

Using Soft Power in Constructing Attitudes of Gender in “A Streetcar Named Desire”

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Abstract

This essay looks at how Tennessee Williams's beloved drama "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses the idea of soft power to limit and mold society perceptions of gender identity and performance. Based on Judith Butler's seminal theory—which holds that gender is a socially created and performative act rather than an underlying essence—this analysis shows how the play uses soft power to enforce standards of acceptable gender expression.. The protagonist, Blanche DuBois, embodies the typical Southern belle, yet her brother-in-law Stanley Kowalski's blatantly masculine instincts conflict with her attempts to maintain a rigorously feminine persona. This study demonstrates how Williams quietly challenges restrictive gender norms by stressing their repressive and harmful effects on people who fail to properly "perform" their given roles. This is done through an analysis of the play's character relationships, dialogue, and dramatic tensions. The study contends that "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses a sort of soft power that subverts viewer notions about gender identity by showing the tragic collapse of Blanche, who is shunned for her incapacity to convincingly execute the anticipated feminine script. A significant case study at the nexus of literature, gender studies, and the sociology of power dynamics, the play contributes to the larger societal discourses and power structures that govern permissible ways of gender expression.. This study offers insights into how cultural production shapes, reinforces, or subverts societal views about the performative nature of gender identity through an analysis of how "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses soft power to control attitudes of gender.

Keywords: "A Streetcar Named Desire", Soft Power, Attitudes, Gender, Cultural, Societal Beliefs, Identity.

Introduction

The timeless drama "A Streetcar Named Desire" by Tennessee Williams has long been praised for its sophisticated examination of difficult social and psychological issues. The play's analysis of gender roles and the power relationships that determine what constitutes appropriate male and feminine expression is foremost among these. The play features Blanche DuBois as a protagonist whose battle to live up to the strict expectations of Southern womanhood serves as a potent critique on the restrictive nature of gender stereotypes.. This study claims that "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses a sort of soft power to mold and control society attitudes towards gender identity and expression. It does this by drawing on Judith Butler's prominent theory of gender performativity. Butler's seminal work suggests that gender is a socially manufactured performance that people are forced to do via repeated patterned acts rather than an innate, essential quality (Butler, 1990). The play's portrayal of Blanche's tragic demise—in which she is shunned because she cannot really play the stereotypically feminine role—serves as a subtly effective way to reinforce the limits of what constitutes appropriate gender conduct. This article shows how Williams' story discreetly undermines conventional gender binaries by showing their detrimental influence on those who break from societal norms through a detailed analysis of character, dialogue, and dramatic tension. The study places the analysis in the larger sociocultural framework of post-World War II America, a time when there was tremendous push to reinstate patriarchal institutions and traditional household responsibilities in the wake of the upheavals of the conflict (Friedan, 1963). By wielding the soft power of cultural production, "A Streetcar Named Desire" contributes to the discourses and power relations that regulate the performance of gender, making it a salient case study in the intersection of literature, gender studies, and the sociology of power dynamics. In the end, this analysis uses Blanche DuBois' tragic story as a lens through which to examine the limiting effects of normative gender scripts in order to shed light on the ways that "A Streetcar Named Desire" serves as a vehicle for the subtle yet pervasive shaping of societal attitudes towards gender.

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Research Questions

- How does Tennessee Williams' play "A Streetcar Named Desire" utilize the concept of soft power to shape and constrain societal attitudes towards gender roles and expectations?
- In what ways does the characterization and narrative arc of Blanche DuBois reflect Judith Butler's theory of gender as a performative construct, rather than an innate or essential quality?
- What broader societal discourses and power structures does "A Streetcar Named Desire" contribute to through its depiction of the consequences faced by those who deviate from normative gender scripts?

Aims of the Paper

- To analyze how "A Streetcar Named Desire" leverages soft power, the ability to influence through attraction and persuasion, to reinforce or challenge prevailing attitudes about acceptable gender expression.
- To examine the character of Blanche DuBois through the lens of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, exploring how the play's portrayal of her downfall comments on the constraining nature of gender norms.
- To place the "A Streetcar Named Desire" analysis of gender roles and power relations in the larger American post-World War II social environment, when there was strong cultural pressure to reinstate patriarchal institutions and traditional home duties.
- provide insights into the complex relationship between cultural production, power, and the shaping of societal beliefs surrounding gender identity and expression, using this classic play as a case study.

