

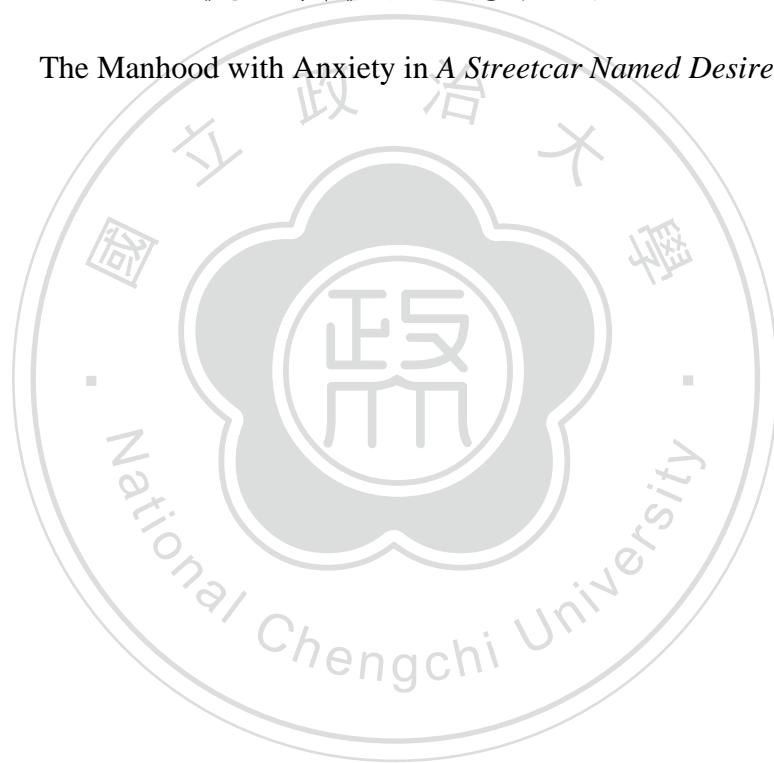
國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士論文

指導教授：姜翠芬先生

Advisor : Dr. Jiang Tsui-fen

《慾望街車》中的焦慮男人氣概

The Manhood with Anxiety in *A Streetcar Named Desire*



研究生：徐承遠

Name: Hsu Cheng-Yuan

中華民國 109 年 6 月

June 2020

The Manhood with Anxiety in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

A Master Thesis
Presented to
Department of English

National Chengchi University



In Partial Fulfilment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Hsu Cheng-Yuan

June 2020

To the One, I Love Deeply but Cannot Love Deeply



Acknowledgement

In the master's program, we would get involved with feminist reading, but there seemed to be a lack of deep reading into men's studies with regard to literature. Therefore, after knowing Michael Kimmel and reading his works, I decided to argue about the manhood with anxiety. I believe *A Streetcar Named Desire* to be very typical to lead readers to see men's situation with family and society. With this thesis, I hope to ask them to reconsider "men" and "manhood;" men should be not only regarded as more powerful figures than women, but also seen as a people that are anxious about struggling with their manhood.

First of all, I am indebted to my supervisor, Prof. Jiang Tsui-fen, who is the kindest professor I ever met. Without her encouragement and professional assistance, I could not finish a thesis about "men." On the other hand, I also thank my committee members, Hsu Li-hsin and Yang Ya-chu. Their rich comments help me think about how to make my thesis more graceful and clearer in explaining manhood as my main discussion.

Then I also thank the teachers who have given me strength; they are especially Eva Chen Yin-I, Tom Sellari, and Iris Ralph. The first two ones are from NCCU. I thank Prof. Chen for giving me a chance to be her assistant so that I can have some working experience. Also, I am grateful that she has helped buy books for me to read and academically use. I must not forget to thank Tom, who is always enthusiastic about accepting my requests concerning my writing samples. As my teacher from TKU, Prof. Ralph's assistance in commenting my thesis also makes me confident and thus appreciative of her.

Having been an assistant in the department of English, I exclusively express my gratitude to two teaching assistants, Betty Teng and Jennifer Chaung. Because of their kindness and guide, I have learned much to be an assistant, and enjoyed the time in the office. I hope everything there can become better and happier than ever.

Regarding my classmates, I also thank Cathy Huang, Annie Hsu, Yung-ling Peng, Joanna Chen, Sandra Chao, Tank Tsai, and so on. We usually have many good talks that inspire and console me. Our discussion on courses and gossip will be kept as my precious souvenir. I will never forget to mention friends off campus; I particularly point out Jiang Shao-wun and Benjamin Honey, and Paul McAllister. Mr Jiang is one of my best friends, who listens to my complaints and gives me suggestions on some issues. Moreover, he provides me with many kinds of snack to cheer me up (Actually, he aims to make me fat.) I also appreciate the help from Ben, who has helped to proofread my thesis. In addition, he has granted me some useful opinions on my writing. He is the kindest British person I have ever met. Paul is such a nice and decent Irish man to help proofread my thesis as well by sacrificing his free time while working in Japan. Concerning my family, I am grateful for my parents' support in me to finish the thesis.

Last but not least, I want to thank my beloved, the *Nameless Guest*. The sudden appearance of you must be a big surprise and benefit to my life. I always adore you for the maturity and wisdom that only belongs to you. Your maturity comes out to comfort and warm my soul; the wisdom of yours is inevitably a key to making me understand that not all the old people are as arrogant as I considered. I enjoy your interest in literature and the discussions with me on it. I cherish your willingness to show different points of view on movies while you display an amiable smile. It is a pity that we rarely meet for inconvenience between us; thus, I must be precious of the times we sincerely talk and exchange viewpoints. This thesis is inspired by you to a degree. Through the way you sometimes stay silent about and avoid your stories, I assume your struggle over the identity fraught with an unspoken feeling. Hopefully, you like this thesis, and pride yourself on owning me as a friend with great potential.

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：《慾望街車》中的焦慮男人氣概

指導教授：姜翠芬教授

研究生：徐承遠

論文提要內容：

田納西·威廉斯的《慾望街車》於1947年首映，這部戲的成功使他成為美國重要的劇作家之一。該劇引起觀眾和讀者廣泛關注的原因之一是性別議題，它描繪了男女之間的性別不平等，也因為這樣，男主角史丹利受到批評家和觀眾大量的譴責。透過這部戲，威廉斯似乎在父權中強調了男人的力量和霸權力。

然而，許多批評家很少關注劇中男性角色的男人氣概。鮮少學者對當時劇中環境的分析，來探討這些男性角色承受的男人包袱。換句話說，劇中的男性被忽略了。

在劇中，可以看出社會定義的男人氣概受到高度重視，從四個男性角色：史丹利，米奇，艾倫和史蒂夫，可以看出男人對男人氣概有相當大責任。藉由《慾望街車》對男性角色努力證明自己男人氣概的描述，本論文主張他們對男人氣概充滿焦慮。

關鍵詞：田納西·威廉斯、《慾望街車》、男人氣概、焦慮

Abstract

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* premiered in 1947; its success elevated him to the top rank of America's playwrights. One reason the play aroused much attention among audiences and readers was because of its representation of gender issue. The play depicts gender inequality between men and women. It is inevitable that the male protagonist, Stanley, rarely steers clear of the denunciations by the critics and audiences. Through this play, Williams seems to accentuate men's power and dominance in a patriarchal system.

However, many of the critics pay less attention to manhood of the male characters as an important gender issue in this play. What is more, there is no analytical exploration of the environment where all of these male characters' demonstration of manhood is expected and requested. In other words, male characters' manhood seems to be ignored.

In the play, the concept of manhood as defined by society is highly regarded, entailing serious responsibility for the four male characters, Stanley, Mitch, Allan, and Steve, to live up to the ideals. All of them struggle with their manhood in a society and historical period when it is difficult to provide income, protect their family, and embrace homosexuality. With an emphasis on Williams' depiction of male characters, this thesis argues that *A Streetcar Named Desire* reveals men's anxiety about their manhood because they are supposed to authenticate their manhood with strenuous efforts.

Keywords: Tennessee Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Manhood, Anxiety

Table of Contents

Acknowledgement	iv
Chinese Abstract	vi
English Abstract.....	vii
Chapter One	1
Chapter Two.....	14
Chapter Three.....	44
Chapter Four	64
Works Cited	68



Chapter One

Introduction

Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* premiered in 1947; its success elevated him to the top rank of America's playwrights. One reason the play aroused much attention among audiences and readers was because of its representation of gender issue. "What is striking is not simply how often . . . *A Streetcar Named Desire* has been recycled . . . but also how deeply these re-citings of Williams's text are caught up in issues of gender . . ." (Geis). The play depicts gender inequality between men and women. Two female characters in the play, Blanche and Stella, are usually pitied by critics as victims of patriarchy. Therefore, it is inevitable that the male protagonist, Stanley, rarely steers clear of the denunciations by the critics and audiences. In this play, Williams seems to accentuate male power and dominance in a patriarchal system.

By reading *A Streetcar Named Desire* featuring the images of male power and dominance, readers can clearly deduce that contemporary American men probably care about their manhood. Most of the male characters of the play attempt to support their sense of manhood by deliberately stressing their masculinity, in order not to be seen as weak by their female counterparts. The concept of manhood as defined by society is highly regarded, entailing serious responsibility for American men to live up to the ideals; they are expected to establish and support their families as part of their masculine performance. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, those male characters struggle with their manhood in a society and historical period when it is difficult to provide income, protect their family, and embrace homosexuality. This thesis contends that the unfairness of women's treatment is not the only focus in the play, and that the play offers a distinct portrayal of the men's troubled feelings and even anxiety over their manhood, which they endeavour to cope with.

Beyond their biologically distinctive features, not all the men can be as masculine as society expects. On the one hand, manhood, according to *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, means “the state or condition of being a man rather than a woman,” and “the adult state of man, as opposed to childhood” (“manhood, n”). Manhood is a presentation in public as evidence of gender contrary to its female counterpart. On the other hand, masculinity has a different definition: “The state or fact of being masculine; the assemblage of qualities regarded as characteristic of men; maleness, manliness” (“masculinity, n”). Strength and boldness are usually associated with masculinity. Manhood and masculinity should not be regarded as the same thing. According to Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe’s interpretation, the reason men are mostly perceived as “masculine” is because of the conventional association in society:

Because of the conventional association between maleness and manhood, a male body is a symbolic asset . . . However, it is neither necessary (females can mask their secondary sex characteristics, appear to be male, and attempt to put on a manhood act . . .) nor sufficient (males can fail to muster the other signifiers necessary to establish themselves as creditable men worthy of full manhood status). (279)

Despite the biological distinctions (such as sex organs) between two genders with the specific features, it does not confirm that a man should or can prove himself “masculine;” each gender has the possibility of showing masculinity in many kinds of situations. Therefore, it is not necessary to equate men with masculinity. That said, it is clear to comprehend that when a male reaches his adult state, he naturally can possess his manhood, but this man with manhood might not have the characteristics of masculinity.

Nevertheless, being a “man” also includes social expectations of manhood and its attendant responsibilities; “gender no longer refers to a biological binarism, but is conceived of as a multi-dimensional political, social, and cultural construct” (Reichardt

566). Manhood is seriously connected to the responsibilities that men are asked to take on as their burden, so men cannot avoid being asked to do what society expects them to do based on gender and roles.

According to *Masculinities*, “the use of ‘role’ as a technical concept in the social sciences, [and] a serious way of explaining social behaviour generally,” has been rationalized concerning men and women; “a general set of expectations which are attached to one’s sex” is inevitably connected to “[m]asculinity and femininity [which] are quite easily interpreted as internalized sex roles, the products of social learning or ‘socialization’” (Connell 22). Moreover, with respect to men’s studies, another influential sociologist, Michael Messner lambasts the language of sex role because it “smuggles in normalizing tendencies in such a way that any difference from the male sex role appears as deviance from a false universalized (middle-class, white, heterosexual) norm” (258). On account of the stereotypical idea of manhood that only belongs to men, people cannot help but link manhood to “masculinity” and to the duties and attitudes a man must have. Correspondingly, society rarely approves of men who act differently from what many other normally perceived men do. As a result of the social expectations regarding manhood, men may feel anxious about how to strengthen or cope with their manhood.

To Tennessee Williams, manhood was a difficult burden for him as he suffered much in grappling with it. Williams must have been viewed as a victim of sex role social conceptions, because his special personal traits contravened the conventional ideal of manhood. The biography of Tennessee Williams by Ronald Hayman tells us that he was born to a harsh father, Cornelius Coffin Williams. Hayman’s interview with the playwright states, “[w]anting his son to be as similar to himself as possible, Cornelius tried to exert influence on him without taking account of either his personality or his potential” (24). Being eager for his son to “be a man,” Cornelius requested his son to support his manhood

as he used to do for himself by giving him many responsibilities, such as his shoe sales job and his participation in a fraternity with strict rules. Although Tom (Tennessee Williams' original name) reluctantly worked hard to fulfil his father's expectations, his efforts did not satisfy Cornelius, who "called him 'Miss Nancy'" to admonish him for not being 'sufficiently' masculine (Hayman xii). Williams enjoyed the sexual aspect of his love affairs with men, but his resistance to his homosexuality, because of the pressure of contemporary society, led him to confess to Hayman that he "truly believes that the homosexualist is wrong and the heterosexualist is right" (Hayman xix). His sexual inclination towards men even resulted in physical assaults by homophobic teenage boys in 1979. With the sad experiences of being denied and questioned, Williams would have felt very anxious about discovering how to prove his manhood and become a socially favoured man. Instead, it drew him into the nightmare of failing to be a typical man; that may be why he created *A Streetcar Named Desire* to describe how anxious men in 1940s America might have felt when they eagerly attempted to receive the public's approval of their manhood.

Since its premiere at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in 1947, *A Streetcar Named Desire* has been repeatedly analysed and reviewed. At first, the play's controversial content annoyed some conservative critics; in their opinion, "Williams's use of symbolism and flowery rhetoric" in the play was perceived as loose and vulgar (Bak 3); they further joked that this play should have been named "The Glands Menagerie" or "The Struggle for the Bathroom," to conform to its content with sexual and violent scenes (qtd. in Bak 3). In spite of fierce criticisms, this play received positive reviews from most of the critics. They were convinced that this play helped Tennessee Williams to earn the title of "a genuinely poetic playwright whose knowledge of people is honest and thorough" (qtd. in Bak 3). Generally speaking, thanks to the most compliments over 70 years, this play has inspired critics to

research from the perspectives of naturalism, psychoanalysis, feminism, and male character studies.

Among all the approaches, naturalism is the first popular method to analyse the play. Many naturalist scholars are certain that Williams's naturalist style presents readers with a realistic vision of the south of America, where the confrontation between culture and power was hardly resolved (Bak 5). Thus, naturalism in the play is vivid in the aspects of naturalistic struggle in society. As Irwin Shaw argues, "The play is written with a triumphantly heightened naturalism . . . It finally has the surprising effect of seeming infinitely more real, more like life itself . . ." (Shaw). The play depicts how lower-class Americans strived to make a living, and how Stanley bullies Blanche in part because of the cultural differences between the south and north of America.

