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BACHELOR THESIS

Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* and Terence Rattigan's *The Deep Blue Sea* as Reflections of their Authors and of their Time

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Study subjects: English – Russian

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I hereby declare that this bachelor thesis is completely my own work and that no other sources were used in the preparation of the thesis rather than those listed on the works cited page.

I have no objections to the BA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

Prague, 4th December 2017 _____

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Abstract

This bachelor thesis provides analysis of the socio-economic factors affecting conduct of the protagonists of the two prominent 20th-century dramatic pieces – *A Streetcar named Desire* by an American playwright Tennessee Williams and *The Deep Blue Sea* by a British dramatist Terence Rattigan. The plays will be juxtaposed and analysed on the basis of historical, economic and social background of the time in which the plays are set. This bachelor thesis will try to shed light upon the circumstances and impulses influencing different conduct within coping mechanisms of the plays' characters.

Key words

Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Rattigan, *The Deep Blue Sea*, Blanche DuBois, Hester Collyer, juxtaposition, Beveridge, Squalor, Want, Idleness, Ignorance, Disease

Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce poskytuje analýzu sociálně-ekonomických faktorů ovlivňujících chování postav dvou významných dramat 20. století – "Tramvaje do stanice Touha" amerického dramatika Tennessee Williamse a "Temně modrého moře" britského dramatika Terence Rattigana. Hry jsou vzájemně srovnané a analyzované na základě historického, ekonomického a sociálního kontextu doby, ve které se odehrává jejích děj. Tato bakalářská práce se pokouší vnést světlo do okolností a impulzů ovlivňujících odlišné vzorce chování v ramcích mechanismů vyrovnání postav her.

Klíčová slova

Williams, "Tramvaj do stanice Touha", Rattigan, "Temně modré moře", Blanche DuBois, Hester Collyer, vzájemné srovnávání, Beveridge, Špína, Nouze, Nečinnost, Nevědomost, Nemoc

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1. Introduction

The aim of the present bachelor thesis is to compare and contrast two selected plays by two equally prominent 20th-century playwrights – *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) by Tennessee Williams and *The Deep Blue Sea* (1952) by Terence Rattigan. When juxtaposing the works in question, historical and social background is to be regarded the basis for the plays' analysis. The choice of the plays is based on a number of factors. Of the utmost importance in selecting the plays was a fact of discovering two dramatic pieces with prominent female protagonists, each being a representative of their culture respectively, in a critical life situation and their means of dealing with it. Williams and Rattigan, each being celebrated for introducing their complex female protagonists to literature, implemented disparate devices of leading their heroines throughout the course of action, not least due to the authors' own life circumstances. Thus, it was decided the analysis of social situation in the post-war time, when the plays were created, and its effect on the main characters' actions in a given circumstances to be the core phenomenon studied in the present work.

It happened to be so that both plays were written at approximately the same time and their authors' lives were similar in a few respects. Both Tennessee Williams and Terence Rattigan are distinguished playwrights, whose success underwent both dramatic rises and sudden falls within their lifetime. The playwrights were contemporaries, with the same year of birth and approximately the same duration of life. Despite having been born and having lived on different continents, either Williams or Rattigan explored the topic of suppressed sexuality, which was their everyday concern and the focal issue in their works. Playwrights' non-traditional sexual orientation along with the society's prejudice in regard to the latter also united the personae of Tennessee and Rattigan.

Having been written around the same time, although in different parts of the world, *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Deep Blue Sea* were the biggest hits that brought their inventors the laurels the latter had yearned for so much. Both playwrights had worked hard to become recognised dramatists and dedicated their whole lives to the art of playwriting. Even when their careers stagnated, either Williams or Rattigan did

not give up and continued with creating their legacy. Today, in the 21st century, these pieces of drama experience copious revivals at theatres all around the world.[1]

Despite numerous similarities mentioned above and shared by the playwrights in question, each of them created their individual archetypical images and characters that are worth looking at in detail. The structure of the present bachelor thesis allows to study life and work of each playwright in question on an individual basis in the theoretical part, and to juxtapose *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Deep Blue Sea* in the practical part in order to observe either similarities or differences of characters' depiction by the dramatists. The objective of the author here is to compare and contrast the diverse social, economic, political and psychological factors directly or indirectly might having prompted the circumstances in which the protagonists find themselves as well as their reactions to certain triggers.

In order to accomplish the objective of this work, various sources of information, including biographies, documentary films and articles have been consulted and studied. An invaluable source of information on Tennessee Williams's biography was found in *Critical Lives: Tennessee Williams* (2016) by Paul Ibell, whereas the majority of the information on Terence Rattigan was obtained thanks to a voluminous 1995 biography by Geoffrey Wansell. Of the paramount importance was the source shaping the practical part of the present thesis – Sir William Beveridge's 1942 Social Insurance and Allied Services report to the British Parliament – that is to be introduced in the theoretical part of this work.

[1] Among the most recent Rattigan's work revivals is that of *The Deep Blue Sea* staged at the National London Theatre in 2016 starring Helen McCrory as Hester Collyer. Tennessee Williams's legacy, in its turn, is commemorated at an annual five-day New Orleans Literary Festival.

2. Theoretical part

2.1 The Beveridge Report and the post-war situation

In 1942, when the "allies were driving Nazi forces back across Europe" ("The Beveridge report revisited: where now for the welfare state?"), Britain started to elaborate plans for the after-war reconstruction. It was at that point when Sir William Beveridge, a progressive British economist having gained authority "during the Liberal Government of 1906 – 1914" and finishing his career as Baron Beveridge in the House of Lords (BBC Historic figures), proposed his programme for the establishment of what was called the welfare state. Lord Beveridge's report was aimed at introducing a system of social security in Britain and mentioned five "giants on the road to reconstruction" (WW2 People's War - Timeline): Squalor, Want, Idleness, Ignorance and Disease.

The post-war time brought need and insecurity to Britain on the one hand, and general prosperity to the United States on the other hand, but what these two cultures had in common was the ideology of intolerance towards otherness, expressed in both *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Deep Blue Sea* in the form of the main heroines' conflict with society as well as in introduction of homosexual characters, be it only implicitly in the Rattigan's play.

Both *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Deep Blue Sea* are set in the post-war time closely following World War II. "The atmosphere of decay" (Williams 13) in the former play is matched with the look "of dinginess, even of squalor" (Rattigan 3) in the latter. As it has been noted above, squalor was among the five "great evils" that Sir William Beveridge mentioned in his 1942 report. Among the other problems standing in the nation's way to welfare the economist named Want, Idleness, Ignorance and Disease. All of the latter happen to be mirrored not only in the work of the British dramatist, Terence Rattigan, but are also to be found in the work of his American colleague, Tennessee Williams, which will be discussed in the practical part of the thesis.

2.2 Tennessee Williams's life and work

2.2.1 Family and early years

Thomas Lanier Williams III, known as Tennessee Williams (1911 – 1983), was a prominent American playwright, "America's greatest" one, according to some biographers (Ibell 7). Even though the majority of Tennessee's plays are set in the Deep South of the United States of America, they have found place in hearts of people all around the world due to their author's talent to create memorable characters and complex situations alluring by their power.

Tennessee Williams was born in 1911 in Columbus, Mississippi, into a family with a rather distinguished social background: one of his paternal ancestors was among the founders of the state of Tennessee. The grandfather on his mother's side was a Reverend, and it was him along with his wife, Tennessee's grandmother, who supported the playwright at all times and provided him with care and love. Tennessee's parents, Edwina and Cornelius, unfortunately, failed to cater to their children's needs due to the incompatibility that they experienced in their unhappy marriage. According to Paul Ibell, a writer and lecturer on theatre, Tennessee's family represented "perfect material for a playwright who specialised in the damaged and the doomed" (13). Cornelius, with his brutal behavior towards both his wife and children combined with hard-drinking was far from being an exemplary father. On the other hand, Edwina, Tennessee's mother, was a mentally unstable and sexually repressed woman, which hardly makes anyone wonder Cornelius's interest in extramarital affairs (Tennessee Williams – Wounded Genius).

Williams's first literary appearance took place when he was sixteen years old – with an article under the title of "Can a Good Wife be a Good Sport?", rather a fictional piece of work than a reportage given the fact the boy had no experience with the matter. His initial literary attempts mostly involved writing for his school magazine about the places he had visited with his grandfather. By all accounts, already at that time the playwright was absolutely charmed with Italy with its picturesque landscape, sunny climate and local people, the feeling which was to stay until the genius's very last days (Ibell 20-21).

2.2.2 William's career development

Williams developed an interest in playwriting during his student years at the University of Missouri, where he originally enrolled in 1929 to study journalism. It was during those years (1929-1932) when young Williams wrote his first two plays – *Beauty Is The Word* (1930) and *Hot Milk at Three in the Morning* (1932). His father, unimpressed with his son's academic progress, forced the former to leave the university in order to obtain a solid job at a St. Louis shoe warehouse that was "owned by the company he himself worked for" (Ibell 22-23). However, due to a nervous breakdown that Williams experienced because of his newly acquired job, he was allowed to resume his studies, which he did at the Washington University first and then at the University of Iowa, from which he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in English.

Soon after his graduation, in 1939, Williams submitted a collection of three one-act plays, *American Blues*, to a competition in New York, the city of his professional aspirations. It was the first occurrence of his new name under which the world would remember him – Tennessee (The State Historical Society of Missouri). The contest brought the novice playwright a prize of $100 as well as support of Audrey Wood, an outstanding literary and theatrical agent of the time, whose input was to take care of Williams's career for the next thirty years until their final fallout (Ibell 33).

The production of *Not About Nightingales*, one of the plays represented in the collection mentioned above, brought him "further financial help – a $1000 grant from the Rockefeller Foundation", so it looked like Williams made his firm steps in the world of playwriting. Yet, his professional path was to be somewhat more complicated than he would have wanted.

