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Williams

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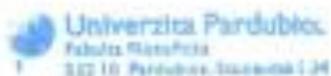
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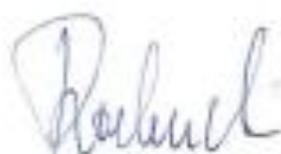
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Souhlasím s prezenčním zpřístupněním své práce v Univerzitní knihovně.

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Annotation

The aim of this thesis is to analyze gender stereotypes in selected plays by Tennessee Williams. It deals with the development of these stereotypes throughout the history. The focus is put primarily on the American South since it is the place where the dramas are set in. The thesis later analyzes gender stereotypes in three William's plays. This analysis is performed mostly by evaluating individual characters.

Keywords

gender, stereotypes, gender roles, women, men, American South

Anotace

Cílem této práce je analyzovat genderové stereotypy ve vybraných hrách Tennessee Williamse. Práce se zabývá historickým vývojem těchto stereotypů. Pozornost je zaměřena zejména na americký jih, kde se dramata odehrávají. Práce dále analyzuje genderové stereotypy ve třech Williamsových hrách a je založena zejména na charakteristice jednotlivých postav.

Klíčová slova

gender, stereotypy, genderové role, ženy, muži, americký jih

Table of Content

0. Introduction	9
1. Gender Stereotypes.....	11
1.1 Female Gender Stereotypes	14
1.2 Male Gender Stereotypes.....	18
1.2.1 Gender Stereotypes in Homosexuality	20
2. History of Gender Stereotyping.....	20
3. Gender Stereotypes in the Southern US	26
4. Gender Stereotypes in <i>The Glass Menagerie</i>	28
5. Gender Stereotypes in <i>Orpheus Descending</i>	38
6. Gender Stereotypes in <i>Suddenly Last Summer</i>	48
7. Conclusion.....	57
8. Resumé	61
9. Bibliography.....	64

0. Introduction

This thesis deals with the topic of gender stereotypes in selected plays by American playwright Tennessee Williams. The first play which is analyzed is *The Glass Menagerie* premiering in 1944, the second drama, which premiered in 1957, is *Orpheus Descending* and the last play with its opening night one year later is Williams' *Suddenly Last Summer*.

However, to be able to analyze gender stereotypes in William's plays, this thesis firstly offers a theoretical input on above mentioned issues. The first term discussed in the chapter 1 is 'gender'. These days, the perspectives on gender are changing, nevertheless, the traditional concept understands gender as an inborn quality. Meaning that females are of a feminine gender while males' gender is masculine. For further analysis, the traditional point of view on the idea of gender is used. Then, the focus is put on the stereotypes in general. They might be defined as generalized preconceptions of characteristic, attributes and roles, which are possessed, or should be performed by members of a particular group. After that, the chapter also examines the set phrase 'gender stereotypes'. These stereotypes ascribe certain qualities, features and social positions to an individual based purely on their sex. Gender stereotypes do not take into consideration one's abilities or social background and are very often transmitted from one generation to another. What is more, as the paper discusses, these stereotypes are frequently disheartening towards women. As a matter of fact, women are merely compared to men, who are said to be stronger, more intelligent and so forth. Furthermore, women and girls are commonly discouraged to do certain things (such as approach men first or not be politically active). These, together with other gender stereotypes are listed in three subchapters dedicated both to female or male gender stereotypes. Since many of Tennessee William's male characters were homosexuals and Williams himself was attracted to men as well, one short section of the paper is devoted to male homosexual stereotypes.

The second chapter provides an overview of historical development of gender stereotypes. For better understanding of the whole concept, the chapter starts its analysis twenty millions years ago and ends in the period when Tennessee Williams wrote his plays. The reason for describing

gender stereotypes in such an early stage of society's development, is the fact that wide public believes gender stereotypes are given historically—there were always inequalities favoring men over women. Nonetheless, women were not seen as housewives and men as breadwinners up until the arrival of agriculture. From that time on, women were kept at home to take care of a house and children, while men were supposed to financially provide for the whole family. The change of this pattern came gradually and the most important milestones for women's inequality were probably the World Wars, which allowed them to prove their abilities in jobs previously reserved for men.

Following chapter concerns gender stereotypes in the American South, since it is the place, where was Williams born, and moreover, the plays are set in South as well. It is important to realize the traditional Southern values, which greatly contribute to the preservation of gender stereotypes. Although the values of contemporary Southerners changed drastically throughout the years, the 1930s society believed in the males' dominance and females' submission. They praised family bonds and proper manners. All of these issues are mentioned and further examined in following three chapters.

The analyses of gender stereotypes in *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer* are the most crucial parts of this thesis and show predominantly same results. In all three dramas, Williams pictures women as those, who are both financially and emotionally dependent on men. Even though some of them violate these stereotypes, the majority of female characters do promote the traditional roles women have in society. Being it Amanda and Laura Wingfield, who are financially dependent on the only men in their family—Tom, or the women from the small town in *Orpheus Descending*, who either need their husbands' money or seek emotional fulfilment in arms of other men. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, the female characters seem to be strong individuals who are capable of living on their own. Nevertheless, both Catherine and Violet share the great emotional dependency on Sebastian. Regarding the males characters in the plays, they tend to be generally dominant over women, however, there is an exception to every rule (such as David Cutrere in *Orpheus Descending*). Last but not least, the stereotypes ascribed to homosexual males are highlighted both in *The Glass Menagerie* and *Suddenly Last Summer*.

1. Gender Stereotypes

To begin with, the word ‘gender’ is to be clarified and looked at from different perspectives in this chapter. First of all, in the linguistic context, ‘gender’ is a category by which words and grammatical forms are classified¹. Not only according to sex or its absence (as with the neutral gender) but also according to other linguistic characteristics, which give rise to the term ‘grammatical gender’. “In German, for example, the word ‘Mädchen’ falls in the set of neuter nouns because it takes the singular nominative definite article ‘das’.”² Nevertheless, its natural gender is feminine, because the word ‘Mädchen’ refers to a female figure. In the modern English language, there is a strong tendency to use mostly natural gender, not the grammatical one, to avoid gender inequality. There are still hundreds of nouns having the grammatical gender but it is slowly changing. As a great example may serve the fact, that the use of a masculine pronoun ‘he’, referring to a person of an unknown gender, is gradually decreasing and the pronoun ‘they’ is used instead.

From the sociological point of view, gender is “all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman”.³ This is a definition, which is not in alignment with the traditional understanding of ‘gender’. That is – gender is defined by individuals’ sex. People born in the body of a man are automatically assigned to be the ones of the masculine gender and the individuals who happen to have a female body are categorized as of a feminine gender. In everyday life, gender is one of the most important and asked statuses determining one’s position in society. People who are recognized as men (therefore being a member of masculine gender group) are treated differently than human beings with a feminine gender. Gender is instantly recognized and people are immediately classified either as men/boys or women/girls. As Raewyn Connell suggests, “[...] these arrangements are so familiar that they can seem part of the order of nature. Belief that gender

¹ Kerstin Müller, *Gender Conflicts in the Dramas by Tennessee Williams* (Bayreuth: GRIN Verlag, 2003), 4.

² Jos J. A. van Berkum, *The psycholinguistics of grammatical gender: Studies in language comprehension and production* (Nijmegen: Nijmegen University Press, 1996), 72.

³ John Money, Joan G. Hampson, John Hampson, "An Examination of Some Basic Sexual Concepts: The Evidence of Human Hermaphroditism". *Bulletin of Johns Hopkins Hospital* 97, no. 4 (October 1995): 312.

distinction is ‘natural’ makes it scandalous when people don’t follow the pattern [...]”⁴ This is the reason why, for example, homosexuality or being a transgender are declared as ‘unnatural’ and wrong. Although, being a woman or a man is not a pre-determined condition. Gender is a state, which is gradually constructed within individual’s mind.⁵ To use words by a well-known French feminist Sime de Beauvoir “One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.”⁶ The same principle is applicable also for boys, who are not born masculine, but have to become men. Therefore, it is impossible to think of masculinity and femininity as fixed by nature and categorize people based on their biological sex (even though some people enjoy the gender polarity and their ‘membership’ in one of these groups).

Nonetheless, in order to further analyze gender stereotypes, this thesis applies the traditional principle of ascribing gender—women are born feminine and men’s natural, inborn gender is masculine.

Secondly, to be able to name and evaluate gender stereotypes, it is necessary to explain the term ‘stereotypes’. The word ‘stereotype’ itself has its roots in Greece, where the words *stereos* and *typos* mean ‘solid’ and ‘mold’. However, the term was first used in France by a printer Firmin Didot to describe a printing method, where certain materials (including mold) were used to duplicate an original material. Later on, the word *stereotype* adapted to a common vocabulary as a metaphorical expression for perceiving people only as a reprints (copies) of others.⁷

In the present days, as Cook and Cusack suggest, a stereotype is defined as “a generalized view or preconception of attributes or characteristics possessed by, or the roles that are or should be performed by, members of a particular group.”⁸ This means that all the members of a certain group (gays, ethnic groups or women) are believed to share common behavioral and psychological features, not taking into consideration their individual abilities, beliefs and weaknesses. Stereotypes do, in an (over)simplified way, categorize, label and judge people based on their membership in a particular social group. They not only unify personalities and classify these units (social groups) as homogeneous objects, but they also ignore individuals’ wishes,

⁴ Raewyn Connell, *Gender in World Perspective* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 7.

⁵ Connell, *Gender in World Perspective*, 7.

⁶ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex* (New York: Random House, 2015), 58.

⁷ David J. Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2005), 8.

⁸ Rebecca J. Cook, Simone Cusack, *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 45.

needs and the environment, which affects their identities and forming of their lives, careers, etc. Furthermore, being it the 21st century, the impact of media spreading the stereotypical ideas is enormous and may have negative impact on someone's life. An illustrative example could be women who are encouraged (through e.g. make-up industry) to take an intensive care of their appearance, since it is perceived as crucial for their success in lives. They are encouraged to look pretty, to attract wealthy men, who would provide for them, and not to work hard and try to show their best inner qualities. This might, unfortunately, work as a negative inspiration especially for young girls, who at their age, just started to shape their opinion on life and values.

It is essential to mention, that not all stereotypes necessarily have negative connotations. Some of them might be neutral, or even positive. Nevertheless, any kind of stereotyping is still a 'labelling' process. May it be a positive one or not. To put it into practice—stereotyping men as being both physically and mentally stronger sex is generally perceived as positive, however, not fitting into this category could lead to low self-esteem and the feeling of a failure.

Assuming that stereotypes are “qualities perceived to be associated with particular groups or categories of people”⁹, it is necessary to define what are these 'qualities' in relation to gender stereotypes. They might be accurate and applicable for most men/women in the male/female groups, however, it is only a generalization of gender roles, which should not be considered a 'standard measuring scale'. What is more, this measuring tool is used the second a baby is born—every newly born human being is automatically categorized based on their sex, thus creating an environment, which will probably further promote the set of rules (based on what gender the baby is) and on top of that, the child is most likely to believe in the rightness of this 'assessing system' and it may lead to a never-ending cycle. When the child is older and starts visiting a school, it is not unusual (especially in the United States) for them to be dressed according to a school code, which again promotes the differences between genders. Boys usually wear some kind of trousers with a shirt, they keep their hair short and trimmed, whereas girls are supposed to wear either dresses or skirts with a top, are encouraged to grow their hair long and wear a decent amount of makeup. Individuals not following this code would be probably looked at as strange, extreme and not fitting into society.

⁹ Schneider, *The Psychology of Stereotyping*, 24.

In the Western civilization, both women and man are supposed to act in society in a certain way ascribed to them based on their sex. Women are expected to be fragile and submissive, conversely to men, who are said to be strong and dominant. Despite the major changes in gender equality made in recent years, if women are stepping out of their ‘roles’ and behave more independently showing their mental and physical strength, they are seen as masculine or even unattractive. On the other hand, when men display their weaknesses and feelings, they are very often referred to as ‘gay’ (even though they are not sexually attracted to other men). Nonetheless, homosexuality is also accompanied by a considerable number of stereotypes. And since the plays by Tennessee Williams refer to gender as well as homosexual stereotypes, all these issues are to be further analyzed (with the regard to American South) in the following chapter.

1.1 Female Gender Stereotypes

These days, female gender stereotypes are probably the most discussed ones. Because of these issues, many organizations and associations emerged, fighting against gender inequality and offending women’s individuality and abilities. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable number of people regarding stereotypes to be true. These stereotypes usually refer to women’s cognitive or intellectual capacity, their biological and physical features and to their psychological characteristics. What is more, as authors of *Gender Roles Attitudes in the Southern United States* suggest, “it is widely believed that gender role attitudes are more traditional in the southern United States than elsewhere in the nation.”¹⁰ In the publication *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspective*, the authors divide gender stereotypes into three basic categories, which are commented on in the section below.

The first ones are so called ‘*Sex Stereotypes*’ which describe a generalized view or preconception related to physical (including biological) attributes.¹¹ The stereotypes emerging from this category are following:

¹⁰ Tom W. Rice, and Diane L. Coates. "Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States." *Gender and Society* 9, no. 6 (1995): 744-56. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/189539>.

¹¹ Cook et al., *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives*, 25.

1. Women are physically weaker than men

This stereotype claims that women are incapable of mastering physical labor as good as men do. On top of that, they are even advised not to display their physical strength, which could be perceived as too masculine and for some men, it might be disgraceful.