In contrast, by pointing to the naturalist determinism in the play, Joseph Wood Krutch asserts that the play is "a sort of semi-surrealist version of the Strindbergian submission to destructive obsessions" (124). However, the play's naturalism draws more naturalist critics' attention to Chekhovian naturalism because Williams is presumed to depict the nature of the past in *A Streetcar Named Desire* as Chekhov does in *The Cherry Orchard*. Kenneth Bernard confirms "an identical naturalism in *Streetcar*, not in Strindbergian but in Chekhovian terms" (qtd. in Bak 5). To argue about their naturalist similarity, C.W.E. Bigsby compares these two plays: "Like Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, which [Williams] similarly admired, [*A Streetcar Named Desire*] focuses on a culture on the turn, an old world, elegant but reflexive . . ." (45). From Bernard's argument and Bigsby's analysis, both plays express the rise and fall of aristocracy as well, and describe the characters' nostalgia for the past by showing their strong feelings.

Although naturalism is argued by many scholars due to the play's vivid depiction of the rise and fall in contemporary America, many other critics eagerly prefer to use

psychoanalysis to approach this play because the characters' intense behaviour is perceived as "abnormal." By observing their excessive and deviant behaviour, they proclaim that Williams seems to pay attention to how a person could deal with the chaotic content in his or her mind (Sharp 171). Among the characters, Blanche is the most typical focus of psychological analysis as she cannot help but struggle with her inner thoughts when driven by madness and mental suffering. Most of the critics view her behaviour from a Freudian perspective. According to Philip Weissman, Blanche hardly has a calm life due to her failed love relationship with her gay husband, Allan, the main cause that makes her unable to keep a good and intimate relationship with other men (277).

Adopting the Freudian theory of repression as well, Nina C. Leibman discusses Blanche's madness in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. "Blanche's actual journey from a streetcar named 'Desire' . . . is a metaphor for her fate, for her desire leads directly to her mental death" (Leibman 33). In Leibman's view, the reason for Blanche's hysteria is attributed to the repression of her searching desire. In addition, it is Blanche's mental trauma from her husband's death that leaves her under his shadow. With the extension of Freudian theory, U. H. Ruhina Jesmin explains that this psychic anguish is too difficult and tough for Blanche to resist and resolve due to the defence mechanism in human beings, forcing Blanche to form a fantasy against trauma by distorting, transforming, or falsifying reality (404).

With the rise of awareness of women's rights, the play absolutely catches feminists' attention because of its depiction of gender inequality under patriarchy, reaffirming Williams' sympathy toward women's suppression by men "in terms of certain popular parameters of feminist reading" (Panda 50). In the view of feminism, like most women in twentieth-century America, Blanche is victimized in patriarchal society, with Stanley playing the role of a typical patriarchal man to manipulate her: "The audience watches the

sentencing of Blanche to the asylum that is to be her ‘home’ while sharing her perception that she has been victimized by Stanley’s—and implicitly patriarchy’s—historical discourse” (Vlasopolos 333).

In addition to the criticism of Stanley as a typical patriarchal victimizer, Mark Royden Winchell favours the play with a title of “a feminist fable.” He postulates that Williams creates this play as an illustration of what social roles women should play under the control of patriarchy: “Stanley’s rape of Blanche might be a paradigm for how men deal with women in a patriarchal society. (Stanley and Mitch would both seem to be purveyors of the double standard, while Stella is nothing more than a sex object and childbearer)” (Winchell). From the feminist analyses above, we can see how helpless and low women were perceived in 1940s America, because the play presents the fact that “women would lose their self when faced with traditional customs and strict standards set by men” (Fang 104).

Feminist analyses on this play showcase women’s lower position and their inequality in society. Moreover, in regard to the criticisms on male characters to prove contemporary male hegemony, Stanley intrigues the critics who mainly attack him for his cruel behaviour and fierce manner. As most of them argue, among all the male characters, Stanley never holds back his masculine power to dominate his friends and relatives, especially the female ones. Bert Cardullo indicates that a great deal of criticism insists on recognizing “Stanley Kowalski as the destroyer of Blanche Dubois” with “brute ugliness” (79). At the beginning of Susan Koprince’s article, she sympathizes with Stella and Blanche stuck in “a cycle of domestic violence,” blaming Stanley as “a batterer—a man whose aggressive masculinity and desire for control are perfectly consistent with the profile of an abuser” (49). To Cardullo and Koprince, Williams creates Stanley’s image to highlight men’s usual abuse of women as a typical batterer in society.

Mel Gussow considers Stanley to be a difficult character for any actor to present because Stanley's performance is so belligerent and inhumane that many of them fail to appropriately perform it: "Stanley must have an animal ferocity. Always, . . . there must be menace, a threat of violence to anyone—or anything—within striking distance." Judging by all the portrayals of Stanley by actors so far, Gussow concludes that only Marlon Brando could properly and successfully depict Stanley's spirit. Due to Williams's creation of male characters whose images hardly give the critics any good impression, it is absolutely hard to notice any positive comments on male characters, especially Stanley, who is critically considered to be responsible for his cruelty towards women.

Many scholars have approached *A Streetcar Named Desire* from the perspectives of naturalism, psychoanalysis, feminism and male characters, thus diversifying and enriching the artistic value of this play. However, most of them pay much attention to the difficult situations Blanche finds herself in, and the eccentric behaviour she displays. Even though Stanley has been analysed and discussed as a male character, there is a lack of the study concerning the other male characters: Mitch, Allan and Steve. Furthermore, there is no exploration of the environment where all of these male characters' demonstration of manhood is expected and requested. With an emphasis on Williams' depiction of male characters, this thesis argues that *A Streetcar Named Desire* reveals men's anxiety about their manhood because they are supposed to authenticate their manhood with strenuous efforts.

Before the thesis investigates the male characters' anxiety over their manhood, it is crucial to understand the evolution of how manhood is perceived in America. Hence, Michael Kimmel's social and historical studies in American manhood are employed to explicate the male characters' manhood with anxiety in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. To analyse why American men need to adopt different attitudes and behaviour to enhance their

manhood, as a prominent scholar in men's studies, Kimmel in his *Manhood in America* divides American manhood into three types. In the eighteenth century, there were two types of manhood: the Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan, both derived from Europe. The Genteel Patriarch bestowed men "with exquisite taste and manners and refined sensibilities," while the Heroic Artisan would be very "formal in his manners with women, stalwart and loyal to his male comrades" (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 13).

Afterwards, in the nineteenth century, came the Self-Made Man, "a model of manhood that derives identity from a man's activities in the public sphere" based on his "wealth and status," and "geographic and social mobility" (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 13). Originating in America as a new type of manhood, the Self-Made Manhood was considered the spirit of the Sons of Liberty, which represented America, as opposed to the control of Father England, which mainly consisted of the European Genteel Patriarch and the Heroic Artisan. Along with the rise of the capitalist system in mid nineteenth-century America, the Self-Made style of manhood became so prominent that most American men respected it, for it could confirm a man's "success in the market, individual achievement, mobility, wealth" (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 17). Therefore, the Self-Made style of manhood became thoroughly established as a model for American men to achieve.

Unfortunately, with the increasing difficulties of twentieth-century America, men felt more threatened by the tough environment and thus more anxious about how to maintain their manhood. The twentieth century can be deemed as a harsh test of manhood for American men, since the femininizing clutches of women arose and "men's work was an increasingly unreliable proving ground" in the era influenced by economic instability (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 128). Because of "women's economic as well as sexual power" at the turn of the twentieth century (Kitch), men started to fear women who were gradually capable of controlling "principal institutions, such as family, religion, and

education” (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 105). They started to be afraid that women’s rising power tended to endanger the core of their manhood. What is even worse, the Great Depression and World War II in America exerted a massive and widespread disadvantage to men’s ability to prove their manhood. A severe economic crisis and the following war’s toll gradually deprived American society of its economic stability and created a chaotic society in which American men felt less confident about their ability to be financially secure and competent. With the rise of women’s right, the Great Depression’s repercussion, and the results of World War II, the concept of the ideal Self-Made manhood became a nearly unobtainable goal and a rigid burden on American men.

In order to explore Stanley’s, Mitch’s, Allan’s and Steve’s manhood undermined by anxiety, this thesis approaches *A Streetcar Named Desire* from the social, historical and psychological studies. When it comes to the cases of Stanley, Mitch and Steve, the concepts of family and marriage of the society from the early to the mid-twentieth century in America played an important and influential role. Furthermore, the great historical events, such as the Great Depression and World War II, will be accentuated in the thesis, for their negative influences resulted in much pressure on these three male breadwinners, and thus caused them to worry about supporting their families. Next, the thesis also draws attention to homosociality, the same-sex union where men not only enjoy activities with same-sex friends, but also try hard to get along with them for the sake of their career or social position. In addition to social and historical approaches to homosexuality, psychological studies will be used to explore Allan’s anxiety as a gay man, who is mostly regarded as “abnormal” in mid twentieth-century America.

Family, to mid twentieth-century American men, is a source of comfort and warmth, and a place for them to define their manhood with its support; however, given conventional and social expectations of men, family entails duties and a burden that most American men

need to take care of. As Michael Kimmel contends, mid-twentieth century American family was seen as an arena that asked men to seek “to anchor their identities as men,” and they, for their identities also as husbands or fathers, were “indispensable . . . to the provision for the family” (149). Furthermore, Roy E. Dickerson also wrote that a twentieth-century American man, though needing a masculine figure to exhibit virility, should maintain “the capacity for a strong love of wife and child,” because it “makes him fit to be a good husband and father” in the family structure (22). As a result, in mid-twentieth-century America, family is not only closely related to the empowerment, but also to the anxiety of manhood.

Marriage is a medium for a man to strengthen his manhood. While leading a man into a serious legally-binding relationship with the woman he loves, marriage is necessarily executed by him to perform as “a complete man.” In *Manhood and Marriage*, Bernarr Macfadden analyses the contemporary mindset for marriage in regard to men’s manhood. In the chapter, “Am I a Complete Man?”, Macfadden puts forward that American people would mostly think “the marital relationship . . . with a woman” is a proof of “a complete man” and that his “sexual strength might increase as a result of marriage” (12). To male Americans of the mid-twentieth century, marriage was a stage of life for them to be affirmed as potent and standard in American society.

The Great Depression and World War II both left American men in the crisis of confidence in their manhood due to the insecurity caused by these two events. During the Great Depression in the late 1920s America, the economic situation worsened, and “resulted in drastic declines in output, severe unemployment, and acute deflation” (Romer 1). Later, World War II followed and “subjected the [American] families to severe strain,” forcing them to “face a severe shortage of housing” (Mintz 9). Under the circumstances of the economic depression and the massive war that brought about increasing prices of

livelihood (Mintz 10), managing family finances became much more challenging, especially for the main male breadwinner whose burden would cause great anxiety.

To twentieth-century American working men, legal heterosexual bonding (marriage) was not the only essential factor for them to enhance their manhood; if they wanted to be more prominent and noticed in workplace, homosociality was needed to promote themselves. These binding relationships were consolidated when co-workers socialized with each other. Kimmel stresses the men's union as "a homosocial retreat" in the twentieth century. This bond functioned not only for entertainment but also for fulfilling a business purpose. As Kimmel argues, twentieth-century American male workers strived "to [masculinize] the workplace through [the men's] bonding" (*Manhood in America* 131). According to Kimmel, "Homosocial retreats were harnessed to serve the corporation rather than provide solace away from corporate life" (*Manhood in America* 131). It is easy to understand that workers were expected to be united by society, so that they could make progress in business. However, it is also clear that this social expectation exerted a kind of pressure that made men anxious.

In mid twentieth-century America, men started to worry that their manhood might be undermined by homosexuality, which would interfere with their being real men. Based on the contemporary psychological research on sexuality conducted during the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, "a feminine identification" and "confusion and evasiveness with respect to the identification of the gender" were phenomena only happening to homosexual people (Hammack 226). Those phenomena are called "gender inversion":

The narrative of gender inversion promulgated in this early psychological research was not merely a question of individual differences on a particular trait (i.e., masculinity-femininity). Rather, it was part of a narrative of sickness and abnormality that . . . argue[s] that same-sex desire was indicative of a particular

“type” of person, and that such desire may be beyond conscious control. (Hammack 225)

Not only was homosexual men’s character thought to be feminized and to contradict masculinity, but they could not be considered to possess normal manhood, for their affection toward men was perceived as psychologically aberrant.

With the approaches mentioned above, the thesis will argue that male characters, such as Stanley, Mitch, Allan and Steve, are very anxious about their manhood in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. To Stanley, his family has turned into a place where he feels anxious because his intruding sister-in-law, Blanche, and his wife are both threatening and questioning his manhood. To maintain his manhood, Mitch is always worried about how to get married to become a family man, and how to cope with and get along with his male co-workers in homosociality. As for Allan, as the pervasive homophobia leaves him with anxiety over his “abnormal” manhood, he forces himself to marry. Steve’s anxiety over his manhood definitely proves that the family’s demands and hardship on the husband as a breadwinner make him feel traumatised during the struggle to maintain his manhood. All these men in the play share a common feature; they are highly anxious about their manhood, with the fact that they take great pains to validate it.

The main structure of this thesis is built up through four chapters, including the introduction as Chapter One, and the conclusion as Chapter Four. Chapter Two analyses Stanley’s anxiety to get over his wife and his rude sister-in-law who challenge his manhood, along with Steve’s anxiety about his manhood that comes from the pressure of family finance. Chapter Three analyses Mitch’s anxiety for his manhood, which is closely related to homosociality and marriage, and Allan’s anxiety over how to improve his manhood as a homosexual.

Chapter Two

Stanley's Manhood with Anxiety from Family

It is an inescapable fact that the meaning of American manhood is firmly tied to family; therefore, married American men must feel bound to protect their families from outsiders' threats, to take care of their wives, and to be hard-working breadwinners to finance their families (Griswold 1001). In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in the self-perceived anxiety of manhood, family plays an important influential role. Stanley needs to be more responsible for his family due to his position as a husband. Acknowledging that his manhood has been threatened and questioned in the family, Stanley becomes so anxious to undertake certain actions to show responsibility for manhood. This chapter will advocate that Stanley has such manhood-related anxiety regarding family, because of Blanche's reckless intrusion with assaults and Stella's disapproval of the way he treats their family. Mainly arguing about Stanley's anxiety over manhood, the chapter will discuss Stanley's manhood in relation to his family, which questions his ability to financially contribute.

As stated in the previous chapter, among the male characters in the play, Stanley, has been studied the most. Not only is he a major character who appears most frequently, but his arbitration and dominance towards other characters render him a controversial character castigated by most critics. As a consequence, Stanley is scarcely far from infamy, as long as his flaws remain to be pointedly stressed and scrutinized.

Through his investigation into Stanley's situation, Robert Brustein describes Stanley as "a highly complex and ambiguous character," because Stanley "can be taken either as hero or as villain" (9). If Stanley is presumed "[a]s a social or cultural figure, Stanley is a villain, in mindless opposition to civilization and culture" (Brustein 9). With the notion of being uncivilized and careless of out-of-state culture, Stanley performs like a typical villain, capriciously behaving in an irrationally violent way. Nonetheless, Brustein explores a

different perspective of Stanley by suggesting that he can be expected to be a hero in the play: “Rather than expressing dissatisfaction with the grubby conditions in which he lives, [Stanley] exults in them, and he does not indicate any desire to better himself” (10). To Brustein, Stanley could have a heroic character to some degree; however, society leaves him feeling disadvantaged and pressured. Because of Stanley’s demonstrated complexity and ambiguity, his heroic traits are hardly evident and thus easily ignored. In fact, Stanley could be regarded as a hero; he is too apprehensively concerned about his family, self-perceived as his duty in relation to his manhood.

