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„The Heat of Tennessee Williams’ South on the  
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## Declaration of Authenticity

I confirm to have conceived and written this paper in English all by myself. Quotations from sources are all clearly marked and acknowledged in the bibliographical references either in the footnotes or within the text. Any ideas borrowed and/or passages paraphrased from the works of other authors are truthfully acknowledged and identified in the footnotes.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



## Acknowledgments

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# 1. Introduction

*A border is more than just the division between two countries;  
it is also the division between two cultures and two memories.*

*(Carlos Fuentes)*

“Some borders are easier to cross than others”, states Guillermo Verdecchia, and adds that “[s]ome things get across borders easier than others” (Verdecchia, 57). The argument presented in this thesis concerns itself with the cultural dimension of national border crossing and explores the resonant implications such a transfer entails. In this endeavor, Tennessee Williams’ *Glass Menagerie* constitutes the cultural object of research, and it shall be examined how the play found its way on the Viennese stages. Could the Austrian (cultural) border be crossed easily or did the transfer encompass any obstacles? In an attempt to answer this question, the major focus will be placed on the reaction of the Viennese audience to the *Americanness* the play encapsulates. Were the American connotations readily integrated into Austria’s cultural landscape or did they rather provoke a feeling of alienation that led to the rejection of the play? As Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink points out, cultural transfer is a dynamic process<sup>1</sup>, which suggests that the audiences did not react uniformly to the drama throughout the different decades. Based on the method of performance criticism, a diachronic change of audience response will be outlined, which, in turn, will be analyzed from a socio-political perspective. However, my analyses will not only tackle the Viennese performances of *The Glass Menagerie*, but will equally take into account the Broadway stagings, since they constitute an indispensable parameter to illustrate potential differences between the American and the Austrian performance tradition of the play and reflect a paradigmatic American audience behavior, against which the reactions of the Viennese theatergoers will be measured. Therefore, part one of this thesis will provide an outline of the American stagings of *The Glass Menagerie* as they were realized on Broadway, while part two will be concerned with the Austrian enactments of the play. Finally, the third part will shed a comparative light on both performance traditions and seek to discover similarities as well as distinctions between them.

The first theoretical pillar of this paper is established by Lüsebrink’s theory of cultural transfer. According to his conception, the transmission of a cultural artifact

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 130.

from the source culture to the target culture can be roughly divided into three major processes, which he identifies as selection, mediation and reception.<sup>2</sup> This thesis will focus on the latter process, since it is most closely associated with the response of the target culture, viz., the reaction *The Glass Menagerie* elicited in Austria. Lüsebrink distinguishes between five different forms of reception, namely *Übertragung* (reproduction), *Nachahmung* (imitation), *Kulturelle Adaptation* (cultural adaptation), *Kommentar* (comment) and *Produktive Rezeption* (productive reception).<sup>3</sup> Among those, reproduction denotes the purest process of cultural transfer, since the transferred element remains most faithful to the original, as is the case in literal translation. By imitation Lüsebrink means the target culture's creation of cultural artifacts which, however, still retain and unequivocally display the linguistic and cultural features of the source culture. Unlike reproduction and imitation, cultural adaptation does not focus on the source culture, but rather takes into account the needs of the target culture. Cultural discourses, texts and rituals are adjusted to neatly fit the value system, ideological orientation and esthetic codes of the target culture with the purpose to facilitate a closer identification with the transferred object.<sup>4</sup> This process seems to bear particular relevance with regard to the subsequent analyses since it contextualizes questions such as the following: Was *The Glass Menagerie* culturally adapted and hence de-Americanized by the Viennese directors to foster a better understanding of the play? How was Amanda Wingfield's background of the American South conveyed understandably to an Austrian audience?

Closely related to the phenomenon of cultural adaptation is the process of productive reception. Similar to the former, the latter implies significant cultural alteration of the transferred element, which is again tailored to the needs of the target culture. As Gunter Grimm elucidates, productive reception places a stronger emphasis on the productive aspect, rather than the receptive.<sup>5</sup> Though the modification process preserves the original form and structure of the artifact, it often provides it with an entirely new content and sometimes even changes it beyond recognition.<sup>6</sup> However, this does not apply to *The Glass Menagerie*, which has remained clearly recognizable in all its Viennese stage appearances.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 132.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 132-136.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 134.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Grimm, 147ff.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 137.

Finally, Lüsebrink's notion of the comment encompasses different forms of discursive analyses, most prominently in the form of reviews or texts that serve a pedagogical and informative purpose. Since it functions as a mediating device between the source- and the target culture, the comment assumes great social significance and affects the reception of foreign cultural influences within the target culture.<sup>7</sup> The present thesis strongly avails itself of the comment in its endeavor to uncover the representations of the United States in the Austrian media and the distinctive features of Americanness which the critics discerned in the performances of *The Glass Menagerie*.

It is worth noting, though, that cultural transfer does not necessarily result in the integration of the artifact into the target culture, but may as well be countered with mental or cultural resistance, non-reception or reception that occurs only after considerable delay.<sup>8</sup> As Verdecchia quite rightly observes, “[s]ome things get across borders easier than others” (Verdecchia, 57). In that sense, it will be examined whether *The Glass Menagerie* was embraced or rejected as a unified whole, or whether some elements “crossed the border” into Austrian culture more easily than others. Were specific aspects of the play met with instant or repeated rejection while others were zealously welcomed? Were there any elements inherent in Williams' drama which the Austrians resented altogether?

Finally, further attention will be paid to external factors that incentivize and accelerate the transfer of a cultural artifact and its embedding into the target culture. For Lüsebrink, cultural transfer is tangibly encouraged by economic, political and ideological as well as emotional or affective dynamics<sup>9</sup>. The latter two distinctions seem to carry eminent importance with regard to the second part of this thesis. Particularly in view of Austria's post-war scene, it will be investigated whether the play was used as a tool to support or contest America's political hegemony. Furthermore, I will seek to explore the emotions the play evoked among the war-shattered Austrian community. Was it considered reflective of the dismal situation of Austria in the wake of World War II or was it perceived as a consolatory resort, an antithesis to their own world of trauma and tristesse?

The second pillar of my theoretical framework will be constituted by Joseph Roach's theory of Circum-Atlantic Performance. Roach propitiously posits that

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 133; 136.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 139.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 140-141.

collective memory and performance are inextricably intertwined<sup>10</sup>, which he derives from Richard Schechner's notion of performance being "restored behavior" (Schechner, 36). The intention of the repetition and rehearsal of a specific behavior rests in the deeply ingrained desire of each culture to preserve and perpetuate its "orature" (Roach, *Culture and Performance* 124), i.e. its distinctive form of "speech, gesture, song, dance, storytelling, proverbs, customs, rites and rituals" (Roach, *Culture and Performance* 124). However, an exact repetition of an action or a performance is impossible to render and hence a certain extent of memory-induced improvisation becomes inevitable.<sup>11</sup> Do forms of American "orature" surface in Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*? If so, were they compatible with the collective memory of the Austrian community? Or could the Austrians recognize features resembling their own forms of cultural expression in the play? How did the collective memory affect the various interpretations of the characters and the presentation of the content?

Both history and memory function importantly in the process of cultural transmission and are therefore influentially at work in the production and creation of performance. For Roach, the decisive difference between history and social memory, however, resides in the performative aspect of the latter. While history is documented by written records, memory is history imprinted on the bodies and is perpetuated by its enactment in the theater, rituals or ceremonies. Both history and performance work selectively, since communities choose which elements they want to transmit, and which they would rather forget.<sup>12</sup> In a diachronic examination, this "historical transmission and dissemination of cultural practices through collective representations" results in a social pattern, which Roach calls the "genealogies of performance" (Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 25). They consolidate drastically when a community feels the need to employ performance as a means of cultural self-assertion, which is conditioned by (cultural) encounter or exchange.<sup>13</sup> Thus, Roach adds an interesting dimension to Lüsebrink's theory of cultural transfer, since he posits that cultural encounter is per se disruptive due to its intrusion into a dissimilar system of collective memories and historically established behavioral patterns. According to him, it is the arbitrariness that defines the nature of collective memory which inevitably impedes the process of "surrogation"

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Roach, *Culture and Performance* 124.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead*, 3; *Culture and Performance*, 125;

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 26; *Culture and Performance* 125 – 126.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Roach, *Culture and Performance* 126.

(Roach, *Cities of the Dead 2*), i.e. the cultural reproduction or recreation that is triggered by new influences and cultural intrusions.<sup>14</sup> Roach asserts:

Because collective memory works selectively, imaginatively, and often perversely, surrogation rarely if ever succeeds. The process requires many trials and at least as many errors. The fit cannot be exact. (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 2*)

In other words, the process of surrogation and thus the doomed quest for the “perfect fit” closely ties in with the most idiosyncratic feature of performance, namely the unremitting search for originals which is realized by the continuous auditioning of doubles.<sup>15</sup> It will be examined who was considered “the original” Amanda Wingfield in Broadway history and it will be investigated whether an Austrian actress could actually meet this claim despite her difference in nationality and collective memory. In 1965, Siegfried Melchinger, critic of *Theater Heute*, posed a quite justified question, namely, “[W]ie soll ein Schauspieler oder eine Schauspielerin von heute diese Zeit, und noch dazu diese Zeit in Amerika darstellen?“ (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965) Melchinger hinted at the gap of unshared social memory that the Austrian actors were confronted with, which did not only concern Amanda’s social background, but also the play’s temporal setting, the Great Depression Era. This is exactly where the element of improvisation comes in: how did the directors and actors circumvent these difficulties? What piece of collective memory were they resorting to in order to fill the void with an Austrian meaning? Could Williams’ American characters be substituted by Austrian actors at all?

Surrogation works within a culture as well as in between cultures, since it encompasses all sorts of newness.<sup>16</sup> Still, the cultural dynamics can be discerned most evidently by analyzing the interaction of various cultures. Roach states:

The key to understanding how performances worked *within* a culture [...] is to illuminate the process of surrogation as it operated *between* the participating cultures. The key, in other words, is to understand how circum-Atlantic societies [...] have invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others. (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 5*)

Again, Roach suggests that *the way* a performance takes place - whether it unfolds in the theater, in the streets, or even in the media - is very much contingent upon history as it has been inscribed on the bodies of a community. Thus, one of my major endeavors will be to relate historical facts to the different performances of *The Glass Menagerie*,

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<sup>14</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead 2*.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead 3*.

<sup>16</sup> Roach states: “Newness enacts a kind of surrogation” (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 4*).

which should allow for some interesting insights into both American and Austrian culture.

Another important question concerns the specific idiosyncracies of both cultures as they materialized in the stagings of the play. What does it mean to be Austrian/American? Which processes are responsible for the formation of a specifically Austrian/American meaning, and who interprets them? Armin Thurnher classifies the Austrian nation as one that is characterized by a certain “conservatism of the heart” (Thurnher, 30), desperately clinging to past traditions and typically resisting new influences. Now, from a Roachian perspective this behavior might simply be decoded as the perpetuation and preservation of the Austrian “orature” (Roach, *Culture and Performance* 124) which, quite naturally, evades the surrogation incited by external intrusions. Friedrich Torberg suggests that this conservatism originates from a strong anchorage in the past which he clearly identifies as a distinctive character of Austrian mentality. “Blicken wir, wohin wir hierzulande immer gerne blicken: zurück” (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 19 Apr. 1961). This focus on the past undoubtedly constitutes an essential divergence between Austria and the perfectly future-oriented United States. Does collective memory hence weigh more heavily with regard to the Austrians than to the Americans? Was *The Glass Menagerie* adjusted to the Austrian identity or was it rejected by Austria’s paradigmatic conservatism?

The following discussion shall provide a fecund soil for the issues addressed above and aims at answering the questions raised.