2. Women are fragile and need to be protected

As will be later on in this thesis analyzed, women are still looked at as weak and not able to protect themselves. This a stereotype, which Southerners still hold and believe, that men are those who should take care of women's safety.

3. Women have maternal function, therefore are vulnerable

This stereotype is closely connected to the previous one. One reason for women to be seen as vulnerable is the fact that they bear children. They are the ones who give birth to babies, thus this function of theirs needs to be protected.

4. Women are not good at sports

As Eileen McDonagh and Laura Pappano indicate in their book, the question of women participating in sports is still very controversial. Women are very often discouraged from sports and if not, they are put aside from men, promoting their insufficient talent and abilities.¹²

The second category of stereotypes is '*Sexual Stereotypes*'. These stereotypes "endow men and/or women with specific sexual characteristics or qualities that play a role in sexual attraction and desire, sexual initiation and intercourse, sexual intimacy, sexual possession, sexual assault, transactional sex (sexual intimacy in exchange for gifts, opportunities or money) and sexual objectification and exploitation."¹³ These '*sexual stereotypes*' are listed below:

5. Women's sexuality is a part of procreation

Meaning that women should have sex only to conceive baby, not for pleasure (compared to men who are not discouraged to fulfil their sexual wants and needs)

6. Women's sexuality should be reserved for her marriage

¹² Eileen McDonagh, Laura Pappano, *Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is not Equal in Sports* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 62.

¹³ Cook et al., *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives*, 27.

Traditional Southern values propagate the idea of women being virgins until they get married. Otherwise they are seen as less valuable and pure.

7. Women are sexual property of men

In Southern society, men are still believed to be the dominant ones in a relationship, thus allowing them to treat their wives as property, which should satisfy all men's wishes.

8. Women are condemned for being promiscuous

This stereotype is applicable for most of the US regions, however, it is stronger in the South, where girls and women are required to be pure and innocent. And having sexually active life before marriage is not in alignment with these virtues.

9. Women should be submissive in the sexual relationship with their partners

This stereotype is closely linked to the 7th one, promoting women's sexual inactivity and submissiveness. Since sexual dominance is the right of men.

10. Women are pretty and should be looked at

Being rooted in history, when Southern girls had to do their best to be admired by men, thus making great chances to enter into a rich marriage, this stereotype persisted until present days. Women are still said to look pretty and take care of their appearance (conversely to men who, if not neatly looking, are seen as masculine).

11. Women should not speak about sex

Not only being sexually active, but also talking about sex is a stereotype, which assesses women's purity. Women who talk about sex are perceived as fierce and not girly enough.

12. Women should not approach men first

As well as being submissive, women are also advised not to talk to men first. In the Southern regions, women's only weapon for attracting men was their appearance. They should only look good and wait until a man approaches them (this stereotype is nicely pictured in *The Glass Menagerie*, where Amanda talks about her past "callers" and the way they admired her).

The third category of stereotypes is '*Sex Role Stereotypes*', which is understood as a normative perspective regarding appropriate behavior or roles of women and men.¹⁴ To determine the 'appropriate' cultural and social roles of both women and men, '*Sex Role Stereotypes*' often build

¹⁴ Cook et al., *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives*, 28.

upon 'Sex Stereotypes'. As the social role theory explains "[...] social role theory focuses on the effects of the traditional division of labor, with women confined more to domestic tasks and men engaging in paid work outside the home. These roles divisions by themselves are sufficient to produce stereotypes that members of each sex have the traits suited to their respective roles."¹⁵ In other words, women's generalized roles are mothers and homemakers, opposed to men who should be primary breadwinners. Therefore, the stereotypes in this category could be following:

13. Women should take care of their children and stay at home

The findings in the article by Rice and Coates promotes the fact, that "Southerners are more likely to think that women should take care of their homes and leave running the country to men."¹⁶

14. Women should not be bosses or be active in politics

This stereotype is commented on in the previous one. Southerners (and especially men) are convinced that women do not have the capacity to be in leading positions. Being it bosses in companies or political posts.

15. Women should not earn more money than men

Southerners believe that women's primary function is the maternal one, not earning money. And if there is the need for women to have a job, they still should earn less than men, to maintain the inferior position.

16. Women cannot be as successful as men

The inquiry, which is analyzed in the *Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States*, shows that Southern people believe that women are predestined not to be as successful as men, mainly due to their emotional characters.

17. Women are dependent on their male partners

Economically, as well as emotionally. Women in South are believed to live a satisfactory life only when they have a man, they can rely on.

18. Women should have 'women jobs' (secretaries, teachers, librarians)

Since women are not capable of being at leading posts, they should stick to the jobs that are suitable for their abilities. These jobs are usually seen as inferior and less demanding.

¹⁵ Alice H. Eagly, Valerie J. Steffen "Gender Stereotypes Stem from the Distribution of Women and Men into Social Roles", *Journal of personality and Social Psychology* 46, no. 4 (April 1984): 746.

¹⁶ Tom W Rice, Diane L. Coates *Gender Role Attitudes in the Southern United States*, 745.

This division into three basic categories of gender stereotypes by Rebecca J. Cook and Simone Cusack is very well done, however, one important component, based on which a number of stereotypes arises, is not in this division included. That is the mental condition of men and women defying other common gender stereotypes. Stereotypes based on the psychological differences between women and men are following:

19. Women are mentally unstable

They are more likely to be hysterical and overreact.

20. Women speak more than men

Their talks are usually labelled as “gossiping”, which men *never* do. They are encouraged to think more and talk less.

21. Women are bad at math and other natural sciences

This gender stereotype is promoted probably on most of the schools throughout the world. Girls are usually advised to focus on humanistic studies and let the scientific field for boys.

As is apparent from the examples listed above, female gender stereotypes are prevalently negative or discouraging towards women’s success or their roles in society. Furthermore, women are usually compared to men and only their ‘weaknesses’ are emphasized, not their strengths.

1.2 Male Gender Stereotypes

Even though men do not need to struggle for recognition, they are still part of a ‘stereotyping system’, which ascribes them a certain features. These features/stereotypes are assigned to men based on the same theoretical framework as females are assigned their stereotypes. It is quite clear why there is no need for men to fight over their position in society. Since the male gender stereotypes are mostly the opposites of the female ones, there is no need for any further explanation with the individual stereotypes. All the stereotypical ideas are clarified in the

previous chapter. Examples of male gender stereotypes (categorized according to Cook and Cusack¹⁷) are to be found below:

'Sex Stereotypes':

- 1. Men are stronger than women**
- 2. Men should protect women**
- 3. Men are good at sports**

'Sexual stereotypes':

- 4. Men should be dominant in the sexual relationship**
- 5. Being promiscuous is an inseparable part of men's nature**
- 6. Men's sexuality does not need to be reserved for his marriage**
- 7. Men can treat women as sexual property**
- 8. Men can speak openly about sex**
- 9. Men should approach women first**
- 10. Men can seduce women**

'Sex Role Stereotypes':

- 11. Men should be the breadwinners**
- 12. Men should earn more money than women**
- 13. Men should not take care of their children and stay at home**
- 14. Men should have 'men jobs' (mechanics, politicians, businessmen)**
- 15. Men are always in charge**
- 16. Men are able to provide for themselves**

Lastly, stereotypes based on the psychological differences between women and men:

- 17. Men are even-tempered**

¹⁷ Cook et al., *Gender Stereotyping: Transnational Legal Perspectives*, 25–29.

18. Men speak less than women

19. Men do not gossip

20. Men are good at math

1.2.1 Gender Stereotypes in Homosexuality

Since both *The Glass Menagerie* and *Suddenly Last Summer* include gay characters, it is relevant to mention also the stereotypes concerning homosexual males.

Homosexual men:

1. Act as women

Meaning they are too emotional and react inadequately.

2. Have a feminine tone of voice

Or they at least speak in a “feminine manner” and use diminutives.

3. Dress as ‘gay’

They are usually said to wear too many bright, glittery and tight clothes.

4. Are fashion designers or hairdressers

These are the typical jobs ascribes to homosexuals since they are not (as well as women) seen in a leading positions.

5. Enjoy shopping

Compared to straight men, who tend to hate shopping (especially for clothes).

6. Are more sensitive

This stereotype ascribes them female “inner” qualities such as over-reacting and crying without having a reason.

7. Have only female friends

8. Are promiscuous

Although these stereotypes are gradually disappearing in the 21st century, some individuals still perceive them as valid and necessary to believe in.

2. History of Gender Stereotyping

To be able to identify the nature and reasons for gender stereotyping, its historical development may serve as a useful tool. Therefore, this chapter focuses on the evolution of such stereotypes.

Approximately twenty million years ago, the first sophisticated mammals evolved on the planet Earth. These creatures were mostly apes, chimpanzees and gorillas. They, for the first time, showed the evidence of sexual dimorphism, which is “a condition where two sexes of the same species display varied characteristics other than merely their sexual organs.”¹⁸ Signs indicating either female or male sex were predominantly physiological. It was not only the obvious variation in genitalia, but it also included differences in stature, bodily weight or the size of their brains.¹⁹ While males were typically taller, heavier and possessed bigger brains, females were painted as the weaker sex. Then, around two hundred thousand years ago in Africa, the first humans appeared. As Emily Bosaczyk proposes in her article, both sexes were at that time equal. Males were often hunters and females were gatherers, however, neither of these roles was seen as less crucial for the tribe’s survival.²⁰ Even though many may perceive hunting and bringing meat as more important than gathering berries, it were females, who provided their tribes with regular income of nutrients, securing the lives of others. The tribe did not rely only on hunters, which brought meat only occasionally.

Moving forward to the first agricultural period, the roles of women and men start to greatly differ. While at the beginning of this era, only hand-held instruments, such as hoe, were used (equally by both genders), after some time, more complicated instruments were invented. One of these instruments, which Ester Boserup believes to be crucial for forming stereotypical gender roles, was a plough.²¹ In fact, “shifting agriculture, which uses the hand-held tools like hoe and digging stick, is labor intensive, with women actively participating in farm work while using a plough to prepare the soil is more capital-intensive.”²² In contrast to the digging stick or hoe, the

¹⁸ Emily Bosaczyk, “The History of Gender Normalities” April 7, 2017. Accessed November 22, 2018. <http://sites.psu.edu/civiciissueserb/2017/01/31/the-history-of-gender-normalities/>

¹⁹ Martin Pickford, A.B. Chiarelli, *Sexual Dimorphism in Living and Fossil Primates* (Firenze: Sedicesimo, 1986), 4.

²⁰ Bosaczyk, “The History of Gender Normalities”

²¹ Ester Boserup, *Women’s role in economic development* (New York: Earthscan, 1989), 13.

²² Paola Giuliano, *Gender: An Historical Perspective* (California: University of California Press, 2017), 3.

plough required considerable strength in one's upper-body to be able to either pull the plough or to control the animal pulling it. Furthermore, farming with a hoe and a digging stick is more compatible with taking care of children. This resulted in men specializing in agriculture, while women were responsible for childcare and other activities at home. On top of that, women became materially dependent on males and thus their social statuses weakened.²³ What is more, the research from 1970 conducted by Ester Boserup indicates that countries with a short crop season, which did not need to use ploughs, have more women engaged in politics and business.²⁴ On the other hand, women in 'plough-countries' tend to have more rooted positions as housewives. As Hansen et al. suggests, states with less agricultural history usually have more gender equality and less patriarchal values.²⁵

Further, males being the main providers, working on the field, the necessity to have children, which would later take care of the crop and also the parents, emerged. At those times, people usually did not know romantic love or affection and couples entered the marriage only for the economic and child-bearing reasons. Owing to this, the idea of 'business deal marriage' was established. Men searched for women with highest fertility and the best dowry, conversely to women, who in order to find a husband who would provide for them, were obliged to present themselves in a certain way.²⁶ They were forced to behave submissively and innocent, they were very often exposed to verbal and sexual abuse, which (in regard to their social position) went un-questioned.

In the United States, this domestic arrangement together with the generally inferior role of women in society remained the same during the 17th and up until the beginning of the 18th century, when a daily life of women included multiple obligations and minimum choices and possibilities. For their whole lives, they were controlled by men. At first it was their fathers, brothers and other male relatives, after they grew up it was their husbands, who dominated their lives. Though now couples entered marriages for more romantic reasons than before, women's sole purpose in life was still to find a husband, reproduce and then serve him. When women got

²³ Giuliano, *Gender: An Historical Perspective*, 3.

²⁴ Boserup, *Women's role in economic development*, 22.

²⁵ Casper W. Hansen, Peter S. Jansen, Christian V. Skovsgaard, "Modern Gender Roles and Agricultural History: The Neolithic Inheritance", *Journal of Economic Growth* 20, no. 4 (December 2015): 403.

²⁶ Bosaczyk, "The History of Gender Normalities"

married, all of her inheritance belonged to their husbands. They had rights to everything that belonged to their spouses, being it her property or her body. This idea was even supported by the marriage vows, which suggested that women should obey her husband. At that time, marriage became a life-long commitment since it was not possible to get divorced up until the second half of the 19th century. In case a woman decided to stay single, she would be ridiculed by the society. In this society, women were still looked at as “second-rate” people with poor rights on education and zero voting rights. Up until the second half of the 18th century, when the middle class emerged, women of any social status had no privileges over their husbands. It changed when families started to work as traders and the unequal relationship between women and men turned into a partnership. Although women’s most essential role was to look after their household, the perspective on gender equality slightly changed.