Stanley’s anxiety is mostly caused by his family, the responsibility of manhood that twentieth-century American men have to be attentive to. As a twentieth-century American man should know how to grow up and to prove himself mature, “[n]ormally, . . . he begins to feel a new interest in his home and to make things for it or to do something to make it a pleasant place for everyone” (Dickerson 23). Stanley’s interest in his family is clear to see; the play describes how Stanley, having been a veteran of World War II, is a worker, a husband, and an expectant father, devoting himself to making a living for his family. Despite showing the fierce and vigorous masculinity of his manhood to arbitrarily control his family, Stanley voices his deep concern for his family through his effort in the workplace and by demonstrating his love to Stella. For his due diligence in his family position, Stanley is portrayed as a typical figure of the Self-Made Manhood, “[t]o be manly . . . as a provider, a producer, and a protector of a family” (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 38).

However, Stanley grows anxious about his manhood as soon as his family has turned into a place with his intruding sister-in-law and his wife threatening and questioning his manhood. This section will argue about Stanley’s anxiety with two approaches. While Stanley’s anxiety can be examined through the presence of Blanche, his worry over his

manhood can also be seen through his interaction with Stella. Blanche must be the first one to cause Stanley to feel anxious over his manhood; he maintains it with fierce actions against Blanche. Furthermore, with her sorrow and her sympathy for Blanche, Stella also complains about the way Stanley maintains his manhood for both their family and her as his wife. Stanley doubtlessly assumes her as the second person that aggravates his anxiety about his manhood.

Because of Blanche's loss of property, rudeness to him as a host, and her criticisms of his identity and masculinity, Stanley worries that his manhood will suffer from Blanche's abuse. Though Stanley's behaviour is verbally and physically insulting to Blanche, his main concern is defying Blanche's offensive assaults on his manhood. To Stanley, the sudden appearance of Blanche, the intruder or the guest, has a potentially negative influence on the family's finances after he has heard the news about her loss of property. Seeing Blanche using his radio and bathroom without respecting him as a host, Stanley also has a hunch that her casual and loose attitude means to challenge his manhood in the family. With social prejudice, Blanche laughs at Stanley's Polish identity, implying his Polish identity is not authentic enough to assist him in maintaining his manhood; even worse, Blanche degrades his masculinity by comparing him to an animal, i.e. less than human. With the fact that Blanche's assaults have endangered Stanley's manhood, this chapter examines how these assaults make Stanley strongly anxious about his manhood.

First of all, Stanley finds his manhood endangered by the intruder, Blanche, whose loss of the Dubois family's property makes him wonder about his and Stella's financial rights. After losing Belle Reve as the Dubois' property in Laurel, Blanche seeks refuge with Stella. While it seems at first like a straightforward visit, Stanley, the male householder, finds the sister-in-law strange and feels her loss of the house is not a simple case. Worried and suspicious of how Belle Reve came to be taken away without explanation, Stanley asks

Stella for any information and explains to her why he needs to ask questions about Dubois' inheritance:

STANLEY. She [Blanche] didn't show you no papers, no deed of sale or nothing like that huh?

STELLA. It seems like it wasn't sold.

...

STANLEY. Have you ever heard of the Napoleonic code?

STELLA. No, Stanley, I haven't heard of the Napoleonic code and if I have, I don't see what it—

STANLEY. Let me enlighten you on a point or two, baby.

STELLA. Yes?

STANLEY. In the state of Louisiana we have the Napoleonic code according to which what belongs to the wife belongs to the husband and vice versa. For instance if I had a piece of property, or you had a piece of property— (Williams 35)

After receiving no hints about Belle Reve, the lost house, Stanley becomes more suspicious. Despite Stella not being mindful, Stanley still keeps talking to understand what happened with Belle Reve. By validating the strength of the relevant aspect of the Napoleonic code, he wants to catch Stella's attention to how seriously he takes the lost property. Nevertheless, Stella continues to make it clear that the loss of the property is not an important question, and suggests that Stanley not take it to heart:

STELLA. My head is swimming!

STANLEY. All right. I'll wait till she gets through soaking in a hot tub and then

I'll inquire if *she* is acquainted with the Napoleonic code. It looks to me like you have been swindled, baby, and when you're swindled under the Napoleonic code I'm swindled too. And I don't like to be *swindled*. (Williams 35)

The play displays the couple's different attitudes towards lost Belle Reve. To Stella, Blanche is her beloved sister, a normal girl who comes to her for help; however, Stanley regards Blanche as the intruder menacing his family as well as him. Regarding the situation of the property, he is ready to question Blanche. Additionally, not only does he intend to get involved with the Dubois property to acquire wealth, but he also aims to take Stella as his "property" to suppress her with the power of the patriarchal code. "Legitimizing his domestic reign of terror, [Stanley] invokes the power of the primal male . . . buttressed by Napoleonic law" (Kolin 461). In other words, it seems that Stanley deliberately wants to use the code as a patriarchal ideology to express his male dominance over his family.

Stanley confesses his concern for the fact that Stella and he may be financially disadvantaged and, more seriously, swindled by Blanche. This is the main reason why he eagerly has to clarify why and how Blanche is losing Belle Reve. By taking out Blanche's expensive belongings, he hastily informs Stella that Blanche must have misappropriated the property to benefit herself secretly: "Then where's the money if the place was sold? . . . Open your eyes to this stuff! You think she got them out of a teacher's pay?" (Williams 35). With Blanche's high-priced items discovered, it is reasonable for Stanley to infer that Blanche must have exploited the Dubois family, which must have deprived Stella and Stanley of the right to inheritance. Cautious about Blanche's exploitation and conscious of his being the head of the household, Stanley is eager to protect his family from the risk of financial loss. If Stanley fails to make his family financially stable, his manhood would be publicly discredited for being financially incompetent. Having been alarmed by the loss of Belle Reve, Stanley foresees his manhood being threatened and thus anxiously needs to

find a way to maintain it by interfering with the Dubois family's property, aspiring to secure his and Stella's right to inheritance.

Secondly, boldly ignoring her role as a guest in the Kowalski family, Blanche demeans Stanley's manhood, causing another assault to exacerbate his anxiety as well. While staying in the Kowalski home, she seldom respects Stanley as a host, offhandedly using anything that belongs to the family. Examples such as turning on the radio without permission and frequently occupying the bathroom for a long time illustrate Blanche's impudent and manipulative behaviour. During one poker night, without asking for permission from the radio's owner, Blanche just turns on the radio for fun, showing that she does not care to pay homage to the male master:

(She [Stella] goes into the bathroom. Blanche rises and crosses leisurely to a small white radio and turns it on.)

...

STANLEY. Who turned that on in there?

BLANCHE. I did. Do you mind?

STANLEY. Turn it off.

STEVE. Aw, let the girls have their music.

...

(Stanley jumps up and, crossing to the radio, turns it off. He stops short at the sight of Blanche in the chair. She returns his look without flinching . . .) (Williams 51)

Blanche acts in a way that does not recognize the distinction between host and guest in the Kowalski family. To Stanley, Blanche has started to regard it as unnecessary to seek the permission from the head of the family. Although Steve suggests that Stanley should not bother these women, Stanley insists that Blanche's behaviour is impertinent enough to affect him; he assumes that she is intentionally challenging the authority of his manhood.

Switching off the radio, Stanley, rude but direct, warns her to be respectful of his manhood. This radio incident triggers his uneasiness regarding his manhood, as Blanche's loose attitude is indicative of her denial of him as the host of the family.

In addition to the case of the radio, Blanche also depreciates the masculine power of Stanley's manhood in the family by her frequent use of the bathroom. After the radio incident, Blanche still pretends nothing significant has happened by staying in the bathroom for a long time. The bathroom seems to have become a place controlled by Blanche, who has started to empower herself through the occupation of domestic space:

STANLEY. (Blanche) here?

STELLA. In the bathroom.

STANLEY. (mimicking) "Washing out some things?"

STELLA. I reckon so.

STANLEY. How long she been in there?

STELLA. All afternoon.

STANLEY. (mimicking) "Soaking in a hot tub?"

...

STELLA. She says it cools her off for the evening.

STANLEY. And you run out an' get her cokes, I suppose? And serve 'em to Her Majesty in the tub? (Williams 97)

In spite of Stella's excuse about Blanche's urgent need to calm down, Stanley feels more anxious about his manhood, implying that both the radio and the bathroom belong to his family and therefore should be respected by Blanche. However, Blanche remains blind to her status as a guest and considers herself a queen worth serving in his house. It makes Stanley sense that she marks herself as superior to him as well as Stella. In his view,

Blanche intentionally subverts and belittles the firmness of his masculine manhood, and means to increase her power over the Kowalski family.

By using the host's radio and bathroom at will, Blanche demonstrates her "feminine clutches" in opposition to Stanley's manhood within his own domestic space. From Blanche's perspective, it is not a big deal when a woman turns on the radio just for some music, and using a bathroom is a way a woman relaxes her fragile nerves. However, from Stanley's point of view, Blanche utilizes her feminine clutches to rebel against his authority in the family. In his anxious position as a family master, Blanche's impolite manner is her feminine threat to his manhood and family.

Stanley's anxiety about Blanche abusing his domestic space underlines his view that men need to uphold their territories (in their homes) to prove and maintain their manhood. Before Blanche's visit, Stanley has the total control over his domestic (public and private) space; however, with the appearance of a "long-stay" visitor, he is forced to acknowledge the fact that his private space is now turned into a public space. Honestly, women may make men feel uneasy and unconfident in the space, especially in public, where femininity presides over masculinism. To confirm woman's domestic power as having a powerful effect on self-perceived manhood, Kimmel elaborates on masculinism as a means to maintain manhood in the home environment where femininity may be an increasing threat to men:

Masculinism is, at its centre, resistance to femininity, to the forces that turn hard men into soft, enervated nerds; it is by escape from women and resistance to femininity that masculinists hope to retrieve their manhood. In their view, men had to wriggle free of these feminine, feminizing, clutches—ironically, the very clutches that male insecurity had created to free the workplace of female competition and to make the home into a man's castle and thus preserve patriarchal authority. It was in

the public sphere that men faced the greatest challenges to their manhood, where their sense of manhood was won or lost, and yet these anxieties were projected, instead, onto women as the bearers of enervating lassitude. Men were suddenly terrified of feminization in the very homes they had created, and now yearned to escape or at least more clearly demarcate themselves from women. (*The History of Men* 21)

Masculine power and feminine power appear as two strengths when man and woman coexist in a space. Then home is a typical space for masculine and feminine powers to struggle with each other. To Kimmel, despite patriarchal ideology, women can have more advantages than men at home, since women spend more time staying at home to develop feminization or femininity as a power against men. On the other hand, men usually go out for work, and then usually overlook being enervated by feminine clutches at the domestic space when they stay home. As Kimmel has claimed, if a man remains ignorant of the phenomenon that a woman has controlled the house with feminization or femininity, he will face a threat to his masculinity, and thus his manhood will be threatened and weakened by women's rising domestic power.

Based on Kimmel's argument above, most men must not be merely concerned about whether their job is stable enough to make them noticed in the workplace or society. Even though they should work hard in the workplace to prove their manhood, they should pay attention to their homes as well. Such women as Blanche will take advantage of everything domestic by the time the power of femininity is spread across the space where man and woman coexist with each other. Under these circumstances, men's anxiety about their manhood will become too apparent for them to ignore.

The less space is left for men's manhood to be retained, the weaker their self-perceived masculinity must be. Thus, men will neither resist women's power nor restore their masculinity in the space charged with femininity. Along with masculinity

diminished by women's rising domestic control as a disadvantage to men, their manhood will be regarded as feminized; it thus makes them lose confidence to successfully respond to the family and the public.

With the evidence of Blanche's use of the radio and the bathroom, the play indicates that Blanche forms her power of femininity and tries to reduce Stanley's strength of masculinity in the Kowalski family. Stanley, as husband or host caring about his manhood, cannot help but become tense; he perceives Blanche disturbing the family and depriving his manhood of his self-perceived masculinity.

Thirdly, Blanche's discrimination against his manhood is also a major reason for his anxiety. It is quite obvious that Blanche, who is proud of her French heritage, does not think high of Stanley, a Polish descent. Apprehensive about her sister as socially superior, Stella reminds her of the differences among groups; nonetheless, Blanche looks down at Stanley's and his friends' Polish identity by teasing their appearance and calling them Polacks:

STELLA. Stanley is Polish, you know.

BLANCHE. Oh, yes. They're something like Irish, aren't they?

...

BLANCHE. Only not so—highbrow?

(They both laugh again in the same way.)

...

STELLA. I'm afraid you won't think [Stanley's friends] are lovely.

BLANCHE. What are they like?

STELLA. They're Stanley's friends.

BLANCHE. Polacks?

STELLA. They're a mixed lot, Blanche.

BLANCHE. Heterogeneous—types? (Williams 23)

Although Polack means “[a] Polish immigrant [or] a person of Polish descent” (“Polack, n. and adj”), the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* emphasizes that it is a very derogatory word that needs avoiding. Born in a high-class family, and as an heir to the French upper-class, Blanche regards herself as more classic and elegant than Stanley and his friends. She never finds it wrong using derogatory terms such as Polacks; for an upper-class woman like her, it is proper to avoid that social bias as an assault on manhood’s self-esteem.

Blanche’s disrespect for Polish heritage acts in such a way that it denigrates the power of Stanley’s manhood. Kimmel points out the impact of more and more immigrants in twentieth-century America creating a melting pot increasingly fraught with fear of xenophobia. He further declares with evidence that contemporary American people, swayed by xenophobic remarks, blindly believed that new American immigrants were “depicted as less mentally capable and less manly—either as feminized and effete or wildly savage hypermasculine beasts—and thus likely to dilute the stock of ‘pure’ American blood” (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 128). As xenophobia was deeply planted in the popular mind, American men would have “[r]acist impulses . . . suffused with gender imagery . . . [that] new immigrant group[s] [were] tainted with . . . gender slanders” (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 129). Not only the immigrants themselves but also their descendants were maliciously labelled as deteriorating American manhood. Correspondingly, censured as corrupting American manhood, those untypical American men were anxious about their manhood as well.

It is very difficult for Stanley to prove his competent manhood in American society because Blanche’s discrimination intensifies the misjudgement of his ability to strengthen his self-perceived manhood. This atmosphere full of social bias inevitably led Blanche to develop a similar discriminatory attitude towards foreign American men like Stanley. Holding her social supremacy, she naturally plans to favour her French ancestry over a

Polish one. This discrimination is evident in Blanche's derision of Stanley being a Polish-American; she jokingly takes him as different from the typical "pure" Americans. Besides, this bias indicates her disdain and her negation of Stanley's manhood because he is not pure enough and therefore not as manly as "pure-blooded" American men. Blanche's bias represents her (and society's) dismissal of his Polish manhood, arousing his anxiety.