## 2. American Reception

### 2.1. The American Premiere (1944)

#### 2.1.1. *The Glass Menagerie* – A “Critics’ Play”?

When Tennessee Williams’ agent, Audrey Wood, approached director Eddie Dowling in the fall of 1944, he was eager to produce a play which guaranteed him commercial success. After having read the script of *The Glass Menagerie* (then entitled *The Gentleman Caller*), he strongly doubted it would win him the desired fame. However, with the financial support of Louis J. Singer, he decided to direct the play that he was so fond of. A close friend of the author, Margo Jones, was chosen as the co-director on Dowling’s side.<sup>17</sup>

*The Glass Menagerie* opened in the Civic Theater of Chicago on December 26, 1944, and it was poorly attended. For the first week it was mostly drama critics who found their way into the Civic Theatre and would return to see the performance again. Consequently, people assumed it might be a so-called “critics’ play”, an expression denoting something “no one understands, including the reviewers, and which carries with it the connotations of doom” (Nichols, *New York Times* 8 Apr. 1945). Eddie Dowling and Louis J. Singer were even thinking of closing the play, when eventually the enthusiastic reviews of some Chicago critics aroused the curiosity of the general public.<sup>18</sup>

Claudia Cassidy attributed the great success of the production to the exquisite cast, who apparently spared the play from a potential fiasco. She declared:

Tennessee Williams [...] has been unbelievably lucky. His play, which might have been smashed by the insensitive or botched by the fatuous, has fallen in to expert hands. (Cassidy, *Chicago Tribune* 27 December 1944)

#### 2.1.2. The Celebrated Cast

##### a) Amanda Wingfield

The pivotal role of Amanda Wingfield was assigned to Laurette Taylor, who used to be a distinguished Broadway actress in the early 1900s. After her husband died in 1928, however, she repeatedly resorted to alcohol and succumbed to depression. For several years, she left the stage completely and did not perform until Eddie Dowling, following the advice of the famous theater critic George Jean Nathan, proposed her theatrical

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 186.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Nichols, *New York Times* 8 Apr. 1945; O’Niell, 187.

comeback in the role of Amanda. Her return to the stage was celebrated by the critics with exuberant reviews, and her creation of *The Mother* in Williams' play was considered as "one of the best roles of her life" (Nichols, *New York Times* 8 April 1945).<sup>19</sup> The most admired aspect of her performance was the versatility with which she mastered a harmonious congruence of Amanda's multidimensional character.<sup>20</sup> In her attempt to grasp as many facets of the role as possible, Taylor individualized the script by spontaneously inserting certain lines and cutting out others. Her reconstruction, however, was along the range of Amanda's character, which was why Tennessee Williams mostly tolerated her personal alterations. After all, through Taylor's intensive and continuous work on the role she arrived at an authentic embodiment of Amanda Wingfield and delivered a performance that has become legendary.<sup>21</sup>

b) Tom Wingfield

As concerns the casting of Tom Wingfield, there was some apparent surprise: The forty-nine-year-old Eddie Dowling, co-director and co-producer of the production, announced that he himself would play Tom Wingfield, who was actually supposed to be in his twenties. However, it turned out that the critics were not irritated at all by the significant discrepancy of age. Although his performance was not praised in the same manner as Laurette Taylor's, it yielded favorable reviews overall. The critics described his portrayal of Tom as relaxed, casual and sincere, all of which created an impression of underplaying. Interestingly, none of the reviewers noted the broad and comical element which Dowling intended in his performance. In order to add a stronger sense of comedy, he even inserted an additional scene in which Tom appeared drunk on stage. Dowling's artificially constructed comic relief resulted in confrontations with his colleague Laurette Taylor, who felt that his interpretation was farcical, hence inadequate. Neither Taylor nor Dowling would conceal their quarrel from the audience, but instead they picked on each other overtly during the performances.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 52 – 53; Nichols, *New York Times* 8 April 1945.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 57.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 61 – 66.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 106 – 112.

c) Laura Wingfield

The role of Laura Wingfield was created by Julie Haydon, who was also at least a decade older than the character in the original manuscript.<sup>23</sup> Apparently, Haydon was the only one of the cast whose acting was not perceived as fully convincing by the Chicago critics. Claudia Cassidy of the *Chicago Tribune* noted:

[...] I couldn't quite believe her, and my sympathy went to her nagging mother and her frustrated brother – because [...] they acted circles around her. (Cassidy, *Chicago Tribune* 27 December 1944)

Quite contrary to the critical response of Chicago, the New York critics would lavish her performance with praise. She was lauded for the spiritual and ethereal quality she added to the role, which made her appear as “a dreaming, wounded, half-out-of-this-world young girl” (Young, *New Republic* 16 Apr. 1945, quoted in O’Niell, 139).

d) Gentleman Caller

Anthony Ross had just returned from military service, when he randomly encountered stage director Randolph Echols in the streets. The next day, Echols suggested Ross for the role of Jim O’Connor, and so “[the actor] stepped literally out of uniform into one of the richest roles of the current season, that of the Gentleman Caller” (Goldsmith, *New York Times* 1 July 1945). This decision proved to be rewarding, since Ross convinced the press and the public alike and was honored with the Billboard Donaldson Award for the best supporting performance of the year.<sup>24</sup>

The actor emphasized the brash and egoistic qualities of Jim O’Connor and presented him as an “awkward, gum-chewing extrovert” (John Chapman, *NY Daily News* 2 Apr. 1945, quoted in O’Niell, 167). He came across as dynamic and masculine – an impression which was supported by his physical appearance. Harriet Johnson felt he represented “an extroverted six feet of masculinity” and described him as “lanky and disc-eyed” (Johnson, *NY Post* 2 Apr. 1946, quoted in O’Niell).

e) Designer

Jo Mielzinger was responsible for the stage design and the lighting. By the time he was contracted for the production of *The Glass Menagerie*, he was already a renowned stage designer. All of the reviewers who mentioned the light design acclaimed Mielzinger’s

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<sup>23</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 137.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 165.

setting. With his adroit use of the lighting and the scrim, he successfully captured the mood of the play and attained cinematic effects.<sup>25</sup> Robert Garland wrote:

Jo Mielzinger has gone out of the way to supply a setting which, with the use of a scrim, lights and imagination, is as fluid as a motion picture background. (Garland, *NY Journal American* 2 Apr. 1945, quoted in O’Niell, 225)

The music was composed by Paul Bowles, a personal friend of Williams’, who had already established himself as a composer of theater music in numerous Theatre Guild productions. All of the critics who assessed Bowles’ music were favorably impressed. It was perceived as atmospheric and reflective of the play’s moods and themes.<sup>26</sup>

In the original production the music was played live by a small orchestra that consisted of an organist, a drummer, a violinist and a harpist, who were positioned upstage.<sup>27</sup>

### 2.1.3. Arriving on Broadway

Three months after the opening night in the Civic Theatre, on 31 March 1945, the play premiered in the Playhouse Theater in New York, starring the same cast that was lauded so favorably by the Chicago critics. On Broadway, Eddie Dowling’s production saw a stunning total of 563 performances, and ran for almost one and a half years. After its original staging in the Playhouse Theater, it moved into the Royale Theater in July 1946, where it finally closed on 3 August 1946. The warm reception which *The Glass Menagerie* received in Chicago was only to be reinforced by the New York audience. Contrary to the assumption of being a “critics’ play”, the Broadway performance of *The Glass Menagerie* found general approval. Lewis Nichols wrote:

When it opened here on Easter Eve, the full truth came out. “The Glass Menagerie”, primarily because of Laurette Taylor’s part in it, is a play for everyone. (Nichols, *New York Times* 8 April 1945)

The directorial collaboration of Dowling and Jones was also recognized as a vital aspect in the success of the production:

The direction by Eddie Dowling and Margo Jones – another product of the “little theatres” – is a smooth and collaborative effort that fuses all the elements of a stagecraft into an almost perfect symphonic interpretation of the author’s original conception. (Waldorf, *NY Post* 2 Apr. 1945, quoted in O’Niell, 188)

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<sup>25</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 224 – 225.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 231 – 232.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 234.

The public and the critics alike were amazed by the resonance the play provoked, which can be gathered from Joseph Wood Krutch's depiction:

It is not often that a first play – indeed, it is not often that *any* play – gets such a reception as *The Glass Menagerie* (Playhouse Theater) got from audience and from press alike. After the final curtain had descended, the unfamiliar cry of “Author! Author!” rang through the auditorium, and next morning the reviewers staged what is commonly called a dance in the streets. (Krutch, *Nation* 14 April 1945)

#### 2.1.4. Criticism of Williams' Literary Style

Although the audience impact of the play was indisputable, the script itself was not entirely unproblematic. Some reviewers criticized certain contextual and interpersonal incongruities and a general lack of substance. Generally, critics felt ambivalent towards the play, which can be gathered quite clearly from Joseph Wood Krutch's comment:

[T]here is not [*sic!*] use failing to mention that [Williams'] weaknesses are as patent as his gifts, or that very good writing and very bad writing have seldom been as conspicuous in the script of one play. (Krutch, *Nation* 14 Apr. 1945)

For one thing, the dual role of Tom as protagonist and narrator was in the main evaluated as an unnecessary theatrical device, which could have been dispensed with.<sup>28</sup>

Lewis Nichols compared the narrative passages to Thornton Wilder's *Our Town* and John Van Druten's *I Remember Mama* and pointed out that they were “not essential to ‘The Glass Menagerie’” (Nichols, *New York Times* 2 Apr. 1945). *New Republic* critic Stark Young believed that the seeming redundancy of Tom's narrations was a matter of Dowling's unemotional delivery. He stated:

[Dowling] speaks his Narrator scenes plainly and serviceably, by which, I think, they are made to seem to be a mistake on the playwright's part, a mistake to include them at all; for they seem extraneous and tiresome in the midst of the play's emotional current. If these speeches were spoken with variety, impulse and intensity, as if the son himself were speaking [...] the whole thing would be another matter, truly a part of the story. (Young, *New Republic* 16 Apr. 1945, quoted in O'Niell, 108)

The genre of a “memory play”, the particular atmosphere and the themes were considered to be mere copies from Chekhov.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, *The Glass Menagerie* was perceived as a play which “forms the framework for some of the finest acting to be seen

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. Nichols, *New York Times* 2 Apr. 1945; Krutch, *Nation* 14 Apr. 1945.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Kronenberger, *New York Newspaper PM* 2 Apr. 1945; Krutch, *Nation* 14 Apr. 1945.

in many a day” (Nichols, *New York Times* 2 April 1945). Louis Kronenberger from the *New York Newspaper* arrived at the following conclusion:

As a play, I think there is a great deal wrong with it. But I recommend it without qualms, because it makes interesting and sometimes absorbing theater, and because Laurette Taylor is giving one of the most remarkable and fascinating performances in many seasons. (Kronenberger, *New York Newspaper PM* 2 Apr. 1945)

### 2.1.5. The Importance of the Southern Locale

Indeed, Laurette Taylor’s rendering of *The Mother* was described as highly accurate and authentic, conveying very credibly both the motherly love and her social background in the American South. For Lewis Nichols,

Miss Taylor makes [Amanda Wingfield] a person known by any other name to everyone in her audience. [...] There is no doubt she was a Southern belle. (Nichols, *New York Times* 2 Apr. 1945)

The geographic setting and Amanda’s background as a Southern Belle were perceived as very significant and distinctive aspects in the play, which aroused stereotypical associations and inspired certain expectations. Louis Kronenberger apparently did not find the Southern flair he was looking for, since he observed, “If Miss Taylor’s Southerner is not quite a great characterization, it is because the materials do not exist for one” (Kronenberger, *New York Newspaper PM* 2 Apr. 1945). However, in many reviews Laurette Taylor was lauded for having perfectly mastered the role of the faded Southern Belle.<sup>30</sup>

Joseph Wood Krutch recognized the Southern atmosphere of the play in Amanda’s diction:

In her dreams this mother, now shabby and old and fat, still relives the days when she led the cotillion at the Governor’s Ball and entertained seventeen callers at one time. All her vocabulary, all her standards, all her plans are in the terms of that dead past. “Gentleman callers”, “widows well provided for”, and “young men of character and promise” are the figures of the mythology from which she cannot escape. She is vulgar, nagging, and unreasonable (Krutch, *Nation* 14 Apr. 1945)

In fact, much of the Southern flair was created by Laurette Taylor’s accurate rendering of the local vernacular. Ward Morehouse wrote:

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<sup>30</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 57.

Miss Taylor captures a Southern accent magically [...] she brings Amanda Wingfield to life – Amanda who could have been the bride of a planter’s son but who married a telephone man instead; Amanda uprooted and living drably in a St. Louis alley tenement. (Morehouse, *NY Sun* 2 Apr. 1945, quoted in O’Niell, 57).