Methodology

This essay employs a multidisciplinary method to investigate how Tennessee Williams' play "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses soft power to limit cultural ideas on gender. It does this by focusing on literary analysis, gender studies, and theories of power dynamics.

The main approach is a close textual analysis of the play with particular attention to the playwright Blanche DuBois's characterization, character interactions and dialogue, and the play's general narrative arc. Judith Butler's groundbreaking theory of gender performativity, which holds that gender is a socially manufactured and obsessively performed identity rather than an intrinsic quality, serves as the foundation for this critical study. The paper examines how Blanche's incapacity to effectively embody the constrictive feminine standards demanded by her patriarchal Southern society ultimately results in her social exclusion and mental collapse via this viewpoint. The study looks at how this narrative trajectory shapes audience perceptions and beliefs about the repercussions of defying gender norms and serves as a kind of soft power. The study also places the analysis of gender roles and power relations in the larger sociocultural framework of post-World War II America. Understanding the intense cultural pressure that prevailed at the time to reinstate patriarchal structures and traditional household roles helps to clarify how "A Streetcar Named Desire" both contributes to and reflects the discourses and power dynamics that govern gender identity and expression.

The interdisciplinary approach, combining literary analysis, gender theory, and sociological perspectives on power, allows for a nuanced and multifaceted examination of how this classic play utilizes soft power to constrain societal attitudes towards gender. Through this comprehensive methodology, the paper aims to offer new insights into the complex interplay between cultural production, power, and the shaping of beliefs surrounding gender.

Literature Review

In (2024) “A Feminist Reading on Margaret Atwood's *Alias Grace*”, “Gender, Power, and Social Structure in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*”, *Celebrated Fragmentation: A Postmodern Study of Harold Pinter's “The Homecoming”*, *A Profound Irrationalism Anchored in Postmodernism: A Study of Harold Pinter's The Birthday Party*, and in (2023) “Neil LaBute's *Some Girl (S): A Study of Gender*”, “*Fragmented Landscape in Harold Pinter's "The Room": A Postmodern Study*”, and in (2013) *Harold Pinter's Portrayal of Woman in "THE HOMECOMING* are studies by A. Almaarouf. All these studies are to handle the theme of feminism and gender construction in the societies. Different societies have various attitudes towards feminism and gender. But none of the mentioned studies handles gender in the same way this paper does because this paper is to cover the role of soft power represented by drama to construct the attitude towards gender.

Exploring the Life of Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams is one of the most celebrated American playwrights of the 20th century. Born in Columbus, Mississippi, in 1911, Williams grew up in a family of Southern aristocrats, which would later influence his writing and provide a unique perspective on the human condition. Williams' early life was marked by tragedy and struggle. Edwina Dakin Williams, his mother, was left to raise their children by herself when her father, Cornelius Coffin Williams, a traveling salesman, frequently left the family. Williams's worldview and writing were greatly influenced by his mother's mental health problems and the family's financial difficulties. His plays' ageless topics, nuanced characters, and beautiful language still make them performed and studied today. Although he had a difficult and tragic life, he was able to use those events as inspiration for his writing, which has captured the attention of readers all around the world. Williams's status as a master playwright was cemented by his later works, which included *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *Cat in a Hat* (1955), and *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959). His plays are distinguished by their intricate character development, beautiful language, and examination of subjects like longing, loneliness, and the pursuit of human connection. Williams explores the human condition in his plays, especially the conflicts and inconsistencies that arise in interpersonal interactions. His plays frequently include characters who are unable to find connection or purpose in life because they are mired in their own desires, anxieties, and insecurities (Kolin 3, 2008).

Discussion: Analyzing Williams' “A Street Car Named Desire”

The 1947 premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning play *A Streetcar Named Desire* took place. It examines the intricacies of interpersonal interactions, identity, and gender roles in a culture defined by expectations and norms. The play's characters, their relationships, and their experiences are shaped by their gender. Blanche DuBois, a southern belle, comes to New Orleans to live with her sister Stella and her violent husband Stanley Kowalski, according to the play. The drama looks at identity, desire, and the brittleness of interpersonal bonds. The experiences and relationships of the characters in the play are significantly shaped by their gender. It also looks at how the 1940s and 1950s social and cultural environment is reflected in the playwright's depiction of gender.

