

A nature of mitch in a streetcar named desire novel

Literature



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' Mitch may be a weak character, but his treatment of Blanche is still disturbing and harmful.' In light of this comment, explore Williams' presentation of Mitch. In your answer you must consider relevant contextual factors.

Mitch can be considered a weak character due to effeminate nature. Within the start of the play he found to be very caring for his mother. Therefore the men around him class him as a much more feminine man. However, his behaviour towards Blanche is harmful as hurts her feelings. This is seen when he does not attend her birthday party. It is also disturbing to the modern audience as it is not something considered as normal nor polite. On the other hand it can be argued that it is not Mitch's behaviour that is disturbing, but Blanche's. This is because she is often found drinking, smoking or flirting with men around her. Such activities were seen as controversial within 1940s America and also the society of Elysian Fields.

Mitch can be considered weak by the patriarchal society that ' A Street Named Desire' is based upon as he is very considerate for women around him. For instance, in scene 3, right after Stella is hit by Stanley, Mitch says, " poker shouldn't be played in a house with women." This characterizes Mitch as someone who believes women and soft and gentle and should be protected from the roughness of poker. However, a man from 1947 would not believe in such a thing. Men treated women as if they were a lower class of human being so for someone like Mitch to do the opposite of completely that would be absurd. Mitch would have been seen as effeminate and weak. Another factor to which plays into Mitch being regarded as effeminate would be how he cares so dearly for his mother. After the ruckus in which Stanley
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caused, Mitch says, " I'm out again," to which Stanley replies, " Shut up." Mitch then says, " I gotta sick mother. She don't go sleep until I come in at night." Mitch deviates from the classic masculinity, in which Stanley fiercely embodies. As a result, Mitch was seen as a weak character by the contemporary viewer and also by other characters within the play.

Mitch's behaviour towards the end of the play is disturbing to the modern audience, but to the contemporary audience it is seen as the norm. Also, to the society of Elysian Fields, this can be considered as the norm. In scene 9, Mitch explicitly calls Blanche a whore, " you're not clean enough to bring in the house with my mother." To the modern audience, this would be extremely offensive and rude. However, to the contemporary viewer, they would agree with what Mitch calls Blanche as during the late 1940s, women were expected to ' remain pure' for the men which they soon come to marry. As Blanche as already lost her virginity, the audience would side with Mitch automatically. Furthermore, due to what Blanche has done to him (lied, manipulated and toyed with him), Mitch feels likes he deserves to have sex with her. Mitch tells Blanche he wants, " what," he's been, " missing all summer." That is to have sex with Blanche. To the modern audience, this type of behaviour would not be tolerated. Such behaviour would be considered as sexual harassment. The contemporary audience would feel the opposite. A contemporary viewer would believe that it is, indeed, Mitch's right to claim Blanche and have her for night. Therefore, it can be argued that Mitch's behaviour is disturbing to the modern reader, but not the contemporary reader.

However, it can also be argued that Blanche is the disturbing one as she is the one that troubles society and its norms. Mitch is not the one disturbing society. For instance, Blanche is found, multiple times, drinking alcohol. Scene 1, she, “ notices something...crosses to it, and removes a whisky bottle.” Blanche has only just entered Stanley and Stella’s apartment and the first thing she notices is a bottle of whisky. This suggests that she may be an alcoholic which, for women during the late 1940s, was seen as something strange. Women were expected to not drink alcohol. Therefore, Blanche can be seen as disturbing what society had set upon women at the time. Furthermore, Blanche smokes as seen in scene 3 when she meets Mitch for the first time and asks, “ have you got any cigs?” Women smoking during the late 1940s was also considered as socially unacceptable. Thus Blanche disturbs society with her abnormal habit of smoking. The last thing in which Blanche possesses, which really sets off those around her, was her previous job of working as a prostitute. Blanche held, “ many intimacies with strangers,” at, “ the Flamingo Hotel.” The hotel was one of Blanche’s homes of the past. It was the second rate hotel she practised prostitution. Until the hotel deemed her, “ morally unfit for her position,” and also cast her out. This was due to the lifestyle she was living. One where she was smoking and drinking constantly. For a brothel to throw her out shows how seriously in trouble Blanche is. This demonstrates how much Blanche had been disturbing society.

Mitch may be considered harmful as he does not attend Blanche’s birthday and in turn, hurts her. Stella, Stanley and Blanche have all been waiting for Stanley for, “ three-quarters of an hour.” However, “ a fourth place at the

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table which is left vacant," remains. The viewer assumes that this place was set out for Mitch, who stood Blanche up. Mitch not showing up symbolises rejection, that he has rejected Blanche as a lover, potential wife and mother to his children. During the 1940s, such rejection could ruin a woman's life. Thus Mitch ends up ruining Blanche's hopes and dreams of ever getting married, leaving Stanley and Stella's home and creating one of her own. For a woman living in the 1940s, this was something to aspire to. Much like how many aspire to gain a further education, women during the late 1940s aspired to get married. To further confirm Blanche's hurt and disappointment, she gets up to make a phone call and, " remains by the phone with a lost, frightened look." Blanche is frightened that Mitch has truly rejected her and does not know what to do anymore. Stanley and Stella were her last and only resort. Now she stands with nothing and not a single penny to her name. Lastly, Blanche has been deeply hurt. This is all a result of Mitch not attending her birthday.

In conclusion, Mitch may be seen as a weak character due to his effeminate nature. However, his treatment of Blanche counters this and seems disturbing. On the other hand, Blanche herself is considered to be a disturbing being as she does not conform to what society expects of women.