### 2.1.6. The Original vs. The Acting Edition

What is worth noting with regard to the debut production of “The Glass Menagerie” is the difference between the printed version of the play and its adaptation for the stage. A number of linguistic changes were made, which aimed at a simplification and closer approximation to the spoken language. For instance, when Amanda talks about her seventeen suitors back in the days of her youth, the original version reads:

That Fitzhugh boy went North and made a fortune - came to be known as the Wolf of Wall Street! He had the Midas touch, whatever he touched turned to gold. And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J. Fitzhugh, mind you! But – I picked your *father*. (Williams, 1984, 24)

In the Broadway production of 1945, this section was changed into the following:

He certainly made a lot of money. He went North to Wall Street and made a fortune. He had the Midas touch. Everything that boy touched just turned to gold! And I could have been Mrs. Duncan J. Fitzhugh. But what did I do about that? I just went out of my way and picked your father. (Nichols, *New York Times* 9 September 1945)

Another modification that was made in the original Broadway production concerned the omission of the titles that were supposed to be projected onto a screen throughout the action of the play.<sup>31</sup> In his productions notes, Tennessee Williams called this the “only important difference between the original and the acting version of the play” (Williams, 1984, 8). The slides bearing the images or titles were conceived as a structural device to accentuate certain aspects within the various scenes. Williams saw a great potential in the creative use of this device and emphasized that every producer or director may use it according to his own imagination. However, Jo Mielzinger opposed the idea of employing the projections since he felt that they would “distract the audience [and] handicap the actors” (O’Niell, 230). He could convince the playwright, who felt that “[t]he extraordinary power of Miss Taylor’s performance made it suitable to have the utmost simplicity in the physical production” (Williams, 1984, 9).<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. Nichols, *New York Times* 9 Sept. 1945.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Williams (1984), 8-10.

Director Eddie Dowling also introduced some significant changes. As I have already mentioned earlier, he inserted an entire scene into the script, in which Tom returns home from the movies in a state of complete inebriation and converses with his sister Laura. The idea, which was originally conceived by the famous theater critic George Jean Nathan, materialized when Dowling outlined and presented it to Tennessee Williams, with the request to write it down. Initially, Williams strongly opposed the idea of incorporating the scene in the script, since he felt that it was “unbelievably out of place, halfway between vaudeville and Saroyan whimsy” (Williams, 1996, 154). However, Williams and Dowling arrived at a compromise, and the scene was properly included into the play.<sup>33</sup> Not all of Dowling’s modifications found their way into the script. In fact, most of them were only used for this production. For instance, he deleted the second narration, added five lines at the end of the play and changed parts of Tom’s opening speech.<sup>34</sup>

### **2.1.7. Recapitulation**

There is no doubt that *The Glass Menagerie* created a furor upon its arrival on stage. Although the pre-Broadway performances in Chicago initially suggested a short run due to the apparent audience disinterest, the continuing plaudits of the reviewers boosted the curiosity of the public, and *The Glass Menagerie* gathered momentum against the presumption of being a critics’ play. Its welcome on Broadway was marked by enthusiasm and critical acclaim, which made Tennessee Williams shoot to fame. Nevertheless, the success of the production was principally credited to the magnificent cast, since the script itself was met with a certain extent of skepticism and ambivalence. The dual role of Tom as narrator and protagonist was mostly perceived as irritating and detrimental to the coherence of the play. Williams was compared to Chekhov and Wilder, and his technique was said to be a poor copy of these playwrights. However, the strong core of the play was unanimously identified by his critics, and all of them concurred that the play provided a great arena for actors who could give proof of their talent.

All of the cast members in this production were highly praised by the critics. However, Laurette Taylor was undoubtedly at the forefront, and many reviewers contended that the success of the play could primarily be ascribed to her portrayal of Amanda Wingfield.

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 189 – 190.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 191 – 192; Williams (1996), 156 – 157.

In 1945, the play was perceived as distinctly American, and the Southern setting was mentioned throughout the reviews. Laurette Taylor credibly rendered the Southern Belle aspect of Amanda Wingfield, which she primarily attained by authentically reproducing the characteristic Southern vernacular.

Eddie Dowling functioned both as co-director and Tom Wingfield, but he was praised more for the former role. In the stage adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie*, he introduced a number of changes, which were geared towards an enhanced sense of comedy. He conceived the “drunk scene”, which was incorporated into the script and made some minor textual modifications.

## 2.2. The First Broadway Revival (1956)

Eleven years passed before *The Glass Menagerie* was first revived in a Broadway production.

Directed by Alan Schneider, the play was enacted for the brief period of only two weeks in the New York City Center. It opened on 21 November 1956 and ran until 2 December 1956. The acting ensemble consisted of Helen Hayes as Amanda Wingfield, James Daly as Tom, Lois Smith as Laura and Lonny Chapman as Jim O'Connor.

### 2.2.1. Alan Schneider - The Dreaminess Has Gone

The City Center production aimed at a direct and pragmatic interpretation of Williams' text, which emphasized the comic elements and stripped off the dreaminess that was prominent in the original performance. Alan Schneider deliberately steered his production into a different direction than Eddie Dowling eleven years ago.<sup>35</sup> He was known as a "playwright's director", since he dealt with the plays in an unintrusive manner, always paying attention not to interfere with the author's intentions. In his work with the actors, he was equally considerate, intervening rarely in the actors' choices of interpretation.<sup>36</sup>

The critics who evaluated the *Glass Menagerie* production of 1956 unanimously approved of Schneider's direction. Brooks Atkinson reminisced about the original performance "with gratitude", but at the same time asserted that this performance has its own and distinct merits: "Now we can be grateful for another beautiful rendering, under the direction of Alan Schneider" (Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956). Schneider, who had already directed *The Glass Menagerie* in 1951, expected more from the Broadway production of 1956. He wrote:

No matter how successful, [...] revivals don't do much for a director. Despite the glowing response to the first major revival of his play in years, Tennessee didn't even come to see us – or communicate with me in any way. Evidently no producers came either, because I didn't get to do another stage play in New York for almost a year. (Schneider, 242)

O'Niell points out that the performance in the City Center was indeed the only *Glass Menagerie* production on Broadway which Tennessee Williams ignored completely. She speculated that his apparent ignorance was a reaction to the critics' dismissal of his

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956; Hewes *Saturday Review* 8 December 1956.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 196 – 198.

later plays, which was triggered by this revival.<sup>37</sup> Brooks Atkinson voices this attitude very explicitly:

In 1945 “The Glass Menagerie” established Mr. Williams as a practical dramatist. To see it again is to realize how much he has changed. (Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956)

### 2.2.2. The Comic Cast

#### a) Amanda Wingfield

Helen Hayes was already familiar with the role of Amanda Wingfield, since she had enacted the part in London in 1948 at the request of both Laurette Taylor and Tennessee Williams. Back then, she was not pleased with her performance, which was the reason for her initial aversion to repeating the role in New York. However, Jean Dalrymple, director of the City Center Theatre Company, succeeded in persuading the “First Lady of the American Theatre” (*Kronen-Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961; Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961) to return to the role of the nagging mother. The reason why he wanted Hayes to play in the production was her high degree of popularity, which he wanted to profit from economically.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, the City Center play productions had the reputation of “low budgeted drama revivals to which high-priced stars contributed their services” (Hayes, 157, quoted in O’Niell, 78). It was the famous actors and actresses who drew the masses into the theatre, rather than the plays themselves. This could also be observed throughout the reviews. Brooks Atkinson stated:

Again, Helen Hayes has done a little more than her bit to keep the City Center drama series on a high level, and she is entitled to go about her own affairs on schedule. (Atkinson, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1956)

In her portrayal, Helen Hayes clearly tried to distance herself from Laurette Taylor and her legendary creation of Amanda Wingfield. She emphasized the humorous aspects of the character and gave her acting style a direct and aggressive tinge, which was commented on by many critics.<sup>39</sup> In his review, entitled “Helen of Sparta”, Henry Hewes observed that Hayes’ aggressive and non-dreamy rendering of the role “perfectly fits Amanda’s statement ‘Life calls for Spartan endurance’” (Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 December 1956). Some reviewers liked her less subtle and more vigorous realization of the role, while others perceived her characterization as untrue to the author’s

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 199.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 68 – 69; 77 – 78.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Hewes *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956; O’Niell, 70 – 73.

intentions.<sup>40</sup> Walter Kerr from the *NY Herald Tribune* undoubtedly belonged to the latter group of critics. Similarly to Henry Hewes, he associated Helen Hayes' creation of Amanda Wingfield with warfare:

Miss Taylor played [the role] like a scratching tree-branch working on a window-pane on a night the wind never stopped. Miss Hayes plays it like a belligerent sparrow bent on marching her brood right into kingdom-come. She is a battling bantam cock bashing at the world in an untidy bathrobe, teetering on stiff little legs with the determination of a dowdy Napoleon, waddling wildly and at top speed up a short flight of stairs to collar her restless, runaway son. (Kerr, *NY Herald Tribune* 22 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 73.)

Other critics assessed Helen Hayes' performance entirely positively. John Chapman from the *Daily News* declared, "Miss Hayes simply cannot do anything wrong on a stage, and this is one of her finest achievements" (Chapman, *Daily News* 22 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 69).

Interestingly, almost all the reviewers compared Helen Hayes' presentation of the role to Laurette Taylor's portrayal of Amanda Wingfield and judged her accordingly.<sup>41</sup>

Instead of researching the role meticulously, Hayes displayed the stage persona she had already established earlier. By employing her so-called "bag of tricks", she made every character her own and developed a reputation for broad and direct interpretations.<sup>42</sup>

In her autobiography *A Gift of Joy*, Hayes admitted that she could not identify with The Mother at all. She wrote, "There was nothing in Amanda, or her son Tom, to which I could respond" (Hayes, 158, quoted in O'Niell, 77).

#### b) Tom Wingfield

James Daly's portrayal of the Son was critically acclaimed, especially with regard to his successful collaboration with Helen Hayes. He presented Tom in a down-to-earth and ironic way, thereby contributing to the general mood of the production. For some critics, Daly accomplished a more accurate realization of Tom than his predecessor Eddie Dowling did in the original production.<sup>43</sup> John McClain, for instance, wrote:

James Daly comes up with a bright interpretation of his own. He is younger and more matter-of-fact, and the combination pays off when it's most needed. (McClain, *Journal American* 23 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 113)

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 71.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 72 – 73.

<sup>42</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 74 – 75.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 112 – 117.

c) Laura Wingfield

The role of Laura was created by Lois Smith, who was chosen by Alan Schneider at Helen Hayes' suggestion. Although some critics initially thought of her as being miscast, they could mostly be convinced otherwise.<sup>44</sup> One of them was John McClain, who wrote:

But the surprise of the evening is Lois Smith. [...] She would seem to be a most unlikely bit of casting, but she justifies the producer's judgment; tall, and with a fragile beauty of her own, she brings a new poignancy to the part of the daughter. (McClain, *Journal American* 23 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 144.)

A few reviewers, however, assessed Smith's rendition of the Daughter unfavorably. Her presentation was described as shrill, and hence contradictory to the shy and withdrawn Laura. Walter Bolton suggested the following piece of advice:

Attractive, young and sufficiently off-beat to be more interesting, the shrill quality is something [Lois Smith] should learn to modulate, and, if possible, avoid. (Bolton, *Morning Telegraph NY* 23 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 145)

Apparently, Lois Smith polarized her audience: While some reviewers were enthusiastic about her interpretation, others were irritated. Her colleague Lonny Chapman and director Alan Schneider belonged to the former group, whereas City Center director Jean Dalrymple was among the latter.<sup>45</sup>

d) Gentleman Caller

Similar to his acting colleagues, Lonny Chapman, who played the Gentleman Caller, stressed the comic and cheerful elements in his presentation. He imbued the role with boyish cockiness, which corresponded to his own off-stage personality at that time. Like Helen Hayes, Chapman individualized his part and provided it with a very personal note, rather than simply adhering to the author's instructions in the stage directions. Thus, he arrived at a totally different rendition of Jim O'Connor than did Anthony Ross in the original production. Chapman, who was chosen for the role by Alan Schneider, was critically lauded for his interpretation, which reportedly balanced the all-American idealism and the dimension of sympathy perfectly.<sup>46</sup> Brooks Atkinson noted:

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 143 – 144.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 144 – 146; Schneider, 241.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 169 – 172,

In the part of the gentleman caller, Lonny Chapman is admirable. Under the cheapness of this poseur, there is a solid fund of sympathy and understanding. (Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956)

e) Designer

Peggy Clark was engaged to adapt the original design and lighting of Jo Mielzinger for the City Center stage. Clark, who was hired by City Center Director Jean Dalrymple, was already known as a prestigious light designer, who had gained her reputation mainly through her contribution for Broadway musicals. Since she was not the original designer of the *Glass Menagerie* production in the City Center, she did not consider it of prime importance for her career. The critics seemed equally indifferent, as most of them did not comment on the design and lighting at all.<sup>47</sup>

Although the production was generally given positive credit, some minor flaws were pointed out by the critics. The main problem seemed to be the size of the City Center, which created an inadequate atmosphere and affected the quality of the music. Hobe Morisson made the following judgment:

“Menagerie” remains a tender, heart-rending work, despite the handicap of being presented in the barnlike acoustically faulty City Center. (Morisson, *Variety* 28 Nov. 1956, quoted in O’Niell, 238.)