Gender roles are examined throughout the play; Blanche is supposed to be feminine and subservient, while Stanley is supposed to be male and powerful. Conflict and tension arise from Blanche's earlier experiences, which include several sexual relationships that undermine her femininity. The play's tension and struggle are heightened by Stanley's physical prowess and emotional impotence, as well as his incapacity to support his family and lack of emotional closeness with Stella.

The performative aspect of gender is emphasized in the play. Stanley's display of masculinity is correlated with his physical strength and aggression, whereas Blanche's femininity is weakened by her prior traumas. Throughout the play, the gender performances of the characters are continually contested and renegotiated. Gender is a major factor in determining the experiences and interactions of the characters, as we learn more about the play. The way that gender is portrayed in the play is a commentary on the expectations and social mores of the day, emphasizing how these things can cause conflict and tragedy. The piece also emphasizes the various ways in which people perform their gender. Stanley's display of masculinity is correlated with his physical strength and aggression, whereas Blanche's femininity is weakened by her prior

traumas. The characters' performances of gender are constantly negotiated and re-negotiated throughout the play, highlighting the fluid nature of gender identity.

Joseph Wood Krutch praised *A Streetcar Named Desire* as a great American play. Williams portrays Blanche's emotional breakdown from both within and outside, blending depth characterization with symbolic theatrics, blending realism and the antirealism, making it a powerful and emotional drama.

In the 1940s, Williams attempted to blend theatrical staging with verisimilitude plots and characters. His experiments failed, but in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, he controlled symbolic devices to reveal Blanche's limited perspective, revealing the play's meaning (Ann 385, 1979).

The play explores the concept of alienation through the story of Blanche Du Bois, a Southern widow struggling to break free from her aristocratic past. Williams skillfully blends psychological and societal elements to portray Blanche's quest for self-discovery, raising concerns about detachment, guilt, sexual conduct, gender differences, and cultural differences. The play highlights the clash between illusion and reality, highlighting the profound sense of isolation experienced by individuals (Hartong 149, 2005).

While Stella, Blanche's sister, managed to leave the aristocratic environment of Belle Reve, Blanche was destined to remain trapped there, unable to free herself from certain misguided aristocratic beliefs that would continue to influence her for the rest of her life. The drama revolves around Blanche's sojourn with her sister Stella, who resides with her husband Stanley Kowalski, in a two-room house in New Orleans. While both Stella and Blanche share a desire to escape their father's control by getting married, they differ in their choice of spouses and the resulting outcomes of those choices. Stella's decision to choose Stanley is driven by her intense desire, while Blanche's choice of the poetic Allan Grey is influenced by her inclination towards delicacy and refinement. However, much to her dismay, she uncovers the truth that her creative spouse, Allan, is indeed homosexual. Overwhelmed by this shock, she treats Allan disrespectfully, causing a deep psychological impact on him and ultimately leading to his suicide. Blanche continues to grapple with her impractical beliefs about life, and she also bears the added weight of guilt for causing her husband's suicide. Blanche's activities can be interpreted as efforts to counteract the power of time, represented symbolically by death, by consistently pursuing relationships with younger men. Her attraction to these young men also serves as a psychological tool to combat mortality.

Because of being a female, Stella takes pleasure in her complete submission to Stanley, which creates a juxtaposition with Blanche's own expression of sexuality. As a response, Blanche starts to imagine the opportunity to establish her own gender identity and individuality in her relationship with Stanley's friend, Mitch, who is not very much different from his friend. However, Stanley undermines Blanche's chance of marrying Mitch. Crucially, Mitch is strongly influenced by his mother and can be interpreted as a satirical representation of Blanche's former husband. Stanley's bad opinion of Blanche impacts her life, destroying all her endeavours to start a new life. This stems from his desire as a male to control all the females in the play, finally resulting in raping Blanche, who seems so weak to resist the rapist. In this context, Blanche is trapped in a rape culture where this abusive act seems to be normalized. Rape culture refers to the forces that normalise and perpetuate sexual assault against women or children. It is a phenomenon where sexual assault and violence are practised against those who seem unable to reject this physical and social degradation (Higgins and Silver 99, 1993). In the play, the playwright sheds light on this issue in the scene when Stanley rapes Blanche and no one believes this happened because of residing in a patriarchal society.