In 1940 Tennessee wrote his first full-length play, *The Battle of Angels*. Its performance in Boston, unlike the author had expected, was a failure due to the audience's appall at the play's violence. To provide for himself Williams continued leading a "nomadic lifestyle" (Ibell 33). On one of his trips he met and fell in love, having had embraced his homosexual nature by then, with a Canadian dancer, Kip Kiernan. Their brief relationship later became the basis of a play script – *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, an autobiographical play, originally written in 1941 as a short play, and eventually produced as a full-length play at the beginning of the 1980s (Ibell 33).

Meanwhile Williams's family situation kept spiraling down: Tennessee's older sister Rose, who "had long been showing signs of mental instability" (Ibell 23), was finally exposed to a lobotomy after which she would be unable to live independently. Even though, the young woman was deprived of a personality, Edwina considered the operation to have run successfully. According to her, the outcome of the procedure with her daughter becoming a helpless creature was better than the former's hysteria and the sexual activities she had engaged in in order to shock her mother. All of this deeply affected the playwright who, on top of feeling guilty for not preventing the operation on his sister, also had an ever-lasting fear of succumbing to madness just like Rose. The tragic life of the latter as well as playwright's own feelings concerning his family situation were to become the basis of Williams's first big hit – *The Glass Menagerie* (1944).

When America entered World War II, Tennessee was little disturbed. As he noted in his journal, the war was as much of interest to him as the theatre life was concerned – the effect it could bring about. Due to Williams's tendency to develop cataracts, he was not called up for service in the armed forces. The latter fact gave him a chance to continue with work, however, it was not until 1943 that the playwright received an opportunity to make money solely by the means of his typewriter, when his literary agent, Audrey Wood, secured a $250-a-month MGM screenwriting contract for him. Given the fact that the playwright had been previously earning $17 a week as a cinema usher, the figure was undoubtedly impressive. Nonetheless, Williams's aspirations as a theatre writer remained his major focus, even more so when he became dissatisfied with what he had to do for Hollywood. Writing "mindless dialogue for an actress he had little respect for" and trying to "keep to a minimum number of syllables in each word" (Ibell 38) was hardly fulfilling for a talent of his scale, so he was not at all disappointed when the company dismissed him before the end of the contract.

Interestingly enough, the success for which Williams had so long strived was brought to him by an unproduced screenplay on which he had been working during his MGM short-lived career. *The Gentleman Caller* had been "rejected as a film project" (Ibell 38-41), however, the renamed *The Glass Menagerie* became a unanimously praised play which made Tennessee Williams famous.

2.2.3 The fruitful 1940s

The Glass Menagerie first opened in December 1944 in Chicago, where it was greeted with remarkable enthusiasm, after which the production moved to New York, where it was welcomed with an even greater eagerness in 1945. The play is a "very personal account of his [Williams's] relationship with his own family" (Bigsby 39). *The Glass Menagerie* is based on a variety of elements from the playwright's life: the main character, Tom, bears playwright's own first name, as well as longs for the same occupation – that of a professional writer – while working at a shoe warehouse. The two main female protagonists, Amanda and Laura, resemble playwright's own mother and sister respectively. What served a powerful magnet for the audiences were the concerns at *The Glass Menagerie*'s core. The preoccupation of the play with peacetime characters and their everyday challenges, rather than with war, was a breath of fresh air in itself, given for how long the war had been in progress by that time (Ibell 48-49). However, it was not just the play on its own that struck the audience; it was also the arrangement of the stage. With his use of music and lighting as well as projections on a special screen, Williams introduced a new type of theatre – "plastic theatre" (*The Glass Menagerie* 8).

The success of his first Broadway production, *The Glass Menagerie*, was impressive, however at that point the writer was in his mid-thirties and well aware of the time ticking away. This concern was to become a central theme in many of his works, including his next big hit, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, premiered in 1947 (Bigsby 43).

The year 1947 was distinctive in the playwright's life both in terms of his professional and private life. As far as the former is concerned, it was in 1947 when Williams created his immortal hit, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, which is most known of all his works and "the one which seems to most define his writing style and character types" (Ibell 54).

A Streetcar Named Desire, which is to be looked at in more detail in chapter three, was a writer's major work for which he was awarded a Pulitzer Prize and which was to become his most known play. The play is set in a tenement building in New Orleans, where the whole action takes place. The reader is exposed to a fading Southern Belle, Blanche DuBois, desperately trying to cling to her evaporating beauty in a hope of finding a providing husband while staying with her sister, Stella, along with the latter's husband, Stanley Kowalski. Blanche's longing for the lost past as well as her graceful

demeanor is juxtaposed to Stanley's down-to-earth approach to life combined with his brutish manners. Thus, metaphorically, Blanche's defeat against him represents "determination of modern age" striving for success by all means it possesses (Ibell 61).

The year his second successful work was produced, Williams wrote an article "The Catastrophe of Success" for *New York Times*, in which he expressed "how creativity is absolutely central to a writer's life" (Ibell 50) along with his concern that he would always "strive to match the success of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*" (Loney).

As for Williams's private life, the year when *A Streetcar Named Desire* was released was also the year when the playwright met Frank Merlo, his long-term lover, with whom he spent the next fourteen years. Even though the playwright was hardly ever faithful to his partner, the two men's relationship was fulfilling and optimistic. "The happy young love for Frankie" (Ibell 77), as the dramatist put it, even inspired the only cheerful play that Williams had ever written – *The Rose Tattoo.* This work of his "celebrates the best in the Mediterranean culture" (Ibell 77). Even though it involves the ever-present themes of death and loneliness that were crucial for Williams's work, *The Rose Tattoo* is in general a very positive piece, demonstrating how a powerful human spirit can withstand life's ordeal (Ibell 79).

2.2.4 After *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

The 1950s was a period in which Tennessee Williams was especially productive, even though he did not manage to create any other piece of work that would resonate with the theatre-goers of the time as much as his 1940s' productions. The beginning of the 1950s was marked by Tennessee writing a novel rather than a play, "a small masterpiece" in itself, dealing with the usual for the playwright themes of "losing one's youth and beauty" (Ibell 68), sex, and money, but is quite unknown for the wider audience these days. *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* shows how with the loss of one's good looks mercilessly taken away by time the roles of predators and preys, as far as amorous affairs are concerned, quite frequently reverse. Once a famous actress, Karen Stone, the main protagonist of the book, looked down on her contemporaries, almost condescendingly allowing them to approach herself in an intimate way. Now, a retired middle-aged widow, she yearns for the attention of young men, but has no other means of obtaining it rather than buying their services (Ibell 74-75).

Another play of the period in question, *Camino Real*, produced in 1953, was a piece that would better fit in the "drug culture and experimental theatre world of the late 1960s" (Ibell 80), a fact that pre-determined the apprehension with which both the audience and the critics treated it. Considerably more successful than its predecessor was a 1955 play *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, which brought Williams a second Pulitzer Prize. Set on a Southern plantation in Mississippi, the play features a multimillionaire Big Daddy and his two sons with their wives fighting over the dying cotton businessman's inheritance (Ibell 85-86).

Many of Tennessee's works became known to the world due to the fact that they were often turned into films, among which were the above mentioned *The Rose Tattoo, Cat On a Hot Tin Roof, Orpheus Descending* (a reworking of *Battle of Angels*) along with the playwright's sensational *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire.*

2.2.5 A Period of Adjustment

Williams's first play of the 1960s, *A Period of Adjustment*, as if prophetically named this way, marked a new period in the life of the playwright. The years to come were to bring him disillusionment with his work fervently attacked by the same literary critics that had praised him earlier (Ibell 101).

From the beginning of the 1960s further on, life was to change dramatically for the playwright: he would still see his plays turned into films, but his literary efforts would stay unappreciated. Emotionally suppressed due to being rejected as a professional, Williams was also suffering in the face of Frank Merlo's diagnosed lung cancer followed by his consequent death. Playwright's deepening depression combined with paranoia stimulated his younger brother Dakin to try to help Tennessee. The former approached the problem from a rather unusual angle and somehow managed to persuade his brother to convert to Roman Catholicism. However, Williams seemed to have little interest in religion and did not manage to find consolation in it. After his *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel*, in which the playwright had put all his resources, faced a storm of negative reviews (something which seemed to have become a regular reaction by that time), Tennessee's mental health started causing a serious concern. In the end it was decided by Dakin that the only solution was confining the playwright to "the mental ward of a hospital in St. Louis" (Ibell 130). Even though the morality of such a deed is arguable, it was undoubtedly the decision that saved Tennessee Williams's life.

2.2.6 A Period of decline

The 1960s and the 1970s were a period of constant decline both in terms of playwright's health as well as his professional reputation. Despite all the harsh criticism and repeated claims about "his best work being far behind him" (Loney), Williams continued to write until the very end of his life. *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (1962), *The Seven Descents of Myrtle* (1967), *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* (1969), *Small Craft Warnings* (1972), *Vieux Carré* (1979), to name a few, were all accepted unfavorably. Unfortunately for the writer, the world did not comprehend his aspirations to create a new type of dramaturgy rather than trying to repeat his earlier commercial success that he experienced with the production of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The way both the critics and the audience perceived it was often based on the assumption that the playwright had exhausted his talent and skill "in imagining affecting characters, in evoking arresting environments and invoking potentially explosive situations" (Loney).

In 1975 Williams published his memoirs that were not only highly entertaining, but also contained an open confession about his sex life. The latter being "dull and dependable" (Ibell 143) in the late years of Williams's life, it never brought peace to him. One relationship that was important at this stage of playwright's life was that with a "handsome, pony-tailed, 25-year old" (Keeney) Robert Carroll, an ex-Vietnam veteran and a novelist. Having eventually split up after a tumultuous relationship, the two remained close and Carroll was even "left a regular lifetime income in Tennessee's will" (Ibell 144).