Fourthly, because of her experience with Stanley's uncivilized manhood, Blanche lampoons it. Blanche never comments on Stanley's masculine character as advantageous to him; instead, she criticises him for being so monster-like. Angry about Stanley's belligerence, Blanche makes direct complaints about Stanley's manhood to Stella:

He acts like an animal, has an animal's habits! Eats like one, moves like one, talks like one! There's even something—sub-human—something not quite to the stage of humanity yet! Yes, something—ape-like about him, like one of those pictures I've seen in—anthropological studies! Thousands and thousands of years have passed him right by, and there he is—Stanley Kowalski—survivor of the stone age! . . . Maybe he'll strike you or maybe grunt and kiss you! That is, if kisses have been discovered yet! Night falls and the other apes gather! There in the front of the cave, all grunting like him, and swilling and gnawing and hulking! His poker night! —you call it—this party of apes! Somebody growls—some creature snatches at something—the fight is on! God! Maybe we are a long way from being made in God's image . . . In some kinds of people some tenderer feelings have had some little beginning! . . . Don't—don't hang back with the brutes! (Williams 72)

In a long speech, Blanche gives her sister a warning that Stanley will destroy the family. Moreover, lest her sister would totally be under the control of this beast, Blanche seriously recommends that Stella escape the atmosphere of danger. Loving Stella as her only relative, Blanche hopes Stella to be aware of Stanley's animal-like feature by showing evidence

from anthropological studies. On the other hand, she radically censures Stanley's manhood merely because of her hatred and bias. By highlighting Stanley's uncivilized and inhumane nature, Blanche purposely besmirches Stanley's manhood to sway Stella by the studies in anthropology.

Although Blanche's suggestion to her sister is well-meaning, she appropriates anthropological studies for her own personal usage. In fact, leading twentieth-century scholars in anthropological studies such as Margaret Mead find that American men are emotionally anxious regarding their manhood due to some conventions of American society. What Blanche contends is simply based on her comparison between Stanley and animals. This comparison is not only misleading but also an unfair condemnation of Stanley. Mead believes that the reason American men have a tough manner and experience anxiety over their manhood is due to the gender identity convention that seeks to shape them into the ideal that American society expects (qtd. in Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 151). To a great extent, this social convention has many negative effects on most American men; these effects mainly lead them into repressing their emotions.

Mead uses anthropological studies to underscore that American men suffer from their repressed emotions; they are instructed not to easily become emotional but to seriously be aggressive in situations disadvantageous to them, i.e. on the proper occasions. Mead continues to contend that the American instruction would "teach [American men] to be tough and to stand up for themselves, and . . . teach them that aggression is wrong and should be repressed, and, if possible repressed" (qtd. in Kimmel 151, *Manhood in America*). Even though they are instructed to avoid being aggressive, Mead fears that they sometimes need to be aggressive: "[A]ggressiveness . . . can never be shown except when the other fellow starts it; aggressiveness which is so unsure of itself that it has to be proved" (qtd. in Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 151). Most American men have been punctilious about the

outmoded convention since a very young age, in which they also have to learn how to handle and control their emotions. As they never detect that their emotions have been limited and repressed, it is difficult for them to express what they undergo emotionally. In addition, they must feel more stressed about the society that expects them to be men who properly employ aggressiveness. Society is so unfriendly and indifferent to their expression of feelings that American men will lose their faith in maintaining and proving their manhood. In this case, it is hard for them to grow into a typical man who can both possess a tough attitude and display a properly aggressive character. These social expectations only leave deep anxiety regarding their manhood and hinder their emotional relief. Being unconscious of Stanley's repressed emotions, Blanche never finds American manhood anxious about how society expects American men to be either emotionless or aggressive.

She raises a strong concern that Stella should be protected, but she does not alternatively attempt to presume and understand why Stanley is taught to be tough. In order to maintain his manhood, as expected by society, Stanley needs to be a tough guy with little emotion. Blanche finds Stanley hard to get along with since he does not tend to be an easy guy who will be emotionally affected. Also, the reason for his emotional anger is because he has discovered Blanche's intention of being offensive to him; Stanley has to become aggressive enough to warn Blanche that she should not press his buttons. However, Blanche never tries to realise Stanley's situation but blames him for being a danger to her and Stella. Without understanding the social stress and expectations of Stanley as a husband, Blanche naturally makes his self-perceived manhood more anxious.

Having observed Blanche's irresponsibility with the lost house, and her disrespect for him as a host with her offensive actions and statements, Stanley needs to fight against her for his manhood by growing aggressive. Stanley resorts to aggressiveness as a crucial attitude to combat Blanche, just as most contemporary American men competed against

cultural conventions from Europe. As mentioned above, Mead has argued about the necessity of aggressiveness in men's fight against their enemy. When American men refer to aggressiveness, the most apparent figure that springs to mind must be the cowboy, a leading exemplar for never considering disguising his strongly masculine performance. Correlating American men with the image of cowboy to distinguish American manhood, Kimmel contends that "[i]t was the United States that gave the world the cowboy legend, and Americans continue to see him as the embodiment of the American spirit" (*The History of Men* 94). From Stanley's revengeful actions against Blanche, the "cowboy's spirit" can be presented in Stanley, who is grimly dedicated to protecting his family and maintaining his manhood through this spirit.

Accenting the "cowboy's spirit" of his manhood, Stanley recalls American manhood's tenacity in rejecting European manhood. The cowboy is the representation for men to follow in twentieth-century America because the way he conveys masculinity to strengthen his manhood has been inspiring American men to resist any threats of American manhood, especially those from Europe. In Chapter One, three types of manhood to distinguish between European and American concepts were introduced. Genteel Patriarch and Heroic Artisan are the typical types of European manhood, which lead men to focus more on personal feelings and elegant performance in public. Although European concepts always influenced America with their emphasis on men being "careful, precise, elegant" (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 92), American men carried on the struggle against these European types of manhood; American men wanted their manhood to be "reckless, rough, and daring" (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 92).

To differentiate themselves from European men, American men are eager to emphasize "'American social character,' a unique combination of attitudes, aspirations, and activities" (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 91). Self-Made Manhood is regarded as the

masculine ideal, since it bestowed upon man evidence that he is such a restless motivator that he never stops pursuing success. In like manner, the cowboy can be seen as a persuasive symbol of Self-Made Manhood because he has “the dynamic of American masculinity more manifest than in our singular contribution to the world’s storehouse of cultural heroes” (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 94). Kimmel further describes the cowboy’s image and its meaning for Americans:

[T]he cowboy is fierce and brave, willing to venture into unknown territory and tame it for its less-than-masculine inhabitants. As soon as the environment is subdued though, he must move on, unconstrained by the demands of civilized life . . .

[T]he cowboy’s mission was to reassert [American manhood] against those forces that would destroy it (monarchy and aristocracy in the 19th century and communism in the 20th, each of which is considered a foreign ideology, imported from Europe).

(Kimmel, *The History of Men* 94-95)

The cowboy’s spirit reminds man of the importance of masculine aggressiveness in supporting his manhood. The cowboy is always aware of positive feedback in public by attending masculine activities, and avoiding or rejecting anything that threatens his manhood. Regarding the cowboy spirit as a twentieth-century trend, American men started to think about and construct their manhood in a different way than their European counterparts.

As a typical twentieth-century American man influenced by the cowboy spirit, Stanley has the intention of exhibiting aggressiveness in support of his manhood challenged by Blanche’s European-style manner. The battle between Stanley and Blanche can be connected to American men’s opposition to European conventions, judging by her changeable emotions and concern for the gentleman’s spirit regarding men. It is the reason that she does not consider whether her performance will offend Stanley. Blanche supposes

that every “typical” man should respect each woman. In addition, her casual behaviour in the Kowalski’s house embodies her pride in believing that Stanley should have acted as a civilized man with decency, and not like an uncivilized brute.

Nevertheless, given the different concepts in defining manhood in America, Stanley is more convinced that American men’s emphasis should not be put on a person’s feeling, or whether to be gentle with a woman; instead, they should be mindful of how to avoid any outside power that intentionally challenges their manhood. Such manhood needs no elegance or serious emotions from others, but such masculinity always results from aggressiveness. In order to put an end to this European style from Blanche that generally endangers American manhood, it is reasonable and inevitable for Stanley to become aggressive by adopting some drastic measures.

Like the cowboy, whose “American aggression is usually . . . retaliatory, a response to an apparent injury,” Stanley is anxious to take aggressive revenge against Blanche’s menace to his manhood; the retaliation “is swift, effective, and inevitably disproportionately severe” (qtd. in Kimmel, *The History of Men* 93). It seems that he is desperate to humiliate her and put her on the spot. Nonetheless, what he aims at is Blanche’s assaults on his manhood. In the face of them, Stanley is prepared to initiate retaliatory actions against Blanche, as he claims: “Things I already suspected. But now I got proof from the most reliable sources—which I have checked on!” (Williams 98). By reason of her assaults on his manhood, his main intention is so obvious as to convince him that Blanche will put his family in crisis and unhappiness. Like an aggressive cowboy ready for retaliation, Stanley is anxious to reinforce his manhood by claiming the justice Blanche owes him.

Stanley has intensely planned retaliation in four ways to assert his determination to defend his manhood and reduce his anxiety caused by Blanche. Firstly, Stanley collects any

relevant news as a retaliatory method to safeguard his manhood against Blanche's power over his family. Her sudden, pompous and unusual visit to Stella and him leads him to conjecture that Blanche will create utter chaos to his family. To avoid this threat, Stanley thoroughly checks her whole story. Holding cogent reports to support his statements, Stanley immediately informs his wife on how debauched her sister was before taking shelter with them: Blanche was suspected of having had many love affairs with many kinds of men:

STANLEY. Honey, I told you I thoroughly checked on these stories! Now wait till I finish. The trouble with Dame Blanche was that she couldn't put on her act any more in Laurel! . . . as time went by she became a town character. Regarded as not just different but downright loco—nuts.
(Stella draws back).

And for the last year or two she has been washed up like poison. That's why she's here this summer, visiting royalty, putting on all this act—because she's practically told by the mayor to get out of town! (Williams 100)

In his eagerness to degrade Blanche's reputation by revealing her scandals as a retaliatory attack, Stanley wants to convince Stella not to trust Blanche. He anxiously alleges how diligently his research is done on Blanche. If his manhood is aggressive enough, with more evidence as to Blanche's scandalous affairs, Stella may clearly understand Stanley's manhood-related anxiety regarding how dangerous Blanche is to their family. He also employs this retaliatory method to defame Blanche's positive images in the minds of Stella and Mitch. Stanley's research and his aggressive words of retaliation represent his anxious determination to fight against Blanche's power over his home and to regain his manhood's strength in his family.

Secondly, Stanley vents his aggressive anger with a large movement as another retaliatory method with his manhood intensively insulted. During the celebration for Blanche's birthday, Stanley, who still behaves like a cowboy, "forms no lasting emotional bonds with any single person" by continuing eating food (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 94). When Blanche deliberately asks for a joke from Stanley, he coldly replies "I didn't think you liked my stories, Blanche," maintaining his rigidity (Williams 106). It is not until Stella criticises him for eating like an animal that he promptly begins to howl and becomes violent around the house:

(He hurls a plate to the floor).

STANLEY. That's how I'll clear the table! (He seizes her arm) Don't ever talk that way to me! "Pig—Polack—disgusting—vulgar—greasy!" —them 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? Remember what Huey Long said— "Every Man is a King!" And I am the king around here, so don't forget it! (Williams 107)

Stanley will not endure allowing both women to unduly slander his manhood. Blanche has challenged his manhood many times with discrimination against Stanley's identity: "You healthy Polack, without a nerve in your body, of course you don't know what anxiety feels like!" (Williams 110). Furthermore, Stella's accusation of his masculine behaviour has started to annoy him: "Mr. Kowalski is too busy making a pig of himself to think of anything else!" (Williams 107). Both sisters never realize that Stanley's anxiety over his manhood is a result of their derision. Only accusing Stanley of being animal-like and indifferent to others' uneasiness, Stella and Blanche have triggered the retaliatory aggressiveness of Stanley's anxious manhood.

With the feeling of manhood challenged and its aggressiveness aroused, Stanley is eager to inform them that he would not let them constantly abuse his manhood. Although patriarchal ideology seems to be presented through his furious statement that man has more authority than woman in the house, he does not totally mean to perform like a king to dominate the sisters. In fact, as a male with manly dignity, he is afraid that the sisters would threaten his manhood by taking too much liberty with him. Therefore, to refrain from the two women's criticisms, he has to strike back by emphasizing his potency in the family. By articulating aggressiveness with masculinity, Stanley wants to retain some respect he feels that he deserves from Stella and Blanche, and warns them that his manhood should not be offended in the family.

Thirdly, to prevent his manhood from Blanche's threatening clutches, Stanley is anxious to drive Blanche away from his space with aggressiveness. In the light of the fact that Blanche speaks ill about him and her careless and corrupt attitudes are likely disadvantageous to the Kowalskis, as Stanley puts it, it is not proper at all to keep Blanche in their house. Therefore, Stanley has bought a train ticket to Laurel as a gift to her, suggesting that she leave as soon as possible. Blanche, feeling appalled at Stanley's aggressiveness, runs out of the house for peace. Stella protests to Stanley that "You didn't know Blanche as a girl. Nobody, nobody, was tender and trusting as she was. But people like you abused her, and forced her to change" (Williams 111). From Stella's sympathy with Blanche, Stanley finds he needs to explain to Stella his consideration for the family and her:

When we first met, me and you, you thought I was common. How right you was, baby. I was common as dirt. You showed me the snapshot of the place with the columns. I pulled you down off them columns and how you loved it, having them coloured lights going! And wasn't we happy together, wasn't it all okay till she

showed here? . . . And wasn't we happy together? Wasn't it all okay? Till she showed here. Hoity-toity, describing me as an ape. (Williams 112)

Through the explanation to Stella, Stanley is worried about exhibiting to her what he feels wronged about. After intruding into the family, her sister has undermined his manhood with the many bad things observed by him. He also wants to tell Stella about the importance of their family's peace that has been disturbed by Blanche's intrusion. To retrieve the peace of the Kowalski family in maintaining Stanley's manhood, it is better to get rid of Blanche. Even though it is a difficult decision for Stella to accept, for the sake of his manhood and his family, Stanley should steel himself to repel Blanche.

Lastly, rape, though controversial and unethical, is the most aggressive retaliatory way Stanley uses to articulate his manhood. It is worth paying attention that Stanley's rape of Blanche has been criticised by critics: "Stanley's rape of Blanche is indeed an antagonistic victimization" (Seigle 44); Tripkovic-Samardzic denounces as well that Stanley does not get any punishment for his raping Blanche (53). From their condemnation, Stanley's rape of Blanche is so antagonistic that he is plainly termed a victimizer, a victimizer deserving sanction. Also, with regard to the cowboy's spirit that impacts Stanley, he should have been "a man of impeccable ethics, whose faith in natural law and natural right is eclipsed only by the astonishing fury with which he demands rigid adherence to them" (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 94). On the contrary, in the rape of Blanche, Stanley seems to lose the awareness of morality with the focus solely on aggressive retaliation.

Nonetheless, this cruel way of retaliation can lead to an interpretation that Stanley uses rape as a retaliatory weapon to empower his manhood and deal with the anxiety stirred by Blanche, who has been so powerful and presumptuous. As George Toles analyses the rape, Stanley uses rape because "[n]othing could persuade him that his sexual victory over her was a rape" (70). Stanley feels it is only his rape which potentially ceases Blanche's

threats to his manhood. In *Against Our Will*, Susan Brownmiller discusses why some men react to some women by means of rape. Although complaining of men's rape as a serious ruin of women, Brownmiller affirms that rape should not be assumed as a way in which men merely enjoy sexual pressure:

[R]ape became . . . man's basic weapon of force against woman, the principal agent of his will and her fear. His forcible entry into her body, despite her physical protestations and struggle, became the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood. (14)

Through rape, what a man aims to do is to repress a woman, so that she will be scared and lose strength to struggle, enabling him to face victory in the "battle." As soon as he finds his victim as weak as he expects, he can feel that his power is growing and effective to support him in beating up the counterpart due to his sense of superiority formed after the rape. Rape plays a crucial weapon for such men as Stanley because it is a way of aggressively proving their manhood to women regarding masculine power via intimidation.