Moving forward to the early 19th century United States, it is the Industrial Revolution increasing other opportunities for men, thus supporting them in enforcing their strong economic roles outside their homes (where they had their wives, who kept care of house and children). Hereby, the traits of the traditional gender roles were still developing. Unlike the position of women, the reasons for couples to get married changed significantly. As the psychologist specialized in gender roles Ayala Pines proposes in her book *Falling in Love: Why We Choose the Lovers We Choose*, women in this period were no longer perceived as a need for financial and economic success—they were more like an accessory for their husbands, who provided for the whole family.²⁷ Therefore the focus was primarily put on the women’s appearance and it gave rise to the romantic love. This era was also a precursor for changes in women’s societal position. They were left behind at their homes, having time to think about their rights and their future realization. Furthermore, it was the onset of the Civil War, which also affected the family structures. The scarce of resources, destructed farms and the absence of both husbands and fathers led to something new. While some women still managed to run their family businesses, farms and shops, some would not be able to survive and thus followed their husbands into army, proving their great dependence on them. On the other hand, a great number of women voluntarily joined the army as nurses and for the first time in the American history women played a significant role in shaping the country’s future. This was one of the initial steps towards the gender equality.

²⁷ Ayala M. Pines, *Falling in Love: Why we Choose the Lovers We Choose* (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 2005), 93.

Another breaking point for women and their roles in history is the beginning of the World War I. Women were no longer discouraged from working and their full-time job was not only their household. Their working opportunities expanded beyond the 'traditional female professions'. Women started to hold jobs which were previously reserved only for men. Those included working in factories, sale, war production or transportation. Realizing the importance of female labor force, demands for equal pay begun. Nevertheless, even after a Committee, set up by a War Cabinet, was established to solve the issue of women's wages, women were not given what they asked for. The report from the Committee supported the principle of 'equal pay for equal work', however, supposing that women are weaker and suffer from 'special health problems' the output was not equal at all.²⁸ Due to the low wages, women were a desired labor force even after the war. And since their position shifted drastically, the National American Women Suffrage Association started to vocalize even more for women's voting rights and in 1920, the right for women to vote finally became a part of the U.S. Constitution.²⁹ This was a huge step forward to a gender equality and breaking of gender stereotypes.

With the arrival of The Great Depression of the 1930s, millions of men started to feel that they lost the ability to provide for their families, which influenced their sense of manhood. During this era, men suffered even more because they were for the first time, financially dependent on women. The reason was that jobs labelled as 'women jobs' (such as teaching or clerical works) was not so severely affected by the Depression. And even though men were desperate to find a job, they were too proud and influenced by the public opinion that they refused to work on 'women's' positions. Sociologist Mirra Komarovsky presents in her book *The Unemployed Man and His Family* that sexual activity virtually ceased in some families after the man lost his job. She explains that some women supposed it was the husband's right to have sexual relations as long as he was working and supporting her, but that changed when he was no longer earning the pleasure he derived from her acquiescence.³⁰

When the United States entered the World War II, the need to keep America economically stable, provided women with even more working opportunities than during the World War I. The wide

²⁸Maurine W. Greenwald, *Women, War and Work: The Impact of World War I on Women Workers in the United States* (London: Cornell University Press, 1980), 142.

²⁹ Elizabeth Frost-Knappman, Kathryn Cullen-DuPont, *Women's Suffrage in America* (New York: Facts on File, 2005), 326.

³⁰ Mirra Komarovsky, *The Unemployed Man and His Family* (Walnut Creek: Altamira Press, 2004), 61.

spread opinions on female employees changed significantly. Women not only worked in factories, standing in for men's jobs, but they also served in the U.S. Armed Forces both in the United States and abroad. However, because of the fear of public opinion, women were not recognized as adequate and permanent force until 1948 when the Women's Armed Services Integration Act came into its existence.³¹ This was not the only reason for seeing women in a different light. They were no longer as fragile and incapable as before. One of the most iconic female figures during the World War II, which was to be seen on every poster in the streets, was 'Rosie the Riveter', who represented a strong factory laborer, an image which was traditionally associated only with men.

After the Second World War (when Tennessee Williams wrote his famous plays), a great number of women were dismissed from their jobs to make way for men returning from the war. Nevertheless, the post-war period was remarkable for its economic growth, which led to an urgent need for new labor forces. Therefore, the US government again encouraged women to work actively.³² There were numerous new positions considered as 'women's job' such as nurses, midwives or secretaries. However, these jobs were categorized as 'women's jobs' in order to distinguish the height of women's and men's salaries. In the late 1940s, the percentage of working women increased, nonetheless, women were still considered secondary workers. Their wages were rather for 'extra' spending than major family incomes. Thus women (and especially young mothers who were once again discouraged from working) were still dependent on their husband's wages. It was until late 1950s and early 1960s, when women commonly worked for their wages, though mostly part-time and for less money than men.³³

³¹ Doris Weatherford, *American Women During World War II* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 41.

³² Antia Wiersma, *Under Fire: Women and World War II*. (Hilversum: Verloren Publishers, 2014), 171.

³³ Rosalind Rosenberg, *Devided Lives: American Women in the Twentieth Century* (New York: MacMillan, 1992), 106.

3. Gender Stereotypes in the Southern US

Tennessee Williams, however spending most of his youth in St. Louis, was born in Columbus, Mississippi and he considered himself to be a Southerner, which might be owing to the fact that he experienced the distinctive Southern home life. The vast majority of his dramas is set in the US South and they display the struggles of traditional Southern families. To be able to understand the gender conflicts in his plays, it is of a vital importance to firstly describe the Southern culture. As Shelton Reed suggests in his publication, some people believe that Southerners should be regarded an ethnic group,³⁴ which clearly indicates the significant distinctiveness of their lives and traditions.

The South “has always been an agricultural region and a poor region as well, something which did not change after 1865. In the 1930s, more than two third of the population lived in rural areas, and more than a half of it was employed directly in agriculture.”³⁵ This fact together with the rich slave history could be the underlying reasons for the strong values Southerners hold. Men’s position, especially the white’s men position, was always the dominant one. They were the heads of their families and slavers, promoting the male’s strength and power over others. What is more, South is regarded as a deeply religious region, where majority of the population actively support their churches and consider going to the church more important than other Americans.³⁶ Falk proposes in his book, that the South is a region less affected by the industrial and cultural changes and therefore it preserved the regional authenticity and loyalty to traditions. He also believes that there is a certain kind of nostalgia for the aristocratic, patriarchal, non-urban life which was once perceived as very promising.³⁷

Since this paper concerns gender stereotypes in selected plays by Tennessee Williams, it is fundamental to briefly depict the gender roles and values in the US South. Himes proposes that “Playwrights and novelists claim that Southern-style gendering is different from gendering in

³⁴ Shelton Reed, *My Tears Spoiled my Aim and Other Reflections on Southern Culture* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993), 26.

³⁵ Müller, *Gender Conflicts in the Dramas by Tennessee Williams*, 14.

³⁶ Reed, *My Tears Spoiled my Aim and Other Reflections on Southern Culture*, 32.

³⁷ Signi L. Falk, *Tennessee Williams* (Boston: Twayne Publisher, 1987), 17.

other regions".³⁸ Regarding the Antebellum South, patriarchy had a crucial role and was an essential base for social interactions, both in the planter class as well as among common planters and small farmers. Wives' property and children belonged to their fathers or husbands, women were not allowed to inherit property (unless their husbands gave them permission) and they also had a very few rights. Furthermore, women themselves were considered husbands' property and were strictly controlled by them. This social structure radically changed after the Civil War, however today's devotion to family, restrictive position of women, racial hierarchy and believes in community remained in the extend, which is not seen anywhere else in the US. White Southerners (both planters and yeoman-class) preached the same masculine virtues, the most crucial were independence, self-reliance, physical strength, endurance, personal honor, racism and individualism, other important character traits were having good character, excellent manners, a sense of responsibility for those dependent on him, and being a defender of traditions in the service of frail feminine virtues³⁹. As mentioned in the chapter 1.2, most of these qualities are stereotypically assigned to men even today. For women, the concept of the Southern Belle is still present throughout the South. The white upper-class women are perfectly familiar with this image, however, they no longer live up to it.⁴⁰ They are said to be less engaged in the traditional behavior of wives and mothers (such as teaching family traditions, writing letters to their family members, managing the household or keeping in touch with their distant relatives.)⁴¹ Women still feel responsible for their children and families, however, they preserve their dignity.

Overall, the family is considered to be more important part of women's lives than career. And it is mostly Southern men who have this perception. They expect their wives to be "passionate, frigid, sweet and bitchy all at the same time".⁴² This diversity is a phenomenon, which could be ascribed to men's dominance. In fact, they desire seductive women, who would fulfil their needs, but at the same time they expect women to be frigid and innocent as the proper Southern ladies are.

³⁸Josepf Himes, *The South Moves into Its Future: Studies in the Analysis and Prediction of Social Change* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1991), 103.

³⁹ Himes, *The South Moves into Its Future: Studies in the Analysis and Prediction of Social Change*, 114.

⁴⁰ Reed, *My Tears Spoiled my Aim and Other Reflections on Southenr Culture*, 40.

⁴¹ Himes, *The South Moves into Its Future: Studies in the Analysis and Prediction of Social Change*, 115.

⁴² Müller, *Gender Conflicts in the Dramas by Tennessee Williams*, 17.

4. Gender Stereotypes in *The Glass Menagerie*

One of the Williams' most renowned dramas *The Glass Menagerie* clearly illustrates the gender stereotypes and gender roles in which its characters are casted. Even though the play was firstly published and premiered in the early 1940s, the story, as one of its protagonists Tom indicates, is set in the period of the 1930s.

To begin with, I turn back time. I reverse to that quaint period, the thirties, when the huge middle class of America was matriculating in a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy. In Spain, there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion. In Spain there was Guernica. Here there were disturbances of labor, sometimes pretty violent, in otherwise peaceful cities such as Chicago. Cleveland, Saint Louis...⁴³

In the 1930s, the citizens of Saint Louis (where the drama takes place) as well as anyone who lived in the United States at that time went through a rough period. Being it an era of The Great Depression, which especially in the rural South had a damaging impact, and made maintaining the desired lifestyle very challenging. *The Glass Menagerie* depicts a lower middle-class family, which is far from living their ideal family life, but is deeply rooted in the traditional gender stereotypes. Furthermore, Tennessee Williams in this play “recognized the psychic damage done to Southern women by this stereotype of the belle and its attendant demand of sexual purity.”⁴⁴

The first member of this family to be analyzed is Amanda Wingfield, a mother of two children—Laura and Tom, is the most prominent character of all. Not only does she take multiple actions throughout the whole play to secure her family, but she also makes her daughter and son perform some actions themselves. Furthermore, Amanda is the one, who probably the most apparently demonstrates the gender stereotypes. Although she currently lives in the 1930s, she clings tightly to the notions of traditional southern values, which were held during her childhood and her early adulthood. As George Hovis suggests in his essay “the world of William’s dramas is not the Old

⁴³ Williams Tennessee, *The Glass Menagerie* (New York: New Directions Book, 1970), 23.

⁴⁴ George Hovis in Harold Bloom, *Tennessee Williams* (New York: Bloom’s Modern Critical Views, 2007), 173.

South but his contemporary America, an ethnically and culturally heterogeneous urban world, a setting in which Williams' belles appears comically out of place."⁴⁵ Amanda is precisely one of these belles and she proposes the importance of marriage to her daughter Laura as if there was nothing as crucial in their lives as finding a husband. The dependency on men is the most obvious stereotype in this drama, women should get married and men should proceed in their careers. Amanda forces these stereotypes upon her children through her constant criticism.⁴⁶ Amanda herself realizes what the life without a man is. Even though many of her stories from Blue Mountain testify that she was a prototypical and highly regarded Belle in her teens "One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain— your mother received— *seventeen!* — gentlemen callers! Why, sometime there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all. We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house"⁴⁷ now she is an abandoned lady, whose primary income generates from her son Tom. Her life greatly differs from the one of a proper southern genteel lady, she dreamed of in Blue Mountains and this way she promotes the stereotype of great dependency women had and still have on men. She, as a southern woman, was aware of her position in society. She believed that "the social capabilities of women joined with wit and appearance turn out to be very essential to save their futuristic things."⁴⁸ Therefore Amanda knew exactly what to do, to achieve her goals of having a comfortable life—finding a man who would provide for her. As is obvious from this exchange between Amanda and her son:

TOM: How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?

AMANDA: I understood the art of conversation!

TOM: I bet you could talk.

AMANDA: Girls in those days *knew* how to talk, I can tell you.

TOM: Yes?

AMANDA: They knew how to entertain their gentlemen callers. It wasn't enough for a girl to be possessed of a pretty face and a graceful figure—although I wasn't slighted in either respect. She also needed to have a nimble wit and a tongue to meet occasions.

[...]

⁴⁵ Hovis, *Tennessee Williams*, 173.

⁴⁶ Uzma Navaz, Abdul G. Awan, "Critical Evaluation of William Tennessee Plays 'A Streetcar Named Desire and Glass Menagerie'", *Global Journal of Management, Social Sciences and Humanities* 4, no. 1 (January-March 2018): 73.

⁴⁷ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 26.

⁴⁸ Navaz, "Critical Evaluation of William Tennessee Plays", 74.