Clothes for A Summer Hotel (1980) and *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (1981), full-length plays of the playwright's late creative life, did not manage to live up to the world's expectations, either. The latter fact is especially disappointing considering how grand the figures inhabit *Clothes for A Summer Hotel*, and how vividly the author draws on his experience, both personal and professional, in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* (Ibell 146, 155).

2.2.7 Playwright's final years and posthumous reputation

Playwright's last play, *A House Not Meant To Stand* (1982), was another work that incorporated autobiographical elements: in the centre of attention there is a family consisting of parents and three children, two boys and a girl, bearing names that either directly or indirectly refer to Williams's own family members (Ibell 164-166). Despite having been warmly accepted at a festival in Miami, *A House Not Meant To Stand* was not transferred to New York due to producers' reluctance to take a risk of raising money for a commercially unsuccessful playwright. In the end, the play was "staged in Chicago, the town where his first great success, *The Glass Menagerie*, was launched" (Ibell 168).

At the age of seventy, Williams "found himself the recipient of both the Commonwealth Award for Distinguished Service in Drama and an honorary degree from Harvard" (Keeney), but the two distinctions were issued to celebrate his past contributions. Unfortunately for the playwright, the innovations he introduced in the theatre of the 1960s and 1970s would remain misunderstood during his lifetime due to the world not having been prepared to theatrical transformations in the direction Williams had set.

Tennessee Williams was found dead on 25, February 1983 on the floor of a hotel suite in Manhattan. New York City's Chief Medical Examiner stated that the playwright's death seemed to be accidental: the playwright had apparently choked on a plastic cap of a bottle of pills (nytimes.com).

Williams had frequently expressed his wish to be buried at sea as close as possible to the place of his idol, Hart Crane's, resting place, with whom he felt, according to his own words, almost identical (Tennessee Williams's interview with Bill Boggs). His brother Dakin, though, decided that the great playwright should be buried in ground so that his grave could be visited by the venerators of his art (Ibell 171).

Even though Tennessee Williams's works usually conjure up in one's mind images of the American South with its sun and heat, it is not the world of joy and celebration of life that they describe (Ibell 11). Themes that recur in the playwright's works are those of sexual desire, longing for lost youth and beauty along with the importance of money. The latter three components, in writer's opinion, formed a

"secular trinity", and their loss devastated one's life, which Tennessee so distinctly presented in his art (Ibell 7-8). His plays deal with the wrecked individuals, even though they do contain a promise of hope. By all accounts, Williams's work draws on his "own family life and other intense personal experiences" (Loney), and it is widely known that his life, especially its final decades, was far from being carefree. Nevertheless, the playwright was determined to live and write. Perhaps this determination to persevere that also embroiders all his creations is one of the reasons why the world-renowned dramatist's work keeps drawing the attention of theatre-goers.

Williams's reputation was restored at the beginning of the 21st century when people became interested not only in the works that the playwright created during his theatrical heyday years, but also in the last decades of his life. Tennessee's late-period work was very much ahead of its time and thus misinterpreted by his contemporaries. New generations of directors and theatre-goers managed to notice what their predecessors did not: albeit dealing with the same topics – something the literary critics of Tennessee's lifetime accused him of – the playwright often shed light on the latter from an unusual perspective. Williams's array of styles as well as his works' "universal application" (Ibell 176-177) is what allures modern-day admirers of his talent.

2.3. *A Streetcar Named Desire*

2.3.1 Setting and plot

A Streetcar Named Desire is a 1947 drama for which Tennessee Williams received one of his two Pulitzer Prize awards and which is perhaps his most famous piece of writing not the least due to the film version released in 1951.

The action of the whole play, as indicated in the extended scene setting in Scene One, takes place in a tenement building in New Orleans in a poor quarter. It is where Stella DuBois, an originally well-bred woman, and her husband of a working-class origin, Stanley Kowalski, reside.

An expression of "shocked disbelief" (Williams 20) is an emotion with which the reader first sees Blanche DuBois, Stella's older sister, who arrived in New Orleans from Laurel, Mississippi. After her and Stella's family home, Belle Reve, has been lost, Blanche, destitute, comes to stay with her sister as she has nowhere else to go. "Past her sell-by date", with her beauty fading and no financial means at all, Blanche's only hope to settle down in life is finding a suitable husband (Ibell 54-55). One of the potential candidates at hand is Mitch, Stanley's colleague and friend. However, Blanche's marriage dreams are not about to come true owing to her brother-in-law's efforts to discredit her.

"Having sensed a challenge to his robust manhood from the moment he met Blanche" (Gassner), Stanley goes out of his way to undermine the reputation of Blanche in his wife's eyes. Unfortunately for Blanche, her persona's past endeavors are far from being as noble as she her bearing suggests. The conflict of Blanche and the world around her is mirrored in her name (Blanche – "white" in French) as well as in her manners as compared to the reality. In spite of her exquisite fox-pieces and dresses, elegant bearing and a name implying her purity, Blanche is not as innocent as she would have desired to appear. As the story progresses, the reader is enlightened on the life story of Blanche DuBois, and the gap between what one sees and what one learns seems too large to be true.

From a monologue Blanche utters when on a date with Mitch in Scene Six, the reader learns details of the heroine's personal life. She fell in love at the age of sixteen with a boy, Alan, who was dedicating her poetry and was very soft and tender in

general. Later on, after they had got married, she by chance discovered that he was gay: "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). Pretending nothing had happened, all three of them went dancing, however Blanche was not able to tolerate her husband's newly revealed sexuality and confronted the boy. As a result, Alan ran out and committed suicide due to the inability to face the fact that his wife, a woman who, he had hoped, could understand him, rejected him so harshly (Williams 96).

After Alan's death Blanche was looking for solace in her "many intimacies with strangers" – a fact that she eventually admits is true – including a "seventeen-year-old boy", an episode after which she was dismissed from her teaching position on the grounds of being "morally unfit" for it (Williams 118). Thus, Blanche comprehends desire as a cure against loneliness, against her haunting memories of the past and reality of the present.

Blanche's idea of desire is at odds with that of Stanley's, her brother-in-law's, whose attitude to life in general as well as to its pleasures, sex being one of them, is rather a simplistic one, but the one that proves to be more beneficial in the end. Whereas Blanche's fragile mind cannot endure the hammer of fate she is exposed to, Stanley appears to not only successfully adapt to the changing environment of the modern world, but to a certain extent also to control it. Stanley's rape of Blanche paving Blanche's way to a mental hospital can thus be regarded both as a means of his demonstrating superiority in the Kowalskis' household and at the same time as establishing the rule of the strong in the new social order system. The underlying idea behind the rape Stanley commits at the end of the play is to be looked into in more detail in the practical part of this work.

2.3.2 Elements of plastic theatre in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

The method of plastic theatre is a technique first implemented by Tennessee Williams when he was working on *The Glass Menagerie* in the early 1940s. Apart from traditional acting, plastic theatre incorporates various non-literary elements, such as music, light and theatrical props, in order to enhance the action on stage. According to the playwright, "expressionism and all other unconventional techniques in drama have only one valid aim, and that is a closer approach to truth" (*The Glass Menagerie* 7). Only through transformation of real-life practices, believed the dramatist, can the audience grasp a state of affairs the playwright intends to communicate.

It is the use of visual aids and music that the playwright uses to convey the psychological states of his characters in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and to accentuate the importance of certain events in the plot. Thus, one of the most significant elements of plastic theatre in the play is the Varsouviana Polka which Blanche hears every time the memory of her deceased husband is triggered and which always stops only after a revolver shot is heard. Another prominent melody heard within the course of the action is that of blues music. The blue piano creates the dreamlike atmosphere, as it is mostly heard at reminiscent moments, such as Blanche "recalling the unfortunate fate of Belle Reve" in Act One (Plastic Theatre).

Tennessee Williams often turned his attention to music as one of the means of meaning communication in theatre. The playwright believed in the ability of music to convey feelings and emotions to add to the atmosphere of the moment. It is by the means of music in *A Streetcar Named Desire* that the author accentuates Blanche's "mental instability" that she has in common with the playwright's own sister, Rose, whereas her guilt is shared with the playwright himself (Ibell 57).

Another powerful means of plastic theatre used in the play is that of light. Blanche, concealing the truth about herself and her past, never appears in the direct light and is only exposed to it at the end of the play when Mitch confronts her with the facts he has learnt about her. Thus, light, or rather its absence, helps to create the atmosphere of understatement and of the unresolved problems remaining in the shade.

2.3.3 Production and critical reception

A Streetcar Named Desire premiered at the Barrymore Theatre in 1947, immediately becoming a hit and running 855 performances. There have been a number of revivals since the first opening night with many talented actresses in the role of Blanche: Jessica Tandy in the original cast, Tallulah Bankhead – an actress for whom Williams initially created the role of Blanche, and Cate Blanchett who received an Oscar for Best Actress in 2014. The most memorable performance, though, is that of Vivien Leigh, who was "immortalized in the film version" (Ibell 59) directed by Elia Kazan and released in 1951.

Vivien Leigh first acted in the role of Blanche DuBois in the successful London production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* directed by her husband, Sir Laurence Olivier, in 1949. Williams and Irene Mayer Selznick, the director of the Broadway production, invited the actress for the same role in a film version to be directed by Kazan, an influential Oscar-winning director. The rest of the cast included Kim Hunter as Stella, Karl Malden as Mitch, and Marlon Brando as Stanley – a reprise of the original Broadway acting crew. The film cast all excelled at their roles: Hunter and Malden were each awarded an Oscar in the Best Supporting Actress/ Actor categories, Brando's career rocketed making him a major Hollywood star, and Leigh, with her powerful embodiment of Blanche DuBois, won an Oscar for the Best Actress the year following the film release (Ibell 59-60).