According to Brooks Atkinson, “[t]here is no doubt that the vast spaces of the City Center are unkind to the nuances of this requiem [...]” (Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956). Hewes criticized the “broadness of performance that tend[ed] to distract the audience’s attention from the emotional core of the play” (Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956) and judged the pace as too fast. However, he speculated that both of these defects were the results of the inappropriately large auditorium.<sup>48</sup>

### 2.2.3. A Changed Perception of the Script ...

Compared with the rather dissatisfied critical voices from 1945, Tennessee Williams’ script was viewed in a much more open and positive way in 1956. The dual role of Tom as commentator of the story and pivotal character in the play, which was assessed as unnecessary and irrelevant in the original production, was fully accepted in the City Center revival. Brooks Atkinson considered *The Glass Menagerie* as Williams’ most

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 235 – 237.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956.

“delicate and perceptive” play so far, which accomplished “a perfect blend of humor and pathos” (Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956). He wrote:

“The Glass Menagerie” mirrors human experience in depth and clarity. Although it is as fragile as the glass toys that the lonely daughter consoles herself with, it has the supple strength of truth. Nothing about it is false or contrived; nothing obscure or irrelevant. (Atkinson, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1956)

The temporal distance of more than a decade seemed to have changed the perception of the script significantly. In 1945, the incoherence within the context as well as the characters had been criticized by several reviewers. However, by 1956, *The Glass Menagerie* had become “a glorious reminder of [the] growing theatre heritage [of American Culture]” (Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956). Incoherency was out of the question, it was rather *complexity* which Williams’ characters were said to be invested with.<sup>49</sup>

#### 2.2.4. ...but Still American

Apparently, the New York audience could relate better to the content of the play and its historical background from a more detached point of view. There is no doubt, however, that *The Glass Menagerie* was perceived as a typically American play whose characters were emblematic of American culture. Jim O’Connor, for instance, was read in the following way:

Lonnie [*sic!*] Chapman brings an intentional surface vulgarity to the gentleman caller, and the moment he explains away Laura with the term “inferiority complex” nicely demonstrates the native lack of subtlety in American culture. (Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956)

The play provided for close identification, nurtured by the years that had passed since its first release. Henry Hewes of the *Saturday Review* observed the following:

The moment the curtain goes up on Jo Mielzinger’s drab St. Louis alley[,] an era both of stage history and of life is back with us. And instead of seeming outdated[,] Tennessee Williams’s words about America and the world in the late Thirties have more force when spoken with ten more years distance between them and the events. (Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956)

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Atkinson, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1956.

### 2.2.5. Recapitulation

Quite naturally, Alan Schneider had a difficult task in staging the first revival of *The Glass Menagerie* after a relatively recent original production that could not have yielded more commendation and critical acclaim. Therefore, it was not surprising that he had to approach the play from a different perspective and hire celebrity actors such as Helen Hayes. While the dreamy and nostalgic quality was a marker of the original production, Alan Schneider stripped off these features and endowed his revival with a pronounced sense of comedy. Although Tennessee Williams neither attended the rehearsals nor the actual performance, Schneider convinced his critics and could stand up to the high standard set by the direction of Eddie Dowling.

At the time of this revival, Helen Hayes was already a star with airs and graces, and she acted out the role of Amanda according to her acquired stage persona. She exaggerated the comic element in Amanda and overshadowed the rest of the cast. While some critics did not dare to criticize her domineering acting style and instead presented her as a theater Goddess, others did not hesitate to compare her portrayal to warfare.

With the passage of more than a decade between its first release and its revival on the Broadway stage, *The Glass Menagerie* had found undisputable acceptance among the general public. The problems which the play stirred in 1944/1945 were not even mentioned any more, and the play began to show as an enduring success within the literary landscape of American culture.

Although the Southern setting was far less important than eleven years ago, the audience still perceived the play as distinctly American and could relate directly to the historical reality of the post-depression years.

### **2.3. *The Glass Menagerie* in the 60s**

Halfway through the 1960s, *The Glass Menagerie* was once again revived on Broadway. The twentieth anniversary performance was directed by George Keathley and starred Maureen Stapleton as Amanda, George Grizzard as her son Tom, Piper Laurie as the fragile Laura and Pat Hingle as the Gentleman Caller. It opened on 4 May 1965 in the Brooks Atkinson Theatre and saw a total of 175 performances.

#### **2.3.1. The Impacts of the Hippie Era on Theater Culture**

##### a) The Drama - A Losing Venture on Broadway

The 60s marked a time of significant sociopolitical changes, which also had a major impact on theatre culture. America celebrated the era of the hippies and saw large-scale liberalizations in virtually all areas of living. The New Left foregrounded the political arena, the Civil Rights Movement accomplished the termination of the Jim Crow Laws, the gay scene expanded and feminism was on the horizon. All these tendencies and developments found expression within the cultural landscape of the time. In the mid-sixties, theatre diversified and was used as an instrument to publicly voice criticism towards politics. The prevailing theatrical current was known as Off-Off-Broadway<sup>50</sup>: Plays were staged on very cheap venues, such as small cafés or theatres, which complemented the pronounced spirit of experimentalism. Quite understandably, the whole development affected the mentality of Broadway. In his article “The Theatre Today: No Place for Drama”, Sam Zolotow observed the following:

Serious drama is a losing venture on Broadway, as shown by the record of the 1964-65 season. A dozen new dramas were produced. All failed. (Zolotow, *New York Times* 21 June 1965)

Instead of drama, the predominant genres offered on Broadway were musical comedies and comedies. The latter were considered the most lucrative investments, since they earned the theaters extremely high profits while their production costs constituted only one third or even one fourth of a big musical production. Dramas, on the other hand, were regarded as very hazardous investments.<sup>51</sup> When Seymour Vall, president of the First Theater Investing Service, was asked for the reason of the few drama productions, he answered:

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<sup>50</sup> “Off-Broadway”, which was originally conceived in the 1950s as a concept with the purpose of producing shows inexpensively, has changed its character significantly by 1965. The production costs have risen dramatically, there was a sharp decline in new productions, and several playhouses were about to close down. (cf. also Zolotow, *New York Times* 21 June 1965)

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Zolotow, *New York Time* 21 June 1965.

“The nature of the drama [...] is to attack the ethics and values of our society. Those people who have achieved enough success to afford theater tickets reject the idea of attending a theater which attacks their way of life.” (quoted in Zolotow, *New York Times* 21 June 1965)

Vall also stated that it appeared to be the older generation who opposed this kind of entertainment, while the younger people favored it.<sup>52</sup> With its critical overtones, the drama seemed to capture the spirit of the era, the recalcitrance of the young towards societal norms and conventions. Due to the expensive theatre tickets, however, Broadway represented a domain for the older generation.

b) *The Glass Menagerie* proves an Exception to the Rule

Interestingly enough, *The Glass Menagerie* survived on Broadway and did not forfeit its fascination for the general public.

After its opening night on 4 May 1965, Howard Taubman reflected upon the durability of Tennessee Williams’ first success, which withstood the passage of time and remained unaffected by external changes:

Never mind the passage of twenty years. It is still rewarding to hear the fresh, personal voice of a generously gifted young playwright named Tennessee Williams as it proclaimed itself in “The Glass Menagerie.” [...] Forget what the years have done to the theater and to us, the audience. Live again through “The Glass Menagerie” [...] or, if you don’t know the play, discover it. (Taubman, *New York Times* 5 May 1965)

It seems as if the play provided a safe haven for the audience, a refuge into the past which provided a shelter from the presence with all its unpleasant changes. Taubman described the theater in 1965 as “undernourished” (*New York Times* 5 May 1965) and perceived *The Glass Menagerie* as a nurturing contribution to the Broadway stages. He evaluated the fact that the play did not lose any of its merits in 20 years as a sign of quality and a justification for its Broadway revival.<sup>53</sup> Indeed, with its 175 performances in the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, the production received appropriate recognition.

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Zolotow, *New York Time* 21 June 1965.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Taubman, *New York Time* 5 May 1965.

### 2.3.2. George Keathley – Creation of a Refuge into the Past

When the producers Claude Giroux and Orrin Christy chose George Keathley to stage this revival, he was not a very well-known director yet. However, he had successfully directed *The Glass Menagerie* for the American Guild Repertory Company in 1961, with Helen Hayes as the figurehead of the group, in a production that was presented on a tour through Europe and South America. Keathley staged the Broadway revival of 1965 in the style of the 1961- performance. Nevertheless, being aware of the sophisticated cast he worked with, he did not interfere with the interpretations of their roles.<sup>54</sup>

The majority of the critics assessed Keathley's direction favorably, but he also received a few adverse reviews. While the mainstream newspapers praised his perceptive and controlled staging, the more alternative periodicals, such as *Variety* and *Village Voice*, did not shy away from open criticism.<sup>55</sup> According to Hobe Morrison, the production lacked innovation and “seem[ed] a mundane expression of a luminously poetic work” (Morrison, *Variety* 12 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 203). In a similar tenor, *Village Voice* critic Michael Smith commented:

Director George Keathley has mounted a revival faithful to the play and without imagination: the production looks the way I imagine the original to have looked. No allowance is made for the more than 20 years that have passed, nor for the audience's changed relationship to the play – not only because of a changed world, but because of the influence the play has had on everything written since it. All the work is worthwhile, but the production is without evidence of creative spirit or of excitement. (Smith, *Village Voice* 3 June 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 203)

It can be presumed that the alternative papers reflected the attitudes of the younger generation. They expressed their request for innovation as well as experimentation and yearned for a theater that mirrored the zeitgeist, while the conservative newspapers apparently supported the mindset of the older generation, who wanted to preserve the play as it was in 1945.

The reference to the audience's altered relationship towards the play is also interesting to note. Quite logically, the distance between *The Glass Menagerie* of 1945 and its audience in 1965 had grown notably, which made it possible to consider the play from a more detached point of view. At the same time, the play itself had gained more

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<sup>54</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 200 – 205.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 202 – 203.

importance and already assumed major features of a classic, probably more so with the younger generation than among the older, who could still relate directly to the historical past that was presented within the story of the Wingfields.

For director George Keathley, the transfer of a play into a different era was completely out of question. His intention was to “let the play speak for itself” (Keathley, personal interview, June 16, 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 206), regardless of the time it was performed in. His attitude seemed to be congruent with the majority of the Broadway audience, which explained the success of this revival.

### 2.3.3. The Cohesive Cast

Keathley and the cast members also attributed the appeal of the production to the “cohesiveness of the cast” (O’Niell, 203). Unlike the previous Broadway staging of *The Glass Menagerie*, all four characters were presented as equally important, and there was not one actor that stood out, as had been the case with Helen Hayes in 1956.<sup>56</sup>

#### a) Amanda Wingfield

In the twentieth anniversary performance, Amanda Wingfield was played by Maureen Stapleton. In her creation of the role, she tried to imitate Laurette Taylor’s interpretation and thus followed a different path than Helen Hayes, who aimed at a deliberately distinct portrayal of the character. Nevertheless, Stapleton’s Amanda was perceived as dissimilar from the original interpretation, which was partly due to her outward appearance.<sup>57</sup> Michael Smith noted, “She is initially in trouble because of her ample size, which lends itself to everything but dignity” (Smith, *Village Voice* 3 June 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 82). While Maureen Stapleton did not embody the desired qualities for many critics, others praised the practical and down-to-earth delineation of her Amanda, which was shaped by her physical characteristics.<sup>58</sup> Norman Nadel remarked:

Her Amanda has a different weight of substance, both in appearance and manner. [...] She has changed the tone of the play, but not to its detriment. (Nadel, *NY World-Telegram* 5 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 81)

Howard Taubman was not irritated by Stapleton’s performance, either. He felt that “Miss Stapleton [brought] probing values of her own to Amanda [which caused] [t]he

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<sup>56</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 204 – 205.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 82 – 83.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 81 – 82.

womanliness and motherliness [to] take on a new significance” (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965).

b) Tom Wingfield

The role of Tom Wingfield was enacted by George Grizzard, who could closely identify with the role due to his own Southern background and family situation. In his portrayal, he focused on the soft and gentle qualities of the character, emphasizing the depiction of Tom as the poet and the loving son. His lyrical presentation of the role was partly lauded and partly rejected by the critics.<sup>59</sup> Grizzard explained the choice of his interpretation by referring to the autobiographic content of *The Glass Menagerie*:

We all know that Tom Wingfield is Tennessee. This is Tennessee’s story – the story of his life. And Tennessee is not a tough sailor. He is an artist. Tom is Tennessee at the time he wrote the play, with the gentle, poetic quality which, in later years, he seemed to lose. (Grizzard, personal interview, 5 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 122)

c) Laura Wingfield

Piper Laurie, who was a renowned film actress at that time, was chosen to create the role of the fragile Laura. Similarly to her colleagues, she received both favorable and less favorable reviews. Compared to Julie Haydon, Laurie presented the character as stronger and more vivid, which some critics regarded as a distortion of the frailty inherent in the role. Furthermore, she was considered too pretty to credibly render the inconspicuous Laura Wingfield.<sup>60</sup> George Oppenheimer wrote:

Unhappily I felt that Piper Laurie in the important role of the crippled Laura was miscast or maybe misdirected. There was never for me the pathetic or frail quality that Julie Haydon brought to the original part. She was, in fact, too self-contained, too attractive and too sturdy. (Oppenheimer, *Newsday* 5 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 147).