My callers were gentlemen—all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta—planters and sons of planters!⁴⁹

This clearly proves that girls at those times were not encouraged to succeed in any other way than just finding a man, who would take care of them. Amanda herself often says that “man is the requirement of women so that she could realize herself.”⁵⁰ They were told to look pretty and behave in a certain requested way in order to attract a possible husband. Their dreams were not to become a fruitful planters or business woman, but to marry one. They were required to present themselves as fragile, innocent ladies, who are capable of entertaining and taking care of their men. Amanda as well as another Williams’ character Blanche DuBoise from *A Streetcar Named Desire* “adopts the role of the belle in an effort to survive within a social milieu in which they are disempowered”⁵¹ and Amanda Wingfield holds this belief even two decades later when she tries to bring together her daughter Laura and her son’s colleague Jim. During the dinner Amanda openly refers to Laura being in the charge of the supper (even though she was not):

AMANDA: Honey, you go ask Sister if supper is ready! You know that sister is in full charge of supper! Tell her you hungry boys are waiting for it.

[...]

AMANDA: It’s rare for a girl as sweet an’ pretty as Laura to be domestic! But Laura is, thank heavens, not only pretty but also very domestic. [...]⁵²

Furthermore, Amanda realizes the weak position women at that time’s society attain, as is clearly stated in one of her monologues:

“I’ve seen such pitiful cases in the South—barely tolerated spinsters living upon the grudging patronage of sister’s husband or brother’s wife! —stuck away in some little mousetrap of a room—encouraged by one in-law to visit another—little birdlike women without any nest—eating the crust of humility all their life! [...]⁵³

⁴⁹ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 26.

⁵⁰ Navaz, “Critical Evaluation of William Tennessee Plays”, 73.

⁵¹ Hovis, *Tennessee Williams*, 171.

⁵² Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 82.

⁵³ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 34.

She knew women do not have as many opportunities as men and are often not taken seriously when trying to succeed in the same fields as men do. They are supposed to take care of children, household and “stay fresh and pretty”⁵⁴. Amanda also claims that “We won’t have a business career—we’ve given that up because it gave us nervous indigestion”⁵⁵ and thus promoting the female stereotypes referring to women as incapable of working in high positions. Even though this was considered standard in the 1930s, in the present days, this lack of opportunities for women is regarded a gender stereotype. And even if Amanda lives her whole life in alignment with these traditional gender roles, she is not afraid to reject them when she feels like her daughter’s life might be ruined for the lack of her interest in men and vice versa—for the lack of interest men have in her. Therefore, paying for Laura’s typewriting lessons in Business College is a deviation from the traditional pattern. What is more, Amanda herself attempts to earn extra money by roping subscribers for *Homemakers’s Companion* magazine. Since she understands well enough the social and economic reality in their world and is aware of her daughter inability to live in the role of a belle, which she sees as an important survival technique, Amanda tries to prevent Laura and herself from an ultimate financial failure. Thus her reaction to Laura’s absence in College is understandable. “So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? [...] What is there left but dependency all our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried woman who aren’t prepared to occupy a position. [...]”⁵⁶

However, Laura is not the only woman who failed in developing or maintaining relationships. Amanda, who repeatedly praises her abilities to have a conversation and entertain male company, is not capable of handling her own marriage. Her husband and father of her two children “fell in love with long distance”⁵⁷ and left her, thus violating the stereotype of men, the breadwinners. This could mean either that the traditional, stereotypical role of a woman is not as desired as Amanda believed it to be or that Amanda’s personality is too shallow, to live with. As evidence of her character’s shallowness and her faith in surface beauty could serve the fact that she is not embarrassed for wearing her old debutant flower dress, which provides readers/audience with a grotesque impression of a woman trapped in a moment that already passed her years ago.

⁵⁴ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 27-28.

⁵⁵ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 34.

⁵⁶ Williams, *Glass Menagerie*, 50.

⁵⁷ Williams, *Glass Menagerie*, 82.

Whereas for Amanda the dress signals her former popularity in Blue Mountains, a distant observer could see an elderly woman in the role of a Belle, who did not receive the promised economic and emotional compensation, “instead of standing amid her family surveying acres of cotton from a porch lined with columns, the woman is alone and destitute, relying upon ‘kindness of strangers’ and alienated family members for her bare existence.”⁵⁸

Another stereotype typically associated with women is their fragility. They are supposed to be frail and delicate so that men have to treasure and protect them. This stereotype accurately describes the character of Laura Wingfield. This twenty-four-year-old girl is as delicate as her glass collection, being it not only her physical handicap and pale skin, which make her frail, but also her mental condition. As one of the stereotypes from the chapter 1.1 suggests, women are said to be mentally unstable and very often overreact, this statement might be closely associated with this terribly shy person, who was so nervous during her writing test, that she almost collapsed. As her typing instructor explains to her mother:

No—I remember her perfectly now. Her hands shook so that she couldn’t hit the right keys! The first time we gave a speed test, she broke down completely—was sick at the stomach and almost had to be carried into the wash room! After that morning she never showed up any more. We phoned the house but never got any answer.⁵⁹

Another female stereotype which Laura greatly demonstrates is the need for women to wait until they are asked by men, not to approach them first. This theory Laura strongly holds. Not because she believes in what her mother told her about men and the way girls should interact with them, but again—because she is deeply introverted. This proves to be right when her first caller Jim, her high school love, arrives and she once again feels faint and does not even want to come out of her bedroom. Overall, Laura is hesitant to take any action at all. She is undoubtedly the exact representative of the stereotypical women, who are said to be unable to do anything, unless their male counterparts make their way through it. She is too powerless to face her fears—she does neither dare to continue in attending the typewriting course, nor does she openly tell her mother.⁶⁰ Instead she wanders around the city whole days and visits places such as galleries,

⁵⁸ Hovis, *Tennessee Williams*, 175.

⁵⁹ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 32.

⁶⁰ Dedria Bryfonski, *Family Dysfunction in Tennessee Williams’s The Glass Menagerie* (New Heaven: Publishing Solutions, 2013), 92.

ZOOs or botanical gardens. When asked, she excuses herself to Amanda by saying “Mother, when you’re disappointed, you get that awful suffering look on your face, like the picture of Jesus’ mother in the museum!”⁶¹ What is more, even if Laura finished her typewriting course at the Rubicam’s Business College, she would not be able to find a valued job. Though her mother paid for this course to secure her future, she enrolled her to the one, which will enable her to work only in those positions, which are (in terms of gender stereotypes) commonly referred to as ‘female’ ones.

Furthermore, Laura satisfies criteria of one more gender stereotype. Her introversion and shyness prevent her from attending any social events, thus making her stay at home all the time (except the time she is supposed to attend the Business College). This fact is in harmony with the stereotype asserting that women should stay at home and nourish it. This inner characterization of Laura is the exact opposite to her mother’s character. The contrast between Amanda and Laura is mirrored also in the relationship between Blanche and Stella in William’s *A Streetcar Named Desire*, where both Stella and Laura are incapable of adopting the role of Southern belles. Laura’s frustration together with her mother’s despotism and father’s abandonment produced such a fragile sense of herself that she is utterly incapable of the kind of coquettish projection Amanda prescribed for her and she is rather surrounded by her glass menagerie than living human beings.⁶²

Another main character is Laura’s brother Tom, who is also the narrator of the story. He, as the only man in the family and thanks to his mother’s inclination towards gender stereotypes, is supposed to earn money to provide for her and his sister. As the 1930s society requires, he should be a strong, independent man, securing his family and displaying his manhood. Since during the Great Depression Era, men were still seen as the dominant slavers, whose destiny is to provide for his relatives. Nevertheless, contrary to those expectations, which are raised around him, Tom is a completely lost man, who tries to escape from his stereotypical life and his duties, which force him to work in a shoe warehouse. This unexciting job together with his mother’s constant comments on anything he does make him truly desperate. One of the passages, where Amanda admonishes Tom for the way he eats, is to be found below:

⁶¹ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 33.

⁶² Hovis, *Tennessee Williams*, 177.

AMANDA: Honey, don't push with your finger. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew—chew! Animals have secretions in their stomachs which enable them to digest food without mastication. But human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it. A well-cooked meal has lot of delicate flavors that have to be held in the mouth for appreciation. So chew your food and give your salivary glands a chance to function!

TOM: I haven't enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It's you that make me rush through meals with your hawklike attention to every bite I take. Sickening—spoils my appetite—all this discussion of—animals' secretion—salivary glands—mascination!⁶³

One of the stereotypes mentioned in the chapter 1.2 refers to men being always in charge. From the extract above is obvious, that Tom does not fit this stereotype at all. In the Wingfield's household, it is Amanda, who is the head of the family, even though it is Tom's income on which are both Amanda and Laura entirely dependent. Furthermore, Tom denies his own manliness by escaping from his problems. As a true stereotypical male, he should face his problems and try to solve them, however, what he does is the exact opposite. He either escapes to the literary world (by reading D. H. Lawrence or writing his own poems) or to the movies and bars. As Irene Shaland proposes in her critical review on *The Glass Menagerie*, that Tom is “the suffering poet unable to resist his calling—so dear to Williams [...]”⁶⁴ meaning that him “going to the movies” is probably only an excuse for visiting gay bars. What further indicates Tom's sexuality is the fact that he, as well as the homosexual character Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*, writes poetry, he not even once talks about his interest in girls, what is more he explains to his mother “No. You say there's so much in your heart that you can't describe to me. That's true of me, too. There's so much in my heart that I can't describe to you! So let's respect each other's”⁶⁵ and finally, at the end of the play he says “I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I

⁶³ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 24.

⁶⁴ Irene Shaland, “The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams”, *Theatre Journal* 42, no. 1 (March 1990): 121. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207569>

⁶⁵ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 51.

buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger [...]”⁶⁶ –a stranger which is supposedly a man. One of the stereotypes ascribed to homosexual males indicates that they are more sensitive than heterosexuals, they tend to overreact and act hysterically, and Tom multiple times manifests this behavior—when arguing with his mother, he very often bursts with anger and offends his mother or sister.

TOM: I’m going to the movies!

AMANDA: I don’t believe that lie!

[Tom crouches toward her, overtowering her tiny figure. She backs away, gasping.]

TOM: I’m going to opium dens! Yes, opium dens, dens of vice and criminals’ hangout, Mother. I’ve enjoyed the Hogan Gang, I’m a hired assassin, I carry a tommy gun in a violin case! I run a string of cat houses in the Valley! They call me Killer, Killer Wingfield [...] Oh, I could tell you many things to make you sleepless! My enemies plan to dynamite this place. They’re going to blow us all sky-high some night! I’ll be glad, very happy, and so will you! You’ll go up, up on a broomstick, over Blue Mountain with seventeen gentlemen callers! You ugly–babbling old–witch...

*[He goes through a series of violent, clumsy movements, seizing his overcoat, lunging to the door, pulling it fiercely open. The women watch him, aghast. His arm catches in the sleeve of the coat as he struggles to pull it on. For a moment he is pinioned by the bulky garment. With an outraged groan he tears the coat off again, splitting the shoulder of it, and hurls it across the room. It strikes against the shelf of Laura’s glass collection, and there is a tinkle of shattering glass.]*⁶⁷

As already mentioned, Tom seeks places where he can hide from the reality. He threatens his mother by saying that he will leave them, and during the last scene, he surprisingly does that. He leaves behind all the responsibilities he, as a man, had towards his female relatives and runs away. Nonetheless, Tom is not the only man in this drama, who abandoned his family. It was his father who already did the same sixteen years ago and Tom only follows in his footsteps. But Mr. Wingfield, the man who “fell in love with long distance”⁶⁸ and walked out on his entire family, is

⁶⁶ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 115.

⁶⁷ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 42.

⁶⁸ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 82.

still talked about with respect and dignity. On top of that, his larger-than-life-size photograph is still hanging over the mantel. Even though his duties as a father and husband were clear—to protect and provide for his family, he breaks this stereotype and leaves without any explanation. He, as well as his two children, is not strong enough to face the reality. Having a homosexual son, a daughter with physical handicap and a wife clung to the naïve Southern ideals are most probably the factors which made him selfishly leave and thus violate the gender stereotypes of men “the protectors” and “the breadwinners”. Yet despite all these facts, Amanda is still devoted wife and hardly ever complains about what Mr. Wingfield did, as if she knew that she might be the one to be blamed.⁶⁹

The very last character to be discussed in this chapter is Jim O’Connor. He is the man, who the most closely corresponds with the male gender stereotypes. Throughout the play, he is portrayed as an ideal man, being it either in Laura’s nostalgic memories, which praises him, or in Tom’s description of him in the scene six. He, as a “proper man” aims very high in his career, he takes courses in public speaking and radio engineering to get a better job than the one he has in the warehouse (even he is on better position than Tom). Though he is not as popular as he used to be in high school, he still has an impact on people surrounded.

TOM: He was the only one at the warehouse with whom I was on friendly terms. I was valuable to him as someone who could remember his former glory, who had seen him win basketball games and the silver cup in debating. He knew of my secret practice of retiring to a cabinet of the washroom to work on poems when business was slack in the warehouse. He called me Shakespeare. And while the other boys in the warehouse regarded me with suspicious hostility, Jim took a humorous attitude toward me. Gradually his attitude affected the others, their hostility wore off and they also began to smile at me as people smile at an oddly fashioned dog who trots across their path at some distance.⁷⁰

Jim also demonstrates the male stereotype of being dominant over women. He shows this quality primarily in his conversation with Laura. He does not hesitate to ask her to sit on the floor next to him and give him a pillow, he gives her dandelion wine adding “Drink it—but don’t get drunk!”⁷¹,

⁶⁹ Brett A. Crawford, “The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams and Gregory Mosher”, *Theatre Journal* 57, no. 2 (May 2005): 310. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25069641>

⁷⁰ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 68-69.