Just like its theatrical counterpart, the film was highly praised: "a motion picture that throbs with passion and poignancy" (nytimes.com). Both critics and the audiences of the time were smitten with the outstanding clarity of emotion projected on the screen. The film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* was unanimously agreed to have preserved the feeling of loneliness and the desperation of struggle depicted in the play by Tennessee Williams (The New York Times). Thus, the fact of the film winning four awards – a record set in the film industry and matched only once since – is hardly surprising. So is the fact of *A Streetcar Named Desire* being one of the films selected for preservation in the National Film Registry of the United States of America (Library of Congress) – an honour received by the motion pictures of special value.

2.4. Terence Rattigan's biography

2.4.1 Family background and life at Harrow

Sir Terence Mervyn Rattigan (1911 – 1977) was a 20-th century dramatist, one of the most popular playwrights of his time. He is often referred to as a "master of the well-crafted play of upper-class manners and forbidden sexuality" (The Rattigan Enigma). Despite his characters always belonging to this class, the way Rattigan himself did, the issues raised in his works are universally applicable, no matter the class, the gender or the race.

Terence Rattigan was born in 1911 in Kensington, London. His father was a highly respected diplomat followed everywhere by his wife, which pre-determined writer's childhood: his parents frequently travelled and stayed abroad, and the mission of raising the boy was laid upon his paternal grandmother. In 1922 Frank Rattigan had to disgracefully retire on a small pension due to an affair that he started with a future Queen of Greece, which was something the British Foreign office would not tolerate (Wansell 23). Despite the significant income loss in the family, Terence was able to continue with schooling and eventually managed to obtain a scholarship to study at Harrow, a prestigious boarding school for boys. Being good-looking and self-confident, Terence was also an outstanding cricket batsman – a young man with an "appetite of cricket recalled that of his father before" (Wansell 24). His school sports career peaked when he participated in the annual games at Lord's against the Eton's cricket team in 1929.

Rattigan detected his passion for drama soon enough after entering Harrow at the age of thirteen. Drama became an interest that he would satiate by spending hours in Vaughan library, where he studied both texts of classical authors and those of contemporary playwrights. With time Rattigan became a crucial figure in the theatre life of Harrow. Frank Rattigan, his father, encouraged playwriting, however he pinpointed that he only tolerated it as a hobby, not as a professional activity, in which Terence could get involved in his leisure time (The Rattigan Enigma).

As Martin Tyrrell, a teacher of English and drama studies at Harrow, comments in an interview for Benedict Cumberbatch's "The Rattigan Enigma", "it was most probably during these formative years at Harrow that Rattigan realised he was a

homosexual" (The Rattigan Enigma). Back in the first half of the 20-th century homosexuality was generally viewed in Britain as something "completely unnatural" (Wansell 24) on top of being legally prosecuted. It was during his boarding school years that Rattigan recognised his "nascent sexuality" (Wansell 24) and learnt he had to conceal it. The latter was something he did throughout the rest of his life, and he only disclosed his sexual orientation to a few intimate friends. The fact that the playwright himself could not openly express his sexuality was reflected in his plays, which are, according to M. Tyrrell, "full of figures who are tortured by their sexuality" (The Rattigan Enigma). *A Deep Blue Sea*, one the two focal plays of the present bachelor thesis, is a bright representative of Rattigan's drama containing characters burdened with their sexuality, and is to be dealt with later in this work.

2.4.2 The first success and its consequences

When in 1930 Rattigan gained a scholarship to read History at Trinity College, Oxford, he saw it as an opportunity to materialise his desired career as a playwright. The university years brought a breath of fresh air into his life. "The constraints of school had gone, and he intended to indulge himself, in theatre, in writing, and in the company of other like-minded young men" (Wansell 48). Rattigan quickly decided to leave his cricket success behind and identified himself with his fellow undergraduates determined to define their lives by art. He was little interested in history then and joined the Oxford University Dramatic Society instead, where he made friends with his future colleagues, to-be dramatic critics and directors.

Having not turned up on his final examination day, even though he had been studying harder than before in his last year, Rattigan devoted all his attention to creating his first serious play, on which he was working with his flatmate and Oxford friend Philip Heimann. The young man was having an affair with an older female undergraduate, Irina Basilewich, who Rattigan knew and admired, however could not help the attraction he felt for his friend. With Heimann being a heterosexual, Rattigan could not cherish hopes about any potential relationship between them, but he could express his feelings on paper, which he did when he and Heimann co-wrote *First Episode* which was to become Rattigan's first West End success.

The feeling of success at his *First Episode*'s reception motivated Rattigan to quit Oxford for good in order to become a full-time professional playwright. His father was far from being satisfied with his son's decision, but gave a chance to his son's ambitions by offering him a deal: Frank Rattigan would give Terrence an allowance of 200 pounds a year as well as the permission to stay at his family home and write, but if by the end of his trial period, which was two years, Terence had not established his reputation of a writer, he would opt for another profession (Rebellato VII).

The next couple of years after Rattigan and his father made the deal, Terence experienced constant rejections, and it seemed that success in theatre was unreachable for him; however his luck changed suddenly in 1936. A major show at the Criterion Theatre was losing money, and the management of the theatre decided to stage a

cheaper production until the next play was ready. Rattigan's play *Gone Away* that was written during the period of Rattigan living with his parents and that was rejected earlier, was offered the slot. In 1936 his comedy *French Without Tears* successfully premiered at the Criterion Theatre on Piccadilly Circus. A light story about a cram school for adults willing to learn French was praised as a "brilliant little comedy, gay, witty, thoroughly contemporary without being unpleasantly modern" (Wansell, 80) by the *Morning Post* – a review that was echoed in many other newspapers the next morning after the premiere took place. *French Without Tears* ran for more than a thousand performances, making the author rich and famous (The Rattigan Enigma).

2.4.3 Wartime period

In 1938 Rattigan started to work on two new plays: a comedy *Follow My Leader*, which he wrote in collaboration with "his friend and contemporary at Harrow and Oxford", Tony Goldschmidt; and a drama *After The Dance* (Wansell 89), a serious work dealing with unequal relationships – a topic which would later be encountered in many of his works. It was at this point that Rattigan started an affair with Peter Osborn, an actor making his way in the West End. Their relationship would endure, with breakups and reconciliation, until the end of Rattigan's life.

Meanwhile, the audience neglected *After The Dance* overshadowed by the "darkening European crisis" (Rebellato VIII) , and the second play of this period, *Follow My Leader*, was rejected to be staged due to its focus on the rise of Hitler in Germany, which was considered by the Foreign Office to be unnecessary in the atmosphere of impending war. According to Rattigan's biographers, it was after these failures that Rattigan deepened his insecurity about writing and found himself in a state that he later acknowledged to be a nervous breakdown (Darlow and Hodson).

After the outbreak of war there was a great demand for volunteers to join the army, and Rattigan was willing to join the RAF, as his psychiatrist acquaintance had advised him in order to cure from his writer's block. This rather unusual treatment with new responsibility and many demanding tasks at hand seemed to help Rattigan – by 1941 he was writing again (Rebellato IX). Military life enabled Rattigan to "escape from the realities of his former life": studying gunnery, codes and flying itself required enormous concentration (Wansell 110). Rattigan's experience in RAF not only served a source of bright impressions for the playwright, but it also managed to provide him with the inspiration he needed. *Flare Path* reflecting Rattigan's involvement in military operations became dramatist's next play, the first play he had written in four years.

The 1940s were a decade of a lifted spirit for the playwright: he had three of his plays running in the West End and a "number of successful films" he had co-written the scripts for (Rebellato IX). As far as his private life was concerned, the second half of the forties was held under the auspices of Rattigan's relationship with a wealthy Member of Parliament, Henry 'Chips' Channon. The latter gained playwright's favour within just a few weeks, and very soon Rattigan dedicated a play to his newly acquired lover – *Love in Idleness*, whose premiere Channon would watch sitting in the same box with Rattigan

and his parents (Wansell 147). Even though the relationship between the two men was not a reckless one, as both of them put their public image in the first place and did not wish to disarray their habitual lives, Channon's influence on Rattigan's persona was only positive. It was during these years when the men had an affair that Rattigan produced his next big hit, *The Winslow Boy*, one of the most well-known productions inspired by a real-life unprecedented accident of a family winning a court case against the Admiralty falsely accusing their son of theft. The play managed to transform public's view on Rattigan as a commercial light-comedy writer and showed his ambitions for being recognised as a serious playwright for which he had always strived (Rebellato IX-X).

2.4.4 The peak of Rattigan's reputation and its sudden demise

In 1950 Rattigan wrote a controversial article, "Concerning the Play of Ideas" which in the end placed him further from his aspiration of being regarded as a serious dramatist. In this article the playwright accused many of his contemporaries to be too concerned with ideas per se as opposed to characters and narration whose importance they undermined. The article triggered many vehement responses condemning its contents and blaming the author for ensuring his career for entertainment-driven, commercial theatres (The Rattigan Enigma).

In 1952 Rattigan wrote a play that was by all accounts inspired by the suicide of one of his lovers, Kenneth Morgan, a young actor to whom Terence was deeply attached and felt partly guilty for his death. Morgan's suicide terrified the playwright, but at the same time gave him an idea for one of his finest plays, *The Deep Blue Sea* (Rebellato XI), which is dealt with in more detail further in this thesis.

It is believed that the first drafts depicted a homosexual relationship, but given the censorship effectively executed by Lord Chamberlain's office whose solemn duty was to ensure that "no 'offensive or suggestive' material was performed in public on the London stage" (Wansell 60), this does not seem to have been plausible. What is more, the playwright knew the mood of the audience in regard to homosexuality too well and would hardly risk his reputation in a vain attempt to knowingly stage a non-appealing work. The play as the reader knows it now, with a heterosexual couple tormented by the depths of despair due to the inequality of their feelings, was another West End success and became the basis for a film starring Vivien Leigh and Kenneth Moore. More detailed information concerning *The Deep Blue Sea*'s contents as well as its reception both in its theatre and film versions is to be found in chapter five.