Likewise, in the case of Stanley, the reason for his rape of Blanche is because of her claiming authority over his house. Before Stanley's battle with Blanche alone in the house, she has dressed like a queen, murmuring in front of a mirror. Stepping into the house, Stanley spots Blanche pretending to be a queen in the house. After he and she talk for a while, there are still many intriguing words spoken by Blanche to annoy Stanley. Given the sign of Blanche's recurrent arrogance and accusation of his manhood, Stanley frantically takes the step of subverting her plan to be a queen:

STANLEY. And look at yourself! Take a look at yourself in that wornout Mardi Gras outfit, rented for fifty cents from some ragpicker! And with the crazy crown on!
What queen do you think you are?

BLANCHE. Oh—God . . .

STANLEY. I've been on to you from the start! Not once did you pull any wool over this boy's eyes! You come in here and sprinkle the place with powder and spray perfume and cover the light bulb with a paper lantern, and lo and behold the place has turned into Egypt and you are the Queen of the Nile! Sitting on your throne and swilling down my liquor! I say—Ha! —Ha! Do you hear me? Ha—ha—ha!

(Williams 130)

In Stanley's mad presentation, his manhood has been challenged by Blanche who has used her status as a visitor to manipulate the family atmosphere. There later comes a battle, a key as to who is powerful enough to be predominant in the house. During the battle, Stanley ends up pushing Blanche onto a bed with force, declaring, "Tiger—tiger! Drop the bottle top! Drop it!" demonstrating the hint of his triumph through rape over the female tiger with a dominant attitude over the family (Williams 130). The rape silences Blanche; this male weapon aggressively deprives her of the intention to subvert and struggle. On account of the loss of her confidence in challenging and threatening, there will be no more resistance to Stanley's manhood. With the decline of Blanche's resistance, Stanley can overcome his self-perceived anxious manhood with aggressive masculinity, as he both wins the battle with the counterpart and wholly reclaims its authority over his family.

As an intruder, Blanche has transgressed her position as a guest and her menacing presence has incurred Stanley's self-defense for his sovereignty over his home. However, Blanche is not the only one in the house who questions his manhood; Stanley still needs to cope with the anxiety over his manhood, as Stella resolves to express her disapproval when putting herself in Blanche's shoes. Stanley pays a great deal of consideration to Stella's attitude towards him; as his wife, she is the only important family member whom he is obligated to protect and take care of. He is worried that Stella will misunderstand and reject

his manhood. He has to deal with anxiety about his manhood, because Stella becomes an inside resister to question and complain about his manhood.

While Blanche's arrival is accompanied by the threats to him, Stanley has to face his anxiety over his manhood which is questioned by Stella. At first, Stella appreciates Stanley for his vigour and passion towards her; however, the more time she spends with Blanche, the more her attitude towards Stanley changes. Blanche keeps complaining to her about Stanley's manhood due to his misconstrued masculinity. Blanche's complaints cause Stella to feel uneasy about his manhood; thus, her husband's masculine image in her mind gradually becomes disagreeable to her. Although she has tried to persuade Blanche not to form a bad impression of Stanley, Stella is influenced by Blanche so much that she accuses her husband of wrong and adverse reactions to Blanche, precipitating Stanley's fear that Stella will weaken his self-perceived manhood and dedication to the family.

When Stella refers to him as a drunk animal on poker night, Stanley is more anxious about his manhood. Feeling annoyed at the radio abruptly turned on again, the drunken husband, Stanley, becomes so violently aggressive in reacting to Blanche, who has disturbed poker night, that he throws and smashes the radio. Stanley's behaviour is a warning to his sister-in-law for offending his manhood as a host. However, Stella feels too afraid to complain to Stanley: "Drunk—drunk—animal thing, you! . . . All of you—please go home! If any of you have one spark of decency in you" (Williams 57). Although Stella should have a fearful reaction to Stanley's violence, her verbal attack threatens Stanley's manhood. By calling him animal, Stella echoes Blanche's wrong use of anthropology studies. An animal's figure replaces Stanley's good image as a husband in Stella's mind, and implies that to a great degree, she starts to think that his manhood only brings him into becoming barbarian and inhuman. Stanley's anxiety over his self-perceived manhood is aroused by Stella's accusation of his way of being manly aggressive; she has misunderstood

him, forming a bad image of him. As the misunderstanding and bad image appear, the relationship of the couple becomes worse, which devastates the congenial family atmosphere.

After being taken away by his friends to calm himself down for a while in the bathroom, Stanley's manhood makes him feel guilty for almost harming pregnant Stella. A man needs to protect his wife, especially when she is having his offspring. Nonetheless, being so eager to reply to Blanche and Stella with much anger, Stanley has forgotten the importance of protecting his wife, as he has become too careless to focus on it. Being too furious about the insults to his manhood, Stanley has made a big mistake by forgetting that a husband is also a protector of his wife and offspring. Stella goes to take refuge with a neighbour, Eunice, crying "I want to go away, I want to go away!" (Williams 58). Kneeling and crying below the house of Eunice, Stanley is worried and beseeches Stella for forgiveness and for her to return; otherwise, she will leave the family, taking the baby. Not only does Stella's possible departure mean abandoning their family, but also represents Stanley's failure as a family protector.

Despite his exertion to dedicate himself to his family, Stanley still ends up with anxiety over his self-perceived manhood, since he is not fortunate enough to have Stella support it at the end of the play. After the rape, Blanche has a mental breakdown. In the interest of his family and manhood, Stanley decides to ask an institution to take her to a "better place" to deal with her madness, and persuades Stella to accept Blanche's madness as trouble for the Kowalski family. Although Stella seems to have agreed with Stanley on behalf of their family, as the only relative of Blanche, she cannot help showing an attitude of sympathy towards her sister when seeing Blanche walking away, "depend[ing] on the kindness of strangers" (Williams 142). After Blanche leaves without turning back, the play details how regretful and angry Stella becomes about Stanley's decision:

(Eunice descends to Stella and places the child in her arms. It is wrapped in a pale blue blanket. Stella accepts the child, sobbingly. Eunice continues downstairs and enters the kitchen where the men, except for Stanley, are returning silently to their places about the table. Stanley has gone out on the porch and stands at the foot of the steps looking at Stella.)

STANLEY. (a bit uncertainly) Stella? (She sobs with inhuman abandon. There is something luxurious in her complete surrender to crying now that her sister is gone.)

STANLEY. (voluptuously, soothingly) Now, honey. Now, love. Now, now, love. (He kneels beside her and his fingers find the opening of her blouse) Now, now, love. Now, love . . . (Williams 142)

However hard Stanley tries to console her due to his care for her as his wife, Stella does not reply to him. Seeing her sister's departure, she feels like she has betrayed Blanche. At that moment, she undermines Stanley's manhood by deliberately keeping silent instead of offering him comfort. Giving no response to Stanley, she exhibits hatred and fury as an unfriendly protest against his manhood's efforts to fight with and dismiss her sister. Her reaction also reinforces that Stanley succeeds in protecting his manhood, but is unsuccessful in convincing Stella that what he has done is for their family. Even though Blanche will never again menace his self-perceived manhood, Stella's acute disapproval of his decision still leaves him with anxiety about his manhood, leading to the crisis of disharmony in the family.

For his manhood, Stanley will never experience any relief but only tension. While competing against Blanche, he has to figure out what he should do to be a proper husband to Stella. His striving to deal with Blanche gives rise to his wife's misunderstanding of his manhood and her partiality for Blanche. What is worse, Stella deduces that Stanley's

manhood never seems attractive but only relentless, because he either mistreats or destroys Blanche. Blanche's departure never relieves Stanley's anxiety over his manhood; his anxiety obligates him to face and overturn Stella's denial of it. The play describes Stanley's manhood with anxiety to invite readers to question their simplistic negative impression of him. From the standpoint of American manhood, Stanley's anxiety over his manhood will never decrease as long as his family shows no willingness to perceive his difficulty in seeking to prove it.

In addition to Stanley, Williams utilizes a minor character, Steve, to help denote the difficulty for American men to validate their manhood. Like Stanley, Steve puts his mind to his own family. He sometimes fights with his wife, Eunice, about their family finances. It seems the play gives too little space for Steve to show his feelings; nevertheless, Steve also indicates that the family's pressure on his manhood makes him anxious. Similar to Stanley on one hand, he finds it difficult to deal with his wife's complaints perceived as an attack on his manhood; on the other hand, different from Stanley, he has to face these complaints from her about their family finances. Family finances are such a big issue that he and Eunice hardly stop quarrelling. The reason Steve barely avoids fighting with her is due to the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II. As a breadwinner, Steve is unavoidably responsible for the family finances and must suffer anxiety related to his self-perceived manhood stemming from his wife's dissatisfaction with his limited financial contribution to their family.

As mid-twentieth century America was in the crisis of the aftermath of the Great Depression and World War II, American men like Steve felt it very challenging to maintain their self-perceived manhood. As the Self-Made Manhood became a widespread concept during the twentieth century in America, men were more attentive to their performance in the workplace, since it brought out a trend motivating them to derive their "identity entirely

from success in the capitalist marketplace” (Kimmel, *The History of Men* 38). However, achieving the goal for this type of manhood grew much more difficult for American men because the Great Depression and World War II were the main events, one after and another, in twentieth-century America. As soon as the Great Depression happened as a result of the stock market crash, America was stuck in economic chaos:

As the effects of the Depression cascaded across the US economy, millions of people lost their jobs. By 1930 there were 4.3 million unemployed; by 1931, 8 million; and in 1932 the number had risen to 12 million. By early 1933, almost 13 million were out of work and the unemployment rate stood at an astonishing 25 percent. Those who managed to retain their jobs often took pay cuts of a third or more. (“The Great Depression”)

With the rise of unemployment, each American family encountered the long-term suffering of poverty. Many of the American men lost their jobs and therefore could not provide their families with any income; staying at home, they were fraught with the feeling of “humiliation within the family” (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 133), afraid of losing the respect of their children and wives in the family.

Later on, “Hitler’s rise to power in Germany . . . was fuelled in part by the economic slowdown [the Great Depression]” (“The Great Depression”). The power of Nazi Germany under Hitler further led to World War II as a conflict among countries. As America aimed to resist any outside strength against itself, most American men were commanded to attend the war “to prove on their battlefield . . . that they were dedicated providers and protectors” (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 147). After the war, those men did not take time to cure their emotional trauma resulting from the war; they needed to face the livelihood of their families, since their “primary function in the family is to supply an ‘income’ to be the breadwinner[s]” (qtd. in Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 162). In these difficult situations,

mid-twentieth century American men as husbands and breadwinners must feel anxious and insecure about the domestic pressure on their manhood.

The social hardships and familial demands cause Steve as a breadwinner to feel anxious about proving his manhood. In addition to the need to make a living for his family during the tough financial period, Steve must be a proper husband by caring about the emotions of his wife, Eunice. There is an ongoing conflict between him and Eunice about the family's economic condition and Eunice's changeable moods. To avoid their conflict, Steve must earn as much money as possible. However, he is rarely successful in satisfying his wife. At the beginning of the play, Eunice asks Stella's family to "supervise" Steve: "Tell Steve to get him a poor boy's sandwich 'cause nothing's left here" (Williams 14). Dissatisfied with Steve's financial contribution to the family, Eunice thinks Steve incompetent to be a proper breadwinner; she never relents in her condemnation of his inability to financially support them. However, she is unaware that her condemnation must precipitate Steve's anxiety about maintaining his manhood in regard to his family.

What is more, Steve comes to grips with his manhood with anxiety over Eunice's groundless accusation of him. She attempts to fight with Steve, assuming that he has had affairs with several women and will possibly leave the family. Her provocation of this fight causes Steve to worry about his manhood, which Eunice seldom apprehends or appreciates:

EUNICE. You ain't pulling the wool over my eyes! I wouldn't mind if you'd stay
down at the Four Deuces, but you always going up.

STEVE. Who ever seen me up?

EUNICE. I seen you chasing her 'round the balcony—I'm gonna call the vice
squad!

STEVE. Don't you throw that at me!

EUNICE. (shrieking) You hit me! I'm gonna call the police! (Williams 74-75)

The conversation highlights Steve's anxiety over his manhood. After the fight over his alleged cheating on her, Steve has to comfort his wife, pretending nothing has happened: "Steve's arm is around Eunice's shoulder and she is sobbing luxuriously and he is cooing love-words . . ." (Williams 78). To make the family peaceful, Steve pleases her with intimate behaviour. He has no opportunity of being consoled by others who will sympathize with his encounters with his demanding wife. Being a man who needs to prove his manhood by his financial contribution to the family, he may have to figure out how to make enough money so as not to face another fight over family finances. All he can do to relieve his anxiety from this domestic tension is avail himself of the homosocial union in which his co-workers feel laid-back together. However, he still has to return to his home, a space that only reminds him about the family duty demanded of his manhood. Steve acquires much anxiety and less confidence over the struggle to retain his self-perceived manhood under the worsening condition in America and Eunice's contempt for his unsatisfactory financial contribution to their family.

In conclusion, this chapter demonstrates Stanley's situation in his family, and suggests that he feels anxious for his manhood as husband and father due to his family's pressure. Stanley needs to conquer anything disadvantageous to his family and manhood. He seriously makes efforts to forestall Stella's refusal to accept the way he treats their family. Minor as he is in the play, Steve also shows his anxiety stemming from the family's demand for financial contribution. Given his manhood being endangered and defied in their families, Stanley, as well as Steve, grows more anxious about how to take action to authenticate it.

Chapter Three

Mitch's and Allan's Manhoods with Anxiety from Society

Chapter Two emphasizes that family is the main issue for Stanley and Steve to handle. Due to their required commitment of manhood as husband or father, their anxiety mostly results from the pressure of their families. Even so, they are still regarded as the more ideal men in America; having their own families as their responsibility, they can more easily show themselves as perfect examples of authentic manhood in society, as described by Mark E. Kann (6). However, the other two male characters, Mitch and Allan, are also anxious about how society looks upon them, and they both struggle to reach the ideal of American manhood by meeting social expectations.

Mitch and Allan are anxious that their manhoods are distant from the ideals of American manhood. Though slightly reluctant, Mitch compels himself to put effort into dealing with homosociality and marriage for the enhancement of his manhood. Since Allan's sexuality has doomed him to go through many more dilemmas in proving his manhood, he forces himself to marry Blanche as a disguise for his manhood's "abnormality." Both Mitch and Allan are very anxious to reform their different manhoods to conform to the typical American manhood. This chapter will first examine Mitch's manhood with anxiety over homosociality and marriage; the latter part of this chapter will explore Allan's anxiety about his manhood as a homosexual.