⁷¹ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 89.

he talks to her in a very opened way, as if they were close friends. He proved his dominance over her even on high school, when he gave her nickname “Blue Roses” and did not call her by her actual name. Nevertheless, the most striking moment was when Jim made Laura have a dance with him, even though he knew how little self-confident she is about herself especially in terms of her handicap. Further, he even kisses her on her lips thus confirming his superiority. All these information might give a false impression of him. Although he was an apparent leader in his interaction with Laura, he did that with good intentions—to boost her confidence. And after Jim unintentionally breaks her favorite glass figure—the unicorn, Laura behaves truly maturely and confidently, this way proving that Jim really broke some of her inner barriers. As Colorado State University professor Morris U. Burns proposes “While Laura’s disappointment in the impossibility of any relationship with Jim was evident, the experience of having been touched by him seems to have brought her a sense of serenity.”⁷²

TOM: I wish that you would—say something.

[She bites her lip which was trembling and then bravely smiles. She opens her hand again on the broken glass figure. Then she gently takes his hand and raises it level with her own. She carefully places the unicorn in the palm of his hand, then pushes his fingers closed upon it.]

What are you—doing for that? You want me to have him? Laura?

[She nods.]

What for?

LAURA: A—souvenir...⁷³

⁷² Morris U. Burns, “The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams”, *Theatre Journal* 42, no. 2 (May 1990): 269.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207772>

⁷³ Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 108-109.

5. Gender Stereotypes in *Orpheus Descending*

As well as are women commonly ascribed qualities of some mythological figures, namely Erinyes or Furies, who are portrayed as crones who take vengeance especially on men for their sins, this chapter deals with Williams' play *Orpheus Descending*, which is also inspired by Greek mythology. One of the main protagonists Val could be seen as a reflection of Orpheus, a legendary poet, prophet and mainly musician, whose abilities to charm people are limitless. The play set in a small Southern town tells a story about a young wanderer and emotionally frustrated, bored people, who are stuck in the same place for their whole lives.

To begin with, the first gender stereotype which could be seen in the play is its whole theme, in which is the play written. The story of Val Xavier might be interpreted as a modern retelling of the ancient myth about Orpheus, where Val as the main figure in both the play and the myth⁷⁴, encounters a town, where his presence affects more than one citizen. Owing to his snakeskin jacket, his confidence and charm, he happens to be the center of attention. As the myth proposes, neither his enemies nor beasts could resist Orpheus' play on his lyre. Even Val had the gift to charm people surrounded by his play on his beloved signed guitar. This way, Val is portrayed as the typical unrestrained man, who can fascinate and seduce any women he wishes to. He, as a true alfa male is independent and dominant over women, he can "burn a woman down"⁷⁵ Even though that in the past, he lived a wild live, being promiscuous and not treating women very well, it seems he has been forgiven by the society, most probably because of the fact he is a man. As well as Orpheus tried to save his wife Eurydice, Lady Torrance felt Val could save her life.

LADY: Longer, longer than morning! I'm going to keep hold of your "life companion" while I pack! I am! I am goin' to pack an' go, if you go, where you go! [...] You didn't think yo, you actually didn't think so? What was I going to do, in your opinion? What, in your opinion, would I be doing? Stay on here in a store full of bottles and boxes while you go far, while you go fast and far, without me having your-forwarding address!-even?
[...]

⁷⁴ Phillip C. Kolin. *The Undiscovered Country: The Later Plays of Tennessee Williams* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2003), 48.

⁷⁵ Williams Tennessee, *Orpheus Descending* (New York: New American Library, 1976), 54.

VAL: He's—knocking for you...

LADY: I know! Death's knocking for me! Don't you think I hear him, knock, knock? It sounds like what it is! Bones knocking bones... Ask me how I felt to be coupled with death up there, and I can tell you. My skin crawled when he touched me. But I endured it. I guess my heart knew that somebody must be coming to take me out of this hell! You did. You came. Now look at me! I'm alive once more! [...] Now. Listen! Everything in this rotten store is yours, not just your pay, but everything Death's scraped together down here!—but Death has got to die before we can go. [...] ⁷⁶

In the excerpt above, Lady clearly manifests the great dependency women have on men. What is more, Val is not the only man Lady relies on. Lady, who could be “any age between 35 and 45[...] is a woman who met with emotional disaster in her girlhood”⁷⁷ suffered through her whole life. A ‘dago’ woman, who in her eighteen years fell in love with David Cutrere, who—after her father's disaster—decided to no longer maintain in contact with her, thus making her undergo an abortion of their child, experienced a great power of male dominance. During her childhood, she was naturally subordinated to her father who provided for her. In her teens, she became to be emotionally dependent on her lover David, who did not hesitate to abandon her even though she just lost her only parent. As the two gossipers Dolly and Beulah mention at the beginning of the play, after all these unfortunate events in Lady's life, she was bought by her current husband Jabe Torrance.

BEULAH: Well, I wasn't surprised. Jabe Torrance bought that woman.

DOLLY: Bought her?

BEULAH: Yais, he bought her, when she was a girl of eighteen! He bought her and bought her cheap because she'd been thrown over and her heart was broken by that—that Cutrere boy... Oh, what a—Mmm, what a—beautiful thing he was...And those two met like you struck two stones together and made a fire!—yes—fire...⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 134-135.

⁷⁷ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 33.

⁷⁸ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 14.

Her husband is a man, whom Lady purely hates. Even though she does not know yet that it was him and his Mystic Crew, who killed her father and thus destroyed her whole life. The excerpt below, where Beulah tells Dolly the story about Lady's father may serve as evidence:

BEULAH: Well, that spring, no it was late summer...

–Papa Romano made a bad mistake. He sold liquor to niggers. The Mystic Crew took action.–They rode out there, one night, with gallons of coal oil–it was a real dry summer– and set that place on fire!–They burned the whole thing up, vines, arbors, fruit trees.–Pee Wee and me, we stood on the dance pavilion across the lake and watched that fire spring up. Inside of tin minutes the whole no'th shore of the lake was a mass of flames, a regular sea of flames, and all the way over the lake we could hear Lady's papa shouting, 'Fire, fire, fire!'–as if it was necessary to let people know, and the whole sky lit up with it, as red as Guinea red wine!–Ha ha ha ha... Not a fire engine, not a single engine pulled out of a station that night in Two River County!–The poor old fellow, The Wop, he took a blanket and run up into the orchard to fight the fire singlehanded–and burned alive.

...Uh-huh! Burned alive... [...]

You know what I sometimes wonder?

DOLLY: No. What do you wonder?

BEULAH: I wonder sometimes if Lady has any suspicion that her husband, Jabe Torrance was the leader of the Mystic Crew the night they burned up her father in his wine garden on Moon Lake?⁷⁹

Nevertheless, Lady has no other option than survive in his presence and live with what she has. Being financially dependent on Jabe and his dry goods store, Lady manifests the same stereotypes as Amanda and Laura Wingfield promoted in *The Glass Menagerie*. Lady feels miserable having to share her life with such a man as Jabe is, however she does not dare to change it until is her husband on the brink of death. Right after she realizes Jabe is about to pass away, Lady finally finds courage to take actions and start with her own business, this way extricating from the stereotypical life she is, as a woman, destined for. Furthermore, decorating the confectionary section as her father's orchard might be recognized as an open revolt against dying Jabe. As Lady explains to Val:

⁷⁹ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 17.

Well—well—you see that other room there, through that arch there? That’s the confectionary, it’s closed now but it’s going to be reopened in a short while and I’m going to redecorate. I got it all planned. (*She is talking eagerly now, as if to herself*) Artificial branches of fruit trees in flower on the walls and ceilings!—it’s going to be like an orchard in the spring! My father he has an orchard on Moon Lake. He made a wine garden of it. We sold Dago red wine an’ bootleg whiskey and beer—They burned it up one summer.⁸⁰

Candidly despising her husband Jabe and secretly reopening the confectionary store might serve as a proof of Lady’s breaking free from the path that society, which believes in gender stereotypes, prepared for her. Nonetheless, as already mentioned, Lady tries to escape from her husband’s shadow and become recognized as an independent individual, however, she simultaneously becomes to be reliant on another person—her lover Val, for whom she at the end of the play, sacrifices her and her baby’s life. As the theatre critic Marc Miller suggest in his article “The hope for Lady’s emotional survival arrives unexpectedly, in the form of a guitar-strumming drifter Val Xavier [...]”⁸¹, who seems to be her salvation, but the opposite is true.

Lady is not the only woman, who deviates from the gender stereotypes. Another female character showing the strenght of her personality is David Cutrere’s sister Carol. Tennessee Williams describes her as a woman past thirty, who lacks prettiness and has an odd fugitive beauty which is stressed by a style of her make-up. Her face and lips are powdered white and the eyes are exadderatedly outlined with black pencil and the lids are tinted blue.⁸² The way she uses her make-up and the way she dresses already suggest her contempt with stereotypes ascribed to women. As mentioned in the chapter 1.1, women should take care of their appearance to attract men. During the interaction with men, women should be submissive and act innocently. However, Carol Cutrere is the exact opposite. She fairly openly invites Val for a ride in her car, which has obviously a sexual subtext, nevertheless, she is not even slightly embarrassed talking about these topics.

CAROL: [...] I’d like to go out jooking with you tonight.

VAL: What’s jooking?

⁸⁰ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 53.

⁸¹ Marc Miller, “Orpheus Descending”, *Back Stage* 51, no. 3 (January 2010): 42.

⁸² Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 22.

CAROL: You know what that is? That's where you get in a car and drink a little and drive a little and stop and dance a little to a juke box and then you drink a little more and drive a little more and stop and dance a little more to a juke box and then you stop dancing and you just drink and drive and then you stop driving and just drink, and then, finally, you stop drinking...

VAL: What do you do, then?

CAROL: That depends on the weather and who you're joojing with. It it's clear night you spread a blanket among the memorial stones on Cypress Hill, which is the local bone orchard...⁸³

Moreover, Carol explicitly states, that she would love to have a physical contact with the young stranger Val.

VAL: You told the lady I work for that you had a message fo me. Is that right, Miss? Have you got a message for me?

CAROL [*she rises, moves a few steps toward him, hesitantly, VAL whistles, plucks guitar string, changes pitch*]: You've spilt some ashes on your new blue suit.

VAL: Is that the message?

CAROL [*moves aways a step*]: No. No, that was just an excuse to touch you. The message is-

VAL: What?

CAROL:-I'd love to hold something the way you hold your guitar, that's how I'd love to hold something, with such-tender protection! I'd love to hold *you* that way, with the same-tender protection! [...] -because you hang the moon for me!⁸⁴

Later in the text, she openly admits that she is an exhibitionist, which is also not in alignment with the typical Southern feminine virtues. "I'm an exhibitionist! I want to be noticed, seen, heard, felt! I want them to know I'm alive! Don't you want to know you're alive?"⁸⁵ This is proved not only by her appearance (going bare foot, wearing unusual dresses and make-up) but also by the fact, that she is repeatedly forced to leave the town and is not allowed to stay there

⁸³ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 32.

⁸⁴ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 74.

⁸⁵ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 43.

overnight. For all this, her family is given money, just to keep her away from all the citizens. Her independent man-like behaviour is apparent in the story she tells about her past. A number of years earlier, Carol was involved in a civil rights campaign where she went on a protest walk wearing nothing but potato sack. Because of this incident, she was arrested for vagrancy and from that time on, she is no longer welcomed in the town. Even though Carol presents herself always as a strong female, who is perfectly fine on her own, she is in fact (as any other women in the drama) heavily reliant on her family's income and care. It is mainly her brother David, who picks her up every time she is in trouble. Beneath all the make-up, Carol is a fragile, lonely woman, who wants to be loved and secured by a man.

VAL: [...] Who're you tryin' t' fool besides you'self? You couldn't stand the weight of a man's body on you. [*He casually picks up her wrist and pushes the sleeve back from it.*] What's this here? A human wrist with a bone? It feels like a twig I could snap with two fingers... [*Gently, negligently, pushes her collar of her trench coat back from her bare throat and shoulders. Runs a finger along her neck tracing a vein.*] Little girl, you're transparent, I can see the veins in you. A man's weight on you would break you like a bundle of sticks...

CAROL [*gazes at him, startled by his perception*]: Isn't it funny! You've hit on the truth about me. The act of love-making is almost unbearably painful, and yet of course, I do bear it, because to be not alone, even for a few moments, is worth the pain and the danger [...] ⁸⁶

Focusing on the play's women, it is necessary to look closer to other female characters, which appear to fit the gender stereotypes. In *Orpheus Descending*, there are two nearly similar characters behaving the same way—Beulah and Dolly. These women are “wives of small planters and tastelessly overdressed in a somewhat bizzare fashion”⁸⁷, who could be simply labelled as local gossipers. Right at the beginning of the play, they discuss Jabe Torrance's health and Lady's past. Even though, for the reader/audience, they may serve as a great source of information, their characters are strikingly stereotypical. One of the greatest stereotypes about women claims they love to gossip, talk too much and care about things they should not care about. These attributes do these two women clearly possess. And while it could be easily men, who would have this informative function in the play, and who would not be called ‘gossipers’,

⁸⁶ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 75.