In 1953, encouraged by the success of *The Deep Blue Sea*, Rattigan wrote a "much lighter affair" (The Rattigan Enigma), *The Sleeping Prince*, which, despite being commercially successful, did not become popular with critics. In an attempt to convince the latter that his plays' commercial success should not prevent the experts from fair consideration of his work, Rattigan used a preface to the second volume of his *Collected Plays*. It was there where the readers found a new character – Aunt Edna – "an aging lady, theatre-goer, living in a Kensington hotel" (The Rattigan Enigma). This comical character was intended to symbolise an average representative of the audience whose

expectations should always be taken into consideration, as the theatrical experience relies heavily on such a viewer. Unfortunately for the playwright, his point of view was not shared and, just like "Concerning the Play of Ideas", rooted even more his image of a "social butterfly" (The Rattigan Enigma). Rattigan's next play, *Separate Tables*, temporarily re-established Rattigan's reputation of a serious dramatist. In *Separate Tables* the author deals with the issues of "honest sexual expression" (The Rattigan Enigma) as well as desperation caused by people's loneliness. After its opening in 1954, the play was highly renowned, and two years later it was made into a remarkably successful Broadway film.

By the mid-50s the mood of Rattigan's contemporaries had considerably changed, which was clearly noticeable in the new theatre it brought about. On 8, May, 1956 the playwright was to witness the rise of the new theatre, a representative of the so-called kitchen sink realism, introduced by John Osborne's *Look Back In Anger*, which almost immediately marked Rattigan as old-fashioned. The Angry Young Men movement's popularity combined with the 1950s' purges of the homosexual contributed to the decline of Rattigan's career. Feeling rejected by the theatre world and suffering from poor health, Terence decided to leave Britain for Bermuda first and then for Hollywood, where he spent the second half of the sixties and the majority of the seventies (Rebellato XII – XV). Rattigan's reputation would not be turned until the 1970s, when a row of successful revivals took place which brought him back the appraisal he had enjoyed in the years of his glory.

2.4.5 Playwright's final years

In the 1970s Rattigan's fortune seemed to turn around again: he wrote many successful screenplays for television and films, and there were a few celebrated theatre revivals of his works. In 1971 Rattigan was granted a knighthood for which he shortly returned to Britain – "the second playwright to receive such an honour since World War I" (The Rattigan Enigma).

Rattigan's last play, *Cause Célèbre*, based on a real-life trial of a woman and her teenage lover having killed her husband, was warmly received by both the critics and the public. The play was first broadcast by BBC Radio, and then Rattigan was invited to come back to Britain to develop a stage version. Despite having been diagnosed with bone cancer, he accepted the invitation. This was the last play the dramatist was to see staged and enjoy the success of. The performance of the play, the "twenty-first of his new plays to be presented in London's West End, took place in Her Majesty's Theatre on 4 July, 1977 (Wansell 389). By that time the playwright was feeling very ill and died only a few months later in Bermuda, at the age of sixty-six.

After his death Terence Rattigan "slid into temporary critical oblivion" (Wansell 399) and only fifteen years after his death was he granted the deserved attention. A revival of *A Deep Blue Sea* in 1993 at the Almeida Theatre in London brought about a succession of further plays' revivals, firmly placing Rattigan among the finest dramatists of the 20th century.

2.5. *The Deep Blue Sea*

2.5.1 Setting and plot

The Deep Blue Sea (1952), one of the two works the present bachelor thesis deals with, is a three-act play, the most famous piece of work by a British playwright Terence Rattigan. Set in the post-war Britain of the early 1950s, it represents, according to Charles Spencer, a "small-scale domestic piece" (telegraph.co.uk). However, the play is much more than that at least due to the author's personal experience projected in the piece of work in question. Not only was *The Deep Blue Sea* "the hardest of my plays to write" (Rebellato XVIII), it also was the product of the tragic, by cause of its suddenness, suicide committed by Rattigan's ex-lover, Kenneth Morgan.

The Deep Blue Sea is in many aspects the reflection of the playwright's own private life and one can find the dramatist himself as well as his former lovers in the characters of the play. On the one hand, the relationship between the main heroine, Hester Collyer, and her husband William is suggestive of that between Rattigan and Kenneth Morgan, who "left a wealthy and successful playwright for a younger man" (Wansell 216). On the other hand, it is possible to see part of Rattigan in Hester while Sir William Collyer could represent another Rattigan's lover, Henry 'Chips' Channon, who was known to have gained playwright's liking by showering the latter with expensive gifts.

Rattigan's original concept was to write a "one-act play about a successful suicide attempt" (Rebellato XIX), however he revised it while working on the play in order to make it both more complex and, in its special manner, drearier, as it features the main protagonist embracing the choice to live against all odds. The opening scene of the play stays true to the Rattigan's initial scheme – the body of a woman found on the floor in front of a gas-fire – however, instead of letting her die, the playwright makes her live and combat the hardships of her life.

In the scene description of the opening act of *The Deep Blue Sea*, Rattigan defines the venue of the whole play. The reader finds himself/ herself in "the sitting room of a furnished flat in the north-west of London" (Rattigan 3). As the chronology of the plot is revealed before the reader, one becomes aware of the action taking place in the post-war time, not long after the end of the Second World War. The house in which the main

protagonists of the play, Hester and her lover Freddie, are accommodated is a "gloomy Victorian mansion, converted to flats after World War I" (Rattigan 3). The look "of dinginess, even of squalor" (Rattigan 3) ascribed by the author to the formerly mentioned building was a typical feature of the period. In his famous report (1942), which Sir William Beveridge, a British economist known for his progressive social reforms attempts, presented to the British parliament in November 1942, squalor, referred to in the play, is called one of the five "great evils" to be fought against in order to "banish poverty" (WW2 People's War - Timeline).

The main focus of readers' attention is Hester Collyer, a woman who, as one learns as the story progresses, leaves a respectable life with her husband, a High Court Judge Sir William Collyer, in order to grasp the feeling of passion with a former Royal Air Force pilot Freddie Page. Unfortunately for the heroine, the depth of the passion she is smitten with appears to not be shared by her lover, and this inequality of feeling, as well as the perceived intolerance of the society she lives in, drives the protagonist to attempted suicide.

As mentioned above, the play opens with Hester Collyer, who has tried to take her own life, like Kenneth Morgan, by gassing herself. She is later discovered in such condition by her landlady and a couple from the same house. Luckily, the heroine is alive and, as the story unfolds, the reader learns about both the past and the present situation of Hester. A clergyman's daughter, wife of the reputable "Mr Justice Collyer", the woman abandons the latter in order to pursue happiness with Freddie Page, a flying ace once, a succumbing semi-alcoholic in the present. The narration reveals that Hester met Freddie in Sunningdale, at a golf club which she and her husband attended 10 months prior to the situation witnessed by the reader. According to Hester, she "had never paid much attention to him [Freddie]. I didn't think he was even particularly good-looking, and the RAF slang used to irritate me slightly…" (Rattigan 51). It was a matter of a few, as Hester puts it herself, "conventional" phrases, a touch of a hand, a laugh of a "guilty small boy", and she "knew then in that tiny moment when we were laughing together so close that I had no hope. No hope at all" (Rattigan 52). Despite all the numerous logical cons of making such a decision, such as displeasure of the 1950s' society she lives in, difficulties in obtaining divorce, financial problems, unfavourable living conditions, Mrs. Collyer resolves to go after passion. The desire she feels is not a purely physical issue, though. As Hester exclaims in a conversation with her husband,

“it’s all far too big and confusing to be tied up in such a neat little parcel and labelled lust. Lust isn’t the whole of life – and Freddie is, you see, to me” (Rattigan 50). Unfortunately for the main protagonist, the deep blue sea of emotion in her soul is not reciprocated in exactly the same way.

The reader follows Hester, whom one only sees in her living-room within the course of one day, thus constrained by space and time. Moreover, the composition of the play is also symmetrical. After Freddie accidentally discovers the suicidal note that his lover addressed to him and was intending to leave to be found after her death, he realises that he is incapable of staying in this relationship any longer, knowing that “he’s driving the only girl he’s ever loved to suicide” (Rattigan 58). The fact of Freddie deserting her, leads Hester to the second suicide attempt, which is timely prevented by Doctor Miller, another tenant of the house where Hester and Freddie live. It is Mr. Miller whose words appear to be crucial in guiding Hester to the decision to live, even without hope. At the end of the play the image of the gas-meter emerges again, but this time the main protagonist uses it to light a fire, which could be interpreted as a new beginning, a sparkle of life flickering in the world of darkness.

As a *Guardian* critic Michael Billington highlighted in his obituary published after the death of Rattigan, all the work of the playwright is “a sustained assault on English middle class values: fear of emotional commitment, terror in the face of passion, apprehension about sex” (The Guardian). All of these are the focus of attention in *The Deep Blue Sea*, where, with the implementation of only a few characters, the playwright demonstrated the impossibility of healthy amorous choices under the ever-daunting social pressure.

2.5.2 Production and critical reception

Casting and producing *The Deep Blue Sea* turned out to be rather challenging: the actors Rattigan had in mind for particular roles kept declining his offer, and it took much effort for Rattigan's friend and H. M. Tennent Ltd.'s manager and producer, Hugh 'Binkie' Beaumont, to persuade Peggy Ashcroft, whom he saw as a perfect lead for the play, to accept the part. The actress stated she "thought she [Hester] was terribly selfish and cowardly to try and commit suicide just because her lover left her or was being neglectful" (Rebellato XX) and suggested it was nearly impossible to make Hester appeal to the audience.