Mitch's anxiety is shown through his constant attempts to meet America's standard concerning manhood. The Self-Made Manhood is a predominant concept in twentieth-century America. For this kind of manhood, American men were required to manage their own family and try to be as distinguished in their workplace as possible. However, Mitch seems to be far from this manhood. Though having a mother as a family responsibility, he

lacks a family as evidence of the duty of his manhood built by caring for a wife. When Stella and Blanche talk about the men's career positions on poker night, Stella asserts that because of Stanley's drive, he is more noticed than Mitch in the department where they work together (Williams 50). Under the pressure of American society's perspective of men in the workplace, and expectation concerning their marital status, Mitch seeks to strengthen his anxious manhood by getting involved with homosociality conducive to his status in the workplace, and even with marriage to make him qualified as a family man.

Because homosociality is regarded as a crucial element to manhood, Mitch pays attention to male activities to validate his manhood and face his anxiety. Homosociality involves a relationship between same-sex people. As well as granting men a chance to expand their friendship, to a great degree, homosociality intentionally drives them to bind themselves tightly through attending many activities. Homosociality, as the introduction has posited, is not just a way American men can form strong bonds with each other, but a means by which they can stabilize their position in the workplace or society. Homosociality is a "social dynamic that explains the maintenance of [men's] gender relations within a reasonably stable power structure" (Hammarén 2). In other words, within homosociality, men have such a stable sense of identity with each other that they appear more forcefully assured. For homosociality referred to as a bond to stabilize the power of their manhood among friends, many men like Mitch unavoidably remain engaged in male activities.

Mitch's manhood-related anxiety is delineated by his participation in homosociality against his will. He is the only friend of Stanley's to feel uneasy about poker night as a homosocial activity. He wants to leave the night since he has "a sick mother" to take care of and does not "enjoy it" (Williams 46). Mitch goes directly to the bathroom to relax away from the homosocial activity. At that time, he bumps into Blanche, and his manhood-related anxiety becomes slightly relieved. After the talk with Blanche, he looks more cheerful than

he does with homosociality. His manhood attracts Blanche so much that she proclaims that he “seems superior to the others” (Williams 49), and that he is “a natural gentleman, one of the very few that are left in the world” (Williams 91). Unlike his friends who comfortably adapt themselves to homosociality, Mitch does not agree that homosociality is enjoyable to him; he is not so enthusiastic about playing so many games with his male friends. Perhaps fewer games are enough as he hopes for the poker night. Moreover, as he presumes, the talk with such an elegant lady as Blanche gives his manhood more courage from her compliments. Hence, Mitch’s anxiety over his manhood is attributed to his naturally resisting homosociality.

The reason Mitch immerses himself in the card game is that attending this male homosocial activity can strengthen his self-perceived manhood. As previously mentioned in Stella’s statement to Blanche, Mitch is not as outstanding as Stanley among the staff members in the factory. Having successfully applied himself to homosociality, Stanley has grasped his drive and excessively displayed its strength everywhere. On the other hand, Mitch may feel worried about how to get as noticed as Stanley in the workplace. Mitch assumes homosociality could grant him a chance to get more attention in the factory by associating with his peers. By forcing himself to stay in homosociality, Mitch initially infers that he can improve his anxious manhood and have the same drive either in the workplace or American society.

Although men realize they need homosociality to develop their manhood, Mitch feels more anxious about his manhood from homosociality’s hegemonic masculinity, which “involves [emotional] detachment and independence” (Bird 125). Because of hegemonic masculinity, homosociality never accepts personal emotions; men in homosociality should know how to be tough with their own and others’ feelings:

[E]motions and behaviours typically associated with women were inappropriate within the male homosocial group. Among the emotions and behaviours considered most inappropriate, and most highly stigmatized, were those associated with feminine expressions of intimacy . . .

[The] suppression of feminine emotions is more than merely a means of establishing individual masculinity. Emotional detachment is one way in which gender hierarchies are maintained. Expressing emotions signify weakness and is devalued, whereas emotional detachment signifies strength and is valued. (Bird 125)

For these men to prove themselves independent of others, they must react to others unemotionally; they talk little to others or do not directly show what they feel. On account of taking an unemotional attitude, some men find themselves stronger and more competent within homosociality.

However, emotional detachment following hegemonic masculinity in homosociality can cause many men to negatively respond. Interviewing many men who have been avidly involved in homosociality, Bird discovers that their voices often become increasingly exhausted and tense; thus, they begin to question homosociality, and whether they could become “real men.” In an interview, a man states:

As I grew older, I really wished that I wasn't so detached from my mom. I'm not that way now, though. After a while, I stopped caring about what everybody else thought. I mean the intimate side got pushed aside for so long because that's not what “real” men are supposed to do. I got over it, though . . . I guess I'm not what “real” men are supposed to be. (Bird 127)

The man in this interview is a good example to show every man can be confused whether a “real” man should sever himself from emotional or intimate behaviour. Bird asserts that the suppression of feeling does not efficiently help men to compete with their peers in

homosocial activities. Instead, to a great extent, when men begin to feel depressed and diffident, they refuse to acknowledge this emotional detachment in homosocial events. Rather, upset by the emotionless ambience, they decide to separate themselves from those campaigns or activities. Aiming to deny the legitimacy of hegemonic masculinity, these men feel homosociality does not credibly make them “real men” but rather emotionally suppresses them.

Mitch’s manhood fraught with anxiety over homosociality arises from Stanley’s emotional detachment that accompanies hegemonic masculinity. The card game scene depicts Mitch finding himself incompatible with his friends and thus hardly fitting in with them. To Stanley and Steve, poker night is the way they can completely relax after a week’s work. However, Mitch does not think the same and views it with dismay. At the beginning of the poker night’s scene, Mitch clearly has an anxious reaction to the card game, not only comprising Stanley’s elation but also Mitch’s intention to depart because Stanley accuses him of weak manhood:

MITCH. I’m out again. I oughta go home pretty soon.

STANLEY. Shut up.

MITCH. I gotta sick mother. She don’t go to sleep until I come in at night

STANLEY. Then why don't you stay home with her?

MITCH. She says to go out, so I go, but I don't enjoy it. All the while I keep
wondering how she is.

...

MITCH. You all are married. But I’ll be alone when she goes.—I’m going to the
bathroom.

STANLEY. Hurry back and we’ll fix you a sugar-tit.

MITCH. Aw, go rut. (Williams 46)

In Stanley's opinion, everyone in the game should enjoy playing cards without having other emotional thoughts disturbing the atmosphere. Though joining the game for the sake of his manhood, Mitch sometimes considers the card game to occupy too much time. Although he informs Stanley that he has a sick mother to look after, Stanley, whose hegemonic masculinity is strongly in charge of the card game, reminds Mitch of the rule that men willing to be involved with homosociality should not show any emotional attachment during its game. For Stanley disrespecting his wish to accompany his mother, Mitch perceives Stanley's hegemonic masculinity as dominating the homosocial activity and making him emotionally repressed and thus anxious about homosociality.

Expressing anxiety about his manhood within homosociality, Mitch intends to rebuff Stanley as a homosocial arbitrary figure in two ways. First, Mitch presents his discontent with Stanley, since he makes Mitch miss the opportunity to maintain his manhood. Indeed, the main cause of the couple's breakup is attributed to Stanley. Stanley claims that he told Mitch about Blanche's real background and scandals to avoid letting his "best friend get caught" by Blanche because "Mitch is a buddy of mine" (Williams 103). Listening to Stanley's information about her scandals, Mitch loses his faith in Blanche and fails to become the expected husband, the identity that will assuage his mother's worry about Mitch's aloneness. More importantly, given the title of husband, Mitch can have a new family to authorize him to take more responsibilities associated with maintaining his self-perceived manhood. Nevertheless, he gives up the opportunity to be a husband with Stanley's news by denying Blanche as a proper wife. Although Mitch accepts Stanley's revelation of Blanche's true story, his behaviour indicates his displeasure with and resistance to Stanley during his last meeting with Blanche alone. When she offers Mitch alcohol, he feels offended, saying: "I don't want Stan's liquor . . . I told you already I don't

want none of his liquor and I mean it. You ought to lay off his liquor” (Williams 114-115). Mitch sounds irritated by Stanley, and wished to escape from the shadow of him.

Secondly, to stop Stanley’s hegemonic masculinity, Mitch endeavours to protest against him by starting a fight with him. In the last scene of the game with his friends including Mitch, Stanley calls a doctor and a matron to take Blanche away to protect his manhood from her continuous abuse. Stanley forces all the people to lie to Blanche that a man would come to carry her away, “the gentleman [she] was expecting from Dallas” (Williams 137). After discovering no gentleman but only a story made up by everyone, Blanche goes crazy; she screams about a lantern that was earlier pulled down by Stanley, and then struggles against the matron on the ground (Williams 140). Looking at her fighting against the injustice done to her, Mitch has remorse for Blanche. The sense of guilt evokes Mitch’s sympathy towards Blanche, but as a result of his extreme anxiety, he attacks Stanley:

While Stella and Eunice are speaking on the porch the voices of the men in the kitchen overlap them. Mitch has started toward the bedroom. Stanley crosses to block him. Stanley pushes him aside. Mitch lunges and strikes at Stanley. Stanley pushes Mitch back. Mitch collapses at the table, sobbing. (Williams 141)

Taking revenge for Blanche, Mitch faults Stanley for retaining emotional detachment. To maintain his manhood, Stanley remains emotionally detached from others’ feelings, displaying hegemonic masculinity. Mitch becomes distressed on account of Stanley’s emotional detachment from Blanche’s departure. Even though Blanche should be blamed and driven away for her abuse of Stanley’s manhood, Mitch presumes that Stanley stays aloof from Blanche when she is out of her mind, thereby psychologically torturing her deliberately. In the way of violence, Mitch is anxious to oppose Stanley for his hegemonic masculinity. Defeated by Stanley, Mitch ultimately cries for his manhood’s incapability to

contend with him. Mitch's defeat forces him to face his failure in rendering his manhood powerful enough to fight against Stanley.

Although having tried to resist Stanley, Mitch ends up compromising his manhood with homosociality by staying in Stanley's house after Blanche is taken away. Perceiving Stanley's emotional detachment of hegemonic masculinity over homosociality, Mitch finds that homosociality fails to maintain his manhood but rather distresses him. Nonetheless, Mitch does not leave from Stanley's house where Stanley is apparently a prominent figure of homosociality. Mitch means not to distance himself from Stanley and his homosocial group, since he considers it unwise to directly break up with Stanley. As Stanley seems more influential than Mitch among their friends, Mitch has to keep a homosocial bond with him as a crucial figure for his anxious manhood. The more alienated Mitch is from Stanley, the fewer bonds with his friends he can hold. Upon reconciling himself with Stanley, Mitch confesses to requiring Stanley's leading power within homosociality to validate his manhood.

In addition to wanting to develop good relationships with colleagues through homosocial activities, Mitch is anxious to marry a wife who can play a significant role in supporting his manhood. As previously stated in Chapter One, Macfadden in his *Manhood and Marriage* begins with the argument that married men can always persuasively prove themselves "complete men" in society (9). That is to say, only marriage can make men appear normal enough in society; therefore, they must consider marriage to validate their manhood.

When marriage is taken into consideration, a man finds himself ineluctably involved with family, the result of marriage. Understanding the meaning of marriage as normalcy in American society, a man will expect "a distinct and emphatic desire for a home, for a wife and children, and all the duties and responsibilities associated therewith" (Macfadden 23).

In spite of marriage as a way of having a legitimate sex partner, a man cannot forget the fact that he will become a husband and father who must consider the responsibilities for his family from the moment he decides on marriage. As long as American men embrace marriage, the family should be taken into serious account in its influence on their manhood.

From Macfadden's perspective of marriage, most American men feel anxious about how to deal with it because marriage is never just a mark of love with women. In fact, when it comes to fostering a serious bond with a woman, a man should not only be well-prepared, but also anticipate taking on a series of duties on behalf of his future family.

Knowing the necessity of marriage, Mitch exhibits an anxious intention to maintain his manhood by marrying. Two women have influenced him to enter into marriage: his mother and Blanche. Fundamentally, his mother's influence explains his major motive for marriage. Though never present, she is characterized as a dying woman, largely dependent on Mitch, a son who is worried about her worsening health. During poker night, Mitch feels uneasy, claiming, "I gotta sick mother. She does not go to sleep until I come in at night" (Williams 46). After Stanley teases Mitch for being very serious about his mother, Mitch argues that "You all are married. But I'll be alone when she goes" (Williams 46). Mitch's reason for needing to go home early is due to his concern for his only relative. When Mitch later meets Blanche alone, he makes a confession to Blanche: "[My mother] worries because I'm not settled" (Williams 94); to Mitch's mother, his unmarried status will definitely leave him lonely and at a disadvantage. As a result, the concept of marrying a woman is invoked in Mitch's mind.

Influenced by his mother's anticipation, Mitch fosters awareness of the responsibility to establish a new family by dint of marriage. As Mitch's only parent, his mother seemingly considers herself responsible for Mitch. She may feel pressure when seeing her son remain

single, and expect social criticism regarding his marital status. Expected by his dying mother, he craves a partner for marriage and thus to build a family.

Apart from his mother who reminds him of marriage, Blanche is the other crucial force urging Mitch to marry. After bumping into Blanche, Mitch has a surge of desire to be emotionally involved with her, in furtherance of their possible marital partnership. During the poker night, when they first meet, they talk much and have good feelings with each other. After the wonderful meeting on that night, they have a date for a further connection. Due to that date, Mitch feels touched by Blanche's sad encounter with her former husband, and makes a quick decision to persuade Blanche to marry him: "You need somebody. And I need somebody too. Could it be—you and me, Blanche?" (96). At this moment, Mitch's quick decision exhibits his craving for Blanche to be his wife for the sake of his manhood; his anxiety is surely caused by American society's insistence on necessity of marriage with regard to manhood. Though Mitch's strong feeling of affection for Blanche obviously drives him to think about forming a legal bond with her, what he truly aims to accomplish by marrying Blanche is proof of being a "complete man."

Mitch easily falls in love with Blanche, as he says to her: "I like you to be exactly the way that you are, because . . . I have never known anyone like you" (Williams 87). While appreciating Blanche, he anxiously wonders if she would be proper enough to be his wife. For Mitch's manhood, an appropriate wife is more suitable than merely a pretty woman. In selecting a woman as a wife, an American man like Mitch may think about the advantages to his future family because only a proper wife can no doubt collaborate with him on how best to raise children.

Through inquiring about Blanche's family background and age, Mitch is keen to know about Blanche's social position and health condition. The poker night is an opportunity for Mitch to inquire further into the personal details of Blanche, whom he

naturally finds intriguing. In spite of being obsessed with Blanche's different but attractive figure, Mitch puts questions to Blanche at her convenience:

MITCH. You're French?

BLANCHE. We are French by extraction. Our first American ancestors were French Huguenots.

MITCH. You are Stella's sister, are you not?

BLANCHE. Yes, Stella is my precious little sister . . . (Williams 55)

By asking Blanche about her family, Mitch will judge whether hers socially matches his. After clarifying Blanche and Stella's sisterhood, Mitch may be able to acquire more information about the Dubois family not only through his understanding of Blanche but also his knowledge of Stella. With a grasp of her family background, Mitch will further determine Blanche's social position.