This tragedy, in fact, utterly shatters Blanche's self-esteem and mental stability. The occurrence of rape in the play serves as a pivotal moment in Blanche's pursuit of self-discovery and understanding. Following the assault, Blanche is utterly shattered and admitted to a mental institution. At the same time, her sister Stella chooses to remain with her husband, not caring about the traumatic experience of Blanche: Stella Kowalski, in *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), is superior in background and personal endowments to her mate. However, she subordinates herself to his way of life because they have a satisfying sexual relationship. When her sister Blanche cannot believe that Stella is happy with her crude husband, Stella tells her that "there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark that sort of make everything else

seem unimportant." When Stella is willing to send her sister to a mental institution rather than believe that Stanley has raped Blanche we see just how far a seemingly gentle and attractive woman will go to defend her sexual partner (Blackwell 11, 1960-2000).

That is to say, the playwright explores American society and its broader implications. In this play, Williams highlights the influence of human desires on people's self-esteem. This play, of course, portrays the actual experiences of every American and, on a broader scale, every individual. The traumatic experience of Blanche Du Bois in the play serves as a symbol of American social life and how women were marginalized during that period. The playwright, indeed, skillfully blurs the distinction between the realm of the stage and the realm of reality. This is because whatever is portrayed on the stage represents the current state of American social life. The play specifically centres on the female psyche in various settings, resulting in a dramatic classification of women.

Jones highlights two types of women in Williams' plays: those who embody the dying tradition of gentility, preferring a romanticized Old South world, and strong, unrefined Latin-origin women driven by sensuality. Williams' recent plays depict women as fascinating individuals symbolizing liberation through sexuality. Blanche, a privileged ancestor, represents a declined society. Williams portrays himself as a poet, capturing the essence of the New South, where aristocracy has a strong influence. The universe is delicate, fleeting, and characterized by aristocratic abnormalities (Jones 15, 1993).

Blanche grapples with identity dilemma due to societal deterioration and solitude in her father's home after Stella's wedding. Despite suffering injuries and nearing death, she persists. Blanche symbolizes a woman trying to avoid family breakdown, but fails due to rapid deterioration and mortality. Early marriage was triggered by lack of connection in Belle Reve. Blanche's situation leaves vulnerable individuals in a hostile environment, facing insurmountable destiny, displacement, and isolation from their homes, community, and identities. Blanche struggles to find her former identity in a male-dominated society, despite her sister's contented married life, as she is unable to find her own identity life (Sahu 10,1993).

Ashmore, Jussim and Wilder (24,2001) state that the desire for social comparison arises when there is confusion about how one is perceived in terms of self-evaluation. This doubt can be answered by comparing one's own position to that of others who are important. Blanche experiences significant frustration in life mostly because she is unable to establish her identity within a feminine framework. She consistently looks for a male figure to define herself, but she doesn't find this in her father's family or in her husband. Holditch (140,1993) highlights that Blanche faced challenges throughout her life due to the absence of a strong patriarchal influence. Blanche's male ancestors demonstrated a lack of strength, as they merely left behind financial obligations in the form of debt. Blanche attempts to counterbalance the vulnerability of her male relatives by marrying a young man, who, unfortunately for both parties, is shown to be homosexual. Blanche's response to Allan Grey's homosexuality is not primarily driven by her rejection of homosexuality but rather by her deep anger with irresponsible and weak men in her life, both within her father and husband's household. That is, Allan Grey's homosexuality provokes Blanche's feelings of insecurity stemming from the absence of dependable and authoritative men in her life. Grey, however, worsens Blanche's situation by demonstrating his final vulnerability through suicide, as a response to Blanche's statement: "you disgust me..." (Williams 184,1951). Consequently, Blanche's sense of individuality is endangered by the lack of sufficient male authority, which she considers to be the defining characteristic of her identity.

Blanche's identity, however, is shaped by her urge to have a male in her life so that she can be sexually satisfied. This stems from her ability to use soft power so that she can win a man in her life. According to Hirsch (32,1979), "Blanche uses sex as a means of self-punishment for betraying her homosexual husband". She engages in sexual encounters with troops, leading to her seduction of a seventeen-year-old student in her English lesson. This act of seduction prompts her to leave Laurel. Blanche's sexuality represents her failure in love and self-discovery, choosing youthful individuals for sexual companionship. Blanche, tormented by her marriage tragedy, seeks positive outcomes in sexual relationships to reassure herself of her youth and attractiveness. However, her quest for identity is pointless, as she delves into her lost history rather than considering her current circumstances (Williams 174,1951). She also sees the soldiers gathered

up as if they were daisies from the lawn at Belle Reve . However, the most important aspect is that they are all very young (Williams 206, 1951).