When rehearsals started in January 1952, Ashcroft was still not feeling entirely comfortable with the role. Frith Banbury, the director of the play, once heard Peggy complain: "I feel as if I'm walking about with no clothes on" (Wansell 222), which was exactly the effect he intended the actress to convey and which she successfully did on the night of the play's premiere on 6 March 1952 at the West End Duchess Theatre in London. The silence prevalent throughout the whole course of the performance was only broken as the final curtain fell – then the audience burst in a roar of cheering. The following morning all the critics were praising Rattigan's new masterpiece – their judgement being summarised in the statement "Mr. Rattigan Jumps Back to the Top" (Wansell 223).

The only negative critical remark that the play has ever received since its premiere in 1952 is that of its ending, and there is still no unanimous opinion on the subject. Kenneth Tynan, an influential theatre critic and writer, succinctly expressed his and some others' dissatisfaction: "I shall never forgive Mr. Rattigan for his last act. It is intolerable. […] If his heroine kills herself, he will merely be repeating the pattern, so he decides to let her live. But he has stated the case for her death so pungently that he cannot argue her out of the impasse without forfeiting our respect" (Tynan 20-21). Rattigan himself was aware that such reaction might follow. As a matter of fact, when the dramatist was planning the play as a one-acter, as indicated in sub-chapter above, he intended to end it with Hester taking her own life. However, as *The Deep Blue Sea* progressed to become a full-length play, the playwright became determined that "whereas in a short play the suicide ending might be logical and conclusive, in the dramatic sense in a play of full length it seemed merely sentimental" (Wansell 224).

Thus, letting the heroine live, Rattigan shows her act of will and does not exclude a sparkle of hope for her even in a seemingly hopeless situation.

The first production of the play proved to be enormously successful and the playwright was offered to produce his creation on Broadway. Margaret Sullivan, whom Rattigan had in mind when creating his drama, as was always the case with the playwright – "throughout his writing life, he thought of actors as he created their parts, just as he thought of the actual theatres that they might play in" (Wansell 29) – accepted the part, but was not able to live up to the dramatist's expectations. Not only did she dislike the role as well as the actor recreating the role of Freddie Page, but was also reluctant to work with Frith Banbury, who was again appointed as a director for the production. The whole situation made Rattigan quite distressed and he was even thinking of not opening the play in New York, which was not possible at that stage.

Just as the playwright feared, Sullivan's performance did not stir either the American audience or the critics who labelled the play as a "soap opera" and a "slick magazine fiction" (Wansell 231). Despite a perceived failure that the playwright considered the American production to be, *The Deep Blue Sea* ran considerable 132 performances at the Morosco Theatre where it had premiered and went on to tour around the country for the next ten weeks. Nonetheless, Rattigan's ambition of securing a reputation of a serious playwright in America was not fulfilled, and even the film (1955) with the star of the legendary *A Streetcar Named Desire,* Vivien Leigh, did not work facing poor reviews after its release.

Due to Rattigan's sharp decline in popularity in the 1960s and 1970s the play disappeared from the theatrical repertoire, and the few minor revivals which took place at the end of the 1970s and throughout the 1980s "failed to impress" both the audience and the critics of the time (Rebellato XXXI). It was not until 1993 when *The Deep Blue Sea* and its author received their well-earned popularity again. Karel Reisz's production at the Almeida Theatre in London not only resulted in ecstatic critical reviews, but also managed to spark interest in Rattigan's work a decade after the playwright's death.

Since 1993 *The Deep Blue Sea* has been revived a number of times – the most recent revival being the one at the National Theatre in London in 2016. Helen McCrory's "shining performance" ("The Deep Blue Sea review – Helen McCrory blazes in passionate revival") presented the depth of passion and despair – both induced

by the phenomenon of inexplicable love lying at the core of the play. The power of emotion with which *The Deep Blue Sea* continues to startle theatre-goers rightly made the play begin, according to Michael Billington, "to look like a modern classic" (Rebellato XXXIII), while its author is universally acknowledged one of the most significant writers of the 20th century.

3. Practical part. Similarities and differences between the characters' behavioural patterns in the plays

3.1 Main heroines' social background

Born into a once wealthy family, Blanche DuBois from *A Streetcar Named Desire* is now left impoverished after having lost the family property while her younger sister Stella was settling down in New Orleans. As Blanche explains in Scene Three, Stella's and her ancestors were "French Huguenots" (Williams 55), which can be traced in her name too: Blanche DuBois, she points out, means "white woods" (Williams 55). "The snapshot of the place with the columns" (Williams 112) Stanley recalls in a conversation with Stella, the DuBois' family home, Belle Reve, accounts for their family's once being well-off.

From Blanche's confession to Stanley in Act Two one learns that Belle Reve was lost due to their ancestors' "epic fornications" (Williams 43) combined with a long succession of deaths, which she, "with my pitiful salary at the school" (Williams 27), could not afford. Left without means for existence, Blanche comes to New Orleans, as she has nowhere else to go, and flings herself upon Stella's and Stanley's mercy.

As for Hester Collyer, the main protagonist of *The Deep Blue Sea*, the reader learns that she is "a clergyman's daughter, living in Oxford, marries the first man who asks her and falls in love with the first man who gives her an eye" (Rattigan 36). As it has already been mentioned in the theoretical part of this thesis, Hester leaves her influential husband, a High Court Judge William Collyer, to live with an ex-pilot Freddie Page in stringent conditions.

As Dan Rebellato, Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London, contemplates in his introduction to the National Theatre's *The Deep Blue Sea*'s edition, Rattigan's placement of the heroine between the three men (her father, her husband, and her lover) each exercising some power is not coincidental: "Hester's sexuality is policed by a repressive triad of church, law and the army" (XXIV).

The instability of the situation in which both Blanche and Hester find themselves, a necessity to depend on other people's emotions and feelings towards them might seem

to be the only uniting bridge between the plays, however there is much more than meets the eye and is to be elaborated on in more detail in the present part of the thesis.

3.2. The concept of Want in *The Deep Blue Sea* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

3.2.1 The concept of Want in *The Deep Blue Sea*

Beveridge claimed that Want was an issue "in some ways the easiest to attack." (WW2 People's War - Timeline). His statement becomes dubious, though, if one ponders over the definition of the term in question. On the one hand, the post-war want implies people's wish to meet a certain standard of living, to be sure that there is a future more positive and wealthy for them. The shortage of housing, continual rationing of "some basic commodities like butter, meat, tea and coal" (History Today) along with high taxation and various state regulations were the legacy of Britain in the late 1940s and early 1950s. On the other hand, there has always been room for another type of want in people's lives: craving, longing, appetite, or Desire. Hester Collyer in *The Deep Blue Sea* seems to be combating both, with the latter type devouring her more vigorously, though. It is this invincible Desire she feels that forces her to leave her loving – in his own way – upper-middle class husband in order to pursue a relationship more passionate and ardent with an ex-pilot living in a working-class flat. In order to understand what effect Hester's decision brings about, one needs to take a closer look at what Britain's moral was at the time.

As far as marriage and sexual expression are concerned, the fervency with which the former was guarded and the latter reprehended is unimaginable for the present-day time. Even though the laws addressing divorce were somewhat softened during the 1940s and the divorce rate noticeably escalated when compared to the years prior to the war, divorce itself was still frowned upon in many circles (History Today). Thus, Hester's choice in favour of feeling over duty cannot be accepted by the society she lives in. What is more, the heroine herself considers her actions socially wrong, unworthy of a respectable woman. Anger, hatred and shame are the emotions she admits to be feeling throughout the course of action of *The Deep Blue Sea.* According to the heroine, her upbringing was conventional and she "was brought up to think that in a case of this kind it's more proper for it to be the man who does the loving" (Rattigan 26). The situation in which Hester finds herself – emotionally starved, unable to obtain the depth of feeling flaming within her from her beloved – results in her lacking respect towards herself, and that fills her with self-hatred. As Doctor Miller notes in Act Three, even the trite "I tried to be good and failed" (Rattigan 80) can be a just excuse in court

“if the judge is fair – and not blind with hatred for the criminal – as you are for yourself” (Rattigan 80). Hester’s refusal to respect herself culminates in her pleading the Doctor to present her “one extenuating circumstance – one single reason why I should respect myself – even a little” (Rattigan 80). As the play comes to its final, the reader sees Hester opt for life, even though she knows it will considerably differ from her previous experience, as she purposefully eradicates the presence of Freddie next to her, even when given a chance to retain him during his visit for a bag on the last pages of the play. The latter fact as well as the heroine’s earlier open confession about the nature of her love towards Freddie in front of her husband could most probably serve as the basis on which Hester might build the feeling of self-respect for which she yearns so much.

3.2.2 The concept of Want in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

The concept of Want seems to stand out in the title of *A Streetcar Named Desire*; however, in order to comprehend its nature, it is necessary to take into consideration the economic and social situation in the post-war America.

Given the fact of general prosperity and economic growth observed in the United States in the late 1940s (the period in which the action in *A Streetcar Named Desire* takes place), one can hardly apply the concept of Want in its meaning of lack of material goods and financial means to the action in Williams's drama. Even though Stella and Stanley Kowalski live in a tiny flat that they rent in a poor area, the issue of poverty hardly concerns them. The Kowalski family appears to successfully get by with what Stanley earns as a factory salesman, and Stella is rather confident that her husband has a "drive" (Williams 50) that might lead him somewhere.

Stella, the younger of the sisters, seemed to adjust to her new living conditions as well as the people – representatives of the "new world" America – around her rather painlessly, whereas Blanche's new state of being left without means to provide for herself made her only want to withdraw from the reality, which she eventually did by the means of abusing alcohol and even succumbing to madness in the end. Williams purposefully depicts Blanche as "the last representative of the old aristocracy" (Oklopčić) endowing her with the characteristics making it impossible for such a character to survive in the modern world. The specifics of Blanche's persona are discussed further in this thesis.

Taking into the consideration the favourable economic situation in the country referred to above, the main interpretation of Want in the play is that of physical desire. As it has been pinpointed in the theoretical part, Stanley's nature of desire in the play differs significantly from that of Blanche's.