With an insight into Blanche's social position, Mitch wonders whether Blanche could do as many domestic chores as he looks forwards to in his family. To Mitch, who has grown in a working-class family, domestic chores should be finished by wives at home. Nonetheless, in the eyes of aristocratic families such as the Dubois, their women, though necessarily staying at home and more responsible for house chores than their husbands, do not have to work as diligently as lower-class women. According to Kathleen L. McGinn and Eunsil Oh, who highlight the connection between social class and women, the different approaches will be taken by lower- and upper-class families respectively:

[U]pper-class women working in male-dominated workplaces, living in households where female employment may be optional, and parenting in communities where intensive parenting is valued, may uphold gendered ideals of women as communal and other-oriented. In contrast, lower-class women working in female-dominated occupations, living in households with limited financial resources, and parenting in

communities where financial independence is valued, face heightened emphasis on the necessity of looking after one's own self-interests. (86)

Women from different classes of families must be taught different attitudes towards housework. Upper-class women are provided with more resources from the family and more help from other nearby upper-class communities. These women are rarely positioned in the laborious process of housework and hardly feel it worth much concern. On the contrary, the limited-resource environment of a lower-class family forcibly leads its women independently in charge of household chores, such as housecleaning and childcare. Therefore, the upper- and lower-class backgrounds, respectively, have directed Blanche and Mitch towards different aspects of housework. Indeed, as Mitch was born in the tradition of a lower-class family, he may desire a woman who is willing to share family responsibility. Figuring out the class difference between him and Blanche, Mitch is worried about whether Blanche would serve as a suitable wife for his manhood.

Besides family background, Mitch asks Blanche how old she is, and probes to inquire about Blanche's condition, as he finds it crucial to his future family's health. Generally speaking, every man is eager to raise a normal and healthy family, so it is natural for a man to pay attention to his and his mate's health. The play describes Mitch's confidence in his health: "I work out there [a fitness club] with the weights and I swim and keep myself fit" (Williams 89). Fit and healthy to benefit his family, Mitch may take Blanche's health into consideration. Therefore, he starts a personal question on their formal date:

MITCH. Can I ask you a question?

BLANCHE. Yes. What?

MITCH. How old are you? (She makes a nervous gesture.)

BLANCHE. Why do you want to know?

MITCH. I talked to my mother about you and she said, “How old is Blanche?” And

I wasn’t able to tell her. (Williams 93-94)

It seems, on the one hand, Mitch solely intends to know whether Blanche is young or old, so that he can give this information to his mother. On the other hand, it also indirectly allows Mitch to better determine Blanche’s health condition for the sake of future familial health.

Mitch is anxious to discern Blanche’s age, as American men’s confidence grows in correlation with their family’s overall condition. In *Manhood and Marriage*, Macfadden addresses to his male readers that a healthy wife is critical to a family’s success since such a woman is capable of assisting a man to raise a family through her own well-being:

[R]emember that [this woman] is to be the mother of your children. Do you want your children to be strong, resolute, splendid specimens of humankind? If you do, then select a woman who you are sure will make a splendid mother . . . If a woman does not possess what might be termed normal sexual instincts, it would be folly to expect her to be normal. (Macfadden 28-29)

In Macfadden’s proposal for spouse selection, what a man must be concerned about is not merely a woman’s attractive appearance, but also whether she is mentally and physically reliable enough to foster a family. If a man possesses a healthy family, he will feel more confident in his manhood and his capacity to manage his own family. It can be confirmed that not only does a man choose a woman as a wife for marriage, but he also needs a proper and healthy wife as a future mother in the interest of their family.

However diligently Mitch tries to know much about Blanche, he still ends up depressed with her scandals revealed by Stanley. He feels anxious about his manhood being weakened by Blanche’s dubious behaviour. Going to be a husband, he must ensure the integrity of his future legal relationship. Likewise, in his opinion, Blanche should be honest

with him. However, her deception means her possible lack of integrity in their future marriage. Worrying again about his mother's concern and the lack of a wife who can support his manhood, Mitch is bent on meeting Blanche; he wants to clarify her true story (Williams 115). Even though her scandals become so obvious to be denied, Blanche, without conveying any apology, quibbles over them and madly makes a declaration: "I don't tell truth, I tell what ought to be truth" (Williams 117); "[d]on't say I lied to you" (Williams 119). As a result of her negligence regarding honesty and integrity, Mitch refuses to marry her. He declaims, "I don't think I want to marry you any more . . . You are not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother" (Williams 120-121). Mitch's anxious manhood protests that he does not need a deceitful wife, a wife who will imperil his manhood.

To validate his manhood, Mitch is aware that it is necessary to perform actions to become a typical man among male peers with a family as a duty of manhood; the play ends up sustaining his anxiety over his manhood by compelling him to compromise with homosociality and to disapprove of Blanche as a proper wife. His anxiety about his manhood will not be just due to the pressure of American society. Making many efforts but receiving no achievements, Mitch will be more anxious about his failure to prove his manhood, and how to pluck up his courage to maintain it afterwards.

Whilst Mitch tries to maintain his manhood via homosociality and marriage, Allan has the anxiety to struggle with his manhood's homosexuality. His anxiety over his "abnormal" manhood causes him to attempt to marry a woman to be more "normal." This chapter points out that the crucial reason for homophobia which drives homosexual men to worry about their self-perceived manhood is a psychological test in the mid-twentieth century. That is why their decision on attempting a heterosexual marriage is a method to make them as normal as heterosexual men, even while they are troubled with heterosexual

sex. Unfortunately, such desperate attempt to be “normal” can make homosexual men like Allan more anxious that they eventually give up rectifying their manhood. Hence, as his sexuality is accidentally discovered, Allan resorts to committing suicide to abandon his manhood.

Allan’s anxiety over his being homosexual can be related to the Rorschach inkblot test in the mid-twentieth century as a way to disclose homosexuality. In 1921, the Swiss psychiatrist Hermann Rorschach in his *Psychodiagnostik* promoted his invented psychological test composed of ten cards with inkblots. Participants were asked to describe the inkblot images (Hegarty 404). Afterwards, this test was actively adopted during the preparation for World War II to judge whether any serviceman was a homosexual, the identity that “raised suspicions about a serviceman being a ‘sexual psychopath’” (Hegarty 408). The contemporary military was “warned of the ‘psychopathic personality disorders’ that would make homosexuals unfit to fight” (Manegold). They were regarded as “abnormal” based on their “special” sexual inclination by the military which denied their ability to contribute to the war.

Because the military homophobic stance like the test raised social awareness on homosexuality as an “abnormality,” Allan’s anxious manhood as a homosexual would be criticised for posing a threat to American manhood. Between the 1940s to the 1960s, two Rorschach scholars claimed that the phenomena of homosexual men endangered the convention of American manhood:

Due and Wright interpreted references to “feminized” behaviour (such as cooking and cleaning) as evidence of “conscious and unconscious feminine identifications,” “strong fear of assuming the active role,” “over-attachment and dependence to the maternal figure,” and “failure to develop adequate emotional ties with the father.” . . .

Due and Wright described homosexuals as essentially paranoid because “[t]he

homosexual, uncertain of his social status, [is] constantly exposed to disapproving social attitudes.” (qtd. in Hegarty 409-410)

The scholars concluded that these men’s behaviours were too feminine to appear as common as those of heterosexual men, and that they were both psychologically and morally “abnormal.” It was perceived as “tempt[ing] ‘normal’ men to engage in ‘unnatural practices’” and affecting men in America to become effeminized (May 256). At the same time, homosexual men would be more anxious that their manhood lacked “masculinity to cover up their insecurities—by more rigid [social] adherence to the most traditional norms,” which pointed to “[masculine] internal identification and external behaviours” (Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* 105). American homosexual men would find their anxious manhood confronted with the issue of how to improve their denied manhood and prevent it from ruthless bias.

Allan, like many homosexual men anxious about their manhood, resorts to marriage as a way to act like a heterosexual man so as to camouflage his perceived “abnormal” sexuality. Richard A. Isay, a modern psychiatrist, through his clinical analysis, speaks in favour of homosexual men and explains why they require themselves to marry women:

[T]he homosexual man who marries does so because of early self-esteem injury that has caused him to see his homosexuality as sinful or sick. Being heterosexual, he feels, is better or healthier, and he has the unconscious expectation that with it will come the longed-for regard of others. Most hope that . . . marriage will cure them. (424-425)

When aware and ashamed of the difference in their sexual orientation as socially and psychologically unaccepted, homosexual men go for marriage as a protection for their manhood’s self-esteem. Perhaps marriage will adjust “flaws” in their sexuality by diverting

sexual attention from men to women to conceal their “unnatural” affection from society, and to become socially expected husbands.

Nonetheless, most homosexual men’s anxiety remains while they rely on marriage to maintain their manhood. The reason is that their desire for men is never eradicated, even keeping them resistant to having sex with their wives:

Still, most of my patients have described feeling increasingly anxious or depressed . . . [Their] sex is experienced as “work” and approached with anxiety since marital sex for a homosexual man usually has procreation and not pleasure as a goal . . . Those who stopped having sex with other men in anticipation of marriage usually resume after the first few years . . . because of the desire for a loving attachment to . . . man. (Isay 425)

Although marriage can help homosexual men to seem “normal,” it cannot help them to dispose of their sexual identity as homosexuals. With their sexual penchant for men, they must feel uneasy and anxious about having sex with women. However, marriage must oblige them to have intercourse with their wives to reproduce children. Therefore, homosexual men hardly relieve their anxiety from heterosexual sex life which excruciatingly stifles their sexual desire, while choosing marriage to forestall social criticisms on their manhood.

As Blanche certifies, Allan’s “abnormality” as a homosexual leads him to seek to resolve the trouble, as well as confirm his difference from typical men. Telling Stanley that “[t]hese are love-letters, yellowing with antiquity, all from one boy,” Allan, Blanche depicts Allan as a distinct one adept in addressing his affectionate thoughts (Williams 41). Later, accusing Stanley of touching Allan’s letter to her without her permission, Blanche asserts that Allan does not have rudeness and audacity as Stanley expresses to her (Williams 42). Regretting having “hurt [Allan] the way that [Stanley] would like to hurt [her], Blanche

compares herself with Allan to prove that Allan easily gets as emotionally defeated as a woman (Williams 42). What is more, divulging to Mitch that “there was something different about [Allan], a nervousness, a softness and tenderness which wasn’t like a man’s,” Blanche further declares that Allan is an unusual and unconventional man, and “effeminate looking” (Williams 95). Besides mentioning her adoration for Allan, Blanche’s speeches point out a distinction between Allan and most American men like Stanley.

Allan feels distressed at the distinction, so it forces him to contemplate any method to make himself as normal as most American men. As mentioned previously in Chapter Two, American men with the Self-Made Manhood do not easily express fondness but rather indifference unless any offence against their manhood ignites their aggressiveness. On the other hand, Allan challenges the convention of American manhood by directly illustrating his passion and emotional fragility. Due to his sensitivity and vulnerability stereotypically thought of as effeminate and thus “abnormal,” Allan sounds nervous to experience not only his homosexuality as a difference, but his manhood being questioned and even declined in American society.

Though already married to Blanche, Allan is still anxious about his manhood; he is too uneasy about employing the marriage to hide his true desire for men. After being married, he still finds that his desire for men still emerges and becomes restrained by the heterosexual sex life. His desire entices him to have an extramarital affair with a man. His sexual “abnormality” ends up discovered by Blanche while he is having sex with a man:

BLANCHE. I didn’t find out anything till after our marriage . . . I was slipping in with him! I didn’t know that. I didn’t know anything except I loved him unendurably but without being able to help him or help myself. Then I found out. In the worst of all possible ways. By coming suddenly into a room that I thought

was empty--which wasn't empty, but had two people in it . . . the boy I had married and an older man who had been his friend for years . . . (Williams 95)

Blanche's discovery of Allan's affair suggests that the heterosexual relationship is barely beneficial to homosexual men; heterosexual marriage is purely a way to make them husbands who are legitimate enough to have families as their manhood's duty: "Homosexuality as an inherent and integral part of [homosexual men's] nature; it compels them to only express the intimate desire for men, so it is natural of them to find sexual resistance to women" (Isay 430). Faced with their unstoppable homosexual desire, they cannot help but intentionally console themselves with other homosexual men through sexual intimacy. Even though Allan has chosen marriage to Blanche as a "smoke and mirrors" deception on his manhood's "abnormality," his natural desire prevents him from ending his obsession with men. Hence, the anxiety about his manhood is doomed not to decrease, and he has to accept his failure to protect it from being disapproved.

In view of the revelation of the homosexual affair that crushes Allan's confidence, he ends up critically judged as impotent to authenticate his anxious manhood. Blanche describes to Mitch in detail how Allan gives up rectifying his manhood, the manhood not only with homosexuality but also with anxiety:

He'd stuck the revolver into his mouth, and fired—so that the back of his head had been—blown away!

. . .

[I am]—unable to stop myself—I'd suddenly said—"I saw! I know! You disgust me . . ." And then the searchlight which had been turned on the world was turned off again and never for one moment since has there been any light that's stronger than this—kitchen—candle . . . (Williams 96)

Even though Blanche feels sorry for Allan, she manifests her aversion to his “abnormality.” Seeing her repulsion as a denial of his manhood, Allan assumes Blanche would refuse to accept him as a husband. She never comprehends why Allan, a homosexual, decided to marry her, and how much anxiety Allan must have felt as a homosexual who contradicts American manhood as heterosexuality. Thus, their marriage would not glow with happiness but rather lead Blanche to misunderstand and disallow Allan. Allan, though a husband by marriage, fails to create or promise a wholesome family with Blanche owing to his manhood’s “deformity.” Committing suicide as a radical method, he quits rehabilitating his manhood with the anxiety in being homosexual. Suicide would be a reasonable means to escape from the anxiety over his manhood tainted with “abnormality,” and to give up on his manhood. Allan’s suicide effectively sharpens the audience’s attention on how much anxiety he deals with pertaining to his “abnormal” manhood.

To sum up, though without family as a burden on their different manhoods, Mitch and Allan have such anxieties that they attempt to validate their different manhoods. Firstly put, for his manhood, Mitch exerts himself to strengthen his position in workplace by the card game as a homosocial activity, and to be a husband by targeting Blanche as a wife candidate. Mitch strives to retain his manhood through marriage and homosociality, whereas Allan decides on heterosexual marriage to hide his manhood’s “abnormality.” Regrettably, neither Mitch nor Allan is successful in consolidating their manhood with anxiety. Mitch inevitably keeps being confronted with anxiety over his manhood since he does not take benefits from homosociality, and cannot be a husband due to his refusal of Blanche as an appropriate wife. Allan withdraws from rectifying his “abnormal” manhood by way of suicide. Mitch and Allan are so anxious as to improve their manhoods to meet the standard of American manhood, but the play sadly ends in their failure.

Chapter Four

Conclusion

Some critics see *A Streetcar Named Desire* as emphasizing “a powerfully heterosexual masculine world” to which American men should adapt (McDonough 23). Through this play, Tennessee Williams proposes to “offer perhaps the best example of the complex male positions” constructed by American sex-role society (McDonough 25). Involved in the complex positions which necessitate their commitment to their manhood, the four male characters, Stanley, Steve, Mitch and Allan, voice strong anxiety about maintaining or rehabilitating their manhood. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Tennessee Williams asserts the argument that men generally suffer anxiety about their own self-perceived manhood.

As the introduction of the thesis indicates, one reason for this play’s widespread fame is that it illustrates gender issues, especially gender inequality. Whatever the approaches to analysing the male characters, most of the feminist critics appear to focus on and identify with the women, especially Blanche. They usually criticise Stanley, the male protagonist, for being a typical patriarchal man and a violent victimizer of Blanche and Stella. Looking at the play’s male characters from a different angle, the thesis explores and focuses on their manhood-related anxiety.