⁸⁷ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 11.

Tennessee Williams decided to create these characters feminine, thus promoting a stereotypical view on women⁸⁸. Furthermore, Dolly and Beulah give the impression of proper wives, devoted to their husbands, but later in the play, Vee Talbott helps to discover the true nature of their relationships. Even though Dolly and Beulah are financially dependent on their husbands and pretend to be loyal wives, deep inside they are probably unsatisfied with their love lives and encouraged by alcohol, they fail to fulfil their traditional female roles.

VEE: Mr. Xavier! Where is Mr. Xavier?

BEULAH: Gone, honey.

DOLLY: You might as well face it, Vee. This is one candidate for salvation that you have lost to the opposition.

BEULAH: He's gone off to Cypress Hill with the Cutrere girl.

VEE: If some of you older women in Two River County would set a better example there'd be more decent young people!

BEULAH: What was that remark?

VEE: I mean that people who give drinkin' parties an' get so drunk they don't know which is their husband which is somebody else's and people who serve on the altar guild and still play cards on Sundays—

BEULAH: Just stop right there! Now I've discovered the source of that dirty gossip!

VEE: I'm only repeating what I've been told by others. I never been to these parties!

BEULAH: No, and you never will!

DOLLY: You're a public killjoy!⁸⁹

After this conversation, one of the minor characters Sister Temple adds “Both of those wimmen are as common as dirt.”⁹⁰ Thereby further persuading the audience about Dolly's and Beulah's rotten characters. However, as the authors of *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams* suggest, Eva and Sister Temple are as well as Beulah and Dolly “two of a group of gossiping, spiteful townswomen”⁹¹, who frequently visit Lady's and Jabe's store just to find out more gossips about them and others who live in their town. This fact might indicate that the only females, who defy

⁸⁸ Jac Tharpe, *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute* (Hattiesburg: University of Southern Mississippi Press, 1977), 159.

⁸⁹ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 40-41.

⁹⁰ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 42.

⁹¹ Alycia Smith-Howard, Greta Heintzelman, *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams: A Literary Reference to his Life and Work* (New York: Fact On File Inc, 2005), 201.

the gender stereotypes (though both only partly,) are Lady and Carol Cutrere. The rest of them are merely envious and bitter women, who are attached either to their husbands—providers, or to their lovers. Such a dependent woman is for instance Val’s former friend, lady osteopath who, no matter how far she is, sends Val money, every time he sends her a message by wire. At least Carol Cutrere retells it as a true story.

CAROL: [...]You told us that it was a gift from a lady osteopath that you’d met somewhere in your travels and that any time you were broke you(d wire this lady osteopath collect, and no matter how far you were or how long it was since you’d seen her, she’d send you a money order for twenty-five dollars with the same sweet message each time. “I love you. When will you come back?”⁹²

Last but not least, the only woman to be further discussed is Vee Talbott. Vee, although having her spiritualistic vision and heart of an artist seems to be attached to her husband Sheriff Talbott as well as the other women in the play. He financially supports her and is annoyed by Vee’s caring behavior towards Val or any other lost strangers.

SHERIFF TALBOTT: Where in hell is my wife? VEE!

VEE: Hush that bawling. I had to speak to Lady about that boy and I couldn’t speak to her in front of Jabe because he thinks he’s gonna be able to go back to work himself.

SHERIFF TALBOTT: Well, move along, Mama, quit foolin’!

VEE: I think ought to wait till that boy gits back.

SHERIFF TALBOTT: I’m sick of you making a damn fool of yourself over every stray bastart that wanders into this country. (*Sheriff Talbott exits while Vee remains standing on steps until lights fade out.*)⁹³

The extract above indicates that Vee is touched by her husband’s opinions on her behavior. What is more, Sheriff Talbott’s speech suggests that Val is not a first man, whom Vee tried to save. She might be as well dependent on Val’s favor as any other women in the play. And even Vee seems to treat Val only in a friendly way, trying to find him a job and a place to stay, she is probably emotionally reliant on Val because her marriage does not provide her with enough excitement

⁹² Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 31.

⁹³ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 45.

and love.⁹⁴ She is supposed to behave as a proper wife, nourish her husband and take care of their household, however she feels it is not the meaning of the life she lives. It is obvious from the excerpt below, where Vee compares her vision of Jesus Christ touching her, to the moment when Val touched her, thus demonstrating her dissatisfaction with the role, she should as a woman take.

VEE: Yes, yes, light. YOU know, you know we live in light and shadow, that's, that's what we live in. A world of light and shadow... Well, and then (*Hesitates to recapture her vision*) I heard this clap of thunder! Sky! Split open! And there in the split open sky. I saw. I tell you. I saw the TWO HUGE BLAZING EYES OF JESUS CHRIST RISEN! Not Crucified but Risen! I mean Crucified and then RISEN! – The blazing eyes of Christ Risen! And then a great – (*Raises both arms and makes a great sweeping motion to describe an apocalyptic disturbance of the atmosphere*) – His hand! Invisible! I didn't see his hand! But it touched me – here! (*She seizes Val's hand and presses it to her great heaving bosom.*)

SHERIFF TALBOTT: (*Furiously*) VEE! (*She starts up, throwing the compress from her eyes. Utters a sharp gasp and staggers backward with terror and blasted ecstasy and dismay and beief, all confused in her look.*)

VEE: You!

SHERIFF TALBOTT: VEE!

VEE (*Taking two syllables of the word 'eyes'*) – The Ey-es! (*She collapses, forward; falls to her knees, her arms thrown about Val. [...]*)⁹⁵

Compared to women, who are in *Orpheus Descending* portrayed as those inevitably dependent on their male counterparts, men are displayed as strong and independent—as gender stereotypes propound. All of the men in the play are undoubtedly superior to their wives. And another feature they have in common is their envy of Val Xavier.⁹⁶ The first man, who clearly demonstrates his dominance over his wife is Sheriff Talbott. As already mentioned on previous pages, he cannot stand the look of Vee and Val having an enthusiastic conversation, he believes that his wife Vee is his property and should not closely interact with any other men. Then Sheriff Talbott sends Vee into his car and she docilely obeys.

⁹⁴ Alice Griffin. *Understanding Tennessee Williams* (South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 178.

⁹⁵ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 115-116.

⁹⁶ Henry Hopkin. "The Plays of Tennessee Williams" *The Tulane Drama Review* 4, no. 3 (March 1960): 49.

SHERIFF TALBOTT: Hey! (*Vee springs up, gasping. Talbott descending.*) Cut this crap! (*Val moves away*) Go out. Wait in the car. (*He stares at Val till Vee lumbers out as if dazed. After a while.*) Jabe Torrance told me to take a good look at you. (*Crosses to Val.*) Well, now. I've taken that look. [...]⁹⁷

Another man, who openly shows his superiority over his woman is Jabe Torrance. Not only that Jabe Torrance bought Lady when she was broken, but he also manifests his dominance and repeatedly reminds her of her dependence on him. Even though Lady takes proper care of their store, especially at that times when Jabe is on his deathbed, he never admits that the store might be at least partly Lady's. What is more, he is surprised by her intelligent solution because women are traditionally not supposed to think or deal with problems.

LADY (*Rises.*): We always has a problem with light in this store.

JABE: So you put the shoe department further away from the window? That's sensible. A very intelligent solution to the problem Lady.

LADY: Jabe, you know I told you we got a fluorescent tube coming to put back here.

JABE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Well. Tomorrow I'll get me some niggers to help me move the shoe department back front.

LADY: You do whatever you want to. It's your store.

JABE: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. I'm glad you reminded me of it. (*Lady turns sharply away. He starts upstairs.*) [...]⁹⁸

The only exception among male characters in Williams' drama is David Cutrere. Although he showed certain contempt for women when he abandoned Lady after their intense love affair, he as well as her, was treated as an object. As Lady states in her conversation with him, they both were bought by their future partners.

LADY: No, no. I didn't write you no letter about it. I was proud then. I had pride. But I had your child in my body the summer you quit me, that summer they burned my father in his wine garden, and you, you washed your hands clean of any connection with a dago bootlegger's daughter and (*Her breathless voice momentarily falters and she makes a fierce*

⁹⁷ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 86.

⁹⁸ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 35-36.

gesture as she struggles to speak.) took that – society girl that restored your homeplace and give you such (*Catches breath.*) well-born children...

DAVID: I – didn't know.

LADY: Well, now you know, you know now. I carried your child in my body the summer you quit me but I had it cut out of my body, and they cut my heart out with it!

DAVID: I didn't know.

LADY: I wanted death after that, but death don't come when you want it. It comes when you don't want it! I wanted death then, but I took the next best thing. You sold yourself. I sold myself. You was bought. I was bought. You made whores of us both!

DAVID: I – didn't know...⁹⁹

6. Gender Stereotypes in *Suddenly Last Summer*

Suddenly Last Summer, a play which Tennessee Williams firstly published in 1958, is a drama where “The women dominate the play”.¹⁰⁰ Even though the whole plot concentrates on deceased Sebastian Venable, which is obvious from the very first sentence Mrs. Venable utters “Yes, this was Sebastian's garden.”¹⁰¹, the most prominent characters of all are young Catherine Holly and her aunt Violet Venable.

To begin with, the characters of Violet and Catherine are seemingly contradictory. Catherine, though she is a beautiful young lady, is treated completely differently in comparison to her elderly aunt Violet. Catherine is considered to be untrustworthy since she once in her life did not manage to control her emotions and that is an issue, which cannot be tolerated by the 1930's high society. From that moment on, she is neglected by the people who surround her. Except for her cousin Sebastian, for whose death is Catherine blamed. The reason why Catherine lost her temper and made a scene during a Mardi Gras ball was quite understandable. As she explains to doctor

⁹⁹ Williams, *Orpheus Descending*, 78.

¹⁰⁰ Harold Bloom, *Tennessee Williams* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 33.

¹⁰¹ Tennessee Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*. (New York: New Directions Book, 1958), 14.

Cukrowicz, Catherine met a man, who offered her to drive her home, however, they firstly stopped in the Duelling Oaks Park, where they were intimate.

CATHERINE: [...] We stopped near the Duelling Oaks at the end of Esplanade Street... Stopped! – I said, “What for?” – He didn’t answer, just struck a match in the car to light a cigarette in the car and I looked at him in the car and I knew “what for”! – I think I got out of the car before he got out of the car, and we walked through the wet grass to the great misty oaks as if somebody was calling us for help there!

DOCTOR: After that?

CATHERINE: I lost him. – He took me home and said an awful thing to me. “We’d better forget it”, he said, “my wife’s expecting a child and –” [...] ¹⁰²

After this incident, Catherine realized she just was misused and thrown away as a thing. The man proved himself to have no character and to treat women as objects. As the gender stereotypes suggest, men should be dominant over women and this man without a name clearly holds this ‘traditional’ belief. Because of Catherine’s public scene and because of the fact that she lost her innocence even before she came out as a debutant, she is now under the threat of lobotomy¹⁰³. This girl, who seems to be very strong and independent later exposes the truth about another man who took advantage of her prettiness and youth. Sebastian, who knew perfectly that Catherine’s social status and financial background are not very impressive, and who was aware of his male superiority over this poor female, took her to travel with him during the summer. As he supposedly stated “Mother can’t go abroad with me this summer. You’re going to go with me this summer instead of Mother”¹⁰⁴ so Catherine, believing in his good intentions, joined him. And as one of the most known quotes from this play says “He liked me and so I loved him...”¹⁰⁵ she completely dedicated herself to him. What is more, she proved her girlish naivety when she “made the mistake of responding too much to his kindness, of taking hold of his hand before he’d take hold of mine, of holding onto his arm and leaning on his shoulder, of appreciating his

¹⁰² Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 63-64.

¹⁰³ Thomas L. Williams, *Suddenly Last Summer* (Mountain View: Ishi Press, 2011), 58.

¹⁰⁴ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 64.

¹⁰⁵ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 40.

kindness more than he wanted me to, and, suddenly, last summer, he began to be restless [...].¹⁰⁶
And before Catherine realized the truth, she was procuring for him.

CATHERINE: He bought me a swim-suit I didn't want to wear. I laughed. I said, "I can't wear that, it's a scandal to the jay-birds!"

DOCTOR: What did you mean by that? That the suit was immodest?

CATHERINE: My God, yes! It was a one-piece suit made of white lisle, the water made I transparent! [*She laughs sadly at the memory of it.*] – I didn't want to swim in it, but he'd grab my hand and drag me into the water. All the way in, and I'd come out looking naked!

DOCTOR: Why did he do that? Did you understand why?

CATHERINE: –Yes! To attract! –Attention.

DOCTOR: He wanted you to attract attention, did he, because he felt you were moody? Lonely? He wanted to shock you out of your depression last summer?

CATHERINE: Don't you understand? I was PROCURING for him!¹⁰⁷

Contrary to this misused, naïve side of her, Catherine also shows signs of rebellious behavior which is in disagreement with traditional gender stereotypes. She, as a proper lady, should be obedient to men and wait until she is asked to do something. She is expected not to approach men first, however, what she does during her interview with doctor Cukrowicz is the exact opposite. “[*She crushes her mouth to his violently. He tries to disengage himself. She presses her lips to his fiercely, clutching his body against her*]”¹⁰⁸ after that she adds “Please hold me! I've been so lonely. It's lonelier than death if I've gone mad, it's lonelier than death!”¹⁰⁹. What is more, owing to this statement, she openly comments on her needs for physical contact with men, which is as well inappropriate since she is a girl. Her courageous spirit is to be seen also in the scene with her nurse, when she stubs out her cigarette into the nurse's palm.