Laurie strongly opposed the idea of representing Laura as a weak and helpless person who passively surrenders to the inferior status imposed on her by society. After having read Williams’ script, Laurie remarked, “I didn’t believe she was as breakable as her glass objects; in fact, I thought Laura could be played to be the strongest character in the play” (Laurie, interview, 16 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 150). However, her shaping

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 117 – 122.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 147 – 148.

of the role was not only affected by her aversion to the cliché of the cripple, but also by external factors. In an interview, she said:

At that time, I was aware of all the liberating changes I was personally experiencing – leaving home, breaking my contract in Hollywood, moving to New York. I put all that into Laura, made her a young woman of substance and certain courage. [...] I could have unconsciously been influenced by what was going on in the sixties. (Laurie, personal interview 16 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 150)

Indeed, in the light of the era, the handicapped Laura could have been read as an allegory of the socially suppressed groups of people who had been denied their voice. Laurie’s interpretation, however, freed Laura from her status as an inferior human being and endowed her with an unusual strength. This can be seen as a parallel to the liberalization of the marginal social groups who were no longer willing to accept docile vis-à-vis, but revolted against them and thus gained political ground.

Tennessee Williams deeply acknowledged and praised Laurie’s interpretation, since of any actress so far she was the one to attain the closest approximation to his sister Rose.<sup>61</sup>

#### d) Gentleman Caller

The Gentleman Caller was performed by Pat Hingle, who received a very positive critical response. The only critic who disagreed with Hingle’s interpretation was Michael Smith from the *Village Voice*. He admitted a personal dislike towards the actor and considered him too old for the role.<sup>62</sup> The other reviewers, however, unanimously approved of his compassionate and tender performance.<sup>63</sup> John McCarten, critic of the *New Yorker*, expressed his theatrical experience as follows:

Oddly, Pat Hingle, playing the Gentleman Caller [...] emerges in this production as the most touching member of the cast. He’s supposed to be an extrovert, but, in his childish quest to become a leader of men by taking a night-school course in public speaking, he struck me as the most appealing dreamer of them all. (McCarten, *New Yorker* 15 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 174 – 175)

Walter Kerr shared the notion of Hingle being the strongest actor of this production. He stated that “[o]nly Mr. Hingle’s performance seems to have found all of its nuances and named them” (Kerr, *NY Herald Tribune* 5 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 176). His

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<sup>61</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 150.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. Smith, *Village Voice* 3 June 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 173.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 173,

credible portrayal of the Gentleman Caller and the subtlety in his interpretation could be ascribed to Hingle's close identification with the role.<sup>64</sup> In a personal interview with Jane O'Niell, he pointed out the similarities between Williams' character and himself:

You see, I was reared like the Gentleman Caller. I came from that depression era. I had no money. I was a Horatio Alger kid. [...] I believed these things that the Gentleman Caller believed. (Hingle, personal interview, 17 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 176)

For Hingle, Jim O'Connor represented a character that was strongly bound to the narrative time of *The Glass Menagerie* and could not be accommodated within a contemporary environment:

I put him in the thirties, where he belonged. I would not change the Gentleman Caller if I played him today. If you try to impose today's mores on Jim O'Connor, you would be laughing at him. The man who feels a marriage engagement was unbreakable, who believes a public speaking class will help him become an executive, who feels guilty about a stolen kiss, this kind, ordinary young man does not exist today. (Hingle, personal interview, 17 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 177)

#### e) Designer

The scenery was designed by Robert Williams and supervised by James Taylor. Due to economic restrictions, it was basically a copy of Jo Mielzinger's original design. The only significant modification in this production was the additional use of a scrim. While the scenic frugality went unnoticed by the vast majority of the reviewers, it could not evade Hobe Morrison's critical eyes.<sup>65</sup> He observed that "the stock-built setting credited to James A. Taylor and Robert T. Williams [...] looks budget-bound" (Morrison, *Variety* 12 May 1965, quoted in O'Niell, 239).

In fact, Taylor regretted not having had more leeway to realize his ideas in the 1965 production. If given the chance, "[he] would have done the set more realistically [and] [...] would have simulated real walls." (Taylor, personal interview, 29 May 1991, quoted in Jane O'Niell, 239). Furthermore, he would have liked to diminish the distance between the actors and the audience. He recalled:

In those days, we were pretty much proscenium bound. If I designed *The Glass Menagerie* again, I would put it on a thrust stage, into the audience. (Taylor, personal interview, 29 May 1991, quoted in Jane O'Niell, 240)

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<sup>64</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 176.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 238 – 239.

In terms of stage design, this Broadway performance was the first to introduce a separate light designer as well as a costume designer - V. C. Fuqua and Patton Campbell, respectively.<sup>66</sup>

#### 2.3.4. The American Setting Loses Importance

Halfway through the 1960s, Amanda's social background in the American South was no longer a crucial aspect of her personality. According to Maureen Stapleton, the fact that she was a daughter of a plantation owner was completely irrelevant to the play. In an interview, she stated the following:

This play is not about [Amanda] being a Southern belle. This is not about lost youth. This is about a woman trying to keep her family together, trying to get her daughter married, trying to keep peace and order in a financially troubled household. (Stapleton, interview 2 July 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 83)

This approach towards the play deviated considerably from its original interpretation in 1945, which was very conscious of the geographic setting and the history associated with it. Howard Taubman recollected the distinct performance of Laurette Taylor, who paid great attention to present Amanda's background. He stated:

Miss Taylor, more than any Amanda I remember, bathed the character in the muted glow of lost, aching illusions. No one has ever matched her in evoking a sense of the faded past. She did not merely cloak herself in a remembrance of vanished gentility. It shone from her in a kind of brave, though dimming radiance. She did not need to adorn herself in her old-fashioned party dress to conjure up the fond, foolish atmosphere of happy girlhood in a graceful, magnolia-scented south. The inflections of her speech, her looks, her gestures and movements created mood as well as character. (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965)

In George Keathley's production, on the other hand, "[t]he spirit of Southern gentility is not noticeable. The troubling sense of genteel decay is there, though the geography is not distinctly identified" (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965).

The universal interpretation of the play was not to the taste of every critic. Walter Kerr, for instance, missed "the sense of a charmed past – whether imaginary or real" (Kerr, *NY Herald Tribune* 5 May 1965, quoted in O'Niell, 82).

With or without a Southern coloring, the character of Amanda Wingfield seemed indestructible. Unlike many other reviewers, Howard Taubman refrained from

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 240 – 241.

expressing judgmental remarks, but instead analyzed the various Amandas objectively. For him, the magic lies within the diverse interpretations the character can assume without being destroyed:

Amanda's indestructibility is astonishing. [...] In the intervening years I have seen a number of Amandas in productions scattered across the land, and I know now that Mr. Williams's Amanda, indeed Amanda herself, endures. She is credible, she is true. She is specifically American, and her truth transcends national traits. (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965)

Taubman recalled different representations of Amanda Wingfield on the American stages and pointed out that even misinterpretations could not have a detrimental effect on the powerful character.<sup>67</sup> What was the reason for Amanda's indestructible validity? According to Taubman's comment, she seemed to be particularly comprehensible to the Broadway audience in a double sense: Firstly, the theatergoers could identify the Mother as "specifically American" and could recognize some "national traits", which most probably conjured up a certain sense of familiarity. Secondly, Amanda seemed to embody some universal aspects that appealed to the audience not only as Americans but also as human beings. With the passage of time, these universal aspects seemed to gain significance, while the American locale faded gradually into the background.

### 2.3.5. Recapitulation

At the peak of the hippie-era, a revival of *The Glass Menagerie* is not exactly what I would think of. After all, the values displayed in Williams' play of the 1940s do not necessarily match with the new liberalizations and the youth protests. The fact that it was staged nevertheless, offers valuable clues to the Broadway audience at that time. Since off-Broadway and, more recently, off-off-Broadway venues flourished and enjoyed great popularity among the young and revolutionary crowd, the Broadway had to rely on the long-established, more conservative middle-aged or older generation, who frowned upon the radical innovations introduced by the young.

In this spirit, George Keathley directed a revival which deliberately did *not* reflect the zeitgeist, but mirrored the past. This earned him decidedly unfavorable reviews especially by the "younger" alternative newspapers like *Variety* and *Village Voice*.

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965.

Like his predecessor Alan Schneider, Keathley, too, relied upon the celebrity appeal of his ensemble. However, he did not structure his revival around one pivotal actress, but instead placed equal significance on each of the four actors.

Maureen Stapleton aimed at an imitation of the legendary Laurette Taylor, but rendered a more down-to-earth mother who was almost deprived of her Southern past. It was already a noticeable phenomenon that the Southern setting would gradually eclipse due to a more universal understanding of the play.

Piper Laurie was the only actress who innovated her interpretation in a way that reflected the spirit of the 60s. Unlike the former delineations of Laura Wingfield, she endowed the role with vigor. In fact, she presented the Daughter as the strongest character in the play, since she did not want to believe that Laura was really that helpless and abject being who accepts defeat without a struggle.

## 2.4. *The Glass Menagerie* in the 70s

The trend of reviving *The Glass Menagerie* once every decade continued through the 70s. The third revival opened on 28 November 1975 in the Circle in the Square Theatre and was performed 77 times. Theodore Mann was in charge of the direction and Maureen Stapleton, Paul Rudd, Pamela Payton-Wright and Rip Torn played the roles of mother, son, daughter and Gentleman Caller, respectively.

### 2.4.1. A Tennessee Williams Boom

1975 marked a year of extraordinary success for Tennessee Williams. He published his *Memoirs*, which stirred a sensation in the media, and his plays “[were] once again generating theatrical excitement” (Berkvist *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975). One can almost talk about a Tennessee Williams boom on Broadway, since there were three revivals of his plays at the same time: *The Glass Menagerie* opened on 18 December 1975 in Circle in the Square, *Sweet Bird of Youth* reopened at the Harkness, and *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* was performed in the Playhouse Theater.<sup>68</sup> What was the reason for the sudden resurgence of Tennessee Williams’ plays? Robert Berkvist from the *New York Times* speculates that the reception of a play strongly depends on the contemporary value system of a society:

[...] [M]ightn’t there be something in the temper of the times to make audiences newly receptive to certain of his plays? Does, say, the nineteen-forties aura of “The Glass Menagerie” now exert a special nostalgic appeal? (Berkvist, *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975).

Indeed, the time span of three decades that stretched between the premiere of *The Glass Menagerie* in 1945 and its revival in 1975 seemed to have suffused Tennessee Williams’ first success with a certain feeling of nostalgia. With the growing distance, the question arose if the play could stand the test of time. In this context, Clive Barnes reasoned:

Is it as good as it was? Or rather is it as good as we thought it was, because when an important play is revived it is not merely the play but a generation standing up on trial. (Barnes, *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1975)

There is no doubt that the liberalizations of the 60s had manifested themselves in the mindset of the people, which facilitated a different understanding of the play. According to Tennessee Williams, the audience could finally appreciate his plays for their real

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Berkvist, *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975.

themes. He said, “I think some works of mine, like ‘Sweet Bird’, are now seen more for other values than the sensational. People today are more accustomed to scenes of sex and violence.” (quoted in Berkvist, *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975).