This thesis examines the four male characters’ anxiety over their self-perceived manhood through social, historical and psychological perspectives as displayed in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This thesis contends that their anxiety results from either their families or society. With anxiety, these male characters struggle to validate or enhance their manhood. Chapter Two explicates the main topic is how family relates to Stanley’s and Steve’s anxieties over their manhood, while Chapter Three concentrates on Mitch’s and

Allan's anxieties over their different self-perceived manhoods resulting from their judgmental society.

Stanley's anxiety is based on his struggle to retain his manhood for the sake of his family. In the face of Blanche's visit with its attendant threat to his self-perceived manhood and his family, he is determined to withstand her assault as he perceives her to be an offensive guest. Her feminine power displeases Stanley and triggers his anxiety over his self-perceived manhood as the head of his family. He is enraged at her mockery of his Polish identity and is also afraid of her xenophobic belittling of his manhood. With her wrong knowledge of anthropology, Blanche lambasts Stanley and never tries to consider his repressed emotions. Loathe to tolerate Blanche, he resorts to a retaliatory attitude like a cowboy in protecting his endangered manhood. Moreover, certain about his manhood, family position, Stanley devotes assiduous attention to Stella for the sake of his status as a husband. Notwithstanding evidence of his devotion to his family, he suffers from Stella's repudiation of his manhood. In handling his anxiety over Blanche and Stella, Stanley finds it difficult to maintain his manhood in his family.

As a foil character to enhance Stanley's manhood, Steve also has manhood-related anxiety because of his family's financial dispute. Following the Great Depression and World War II, Steve faces an economic dilemma and his family's expectant pressure for him to be a breadwinner. He feels less confident and uneasy about his family as a result of Eunice's physical and verbal complaints about his ability to financially contribute to their family, which results in his anxiety over manhood.

Two other male characters, Mitch and Allan, also demonstrate their different manhoods with anxiety in their own ways. Mitch is very worried about maintaining his manhood via preoccupation with homosociality and marriage to meet the American ideal of manhood. He attempts to be a typical American man by forcing himself to fit in at the

card game and finding a worthy candidate for his wife. While conscious of homosociality as crucial to make him noticed in his workplace, he cannot but resist its atmosphere with emotional detachment demanded by Stanley's hegemonic masculinity. Although Blanche inspires him with the idea of marriage, Mitch abandons the plan to marry her, implying that her dishonesty can offer no integrity to their marriage. Whatever his efforts to make himself a conventional American male, he still feels agitated about his manhood, and wonders how to validate it.

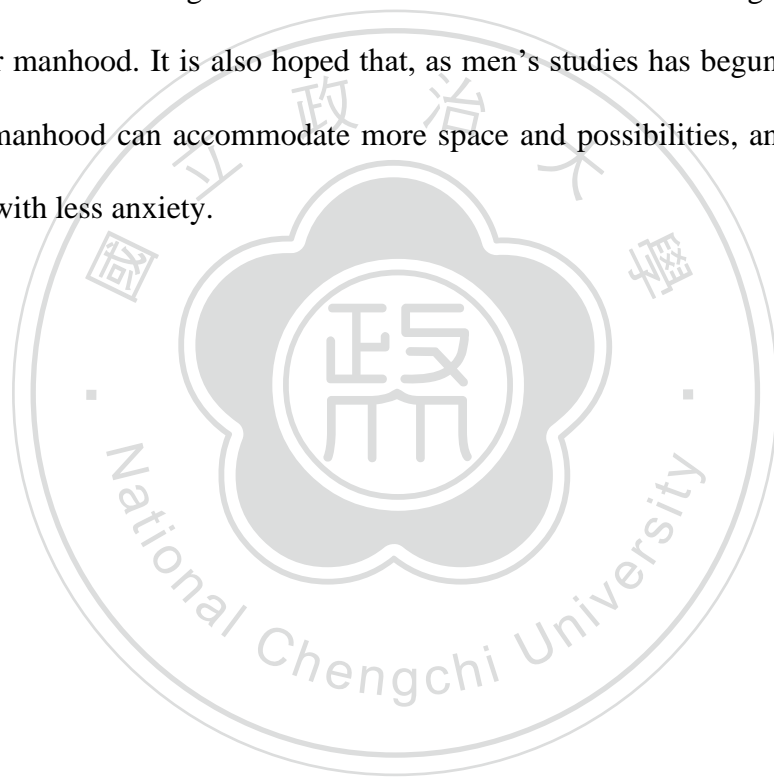
In the aspect of his suicide, Chapter Three also argues that Allan is too anxious about his "abnormal" manhood to become involved with heterosexual marriage. Situated in the homophobic ambience in America, he endeavours to keep his manhood normal. That is why he decides on heterosexual marriage, to pretend to be a heterosexual man; however, he finally kills himself when his homosexual love affair is discovered by Blanche. His suicide suggests his chronic anxiety over his manhood due to the public misconception of homosexuality and his failure to become a heterosexual man through marriage.

This thesis maintains that manhood does not merely mean the state of being a male adult. As long as males are raised in a sex-role society, they inexorably become dedicated to sustaining their manhood by shouldering the responsibilities to win public and family approval. In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, all four male characters encounter the issue of how to maintain their self-perceived manhood; some of them need to remain financially supportive of their families, whereas others must work out methods to make themselves as competent or normal men in this gendered society, so as to authenticate their manhood.

In *Manhood in America*, presenting three types of manhood in America, Michael Kimmel "explores how the experience of manhood has shaped the activities of American men" (1). He believes whatever the era, "the idea of testing and proving one's manhood [has become] one of the defining experiences in American men's lives" (Kimmel, *Manhood*

in America 1). American men have been addressing “fears, frustration, and failure” regarding the expectations of manhood (Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 6). Sex-role ideology expects a man to be masculine, heterosexual, competent in workplace, and responsible for his family finances. However, when he loses one of the characteristics above, his manhood is judged as a failure based on the absolute standards for men.

Manhood seems to have been academically ignored by the critics of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the past. It is hoped that this thesis will open a more sympathetic eye to male characters who undergo conflicts of various kinds when striving to maintain and improve their manhood. It is also hoped that, as men’s studies has begun to burgeon, the meaning of manhood can accommodate more space and possibilities, and that manhood can develop with less anxiety.



Works Cited

- Bak, John S. "Criticism on *A Streetcar Named Desire*: A Bibliographic Survey, 1947-2003." *Cercles*, Oct. 2004, pp. 3-32.
- Bigsby, C. W. *Modern American Drama 1945—1990*. Cambridge, 1992.
- Bird, Sharon R. "Welcome to the Men's Club: Homosociality and the Maintenance of Hegemonic Masculinity." *Gender and Society*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1996, pp. 120-132. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/189829. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020.
- Brownmiller, Susan. *Against Our Will: Men, Women, and Rape*. Fawcett Publications, 1993.
- Brustein, Robert. "America's New Culture Hero: Feelings Without Words." *Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1988, pp. 7-31.
- Cardullo, Bert. "Drama of Intimacy and Tragedy of Incomprehension: *A Streetcar Named Desire* Reconsidered." *Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1988, pp.79-92.
- Connell, R W. *Masculinities*. U of California P, 2005.
- Dickerson, Roy. E. *Growing into Manhood*. Association P, 1933.
- Fang, Wei. "Blanche's Destruction: Feminist Analysis on *A Streetcar Named Desire*." *Canadian Social Science*, vol.4, no.3, 2008, pp. 102-108.
- Geis, Deborah R. "Deconstructing (A Streetcar Named) Desire: Gender Re-citation in Belle Reprieve." *American Drama*, vol. 11, no. 2, 2002. *Gale Literature Resource Center*, Accessed 19 Apr. 2020.
- Gussow, Mel. "Critic's Notebook; Has Stanley Kowalski Become an Unactable Role?" *The New York Times*, 14 Mar. 1988,

- <https://www.nytimes.com/1988/03/14/theater/critic-s-notebook-has-stanley-kowalski-become-an-unactable-role.html>. Accessed 29 Dec. 2019.
- Griswold, Robert L. "Manhood in America: A Cultural History." *Journal of Social History*, vol. 30, no. 4, 1997, pp. 999-1001. *ProQuest*, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/198908946?accountid=10067>.
- Hammack, Phillip L and Eric P. Windell. "Psychology and the Politics of Same-Sex Desire in the United States: An Analysis of Three Cases." *History of Psychology*, vol. 14, no. 3, 2011, pp. 220-48.
- Hammarén, Nils, and Thomas Johansson. "Homosociality: in Between Power and Intimacy." *SAGE Open*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-11.
- Hayman, Ronald. *Tennessee Williams: Everyone Else Is an Audience*. Yale UP, 1993.
- Hegarty, Peter. "Homosexual Signs and Heterosexual Silences: Rorschach Research on Male Homosexuality from 1921 to 1969." *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 12, no. 3, 2003, pp. 400–423. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3704894. Accessed 13 Apr. 2020.
- Isay, R. A. "Heterosexually married homosexual men: Clinical and developmental issues." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, vol. 68, no. 3, 1998, pp. 424-432.
- Jesmin, U. H. Ruhina. "A Psychoanalytic Insight into Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*—Psychic Strength from Defense Mechanism." *Journal of Literature and Art Studies*, vol. 2, no. 3, Mar. 2012, pp. 404-409.
- Kann, Mark E. "The Culture of Manhood." *A Republic of Men: The American Founders, Gendered Language, and Patriarchal Politics*, NYU P, 1998, pp. 5-29. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctt9qg73c.5. Accessed 5 Feb. 2020.
- Kimmel, Michael S. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*. Oxford UP, 2006.
- . *The Gendered Society*. Oxford UP, 2011.

---. *The History of Men*. State U of New York P, 2005.

Kitch, Carolyn. "Destructive Women and Little Men: Masculinity, the New Woman, and Power in 1910s Popular Media." *Journal of Magazine & New Media Research*, vol.1, no. 1, 1999.

Kolin, Philip C. "'it's Only a Paper Moon': The Paper Ontologies in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire*." *Modern Drama*, vol. 40, no. 4, 1997, pp. 454-467. *ProQuest*,
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/198802774?accountid=10067>.

Koprince, Susan. "Domestic Violence in *A Streetcar Named Desire*." *Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*, edited by Harold Bloom, Infobase, 2009, pp. 49-60.

Krutch, Joseph Wood. "*Modernism*" in *Modern Drama: A Definition and an Estimate* / *Joseph Wood Krutch*. Cornell UP, 1953.

Leibman, Nina C. "Sexual Misdemeanor/Psychoanalytic Felony." *Cinema Journal*, vol. 26, no. 2, 1987, pp. 27-38. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1225337. Accessed 10 July 2019.

Macfadden, Bernarr. *Manhood and Marriage*. Physical Culture Pub. Co, 1916.

"manhood, n." OED Online, Oxford UP, September 2019,
www.oed.com/view/Entry/113455. Accessed 20 Sep. 2019.

"masculinity, n." OED Online, Oxford UP, December 2019,
www.oed.com.utorpa.lib.nccu.edu.tw/view/Entry/114566?redirectedFrom=masculinity+&. Accessed 20 Dec. 2019.

May, Elaine Tyler. "History Without Victims: Gays in World War II." *Reviews in American History*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1991, pp. 255-259. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/2703080. Accessed 19 Mar. 2020.

- Manegold, Catherine S. "The Odd Place of Homosexuality in the Military." *New York Times*, 18 Apr. 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/04/18/weekinreview/the-odd-place-of-homosexuality-in-the-military.html>. Accessed 28 Feb 2020.
- McGinn, Kathleen L., and Eunsil Oh. "Gender, Social Class, and Women's Employment." *Special Issue on Inequality and Social Class. Current Opinion in Psychology* 18, 2017, pp. 84-88.
- McDonough, Carla J. *Staging Masculinity: Male Identity in Contemporary American Drama*. McFarland & Co, 1997.
- Mintz, Steven. "Introduction: Does the American Family Have a History? Family Images and Realities." *OAH Magazine of History*, vol. 15, no. 4, 2001, pp. 4-10. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/25163456. Accessed 15 Dec. 2019.
- Messner, Michael A. "The Limits of 'The Male Sex Role': An Analysis of the Men's Liberation and Men's Rights Movements' Discourse." *Gender and Society*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1998, pp. 255-276. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/190285. Accessed 15 July 2019.
- Panda, Ramnarayan. "Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*: A Study in Sexual/Textual Politics." *The IUP Journal of English Studies*, vol. 6, no. 2, June 2016, pp. 50-56.
- Reichardt, Ulf, and Sabine Sielke. "What Does Man Want? The Recent Debates on Manhood and Masculinities." *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, vol. 43, no. 4, 1998, pp. 563-575. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/41157417. Accessed 15 July 2019.
- "Polack, n. and adj." *OED Online*, Oxford U P, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/146735. Accessed 1 Jan. 2020.

- Romer, C. D. "Great Depression." *Encyclopedia Britannica*. 20 Dec. 2003.
https://eml.berkeley.edu/~cromer/Reprints/great_depression.pdf. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019.
- Sharp, William. "An Unfashionable View of Tennessee Williams." *The Tulane Drama Review*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1962, pp. 160-171. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1124941. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019.
- Shaw, Irwin. "The Brutal Beauty of *A Streetcar Named Desire*." The Review of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, by Tennessee Williams. *The New Republic*, 23 Dec. 1947, newrepublic.com/article/131954. Accessed 25 Apr. 2019.
- Schrock, Douglas, and Michael Schwalbe. "Men, Masculinity, and Manhood Acts." *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 35, 2009, pp. 277-295. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/27800079. Accessed 11 Dec. 2019.
- Seigle, Lauren. "Blanche Dubois: An Antihero." *Journal of the Arts & Sciences Writing Program*, no. 2, 2010, pp. 42-48.
- "The Great Depression." *khanacademy.org*, n. d.
<https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/great-depression/a/the-great-depression>. Accessed 25 March. 2020.
- Toles, George. "Blanche Dubois and the Kindness of Endings." *Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 2009, pp. 61-82.
- Tripkovic-Samardzic, Vesna. "Contradictions of Society in Tennessee Williams." *British and American Studies*, vol. 22, 2016, pp. 49-56,252. ProQuest, <https://search.proquest.com/docview/1802495756?accountid=10067>.

- Vlasopolos, Anca. "Authorizing History: Victimization in *A Streetcar Named Desire*." *Theatre Journal*, vol. 38, no. 3, 1986, pp. 322-338. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/3208047. Accessed 11 Dec. 2018.
- Williams, Tennessee, and Al. Hirschfeld. *A Streetcar Named Desire / Tennessee Williams: with a Foreword by Jessica Tandy and an Introduction by the Author; Illustrations by Al Hirschfeld*. Bookman, 1982.
- Winchell, Mark Royden. "The Myth Is the Message, or Why *Streetcar* Keeps Running." *Contemporary Literary Criticism Select*, Gale, 2008. *Literature Resource Center*, <https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/H1100004108/LitRC?u=nccu&sid=LitRC&xid=7b43f625>. Accessed 4 Dec. 2019. Originally published in *Confronting Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire: Essays in Critical Pluralism*, edited by Philip C. Kolin, Greenwood Press, 1993, pp. 133-145.
- Weissman, Philip. "Psychopathological Characters in Current Drama A Study of a Trio of Heroines." *American Imago*, vol. 17, no. 3, 1960, pp. 271-288. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/26301740. Accessed 2 June 2020.