Compared to Catherine, who is dependent on Venable's fortune, her aunt Violet is financially well secured and even capable of funding doctor Cukrowicz's research. Though she presents herself as a proper (stereotypical) Southern lady with exemplary manners, she does not hesitate to bribe the young doctor for her personal needs.

¹⁰⁶ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 71.

¹⁰⁷ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 77.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 68.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 69.

DOCTOR: In your letter last week you made some reference to a, to a—fund of some kind, an endowment fund of—

MRS. VENABLE: I wrote you that my lawyers and bankers and certified public accountants were setting up the Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation to subsidize the work of young people like you that are pushing out the frontiers of art and science but have a financial problem. You have financial problem, don't you, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Yes, we do have that problem. My work is such a new and radical thing that people in charge of state funds are naturally a little scared of it and keep us on a small budget, so small that—. [...] I don't want to turn you against my work at Lion's View but I have to be honest with you. There is a good deal of risk in my operation. Whenever you enter the brain with a foreign object...

[...]

MRS. VENABLE: After all that horror, after those nightmares: just to be able to lift up their eyes and see—a sky not as black with savage, devouring birds as the sky that we saw in the Encantadas, doctor.

DOCTOR: —Mrs. Venable? I can't guarantee that a lobotomy would stop her—*babbling*!!

MRS. VENABLE: That may be, maybe not, but after the operation, who would believe her, Doctor?

[...]

DOCTOR: But if I disagree with you?

MRS. VENABLE: That's just part of a question: finish the question, Doctor.

DOCTOR: Would you still be interested in my work at Lion's View? I mean would the Sebastian Venable Memorial Fund still be interested in?

MRS. VENABLE: Aren't we always more interested in a thing that concerns us personally, Doctor?

DOCTOR: Mrs. Venable! You're such an innocent person that it doesn't occur to you, it obviously hasn't even occurred to you that anybody less innocent than you are could possibly interpret this offer of a subsidy as—well, as sort of a *bribe*?

MRS. VENABLE [*laughs, throwing her head back*]:

Name it that—I don't care—. There's just two things to remember. She's a destroyer. My son was a creator! —Now if my honesty's shocked you—pick up your little black bag without the

subsidy in it, and run away from this garden! –Nobody’s heard our conversation but you and I, Doctor Sugar...¹¹⁰

Despite her seeming innocence and her effort to protect family values and her son’s legacy, Violet’s morals are very doubtful. Even though her genuine love for Sebastian is obvious, she is not particularly concerned for her former husband’s health. In one of her stories, she tells to doctor Sugar, Violet implies that one long-ago summer, when Sebastian and herself were in Himalayas, she received a message from her husband’s lawyer saying: “Mr. Venable critically ill Stop Wants you Stop Needs you Stop Immediate return advised most strongly. Stop....”¹¹¹ And despite this desperate ask for help, she refused to return home and rather stayed with Sebastian to ensure herself he is safe. This was a moment when a reader/audience discovers her loose morals and her lack of interest in her ill husband, whom she should look after as a good and decent Southern woman. On the other hand, she demonstrates the stereotypical belief that women are dependent on men by overprotecting and tightly clinging to her only son. She talks about him almost in a godly way, praising his poetic capabilities and modesty. Nonetheless, for Sebastian, she is no longer needed since her youth and beauty deteriorated owing to her age¹¹². This fact, together with his sudden death, gives rise to her animalistic behavior. As the gender stereotypes suggest, women tend to be mentally unstable and overreact. And that is exactly the behavior Violet illustrates through her desperate wish for Catherine’s lobotomy. What is more, the manner in which she talks about her and Sebastian is rather alarming.

MRS. VENABLE: [...] ...before you hear whatever you’re going to hear from the girl when she gets here. My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it, too, we had to be very fleet-footed I can tell you, with his loos and his charm, to keep ahead of pursuers, every kind of pursuer! –I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e! – Chaste...

DOCTOR: I understand what you mean, Mrs. Venable.

MRS. VENABLE: And you believe me, don’t you?

DOCTOR: Yes, but–

MRS. VENABLE: But what?

¹¹⁰ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 29-32.

¹¹¹ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 22.

¹¹² William M. Poteet, *Gay Men in Modern Southern Literature* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2006), 64.

DOCTOR: Chastity at—what age was your son last summer?

MRS. VENABLE: Forty, maybe. We really didn't count birthdays...

DOCTOR: He lived a celibate life?

MRS. VENABLE: As strictly as if he'd vowed to! This sounds like vanity, Doctor, but really I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people. Time after time my son would let people go, dismiss them! – because their, their, their! – attitude toward him was—

DOCTOR: Not as pure as—

MRS. VENABLE: My son, Sebastian, demanded! We were a famous couple. People didn't speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said "Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian are staying at the Lido, they're at the Ritz in Madrid. Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian have taken a house in Biarritz for the season," and every appearance, every time we appeared, attention was centered on us! –everyone else! Eclipsed! Vanity? Ohhhh, no, Doctor, you can't call it that—¹¹³

The short dialogue above suggests that Violet, being "only" a woman, who should function as a man's accessory (as discussed in the chapter 2.), would be socially far less regarded not being for her charming son. Since the fourth chapter 'Gender Stereotypes in *The Glass Menagerie*' presents Amanda Wingfield as an overprotective mother, Violet significantly exceeds this characterization (both in motherly and oddly-sexual sense).

The character of Sebastian Venable both represents and violates certain stereotypes as well as his cousin or mother. Yet there are two categories of stereotypes which he falls into. The first category focuses on gender stereotypes ascribed to men. While women are said to be dependent on men, being unable to succeed without their support, a proper stereotypical man should be mentally strong and self-reliant. However, this is the first stereotype which Sebastian violates. Firstly, his mother accompanies him on his travels because Sebastian is unable to work on his own. As Violet states "A poet's vocation is something that rests on something as thin and fine as the web of a spider, Doctor.[...] Great help is needed! I did give it! She didn't!"¹¹⁴ further adding "When he was frightened and I knew when and what of, because his hands would shake and his eyes looked in, not out, I'd reach across a table and touch his hands and say not a word, just look,

¹¹³ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 25-26.

¹¹⁴ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 73.

and touch his hands with my hand until his hands stopped shaking and his eyes looked out, not in, and in the morning, the poem would be continued.”¹¹⁵ The way Violet cares and morally supports her son is something, which is usually seen between a mother and her child, not a man at the age of forty. Secondly, Sebastian was too shy to initiate any interaction with strangers, though he wanted to be introduced to some of them. Catherine points out to this fact in her testimony in the scene four: “She didn’t know that she was procuring for him in the smart, the fashionable places they used to go to before last summer! Sebastian was shy with people. She wasn’t. Neither was I. We both did the same thing for him, made contacts for him, but she did it in nice places and in decent ways and I had to do it the way that I just told you!”¹¹⁶ Even though that Catherine talks about Sebastian’s shyness really openly, it indicates more than just his bashfulness. Sebastian, on one hand, is excessively attached to his mother (later his cousin) and seems unable to function in society on his own; on the other hand, he plays around with these women as with puppets, thus promoting the stereotype of men being the dominant ones – the ones, who can treat women as objects designed just for their personal use. Nevertheless, even at his age, Sebastian still relied on his parents’ financial support and was too weak to openly face and follow his secret desires. By those is meant his interest in men. The idea of Sebastian being a homosexual is present throughout the whole drama. Right at the beginning Mrs. Venable talks about Sebastian’s garden full of exotic and rare plants and as John M. Clum suggests in his critical essay, the fact that a man understands flowers could stereotypically indicate his sexual orientation.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the gay stereotypes suggest that homosexual males tend to dress differently compared to their heterosexual peers and to be more involved in the world of fashion. Sebastian, wearing his “spotless white silk Shantung suit and a white silk tie and a white panama and white shoes, white–white lizard skin–pumps!”¹¹⁸, buying new clothes for Catherine and surrounding himself only with good looking people, clearly differs from the typical breadwinning, rough, sporty men (such as Stanley Kowalski in Williams’ *Streetcar Named Desire*). What is more, gender stereotypes present male homosexuals as more sensitive, which is closely connected to being highly demanding. Violet’s speech, which is already mentioned in this chapter, proves that “[...]”

¹¹⁵ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 73.

¹¹⁶ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 77.

¹¹⁷ John M. Clum in Harold Bloom, *Tennessee Williams* (New York: Bloom’s Modern Critical Views, 2007), 32.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 79.

Sebastian, demanded!”¹¹⁹ and later in the play, she also uncovers how particular Sebastian was about certain things. “That Sebastian would go every day to some dirty free public beach near a harbor? A man that had to go out a mile in a boat to find water fit to swim in?”¹²⁰ Moreover, women at those days were encouraged to stay at home or to have a “women’s job”. The same applies also for men—they are supposed to have a proper men’s job, which would provide financial security for him and his family. Nonetheless, Sebastian does not follow these stereotypes and being a poet is his full-time occupation (even though he writes his poems only during three months in a year). Last but not least, Sebastian is clearly on the edge of being an independent young man, who is not afraid to take what he wants and a little mama’s boy, who is unable to live on his own. His character could be compared to the Venus flytrap, an insectivorous plant, which as well as Sebastian delicate and vulnerable but at the same time predatory and hungry for flesh.¹²¹ However, in Sebastian’s case it is not flies what yearns for, but boys. In her recollection, Catherine mentions the way Sebastian used to talk about men—as if they were items on a menu.

Cousin Sebastian said he was famished for blonds, he was fed up with the dark ones and was famished for blonds. All the travel brochures he picked up were advertisements for of the blond northern countries. I think he’d already booked us to—Copenhagen or—Stockholm. —Fed up with dark ones, famished for light ones: that’s how he talked about people, as if they were—items on a menu. —“That one’s delicious-looking, that one is appetizing,” or “that one is not appetizing” —I think because he was really nearly half-starved from living on pills and salads...¹²²

Even though Sebastian enjoyed his homosexual-cannibalistic lusts, it was him, who paid for his profligacy with his life. And at the end of the play Catherine uncovers the truth about his decease—he was devoured by the musicians.

—Waiters, police, and others—ran out of buildings and rushed back up the hill with me. When we got back to where my Cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little black sparrows, he—he was lying naked as they had been naked against a

¹¹⁹ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 26.

¹²⁰ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 75.

¹²¹ Kevin Ohi. “Devouring Creation: Cannibalism, Sodomy, and the Scene of Analysis in *Suddenly Last Summer*”. *Cinema Journal* 38, no. 3 (March 1999): 32.

¹²² Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 40.

white wall, and this you won't believe, nobody *has* believed it, nobody *could* believe it, nobody, nobody on earth could possibly believe it, and I don't *blame* them! –They had *devoured* parts of him.

[Mrs. Venable cries out softly]

Torn or cut parts oh him away with their hands or knives or maybe those jagged tin cans they made music with, they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouths of theirs. There wasn't sound any more, there was nothing to see but Sebastian, what was left of him, that looked like a big white-paper-wrapped bunch of red roses had been *torn, thrown, crushed!* –against that blazing white wall...¹²³

A man whose values are absolutely contrasting is Doctor "Sugar" Cukrowicz. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, he is the exact representation of a "true" man. He tries to win recognition in the scientific field, he plans to start a family and on top of that, he thinks rationally about the world and people around him. He is the only one, who is willing to listen to Catherine's story to find out the truth behind it and is hesitant to perform the brain surgery. What is more, he treats others with respect regardless of their social status or alleged mental health. Nevertheless, Doctor Sugar might also have some secrets. One of the critics in the Bloom's collection of critical views on Tennessee Williams proposes the idea of Doctor Cukrowicz being also a homosexual. He claims that "In fifties dramas, very good looks are often a sign of homosexuality"¹²⁴ And Doctor Sugar is described as "a young blond Doctor, all in white, glacially brilliant, very, very good-looking, and the old lady's manner and eloquence indicate her undeliberate response to his icy charm"¹²⁵ Mrs. Venable is not the only one who is fond of this young handsome man. However, "Dr. Sugar is neither responsive to Mrs. Venable's steel magnolia charm nor to Catherine literally throwing herself at him"¹²⁶ This might be due to the fact that he is devoted to his girl, or simply because he is attracted to men as well as Sebastian. Other than that, Doctor Sugar is the only one, who is not directly affected by the death of Sebastian Venable. Nonetheless, his role in this issue is crucial. He is the one who decides on the lobotomy, who has the right to quieten Mrs. Venable and control their conversation.

¹²³ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 87.

¹²⁴ Clum, *Tennessee Williams*, 33.

¹²⁵ Williams, *Suddenly, Last Summer*, 14.