#### 2.4.2. The Competing Force of Television

However, it was not only the distinctive spirit of the 60s that generated a changed perception among the public, but also the growing importance of television. In fact, theater had to cede a large territory to TV, which affected the size and the composition of the theater repertoires, the willingness to subsidize young writing talents, the production of new or non-commercial plays and the relationship between the audience and the theater.<sup>69</sup> Reflecting upon the latter point, Tennessee Williams observed the following:

“[...] [A]udiences have changed. TV has made more and more of an assault on people’s sensibilities. Granted, a certain percentage of those people will always welcome theater, after the bang, bang, bang of TV, but not nearly enough of them. So theater doesn’t have the kind of audience support it used to have.” (Williams, quoted in Berkvist, *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975)

No matter how much pressure the theaters saw themselves confronted with, *The Glass Menagerie* remained a safe venture. Clive Barnes from the *New York Times* even regarded the production as a hopeful impulse for the future. He surmised, “In this play of heart, of spirit, there was once a new dawn for the American theater. And naturally, dawns always survive” (Barnes, *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1975).

#### 2.4.3. Theodore Mann – The Presentation of a Realistic Family

Theodore Mann, the director of this production, set forth his explanation of the enduring validity and the untarnished audience appeal of *The Glass Menagerie*:

The Wingfields are a prototype of an American family, of every family. Every family has parental manipulation, has children trying to break away. That is why this play has survived, because the family situation is so realistic. (Mann, personal interview, 3 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 210)

According to his perception of the play, Mann chose a realistic approach, which was disapproved of by the majority of the New York critics. Many reviewers criticized the lack of lyrical qualities in this production. Edwin Wilson missed the director’s sensitivity

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Berkvist, 105.

to realize the “underground rhythm of the scenes” (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 Dec. 1975), which, for him, was subtly but essentially incorporated in the play:

It is these modulations, these nuances – the music, if you will – that is missing so often from this production. Both Rip Torn who plays Tom and Theodore Mann who directed the play seem totally tone deaf to the tune Williams sings or to those subterranean sounds beneath the surface. (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 December 1975)

Another point of criticism concerned Mann’s “choppy, uneven staging” (O’Niell, 208-209), which accentuated the episodic structure of *The Glass Menagerie*<sup>70</sup> and left the impression that “Mr. Mann [...] has directed the action by fits and starts” (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 December 1975).

In contrast, Hobe Morrison evaluated Theodore Mann’s work positively. He considered the direction as a crucial factor to arrive at what he called “the best overall performance this first Williams success has ever had, even surpassing the 1944-1945 original” (Morrison, *Variety* 24 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 207).

#### 2.4.4. The Down-To-Earth Cast

##### a) Amanda Wingfield

In the 1975 production, Amanda Wingfield was again played by Maureen Stapleton, who had already created the role in the previous Broadway revival. The reviewers commonly noted an improvement of her performance, but her acting style was again described as “naturalistic” and “down-to-earth” (O’Niell, 85). At the time of this revival, Stapleton was 50 years old and was a single mother of two grown children. Thus, her own circumstances allowed her to identify closely with Amanda Wingfield, more so than in 1965.<sup>71</sup>

According to Theodore Mann, Amanda Wingfield is a prototypical mother who should be presented as an understandable, likable character instead of a hysterical and neurotic one.<sup>72</sup> Thus, Stapleton basically played herself<sup>73</sup> and succeeded in the presentation of a classic mother, but this interpretation did not meet the expectations of every critic. Walter Kerr, for instance, identified a significant deficiency in this performance, which he solely referred back to Maureen Stapleton:

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Gottfried, 19 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 209.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 90.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Mann, personal interview, 3 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 91.

<sup>73</sup> “In 1975, I could play myself. I did not have to reach to be older. I fit the role of Amanda” (Maureen Stapleton, personal interview, 2 July 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 90).

[T]here is one thing she cannot be, or has not found her way to being: intolerable. For all that is well-meaning about this mother, she must in some sense be unbearable, heartbreakingly so. [...] [Stapleton] is a panda, without claws. The play, to function at its richest, needs those claws. (Kerr, *New York Times* 28 Dec. 1975)

b) Tom Wingfield

Rip Torn played Tom Wingfield in the Circle-in-the-Square-production, and his portrayal differed considerably from George Grizzard's in the previous Broadway revival. While Grizzard had stressed the poetic nature and gentleness of the character, Torn emphasized Tom's rebellious side and rendered the role with harshness and intensity.<sup>74</sup> In his interpretation, Torn followed Theodore Mann's instructions, who viewed Tom as "a tough sailor, rebellious and bitter" (O'Niell, 127). Mann justified this character impression by pointing out the connotations Tom's profession as a merchant sailor evoked:

If he's a merchant sailor he had to be tough, had to go down to the docks to get jobs, had to get beaten up, had to get drunk. I figured Tom, having done all that, could not be the poetic, sort of beatific young man I've seen in other productions. (Theodore Mann, personal interview, 3 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 127)

John Simon did not agree with this subtext, as he rather perceived Tom Wingfield as a "nostalgic-poetic mariner, whose loving memories recreate the play" (Simon, *New Leader* 19 Jan. 1976, quoted in O'Niell, 125). Generally, I think it can be concluded that the concept of a sailor in the merchant marine was commonly understood by the American audience, yet the associations varied individually. Correspondingly, for some people the signifier "sailor" pointed to toughness and fighting, whereas others had a romanticized signified in mind.

In 1956, Helen Hayes had endowed her Amanda Wingfield with a direct, non-dreamy and aggressive quality, which irritated some of the critics. As a response, she was compared to "Helen of Sparta"<sup>75</sup> and Napoleon.<sup>76</sup> Almost twenty years later, Rip Torn sparked a similar reaction with his harsh portrayal of the Son. Interestingly, he was described as "doom-hungry and resentful as a Greek hero", whereas Paul Rudd as the mannered Gentleman Caller was perceived as "a model of baffled propriety and middle American rectitude" (Barnes, *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1975). In view of these comparisons, it may be surmised that aggressiveness was a feeling which the American

<sup>74</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 124 – 125.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Kerr, *NY Herald Tribune* 22 Nov. 1956, quoted in O'Niell, 73.

audience did not like to identify themselves with and therefore resented on stage. Rather, they liked to see themselves as a prim and proper nation that had internalized a certain sense of morality. Thus, with his “hard jagged delivery” (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 December 1975), Rip Torn did not present a Tom Wingfield the American audience liked to identify themselves with.

c) Laura Wingfield

As Tom’s sister Laura, Pamela Payton-Wright was widely acclaimed by the New York critics. In fact, among all the actresses who appeared as Laura Wingfields on the Broadway stages, she was the one to be praised the most for her performance.<sup>77</sup> Similar to Piper Laurie in the 1965 production, the actress decidedly turned away from a single-sided interpretation of the character, but attempted to reveal the strong and positive aspects of Laura.<sup>78</sup> In an interview with Ross Wetzsteon, Payton-Wright elaborated on her interpretation of the Daughter and pointed out the challenges this role presents:

The trap in Laura is that she can be so spiritless and withered. It’d be easy to play her that way, as someone who’s given up before the play’s even started. But I think she’s got a bit of a fighter in her too. She wouldn’t be interesting if she didn’t. [...] I want to get rid of that depressed quality. (Payton Wright, personal interview with Ross Wetzseton, 1 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 155)

As Payton-Wright mentioned, her reading of Laura Wingfield was supported not only by director Theodore Mann but also by Tennessee Williams. The playwright attended several rehearsals and even introduced the cast to his sister Rose. When asked about Laura’s disability, Williams clarified that “[s]he’s not crippled. She has an affliction of the soul” (Payton-Wright, personal interview with Ross Wetzseton, 1 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 155), which had a major impact on Payton-Wright’s character interpretation.<sup>79</sup>

It is interesting to note that in the previous Broadway revival, the vivid rendering of the role was criticized by almost half of the critics, whereas in 1975 only three out of sixteen reviewers expressed their disapproval of the lack of fragility.<sup>80</sup>

Payton-Wright especially convinced the critics in the “Gentleman Caller scene”, in which Jim O’Connor raises a flicker of hope in the girl, but eventually lets her down. This scene

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<sup>77</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 154.

<sup>78</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 152; 155 – 156.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 155.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 147 – 148; 152.

is commonly regarded as the climax of the story and had moved the audiences throughout the past thirty years.<sup>81</sup> Edwin Wilson wrote:

It is one of the most poignant scenes of the modern stage, and also one of the most sure-fire dramatically. As played by Pamela Payton-Wright and Paul Rudd, the scene comes to life again in the present production; it never fails to move us no matter how many times we have seen it. (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 Dec. 1975)

d) Gentleman Caller

Paul Rudd, who was chosen by the director as the Gentleman Caller, was generally assessed favorably by his critics. The only two reviewers who commented less approvingly on Rudd's performance felt that he did not show enough sympathy for the character.<sup>82</sup> Howard Kissel thought that Rudd enacted the role in a single-sided manner:

Paul Rudd is strong as the gentleman caller, but he makes the obvious choice of playing him simply as an all-American go-getter, expending so much nervous energy we never really feel he has rapport with Laura in their brief scene together – the gentleman caller need not be so cruel a parody of Laura's daydreams. (Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 19 Dec. 1975, quoted in O'Niell, 179)

Similar to Clive Barnes, Howard Kissel immediately associated an American stereotype with Jim O'Connor. Undoubtedly, the Gentleman Caller triggered a set of images that could be read almost allegorically. While Barnes positioned the character into the Midlands of American society with their bourgeois manners, Kissel considered him in a broader context. Both critics, however, regarded this stereotype of an all-American hero with suspicion.<sup>83</sup> By 1975, the American Dream, which Jim O'Connor was an epitome of, apparently no longer aroused entirely positive connotations.

Kissel's perception of Paul Rudd's presentation stood in stark contrast with the actor's intended interpretation, since Rudd believed that he had provided the role with depth and complexity. In a personal interview with Jane O'Niell, he explained:

It would have been easy to play [the Gentleman Caller] as a yokel, a bumbledick. But I gave him complexity. I worked a lot on refining the role during the previews, as a matter of fact. (Paul Rudd, personal interview, 25 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 180)

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<sup>81</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 154.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 178 – 179.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Barnes, *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1975; Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 19 Dec. 1975, quoted in O'Niell, 179.

Quite metaphorically, Rudd agreed that prior to the encounter with Laura, Jim O'Connor "thought he was simply a Dale Carnegie man, climbing the ladder, only needing a little knowledge to succeed" (Paul Rudd, personal interview, 25 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 180). However, the acquaintance with the girl and her fragile world induces an inner change in the young man. Laura's love gives him insight into a new truth, which he is overpowered with and cannot handle. Therefore, he retreats into the superficial world he is familiar with.<sup>84</sup>

e) Designer

Quite obviously, the oblong arena stage at the Circle in the Square Theatre presented a major challenge to the direction of the play. In this revival, the stage featured the characteristics James A. Taylor, the designer of the 1965 production, envisioned as desirable:<sup>85</sup> Due to the arena stage, the audience was brought much closer to the actors, which provided intimacy and a more immediate theater experience. However, the vast space was problematic to use efficiently and some critics were not satisfied with Mann's approach<sup>86</sup>. John Simon remarked:

Arena staging is distracting here. Like people in elongated railroad flats, actors stand around in unsettling configurations at overly extended intervals. There is too much space to contend with, and Mann did not find the right movements and rhythms with which to conquer this space and fill it up. (Simon, *New Leader* 19 Jan. 1976, quoted in O'Niell, 209)

Ming Cho Lee, who was chosen to create the setting for this performance, agreed that the oblong stage in the Circle-in-the-Square Theatre was a very difficult undertaking for a set designer. He placed the upstage dining room in the rear and connected it to a combination of bedroom and living room farther front by means of three steps downwards. Originally, he conceived a raked living room which should elevate the dining room just enough to be viewed by the audience in the far back. Unfortunately, however, Maureen Stapleton could not perform on a raked stage due to a leg injury, so Ming Cho Lee had to make a compromise, which he and his critics were not happy with.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Cf. Paul Rudd, personal interview, 25 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 180.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Taylor, personal interview, 29 May 1991, quoted in Jane O'Niell, 240.

<sup>86</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 211 – 212.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 241 – 244.