The newspaper boy is perceived by her as a "young Prince out of 'The Arabian Nights.'" Mitch, who lacks social maturity, is regarded by her as "a natural gentleman, one of the very few that remain in the world." (Williams 179, 1951). Blanche inspires ideal human beings in her flat with Mitch, refusing to use light to imagine themselves as Bohemians. Instead, she lights a candle and proclaims, "Je Suis La Dame aux Camellias!" (Williams 206, 1951).

The rape scene in *A Streetcar Named Desire* highlights Blanche Du Bois' life and her psychological breakdown, ironically occurring on her birthday. The play highlights the negative consequences of pursuing gender identity, with Stanley's character playing a crucial role in Blanche's journey. Holditch(159,1993) suggests Stanley's actions in *Belle Reve* are driven by his desire to maintain his dominant social order and prevent women from challenging him. Blanche confronts her idealized noble lineage and the family's decay, viewing Stanley as her victimizer. . While throwing the plate on the floor, Stanley says to Stella:

Stanley. That's how I'll clear the table!... Don't ever talk that way to me! Pig – polack- disgusting – vulgar – greasy! – the kind of words have been on your tongue, and your sister's too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? ... (He hurls a cup and saucer to the floor) My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places?" (Williams 194,1951).

The play depicts the conflict between Blanche and Stanley, symbolizing a clash between Stanley's "Napoleonic code" (Williams 133,1951) and Blanche's disruptive influence, highlighting the contrasting gender identities embodied by the two characters. Blanche, aware of her patriarchal past, seeks to rescue Stella from Stanley's control, intentionally provoking her hatred towards him, as depicted in scene IV.. In her speech, "He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! ... Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is – Stanley Kowalski – survivor of the Stone Age! ...Don't – don't hang back with the brutes!" (Williams 163,1951).

Blanche aims to convince Stella to escape through a pure connection, but Stanley eavesdrops on her speech, foreshadowing her failure. Stanley reveals her hypocrisy, demonstrating loyalty to Mitch. The play explores identity through gender-focused relationships, with Blanche's perception of Mitch as a substitute for Shep Huntleigh. Stanley aims to undermine her influence as a seductress, using seduction as a powerful weapon to manipulate others and sidestep truth. Mitch incites Blanche to be seduced, leading to her complete deterioration as a high-status woman, while Stella is the true heroine in the play(Bedient 53,1993).

Stella, unlike Blanche, adapts to new situations and understands survival requirements. She contrasts with Blanche's realism, having a stable personality and clear understanding of her status as a woman. Stella accepts Stanley's male supremacy, leading to more happiness than Blanche. Despite losing identity due to *Belle Reve's* decline, Stella focuses on developing a new sense of self after marriage(Morrow 68, 1993).

When Blanche inquires if he intended to insult her, Mitch responds, "No, simply being realistic." (Morrow 68,1993). Mitch's presence strengthens Blanche's apprehension of reality, as evident in her declaration of her preference for Romanticism:

Mitch: I don't desire realism. I desire the power of sorcery! Affirmative, affirmative, sorcery! I endeavor to bestow that upon individuals. I distort information when communicating with them. I am not honest. I convey what is the genuine truth. If engaging in such behavior is considered morally wrong, then I am willing to accept the consequences and be condemned for it". (Williams 203-204, 1951).

Mitch's role in the play is to serve as a trusted friend of the opposite gender and to uncover Blanche's past. Blanche admits to Mitch: "Yes, I had numerous intimate encounters with strangers." (Williams 204,1951). Mitch's presence enables Blanche to live in the past. He evokes the memories of her loving husband, who expresses his homosexuality to her. Blanche seeks to unburden herself by divulging her sexual relationships with strangers to Mitch. She admits to him: "Indeed, I engaged in numerous encounters of a personal

nature with individuals whom I did not know...I found solace in engaging in intimate encounters with unfamiliar individuals to alleviate the emptiness in my heart." (Williams 204-205, 1951). Blanche sets boundaries with Mitch, limiting their interactions to kisses, reminiscing about her past with Allan while he was alive.