¹²⁶ Clum, *Tennessee Williams*, 34.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this master thesis offered an insight into the issues of gender stereotypes in the selected plays by Tennessee Williams. The initial section concerned with the theory of gender stereotypes, since their proper understanding was crucial for further analyses. Some of the often repeated stereotypes were particularly listed, so that it provided a more tangible theoretical background. What followed was the historical overview of gender stereotypes' development, since the events happening in the past made a great contribution to the changes in gender roles. All the wars, economic and social affairs together with that day's philosophy significantly shifted the perspective on men and women. Being it the second half of the 18th century, which thanks to the growth of family trading and the impact of Enlightenment promoting rationality and individual's own freedom, initiated the equality between both sexes. Even though, the struggle for gender equality was yet to start, the tide was slowly turning. Philosophical thoughts of the late 18th and the 19th century question the relationship of men and women, nonetheless, they still saw women as the ones naturally determined to conserve the human species and to cultivate the society through family. However, the position women had in marriage was slightly more comfortable due to the fact that couples married mostly for affection not dowry. The arrival of the 20th century brought about considerable changes. Not only that both World Wars gave women opportunity to show their potential, but they also became aware of their power and it contributed to the later rise of Feminism. The evolution of gender stereotypes in the Southern US was far less rapid. As mentioned in the chapter 3, the reason is the region's cultural and religious values. Southerners tend to praise more the family values and patriarchal society, which is reflected in Williams' plays.

The analyses of *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer* proved that the male dominance is present in all of these three dramas. Most of the female characters, being it Amanda and Laura Wingfield in *Glass Menagerie*; Beullah, Dolly, Lady, Vee and Carol in *Orpheus Descending* or Violet, Mrs. Holly, Catherine in *Suddenly Last Summer* are either financially or emotionally dependent on their male counterparts or other male figures around them. The subordinated female's position is the most common one in Williams' plays. However, there are some exceptions, which do not follow this pattern. Williams does not portray only the

weaknesses which are ascribed to women, but he also creates independent, self-sufficient characters, which stand out among the others and in some way violate the gender stereotypes. Nevertheless, these women are not accepted as graciously as ladies, who behave in accordance to the prescribed gender rules. They are very often said to be insane, fool or irresponsible. Their individuality is seen rather as having a lack of manners than courage. In the 1930s society, which is the period when these Williams' plays are set in, women such as Carol Cutrere or Catherine Holly are seen as deterrent examples with little respect towards the traditional values. Although the only sin they committed is stepping out of the path of gender stereotypes.

On the other hand, men tend to be generally (and stereotypically) presented as the dominant ones, who are responsible not only for themselves, but also for their wives, mothers or sisters (because they are unable to provide for themselves). They are the ones, who determine the women's wealth and life standard not taking into consideration their inner desires and wishes. As well as women are destined to deliver babies, men should take care of the financial matters. Nonetheless, some of the Williams' characters such as Tom Wingfield, are not satisfied with their roles as breadwinners and would rather spend time on more delicate things than just making money to feed his family. Compared to Tom, Williams offers also male characters, which seem to immensely enjoy their superior position over women. Sebastian Venable and Jabe Torrance are great examples of men, who are well aware of their power and do not hesitate to treat women as inanimate objects and to use them as a tool for their own pleasure, thus promoting the gender inequality. In opposition to this, *The Glass Menagerie* and *Suddenly Last Summer* propose other stereotypes which are assigned to male homosexuals. These are overt sensitivity, interest in any sort of art (such as poetry) and nature and a distinct way of dressing up. These are the attributes possessed by both Sebastian Venable and Tom Wingfield.

And even if it might not be obvious at a first, Williams inconspicuously suggests a way his characters can extricate from the prescribed gender-stereotypical roles they should fulfill. For him, the solution might be quite simple—to escape. And the escape might have multiple forms. The first type of escapism is the most literal and simple one, and is present in all three plays. In *The Glass Menagerie*, both Tom and his father escape from their family to break free from the duties, they as a men-breadwinners have. Mr. Wingfield runs away before he falls into the stereotypical machinery of everyday life of a father and husband. He prefers leaving his two

children over the monotonous family life. His son, Tom, has probably a greater sense of responsibility towards his relatives and firstly escapes only to the realm of literature, movies and alcohol. Nevertheless, he is no longer capable of living his boring, meaningless life as the one, who has to earn enough money to provide for his relatives and, as well as his father, he runs away to break free from the destiny he should, as a male, fulfill. Another character who decided to escape in terms of moving to a different place is Val Xavier in *Orpheus Descending*. He is no longer satisfied with his life full of alcohol and women, who show their dependency on him, so he runs away to a small Southern town to start his life again. And after some time, he is advised to leave the town as well. Sebastian Venable in *Suddenly Last Summer*, is the last man, who tries to break free from his male responsibilities. He should have a family and a decent job, however, he rather pronouns himself a poet, thus avoiding many of his duties. During nine months in the year, Sebastian hides himself in his tropical garden, and the remaining three months he spends abroad. The thing is, Sebastian is aware of his inability to meet the expectations held by society, which believes in traditional family values and gender stereotypes.

Apart from the escape, Williams offers another possible way to extricate from the stereotypes—and that is death. This theme appears both in *Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. The presence of death accompanies most of its characters and might be regarded as one of the solutions to the issue. In *Orpheus Descending*, it is Jabe's death which symbolizes the potential liberation from the role Lady needs to play in order to survive in that day's society. Since Lady has to obey Jabe's orders, she is happy about his miserable health condition which might end her suffering, which she experiences as a stereotypical, subordinated wife. Nevertheless, in the end, it is not only Lady's life, which is sacrificed for another man, it is also her baby's life, which comes to nothing. Lady, in fact, frees herself from the stereotypes, but at what price. The life of Val Xavier, who repeatedly tries to escape from his life, ends similarly showing that running away from your destiny is not sufficient, however, death might be seen as the only permanent solution. In *Suddenly Last Summer* the characters are also faced with the death of their close relatives. First of all, it is the sudden decease of Sebastian Venable, who did not represent the image of a proper, stereotypical male. Even though Sebastian tried to live in isolation either in his garden or on his summer journeys, he did not break out of the society's demands until his passing away. From that moment on, his unconventional spirit was free, not having to follow any given rules. Last but not least, the death of Mrs. Venable might also have some significance for his family members. Since

that moment, he was no longer committed to financially support his wife and son. What is more, Violet Venable also lost all of her duties towards him and could not fully devote her time, love and effort to Sebastian. And even though her behavior probably did not change radically after her husband's death, nobody had then the right to blame her for violating the gender stereotypes of a dutiful wife.

Lastly, as the title of this thesis suggests, gender stereotypes bring sense of both prides and prejudices—being it in the real world or in the world of literature. In Jane Austen's romantic novel *Pride and Prejudice*, it is men's pride not allowing them to confess their affection for the 'weaker' sex. Their financial and social superiority prevents them from seeing the true nature of individual's character, thus creating a false images and blind prejudices especially against women. In Tennessee William's plays, prides and prejudices are depicted rather similarly. In his dramas, female figures are usually treated accordingly to the prejudices arising around them. They are said to be fragile, too much sensitive and naïve or incapable to provide for themselves. Nonetheless, several female characters prove these prejudices/stereotypes to be wrong. As for the men, in *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, they are definitely driven by their prides. Since they all are well aware of their social privileges, financial resources or greater physical strengths. All these features are projected in their relationships with women, proving the immorality of prides, prejudices as well as any other stereotypes.

8. Resumé

Tato diplomová práce se zabývá genderovými stereotypy ve vybraných hrách Tennessee Williamse. První z analyzovaných her je *The Glass Menagerie*, druhé Williamsovo drama je *Orpheus Descending* a poslední hrou, jež je v této práci rozebrána, je *Suddenly Last Summer*.

Počáteční kapitola této práce nabízí vhled do problematiky genderových stereotypů tak, aby byla později možná jejich analýza ve Williamsových hrách. První z termínů, jež je v kapitole 1 prodiskutován, je výraz ‚gender‘, na který se v dnešní době nahlíží už poněkud jinak, než v letech uplynulých. Nicméně tradičním pojem genderu je chápán jako vrozená kvalita, která je jednotlivcům přisuzována na základě jejich biologického pohlaví. A s touto definicí bude pracováno i v následujících kapitolách. Dále se pak práce zaměřuje na stereotypy obecně. Ty mohou být definovány jako určité předsudky, vlastnosti a role, jež jsou přisuzovány všem členům konkrétní skupiny či společnosti. Dále se práce zabývá pojmem ‚genderové stereotypy‘. Ten přisuzuje jednotlivcům určité kvality, rysy a společenské postavení na základě jejich pohlaví. Genderové stereotypy neberou v potaz individuální schopnosti ani sociální prostředí, ve kterém se osoba pohybuje. Jsou velmi často předávány z generace na generaci a obvykle jsou znevažující vůči ženám. Tyto stereotypy mají tendenci srovnávat ženy s muži (kteří jsou považováni za silnější a inteligentnější) tak, že se pouze vyzdvihují jejich negativní vlastnosti a slabé stránky. Díky těmto stereotypům jsou ženy a dívky často odrazovány od určitých činností, jako například politická aktivita nebo dominance v partnerském vztahu. Tyto stereotypy jsou společně s dalšími vyjmenovány ve třech podkapitolách, které jsou věnovány jak mužským, tak ženským genderovým stereotypům. A jelikož mnoho z Williamsových postav, stejně tak jako on sám, je homosexuální orientace, jedna z kapitol se zaměřuje právě na stereotypy homosexuálních mužů.

Druhá kapitola nabízí přehled historického vývoje genderových stereotypů. Pro lepší pochopení celého konceptu začíná historická analýza již v době před dvaceti miliony let a končí v období, ve kterém Williams své hry napsal. Důvodem pro popis genderových stereotypů v již tak rané době je fakt, že veřejnost je přesvědčena o jejich historickém původu. Věří totiž, že ženy mají odjakživa horší společenské postavení než muži. Pravdou však je, že ženy začaly být považovány za hospodyňky a muži za živitele až s příchodem zemědělství. Od této chvíle bylo úkolem ženy starat se o domácnost a své potomky, zatímco od mužů se očekávala schopnost

materiálně celou rodinu zabezpečit. Změny v tomto zaběhnutém systému přišly pozvolna. Největšími milníky, které vedly k rovnocennému postavení mužů a žen, byly obě světové války, které společně s tehdejší filosofií umožnily ženám dokázat své schopnosti na pozicích, které byly dříve vyhrazeny jen mužům.

Jelikož je Tennessee Williams narozen na jihu USA a jeho hry se v tomto regionu také odehrávají, další kapitola se zabývá genderovými stereotypy právě na onom zmiňovaném americkém jihu. Je totiž velice důležité si uvědomit tradiční jižanské hodnoty, které značně přispívají k zachování genderových stereotypů. A ačkoliv se hodnoty obyvatel jihu během let výrazně proměnily, společnost ve 30. letech 20. století stále věřila ve správnost mužské dominance a ženské podřízenosti. Lidé uznávali rodinné hodnoty a vybrané způsoby. Všechny tyto prvky jsou diskutovány v následujících třech kapitolách.

Samotné analýzy her *The Glass Menagerie*, *Orpheus Descending* a *Suddenly Last Summer*, jsou nejtěžnějšími kapitolami v celé diplomové práci. Všechna tři dramata vykreslují genderové stereotypy víceméně identicky. Williams vyobrazuje ženy jako ty, které jsou finančně a emocionálně závislé na mužích. Jako typický příklad může sloužit Amanda Wingfield, která je odkázána na příjem svého jediného syna, nebo Violet a Catherine v *Suddenly Last Summer*, které až nepřirozeně lpěly na mladém Sebastianovi. Ačkoliv některé z ženských postav boří hranice genderových stereotypů (např. Carol Cutrete ve hře *Orpheus Descending*), většina z nich reprezentuje tradiční společenské role žen. Co se týče mužských postav ve Williamsových hrách, ty zastávají převážně dominantní funkci ve vztahu s ženou. Nicméně každá výjimka má své pravidlo a stejně tak lze v těchto dramatech spatřit i muže, kteří nekorespondují s tradiční představou typického silného a samostatného muže. Takový je totiž například bratr Carole Cutrete, David. Ten se sice zamiluje do chudé dívky italského původu, nicméně nemá dost odvahy na to, aby jejich vztah uznal za oficiální. Raději svou lásku opustí v její nejhorší chvíli a prodá se ženě, která ho může materiálně zabezpečit. Na rozdíl od něj je ale většina mužů těmi, kteří sami zaopatřují své ženy a rodiny. Těmi je jak Jabe Torrance, tak Sheriff Talbott, nebo již zmiňovaný Tom Wingfield. V neposlední řadě autor zobrazuje mužské postavy, které naplňují některé ze stereotypů přisuzovaných homosexuálům. Sebastian Venable i Tom Wingfield jsou popisováni jako ti, kteří se zajímají o umění (zejména poezii), často reagují nepřiměřeně a jejich způsob oblékání je také odlišný od ostatních.

Jak již závěr celé práce zmiňuje, jediným zjevným východiskem z těchto stereotypů, které Tennessee Williams navrhuje, je útek. Může to být útek do světa literatury či výprava na dno lahve, které podniká Tom Wingfield v *The Glass Menagerie*. Nebo prostá změna prostředí či odchod od rodiny, tedy metody praktikované panem Wingfieldem, Sebastianem Venablem, Valem Xavierem a dalšími. Radikálnější formou úprku od společnosti předepisující dané normy a role je smrt, která je přítomna jak ve hře *Orpheus Descending*, tak v *Suddenly Last Summer*. A ačkoliv je pro některé z postav symbolem dlouho požadované svobody, může se nakonec stát pouze nepřiměřenou vysokou cenou za vybočení z role, kterou genderové stereotypy předepisují.

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