The overall critical response to Lee's set design was rather unfavorable.<sup>88</sup> Howard Kissel was among the few reviewers who commented positively on the realistic set. According to him, "Ming Cho Lee's simple set conveys just how dreary this Depression home was [...]" (Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 19 Dec. 1975, quoted in O'Niell, 242). John Simon, on the other hand, felt that "[n]owhere in Ming Cho Lee's convincingly ramshackle apartment is there the 'poetic license' Williams expressly asks for [...]" (Simon, *New Leader* 19 Jan. 1976, quoted in O'Niell 242 – 243). Lee, who had already acquired a reputable distinction as a designer on and off Broadway, concurred with Simon and admitted that the set was "too heavy, too solid" (Ming Cho Lee, personal interview, 2 Aug. 1991, quoted in Jane O'Niell) and lacked depth and imagination. The designer traced this insufficiency back to the poor collaboration between him and director Mann. In Ming Cho Lee's opinion, a good teamwork between a designer and a director is of major importance, since both have to negotiate on their individual interpretations of the play.<sup>89</sup> Lee explicates the role of a designer as follows:

We are not just people who do sets and costumes. Designers are dramaturgic. We must speak the same language as directors. There must be much discussion between designers and directors, not so much about the set design as about the play. What does this play mean to us? Why are we doing this play? [...] (Ming Cho Lee, personal interview, 2 Aug. 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 244)

Apparently, Theodore Mann did not share Ming Cho Lee's intention of representing the complexity of *The Glass Menagerie* but counted on the celebrity appeal of stars like Stapleton and Torn.<sup>90</sup> In consideration of the substantial pressure to succeed, which was already prevalent on the Broadway stages in 1975<sup>91</sup>, Mann certainly was afraid to take any risks implicit in an experimental stage design. Thus, he relied on the popularity of his actors as a safeguard for this production and merely concentrated on the obvious elements of the play.<sup>92</sup> Due to this superficial approach, Ming Cho Lee was not given the opportunity and the time to "create[...] an environment that could provide memory, fragility and still be realistic" (Ming Cho Lee, personal interview, 2 Aug. 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 245).

The avoidance of any potential risk also precipitated on the lighting, as John Simon observed:

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<sup>88</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 242.

<sup>89</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 244.

<sup>90</sup> Cf. Ming Cho Lee, personal interview, 2 Aug. 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 244 – 245.

<sup>91</sup> Cf. Berkvist, *New York Times* 21 Dec. 1975.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 Dec. 1975.

[...] Thomas Skelton is an able lighting designer, [but] he apparently was not allowed to follow the author's instructions and provide less naturalistic, more El Grecoish lighting. (Simon, *New Leader* 19 Jan. 1976, quoted in O'Niell, 245)

The Circle-in-the-Square production was another Broadway revival which did not employ Bowles' original music. Instead, Mann framed the performance with guitar music by Craig Wasson, since he felt that it would be a modernization which corresponded with his interpretation of the play<sup>93</sup>:

Guitar music is country music. I think of this play as country, even if it takes place in St. Louis. I think of [the Wingfields] as rural people finding themselves in the city. [...] In my mind, I always thought it was a family who lived in the country and the father had brought them to the city. Nothing about their behavior makes them citified. (Mann, personal interview, 3 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 247)

His idiosyncratic interpretation was not embraced by the reviewers. Among the three critics who mentioned the music, two pronounced their displeasure.<sup>94</sup> John Simon advocated the original music by Paul Bowles and dismissed the musical contribution by Craig Wasson as an unwelcome "claptrap" (Simon, *New Leader* 19 Jan. 1976, quoted in O'Niell, 246).

#### **2.4.5. The Setting Becomes Increasingly Universal, but the Local Vernacular Remains a Marker of the American South**

In 1975, the question whether Amanda Wingfield was a universal mother, rather than an epitome of the faded Southern Belle, was debatable. Bearing in mind the development *The Glass Menagerie* had undergone within the previous three decades, it seems justified to say that the distinctive Southern setting had already lost most of its significance, whereas the universal aspects have solidified as the essence of the play.

Edwin Wilson, for instance, does not take his reader's knowledge of the setting for granted. He writes, "*As most people know*, the play is a tale of a former Southern belle, now living in reduced circumstances, who tries to maintain the illusion of what life was like in the Old South" (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 Dec. 1975, 6, *my emphases*).

The downplaying of Amanda's social background as a former member of the old plantation aristocracy, which was already noticed by the critics in 1956 and 1965, was

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<sup>93</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 246 – 247.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 246.

reiterated in the reviews of the 1975 revival.<sup>95</sup> To Martin Gottfried, it appeared that “[t]his Amanda is almost vulgar and hardly believable as a one-time Southern belle” (Gottfried, *NY Post* 19 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 87 – 88). His colleague Richard Watts shared this opinion and commented in an otherwise highly favorable review:

It is the most minor of quibbles to say that Miss Stapleton, one of the best actresses in America, lacks a little something of the quality that had made the mother suggest the society Southern belle she had apparently been in her youth. (Watts, *NY Post* 22 Dec. 1975, quoted in O’Niell, 88)

No matter how much the geographic locale turns into the background, the original English text itself will always encode a particularity of the American South, namely the distinctive features of regional speech. In this context, Wilson elucidates:

Mr. Williams is a Southerner by birth and upbringing and he frequently writes in a Southern idiom. People mistakenly think that a Southern accent is a matter of pronunciation[.] [...] But pronunciation is the least important part of it. The way the words are strung together – the inflections, the words emphasized, the rise and fall in the melody as the sounds are spoken – is the key as much as mere pronunciation. (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 23 December 1975)

Furthermore, Wilson remarks that none of the actors in this revival approximated the authentic Southern accent.<sup>96</sup> Tennessee Williams was present at the first rehearsal and induced minor textual changes, most of which aimed at a higher accuracy of Southern colloquialism.<sup>97</sup>

#### 2.4.6. Recapitulation

After having survived the hippie-era, *The Glass Menagerie* again had to face the question whether it could stand the test of time in the 70s. After all, television proved to have a detrimental effect on theater, and many people would stay at home to watch a sitcom rather than going to see a play.

Tennessee Williams, however, was lucky, since his publication of the *Memoirs* fuelled a heightened audience interest, which Broadway immediately responded to. Three of his plays were staged at the same time, which, of course, is a rather rare phenomenon.

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<sup>95</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 87.

<sup>96</sup> Cf. Wilson, 23 Dec. 1975, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 212 – 213.

Directed by Theodore Mann, *The Glass Menagerie* appeared as a work of realism. Focusing on the universal aspects of the play, Mann put the family situation into the foreground and stripped off the lyrical qualities.

The cast conformed to the realistic approach and rendered their roles in a down-to-earth-manner. Maureen Stapleton portrayed a loving mother without the intolerable quirks of Amanda Wingfield. Rip Torn focused on the rebellious side of Tom by picturing him as a tough sailor rather than a sensitive poet. As introduced by Piper Laurie in the previous decade, Pamela Payton-Wright also rendered a vivid and strong Laura and could particularly convince her audience in the Gentleman Caller Scene with Paul Rudd.

The production did not employ Bowles' original music, but featured incidental guitar music by Craig Wasson, which should emphasize the rural aspect of the play and its characters.

By 1975, the universal aspects of the play clearly prevailed, and the Southern setting seemed completely irrelevant. The only "Southernness" which could not be eradicated was the distinct regional speech of the characters.

## 2.5. The First Posthumous Revival (1983)

The first revival of *The Glass Menagerie* after Williams' demise opened on 1 December 1983 in the Eugene O'Neill Theater and ran for 92 performances. Directed by John Dexter, the ensemble consisted of Jessica Tandy as the Mother, Bruce Davison as the Son, Amanda Plummer as the Daughter and John Heard as Jim O'Connor.

### 2.5.1. Ronald Reagan and the Restoration of American "Greatness"

When Ronald Reagan was inaugurated as the 40<sup>th</sup> president of the United States in 1981, he inherited the country in a state of profound crisis, which did not only affect the economic sector, but also, and quite prominently so, the national pride. As Marilyn Berger observed:

To a nation hungry for a hero, a nation battered by Vietnam, damaged by Watergate and humiliated by the taking of hostages in Iran, Ronald Reagan held out the promise of a turn to greatness, the promise that America would "stand tall" again. (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004)

Thus, Reagan's mission consisted not solely in ensuring the economic and political recovery of the country from the adverse legacy of the 1970s, but also in the restoration of America's self-image. Even though Mr. Reagan was not considered a strategic thinker and his knowledge of international affairs was described as deficient, he initially seemed to live up to the expectations of his fellow citizens. It may be surmised that his public appeal and his "tremendous popularity" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004) were strongly enhanced by his appearance, which was reflective of the American Dream.

Born in 1911 to a poor family of Irish descent, Reagan recalled his "prairie small-town beginnings" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004) as a formative experience for his personal development. He played football at school and worked at various Broadcasting stations, where he could train his communication skills. On a trip to Southern California in 1937, Reagan was offered a seven-year contract by Warner Brothers, which ushered in his career as a film star. A former Democrat, Reagan became politically engaged on the side of the Republicans in 1962, which precluded his official appearance on the political arena in 1964 and eventually climaxed in his successful presidential election in 1981.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Cf. Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004.

Indeed, Reagan's biography bears a striking resemblance to that of the Gentleman Caller, who has repeatedly been considered representative of the prototypical American male.<sup>99</sup> Similar to Tennessee Williams' fictional character, the President of the United States was described as a man who conveyed a "youthful optimism" and exuded a "boyish charm" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004). He was considered vital, self-confident and exceptionally eloquent – features that equally applied to Jim O'Connor. Upon his nomination for re-election in 1984, Reagan pointed out that - unlike his Democratic opponent Walter F. Mondale - he would "represent mainstream America" in a "government of hope, confidence and growth" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004). His rhetoric proved successful among his voters, and Reagan entered his second presidential term with an overwhelming electoral victory.

Reagan's political agenda encompassed major tax-cuttings, the slashing of welfare programs, heavily increased defense spending and the lifting of government regulations concerning consumer-, job-related and environmental issues.<sup>100</sup>

By 1983, the recession was finally contained, the economy had recovered and the country was poised for a period of sustained economic growth. 16 million new jobs were created, and unemployment decreased. However, Reagan's change in tax policy turned out to serve predominantly the wealthy stratum of American society, whereas poverty increased, the divide between the rich and the poor widened, and homelessness became a serious problem.<sup>101</sup> In his article "Debunking the Reagan Myth" Paul Krugman quotes Bill Clinton, who defined the 1980s as "a Gilded Age of greed and selfishness, of irresponsibility and excess, and of neglect" (Clinton, quoted in Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008). In fact, the 80s seemed to have been ruled by a certain extent of superficiality, which was complemented by the glamorous Hollywood past of the president. With the Reagans, a new sense of elegance and glamour arrived, the family quarters of the White House were refurbished and Washington became known as "Hollywood on the Potomac" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004). Appearances clearly mattered more than substance, which can also be discerned by the fact that Reagan, a president gifted with an "extraordinary ability to communicate" (Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004), belied his ignorance of international developments relying on

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<sup>99</sup> Cf. Atkinson, *New York Times* 22 Nov. 1956; Cf. Barnes, *New York Times* 19 Dec. 1975; Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

<sup>100</sup> Cf. Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004; Conte and Karr, *An Outline of the U.S. Economy*.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004; Conte and Karr, *An Outline of the U.S. Economy*; Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008.

3-by-5 index cards on which his subordinates used to compile the information necessary for his meetings.<sup>102</sup>

For Krugman, the success of Reagan's policies was a myth, since it was the natural economic rebounding after the recession that accounted for the sustained economic growth, rather than the accomplishments of Reaganomics.<sup>103</sup> As Patrick J. Buchanan, a long-time political partner of Reagan and his communications director at the White House, stated, "For Ronald Reagan, the world of legend and myth is a real world [...] He visits it regularly, and he's a happy man there" (Buchanan, quoted in Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004).

In reality, though, Reagan's change in tax policies proved utterly detrimental to the budget deficit, which exploded to a \$173 billion in 1986. Nevertheless, Reagan's popularity remained undiminished until 1987, when the clandestine operation of "Iran-Contra" leaked out to the public. The president had allegedly ransomed American hostages in Iran for a supply of weapons. Initially, Reagan denied this illegal transaction, but later he confirmed the validity of the accusation. Even though he was not brought to trial, the Iran-Contra affair had severely tarnished the glow of his "heroic appeal".<sup>104</sup>

Ronald Reagan remained a controversial figure. While most of his staff members issued him adverse testimony, numerous Americans beheld him as a very important president who "fulfilled [the] restorative functions [the Americans] needed" (Kenneth Lynn, quoted in Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004).

### 2.5.2. A Classic to be Put into Question

Tennessee Williams died on 24 February 1983 at the age of 71, and *The Glass Menagerie* was the first of his plays to be revived on a major stage. With its status as his best-loved and, by many, most admired work, this choice was not surprising. However, it was probably not the play the late author would have selected.<sup>105</sup> Benedict Nightingale, critic of the *New York Times*, imagines the playwright's reaction from beyond the grave:

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983.