From the first moment Stanley is introduced in the play, the reader sees him as someone quite primitive – which is exactly what Blanche will appeal to when trying to convince her sister to see Stanley for what he is:

> **Animal joy** in his being is implicit in all his movements and attitudes. Since earliest manhood the centre of his life has been pleasure with women, the giving and taking of it, not with weak indulgence, dependently, but with the power and pride of a richly feathered male bird among

> hens. […] **He sizes women up at a glance**, with sexual classifications, crude images flashing into his mind and **determining the way he smiles at them** (Williams 21).

Williams's comment concerning Stanley's attitude to women in the opening scene of *A Streetcar Named Desire* hints at the events about to follow. The only kind of smile that Stanley would address to his sister-in-law within the course of action is a grin, a mimic expression of contempt. It is easily traceable that Stanley grins at Blanche at those moments when he either mocks her or wants to express his superiority as, for instance, in Scene Four, when Stanley overhears Blanche's plead to Stella addressing his "animal's habits" (Williams 72), but pretends he does not know about anything. In Scene Eleven of the play Stanley uses his signature grin immediately after the idea of violating Blanche has come to his mind.

Blanche, on the other hand, being, according to Stella, "tender and trusting" (Williams 111) in her childhood, represents a very sensitive person in her adulthood, too. For her Desire is not just a regular pleasure of life, it is her means of escaping from the reality in which she is lonely and not so young anymore. An English teacher at high school in the past, Blanche was dismissed from her job on the grounds of child molesting. The latter fact, however terrifying, accounts for and can be explained by an even deeper psychological issue that the woman has – her ever-growing paranoia of getting old completely alone.

Williams clearly demonstrates Blanche's fixation with her age within the course of the play: first, when she lies to Mitch that Stella is her older sister: "Just slightly. Less than a year" (Williams 55), then mentioning turning twenty-seven on the day of her birthday (Williams 110). The climax of Blanche's maladjustment to the reality of being a woman over thirty gradually getting farther from her prime years is reached in Scene Nine of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, when Mitch suggests he take a look at Blanche in a bare lightbulb's light. Blanche "utters a frightened gasp" at Mitch tearing the paper lantern covering the lightbulb, frantically "crying out" and "covering her face" when the man turns the light on (Williams 117). Blanche's exaggerated preoccupation with her appearance is also demonstrated with her insistently repetitive question of "How do I look?" addressed to different people. The meaning of the latter, however, is more profound than a simple demonstration of Blanche's vanity. By introducing the main female protagonist the way she is in the play, Tennessee Williams in fact reviewed the so-called Southern belle stereotype, which is to be demonstrated hereinafter.

3.2.2.1 Southern belle stereotype

As Biljana Oklopčić, a senior lecturer at the Department of Foreign Languages at University of Osijek in Croatia, defines in her article "Southern Bellehood (De)Constructed: A Case Study of Blanche DuBois", "the figure of the Southern belle is founded on a canonized discourse, resting on a cultural and social *personification* – a description, a code, a stereotype – which legitimizes and authorizes the interpretation of culture and nature" (Americana). Such a figure rests upon several very strictly specified requirements, mostly taking their roots from the Victorian notion of a "woman as an angel in the house". Thus, the Southern belle stereotype presupposed a white woman figure of an aristocratic origin whose range of hobbies and interests would not go much further beyond reading and writing and whose main ambition in life was "finding and marrying a real Southern gentleman." Taking into consideration the latter postulate as a basis for the Southern belle stereotype and illuminating further details along the way, let us examine the playwright's approach to the case (Oklopčić).

As Blanche notes in a conversation with Stella on a poker night at their place, Mitch appeals to her due to his being "superior to the others" (Williams 49). Blanche's open manifestation of willing to "*deceive* him [Mitch] enough to make him – want me…" and the following romance between them (Williams 81), as well as her social background make the main protagonist seem to correspond to the image of a Southern belle. However, emphasising the incapability of such a character to survive in the world comprising people like Stanley, Williams portrays Blanche as a regular drinker leading a promiscuous life resulting in madness – all of the characteristics that do not fit into the Southern belle stereotype (Oklopčić).

3.3 The concept of Idleness in *The Deep Blue Sea* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

3.3.1 The concept of Idleness in *The Deep Blue Sea*

To contemplate on the concept of Idleness in the play, one needs to refer to Hester's lover, the relationship with whom becomes almost deadly for the heroine. A Royal Air Force pilot in the past, whose life "stopped in 1940" since he left the RAF (Rattigan 51), a basically unemployed drinker in the present, Freddie cannot find his place in peaceful world and idles with his air force friends playing golf at weekends. Freddie's live-for-the-moment strategy, which helped him go through the war, can explain Freddie's "immediate response to Hester's awakened passion" ("The Deep Blue Sea: Love and emotional truth in post-war Britain"). It is quite reasonable to conclude that such an attitude can hardly represent the basis for a deeper attachment, thus making the moment of crisis imminent.

Deeply affected by the war, Freddie is "emotionally damaged" (wsws.org) and is unable to return the passion Hester almost, in his point of view, imposed upon him: "A clergyman's daughter, living in Oxford, marries the first man who asks her and falls in love with the first man who gives her an eye" (Rattigan 36). From the conversation between Freddie and his friend, Jackie Jackson, in Act Two of the play, the reader learns more about the love-story Freddie was "tangled up" in (Rattigan 36) – a story of a middle-aged woman suddenly discovering an insatiable striving for shattering emotion when she meets a younger man who seems to express some interest in her. Unfortunately for the both protagonists, their idea of love proves to be very different. Freddie has given Hester all he is capable of, which Hester knows but cannot be content with due to her nature. Her feeling devours her completely and requires explicit manifestation of the reciprocal feeling, whereas Freddie, who, according to his own words, "can't be a ruddy Romeo all the time" (Rattigan 36), even though he claims to be in love with Hester, is a less devoted part. The male protagonist is aware of the enormous gap in their levels of involvement in the relationship and is mentally tormented by it. In the same conversation with Jackie in Act Two, he states: "I'm just a bloke who's having a couple of drinks because he's feeling ruddy miserable" (Rattigan 41). Mr. Page's abuse of alcohol could hereby be regarded an outlet for his feeling of heartache and hopelessness of the situation with Hester.

3.3.2 The concept of Idleness in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Idleness in this play is not so explicitly expressed as in *The Deep Blue Sea*, however there are elements of it to be found in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, too. Above all, it concerns Blanche, who, having lost her job in Laurel, comes to stay with her sister and brings "some nice clothes to meet all your lovely friends in" (Williams 23). Despite finding herself in a difficult financial situation, Blanche never expresses her intentions of obtaining a solid job with a steady income. On the contrary, according to the Southern belle myth Williams implements when building up the main protagonist, Blanche heavily relies on men as her saviours. Thus, in Scene Four, she comes up with an idea that she and Stella must get away from New Orleans and tries to send a wire to Shep Huntleigh, with whom Blanche "went out […] at college and wore his pin for a while" (Williams 66). Then, in Scene Ten Blanche boasts to Stanley that she has "received a telegram from an old admirer of mine" (Williams 123), thus in her imagination escaping from the reality to the world of strong men wanting her companionship just for the sake of it.

Blanche's final line addressed to the Doctor at the end of the play – "Whoever you are – I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (Williams 142) – is not just an indication of Blanche's good manners or persevering in her role of a noble aristocrat. "Depending on the kindness of strangers" has become her lifelong necessity, as her family has proved "wholly incapable of giving her the support, shelter or kindness she needs" (Ibell 58).

In regard to what has been said earlier, it is possible to say that Blanche's means of escapism while she is still balancing on the verge of fantasy and reality seems to be reliance on other people's presence in her life: "I want to be *near* you, got to be *with* somebody, I *can't* be *alone*!" (Williams 23). While waiting for the right person to come and save her, though, she does not seem to make any efforts of arranging her own future.

3.4. The concept of Ignorance in *The Deep Blue Sea* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

3.4.1 The concept of Ignorance in *The Deep Blue Sea*

Another "great evil" of the 1940s – 1950s' British society addressed in the play is Ignorance in the sense of incomprehension of what other people have to undergo given the difference of their nature. As it has already been mentioned earlier, the main conflict lies within the relationship insufficiency of Hester and Freddie. Given the morals of the epoch, Hester's choice of leaving her bleak marriage in order to go after feeling makes her pray of social condemnation. When renting a flat in Mrs. Elton's house together with Freddie, Mrs. Collyer becomes known as Mrs. Page, and it is not until the very moment of her attempted suicide that other tenants learn her real name as well as her being in fact married to another man. Hester's landlady, Mrs. Elton, discloses how distressed Hester was after Mrs. Elton had picked up her ration book and had seen her real name: "Poor lamb – she thought Mr. Elton would turn her out. I found her that evening packing her things" (Rattigan 11). To Hester's advantage, her landlady proved to be an understanding person, who silently guarded her secret and Hester's dignity along with it. As far as Freddie is concerned, his motives are less transparent to Mrs. Elton: "I can't understand how he could go and do a thing like that – leaving you alone tonight after what happened", she declares when talking to Hester after Freddie deserts the latter (Rattigan 62). Even Freddie's good friend, Jackie, does not seem to grasp what Freddie endures when he learns that his lover has tried to take her own life. Jackie replies in short, exuding his lack of interest phrases and at some point even tries to diverge from his friend's confession by asking him about the potential job offer being in question earlier (Rattigan 37). The peak of Jackie's ignorance can be traced when he explicitly indicates that Freddie overreacts to what has happened (Rattigan 41), as he, Jackie, himself is always capable of dealing with his partner, Liz: "And all because you forgot her birthday? But that's just the sort of black I'm always putting up with Liz" (Rattigan 35).