Despite the scene's disquieting quality, yet, there is a sense of comedy in Blanche's immediate use of double entendres: "You make my mouth water"(Williams 84,1951) , referring both to the young man and his cherry soda. According to Verna Foster, in her essay "Tragicomic Dramaturgy in *A Streetcar Named Desire*", Blanche herself is able to adopt a comic stance towards her own sexuality, and it is this self-awareness that gives a tragic dignity to her sexual obsessions. She mocks even the horror of her life at the Flamingo and Mitch's disgust with her promiscuity by satirically calling the hotel where she brought her "victims" the "Tarantula Arms"(Williams 118,1951) , an allusion that is lost on Mitch. This scene (nine) is quintessentially tragicomic. Williams makes Mitch's sexual obtuseness, at which we have previously laughed, destroy any hope Blanche might have for a secure future when, unable to see her as anything other than a whore, Mitch rejects her as unfit to be his wife. Blanche is finally destroyed by both Mitch's sexual diffidence and Stanley's sexual predatoriness, both of which Williams initially presents as comic (Foster 1999)

A Streetcar Named Desire highlights the significant role of gender in the narrative, with the clash between the hyper-masculine Stanley and the delicate Blanche illustrating societal pressures. Blanche's struggle to maintain beauty and social status highlights limited options for women, while Stanley's assertive dominance reflects the masculine need for control, power, and empathy. Williams' play exposes the inequalities of 1940s American society through the characters Blanche and Stanley, highlighting the consequences of defying patriarchal authority and the privileges afforded to men.

The drama challenges gender norms in a few ways, one of which involves Blanche. Even though Blanche adheres to the usual feminine stereotypes, such as her refined manners, love of expensive clothes, and dependence on male suitors, she also has a strong, sexually free side that contrasts with the submissive, chaste "southern belle" ideal. Her promiscuity and unwavering willingness to follow her heart set her apart from the strict sexual morality that was imposed on women at the period. On the other hand, Stanley's hypermasculine persona stands for a violent, poisonous kind of manhood that diverges from more complex or emotionally expressive forms of masculinity. The historic rape scene and his other brutal acts towards Blanche expose the perils of unbridled patriarchal dominance. Inferring that inflexible masculine norms are bad for men as well as women, the play presents Stanley's violence as the inevitable result of his gender indoctrination. Furthermore, Stella represents a more nuanced, equivocal gender identification. Because Stella is a woman who both voluntarily yields to Stanley's authority and has some autonomy and agency, she challenges stereotypes about female passivity and male dominance. The notion that traditional gender roles are the only route to pleasure and self-actualization is called into question by her capacity to achieve joy in an apparently restrictive patriarchal marriage. In the conclusion, *A Streetcar Named Desire* challenges readers to consider the viability and acceptability of traditional male and feminine ideals through its nuanced examination of gender. The play encourages a more complex, egalitarian perspective of gender identity and expression by illustrating the human costs of such rigidity.

Conclusion

Using Judith Butler's seminal theories, this examination of gender roles and power dynamics in Tennessee Williams' "*A Streetcar Named Desire*" shows how literary works can use soft power to influence public perceptions of gender. The play's protagonist Blanche DuBois effectively embodies Butler's thesis that gender is a performative construct rather than an underlying or essential trait.. One could interpret Blanche's terrible demise as a warning of what happens when one doesn't "perform" the rigid feminine standards that her patriarchal Southern society expects of one. Her incapacity to portray the sensitive, reliant, and submissive position of the ideal Southern belle with conviction leads to her eventual social exclusion and psychological collapse. "*A Streetcar Named Desire*" employs a strategy of soft power in this story to sway the audience's ideas on what constitutes appropriate gender expression. The play's depressing conclusion conveys the severe consequences encountered by people who stray from social gender norms, supporting

the idea that gender is not a question of free will but rather a set of restrictive standards that must be scrupulously upheld. The drama adds to the discourses and power dynamics that regulate gender by reflecting the larger sociocultural backdrop of post-World War II America, when there was intense cultural push to reestablish conventional domestic roles and patriarchal power structures. Because of her terrible ending, Blanche's story continues to be told in popular culture as a warning about the perils of being different. We learn more about the intricate relationship between cultural production, power, and the performative character of gender identity through this analysis of how "A Streetcar Named Desire" uses soft power to limit gender attitudes. This timeless drama serves as a crucial case study for comprehending the subtle but ubiquitous ways in which literature polices and shapes the limits of permissible gender expression.

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