The brightest example of how far people's ignorance can go in the play is perhaps the situation with Dr. Miller, or rather an ex-doctor. According to Mrs. Elton, after the "bad trouble" (Rattigan 64) in which Miller had once been, his name was eliminated from the Medical Register with no hope to obtain his qualification back again. By all accounts, Miller was a talented doctor, who "was working on some sort of treatment"

(Rattigan 64) for infantile paralysis, and the reader can almost hear how Mrs. Elton bitterly proclaims: “There’s waste for you if you like” (Rattigan 64). One never learns what exactly it was what Miller did which resulted in such grave consequences for his career. However, Mrs. Elton’s insinuations such as the one that “ordinary normal people” can never forgive Miller’s mishap, or her remark about “all sorts of people it takes to make a world” followed by an unfinished story about a couple that once lived in flat eleven, suggest that Miller’s “crime” might have been him having been involved in a homosexual relationship (Rattigan 64-65). As it is correctly accentuated in the Terence Rattigan’s biography section of the Nick Hern Book’s edition of *The Deep Blue* Sea, “the 1950s were a difficult time for homosexual men”. Sexual minorities were so thoroughly searched for and arrested that they had do elaborate “a highly sophisticated system of gestural and dress codes, words and phrases that could be used to indicate one’s sexual desires” (Rabellato XIII). The 1950s saw a sharp enthusiasm of seeking out and making homosexual activities practised by the “Evil Men” public, of particular interest were men in heavy-duty positions (Rabellato XIV). To sum up, it is possible to say that, quite regrettably, one’s sexual orientation defined if the person could lead a satisfactory social and professional life. People whose preferences deviated from the heterosexual norm had to conceal it by all means; otherwise they would become victims of not only social, but also legal persecution (History Today). All of this is vividly reflected in Rattigan’s play: a letter Mr. Miller received one day, the case fervently discussed in newspapers, Doctor’s honest commentary about his time in jail, a petty position of a bookmaker’s clerk he had to accept after the scandal and his voluntary work at hospital at night (Rattigan 64). Public’s reluctance to accept people like Miller, that is people unlike them, once announced corrupted, is clearly voiced in Hester’s neighbour’s, Ann Welch’s, repeated statement of Miller not being a doctor, which she keeps asserting even in a situation when a person’s life might be at stake (Rattigan 6).

3.4.2 The concept of Ignorance in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Unlike Britain, which had been exercising persecution and imprisonment of homosexuals until the Wolfenden Report (1957) was implemented, the United States of America was generally more liberal towards the latter. Even though it was still not unheard of homosexuals' arrests executed on the basis of the state sodomy laws, there was no equivalent of the British Lord Chamberlain's office in America, which allowed gay people to participate in creation of films, music and literature. It was only the level of readiness of the audience to embrace homosexuality reflected in art and media that defined how far the artist could go when creating their work. Tennessee Williams, for instance, for whom homosexuality was an essential part of his life, was well aware of the impossibility of crafting an essentially homosexual play. Thus, each of his works directly or indirectly introduces gay characters, but all of them end up "dead or crippled" (Ibell 82). A typical example is Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* with its gay character Alan who, as one learns in Scene Six, commits suicide. Blanche's ignorance towards her young husband's situation is gradually replaced with understanding: "He came to me for help. I didn't know that" (Williams 95), and then – with guilt.

The guilt that Blanche feels towards her deceased husband is her constant companion now. What is more, the memories of Alan are often triggered by various coincidental situations: Stanley's question whether she was once married, a pack of Alan's letters that Stanley notices and snatches from her paper box, a young man that comes to ask for a donation. As Paul Ibell pinpoints in his book *Critical Lives: Tennessee Williams*, Mitch's eventual dismissal of Blanche is in some ways "a mirror image of her treatment of her husband" (57).

3.5. The concept of Disease in *The Deep Blue Sea* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*

3.5.1 The concept of Disease in *The Deep Blue Sea*

As for the concept of Disease raised by Beveridge, it echoes on several levels within *The Deep Blue Sea*. As well as some physical afflictions named in the play (Mr. Elton's arthritis, infantile paralysis – Doctor Miller's specialisation), one might also consider both Hester's and Freddie's sore states of mind as an unhealthy condition they have to endure. Mr. Page tries to drown out his suffering by turning to alcohol; Hester seeks salvation in death. The realization both characters gradually come to becomes the ultimate solution: in order to live on, they have to go different ways, since, as Freddie succinctly puts it at the end of Act Two, "we're death to each other, you and I" (Rattigan 59). Freddie's decision to leave Hester, and final determination of the latter to let him go facilitated by kind-hearted Miller's straightforwardness along with his support, and forgiving Mrs. Elton's help, grant the couple another chance, even though in a world without each other.

Another interpretation of Disease may be regarded in connection with the concept of Ignorance studied earlier in this work. The British society of the time period well known to the playwright himself, the one in which he placed his protagonists, intolerant to unfamiliarity, still curing its wounds after World War II, could be called impaired in regard with its inability to accept the realities of the present-day moment.

3.5.2 The concept of Disease in *A Streetcar Named Desire*

Of all the five concepts introduced in the practical part of the present thesis, the concept of Disease is perhaps the most explicitly evident in the play. From the moment Blanche is introduced in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, there is certain tension in her behaviour which manifests itself in the heroine's drinking problem as well as long baths that she takes in order to calm her nerves: "Oh, I feel so good after my long, hot bath, I feel so good and cool and – rested!" (Williams 105).

The means of plastic theatre that the playwright implemented in his art and which are particularly outstanding in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, also emphasise the state of mental instability of the main protagonist. As it has been mentioned previously in this work, a very powerful means of conveying emotions and feelings in the play is music. The Varsouviana polka that Blanche hears every time when forced to recall her failed marriage and the sound of the dreamy blue piano contribute to understanding the heroine's perception of the reality around her.

Heroine's desperate wish to create magic to avoid reality eventually reveals a veil of lies behind which Blanche was hiding: the fact that she had been dismissed from her school teaching position, not granted a holiday; her numerous encounters with men after her husband's death; her real age. All of this naturally makes one wonder whether the story about how the DuBois' family home had been lost is legit or whether Blanche aims at representing herself as a victim of circumstances entirely groundlessly.

Blanche's eventual loss of touch with reality, however cruel, seems completely justified. Not only is her madness a logical peak of Disease, but it is also a defeat against the modern era represented by Stanley and imposed on Blanche, despite her barricade of illusions, in the form of physical violation which brings her down and leads the heroine to the asylum.

4. Conclusion

Taking into consideration the observations pinpointed earlier in this thesis, it is possible to assert that *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *The Deep Blue Sea* both reflect the specifics of the epoch when they were written as well as the concerns of their authors.

When analysing both dramatic pieces, it was noticed that either *A Streetcar Named Desire* or *The Deep Blue Sea* to a greater or lesser extent contained the five concepts outlined by a British economist Sir William Beveridge in his famous 1942 report concerning his country's citizens' welfare, which was mentioned in the theoretical part of the thesis. The key role of the socio-economic status of *A Streetcar Named Desire*'s and *The Deep Blue Sea*'s characters, especially their main protagonists, due to their being women, allowed to implement the concepts introduced by Sir Beveridge Thus, it was decided to apply each of the concepts ("Squalor", "Want", "Idleness", "Ignorance", "Disease") to the focal dramatic pieces and to present the situations in which the former are relevant. The choice of practical part structure reflects the division based on the concepts mentioned earlier due to their ability to contribute to one's better understanding of the plays' settings and characters' behavioural patterns.

Both Tennessee and Rattigan placed their main heroines in the post-war world in situations when the women had to face certain difficulties, such as loss of their social status and financial means, and to make decisions as to how to cope with the situations in which they had found themselves. At the time, when women's welfare largely depended on men, seeing a woman combatting the hardships of life on her own, let alone, pursuing her desires, was rather exceptional. In the case of Hester Collyer in *The Deep Blue Sea* one sees a strong individual who, despite having attempted to commit suicide due to the inequality of feeling in her and Freddie's relationship, manages to find strength to live even after her lover has deserted her. Blanche DuBois from *A Streetcar Named Desire*, however, proves to lack the inner strength present in Hester and is defeated by the overwhelming scale of her life's tragedy. Having lost her husband as well as her family heritage and succumbed to promiscuity and regular drinking, Blanche cannot come to terms with reality and eventually loses touch with it.

Through the opposition of Blanche's world fraught with illusions and self-deceiving lies and the down-to-earthly brutal demeanor of Stanley, Tennessee Williams depicted a fatal clash of the old America and the new, post-war one where noble

aristocracy has no more use or even space. Similarly, Terence Rattigan's characters in *The Deep Blue Sea* "sum up to a portrait of the British society of the time" (Billington): a middle-class couple of Peter and Ann Welch, a working-class landlady, upper-class Mr. Collyer, a social outcast in the face of Dr. Miller. The appearance of the latter in the drama is not coincidental: the character, whose implied crime in the play is being a homosexual, embodies Rattigan's own fear of being deprived of his social status should his own sexual orientation become disclosed in real life. Similarly, Williams employs a homosexual character in his play as a means of resonating his crucial theme of suppressed sexuality which he introduces with the character of Blanche. Alan, once Blanche's husband, is discovered with another man and is eventually rejected by his wife, which leads the young man to a suicide. The bitterness and dismissal from society in the case of either Dr. Miller in *The Deep Blue Sea* or Alan in *A Streetcar Named Desire* emphasised by the dramatists were a type of reaction homosexual people were treated with in both Britain and the United States of America in the 1940s – 1950s.

More than half a century later Tennessee Williams's works as well as those of his British colleague, Terence Rattigan, remain topical due to their universal applicability. The means of plastic theatre introduced by the former playwright allowing the audience to experience the wretchedness of one's circumstances more closely along with the latter playwright's depth of passion revealed on the pages of his dramas earned fame and fortune for their authors as well as copious revivals for their works.

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