“I gave them a ‘Measure for Measure’ and a ‘Troilus and Cressida’ and a ‘King Lear’”, one can hear his ghost grumbling to Shakespeare over ambrosian cocktails at the Paradise Saloon,” and they persist in putting on my “Twelfth Night”. (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983)

For Nightingale, *The Glass Menagerie*, albeit a remarkable work, is not Williams’ best, since it does not expose Williams’ “first-hand pain” (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983) digested in the play with the same complexity and courage as *Suddenly Last Summer*. In comparison with the latter, he perceives the story of the Wingfields as “cozy, sub-Chekhovian and several of the other things the harsher critics called it years ago”. Furthermore, he raises the question, “When will Broadway pay its posthumous respects to the Tennessee Williams who could write like that” (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983)? In fact, Nightingale claimed that *The Glass Menagerie* received its reputation as a literary masterpiece only years after its first Broadway appearance in 1945. Back then, the critics failed to identify with the play and its distinctive style, and it was only after the revival with Helen Hayes in 1956 that they commended William’s drama and provided their reviews with positive attributes.<sup>106</sup>

In an attempt to explain the reason why Williams’ first success remained also his greatest, Nightingale arrived at two plausible deductions.<sup>107</sup> Firstly, *The Glass Menagerie* fits the economic and esthetic request of contemporary Broadway, since it calls for only one set and four actors. Secondly, it has at its core a subject which apparently cannot be exhausted and will always arouse public interest, namely “the pathology of the American family” (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983). Therefore, the play was both a safe venture for Broadway as well as a guarantor of an undiminished audience attraction.

The play was largely understood as Williams’ account of his own life, which was accentuated throughout the reviews.<sup>108</sup> The reference to the autobiographical aspect of the play did not only convey the impression of getting to know the author and his life, but also allowed the audience to project the problematic content onto a designated subject.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983; Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

### 2.5.3. John Dexter – A Meticulously Literal *Glass Menagerie*

The performance, which was meant to be a tribute to Tennessee Williams, was directed by John Dexter and opened in the Eugene O'Neill Theater on 1 December 1983. Since 1974, Dexter had served as the director of production for the Metropolitan Opera, and this operatic background also influenced his play productions. In his work, he relied on the effect of spectacle and paid attention to the esthetic aspect of a play.<sup>109</sup>

Unfortunately, in *The Glass Menagerie* revival of 1983, his style did not find favor with his critics. Out of twelve New York critics who commented on this Broadway performance, eight assessed his direction unfavorably.<sup>110</sup> Clive Barnes, critic of the *NY Post*, was among the few who remarked positively on Dexter's approach:

Dexter has been very fair to the play. [...] But [he] is a deal more than merely conscientious. His great skills as a director have always been towards formal structure, and in letting the playwright speak for himself [...] [the direction] is brilliantly self-effacing. (Barnes, *NY Post* 2 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 214)

Unlike the previous Broadway directors, Dexter used the Reading Edition of *The Glass Menagerie* as the basis of this production and rendered the play in a painstakingly literal sense.<sup>111</sup> His paramount premise was to be truthful to the original, and thus he also employed the title slides that were projected on a screen, which can be identified as the major difference between the Acting Edition and the original.<sup>112</sup> Midway through rehearsals, Dexter was confronted with certain inadequacies in the Reader's Edition, which made him resort to some passages of the Acting Edition.<sup>113</sup> The reason why Dexter was so reluctant to use the latter version was explained by Jessica Tandy:

John felt that Williams preferred the Reading Edition, or he would not have not [*sic!*] had it published. It was, of course, much closer to Williams' original manuscript. [Dexter] said, "Why not do what Tennessee wrote?" He thought it was what Williams would have wanted. (Tandy, personal interview with Jane O'Niell, 4 July, 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 100)

The vast majority of the reviewers felt that Dexter's literal direction generated a cold and remote atmosphere and caused alienation among the audience, who were distanced from the action.<sup>114</sup> Reportedly, Dexter deliberately disregarded the lyrical and dreamy quality inherent in the play. Bruce Davison, the Gentleman Caller of this production,

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 218.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 214.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 217.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 222; Williams 1984, 8 – 9.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 101.

<sup>114</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 214 – 215.

stated in an interview that “John [Dexter] was a brilliant technician and a creative director, but he had troubles with dreams, little human dreams, plays about human frailty” (Davison, personal interview, 28 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 220). *Daily News* critic Douglas Watt deplored the lack of fragility in this production and described Dexter’s direction as “heavy-handed” (Watt, *Daily News* 2 Dec. 1983, quoted in O’Niell, 217). Frank Rich approved of the director’s unsentimental approach, but was not pleased with the actual outcome, either. As he put it, “[...] [T]he notion of fighting against a maudlin Glass Menagerie is laudable, [but] the execution has gone astray” (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983, 3).

Dexter was also made responsible for the unsatisfactory acting of his cast. Rich observed that “[t]he supporting cast, though populated by accomplished actors, is frequently playing at a routine level” (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983, 3), and Edwin Wilson ascribed the run-of-the-mill acting to Dexter’s incapability to “help[...] his cast find the tune” (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 7 Dec. 1983, quoted in O’Niell, 217). Indeed, the relationship between the director and his actors was not exactly harmonious and undoubtedly affected the final result on stage. Chris Barreca, who served as the assistant designer for this production, summarized the situation as follows:

John is a visionary director, and tends to be captain of his ship. To John, art is a dictatorship. He would lash out at actors who disagreed with his interpretation. But this was a small cast of talented actors who were working through a process to find their strengths. You can’t belittle that process. As a director, he turned out badly because you can’t impose a dictatorship on a group of strong-willed actors. (Barreca, personal interview, 12 July, 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 220).

#### **2.5.4. The Dominated Cast**

##### a) Amanda Wingfield

Jessica Tandy, the legendary Blanche Du Bois of 1947, enacted the role of Amanda Wingfield in this revival. At an age of 74, some critics felt that the actress was already a generation too old for the role.<sup>115</sup> For Frank Rich, the reunion between Williams and Tandy, whose partnership was legendary in American theater history, was the foremost aspect of this event and even overshadowed the faults of this production.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 102.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Rich, 2 Dec. 1983, 3.

Similarly to Maureen Stapleton, Tandy focused on the universal aspects of the Mother and presented her personality as a logical and comprehensible product of her miserable economic circumstances.<sup>117</sup>

Benedict Nightingale rated Tandy's performance as the most ordinary one of the hitherto five Broadway versions of *Amanda Wingfield*:

Everywhere Miss Tandy is at pains to downplay what's absurd in *Amanda*, underemphasize what's exceptional about her, and, presumably, persuade the parents in the orchestra to identify with as many aspects of her as possible. (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983)

The critic felt that her performance was deficient in pain, fear and desperation, feelings that can only be revealed when the risk is taken to scratch beyond the surface of the story. He argues, however, that an ordinary presentation of the character enhances the moral subtlety of the play. In his opinion, an exaggerated interpretation causes the audience to immediately distance themselves from *Amanda*, whereas portraying her as a "normal" mother allows for a higher degree of empathy and the identification of the universal core message, namely "that self-sacrifice may be, not just a variety of egoism, but the most exquisitely effective way of destroying their children yet invented by parents" (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983). While Nightingale thought Tandy depicted an ordinary mother who the audience could identify with, Howard Kissel felt exactly the opposite. He was irritated by the hardness in her voice and arrived at the conclusion that "this approach limits our sympathies for the woman" (Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 2 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Neill, 96). In fact, the most widely noticed feature in Tandy's portrayal was a distinctive hardness and almost cruelty.<sup>118</sup> While one part of the critics regarded this quality as positive and desirable, the other part considered it inadequate and regretted the resulting lack of fragility.<sup>119</sup> Frank Rich, who belonged to the former group, thought that Jessica Tandy accomplished a multi-faceted portrayal of the former Southern Belle and distinguished herself from numerous other *Amandas* by deliberately stirring contempt in her audience, which he considered to be the essential feeling to making Tom's ultimate reaction credible and comprehensible for the audience.<sup>120</sup>

What is more, the actress added to this authenticity with her physical appearance:

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<sup>117</sup> Cf. Nightingale, 11 Dec. 1983, H3.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. O'Neill, 94.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. O'Neill, 96.

<sup>120</sup> Cf. Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

Miss Tandy brings one other strong asset to this role – beauty. When she puts on her yellow-linen cotillion dress to greet Laura’s gentleman caller, there is nothing campy or self-parodistic about the mother’s retreat to her vanished past. (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983)

Tandy herself did not consider her performance very compelling, which she largely blamed on the infelicitous directorial choice to use the Reader’s Edition. Dexter’s attempt to arrive at a compromise between the Reading - and the Acting Edition in order to overcome certain shortcomings further aggravated the situation for the actors. As Jessica Tandy put it,

We ended up trying to work with an amalgam of two scripts. It was extremely confusing. During rehearsals, we lost it. We lost the flow. And as a result, the performance was a failure. (Tandy, personal interview with Jane O’Niell, quoted in O’Niell 101 – 102)

b) Tom Wingfield

Bruce Davison, who was chosen by Dexter to enact the role of Tom Wingfield, completely agreed with Tandy. He related how insecure the whole cast was during the rehearsals and how much they were afraid of the Broadway opening. Depicting his emotional condition, he said, “I have never felt such a disaster coming. It was like being in a barrel going over a waterfall” (Davison, interview with Jane O’Niell, 28 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 135). Davison was a celebrated actor both on stage as well as on screen. Nevertheless, among the five previous actors who played Tom on the Broadway stage, he convinced his critics the least.<sup>121</sup> Frank Rich criticized the inconsistency in Davison’s speech as well as his performance:

Bruce Davison’s Tom has a Willamesque accent that comes (in the narration) and goes (in the scenes proper) – and the performance is in and out too. A cagey opponent for Miss Tandy in their fights, the actor gives an exaggeratedly actorish delineation of a dreamy poet battling for salvation. (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983)

Exaggeration was also detected in his presentation of humor. As in his comments about Jessica Tandy, Benedict Nightingale declared that Davison’s presentation lacked pain, fear and desperation. He wrote:

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 130.

[...] Bruce Davison's Tom [...] seems to be narrating the happier sections of "Our Town," not revisiting as traumatic a series of memories as an edgy, sensitive young man could reasonably fear to undergo. (Nightingale, *New York Times* 11 Dec. 1983)

Apart from Nightingale, four other critics missed character depth and intensity in Davison's version of the Son. One of them was Jack Kroll, who longed for a more emotional exhibition:

Bruce Davison is a good actor with a clear, clean technique, but it's hard to see the yearning poet in him, the desperation that drives him to leave the family and repeat the flight his runaway father took long before. (Kroll, *Newsweek* 12 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 132)

Not only the reviewers, but also the director expressed his discontent with Davison's rather superficial and humorous portrayal. During rehearsals, he tried in vain to dispose him to the more serious and thoughtful Tom Wingfield.<sup>122</sup>

*Village Voice* critic Michael Feingold deemed Davison inappropriate for the role altogether, since he considered his personality utterly disparate from Tom Wingfield's. According to Feingold, "[Davison] is obviously far too healthy-minded a soul ever to get drunk or abandon his family" (Feingold, *Village Voice* 13 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 133). Surprisingly, Davison reinforced Feingold's view. He admitted:

I think we were all miscast. I think John Heard would have made an excellent Tom, and I would have been a good Gentleman Caller. John Dexter chose the cast, and I think he purposely made an eclectic choice – sort of an off-casting to make something new and radical out of the play. But *The Glass Menagerie* is too fragile to withstand such dynamics. (Bruce Davison, personal interview with Jane O'Niell, quoted in O'Niell, 133)

### c) Laura Wingfield

At the request of director John Dexter, Amanda Plummer played Laura. Due to her stage history, Plummer had gained a reputation as an actress embodying "mentally off-balance[d]" (O'Niell, 160) roles. This "[o]ff-center image" (Salzberg, *Daily News* 27 Nov. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 160) was the reason why Plummer was initially hesitant about accepting the role, but eventually she realized that it was a great opportunity for her.<sup>123</sup> Unlike her colleague Bruce Davison, she could identify closely with the handicapped girl and was able to draw from her own personal experiences. Her

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Davison, personal interview with Jane O'Niell, 28 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 134.

<sup>123</sup> Cf. Salzberg, 27 Nov. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 161.

intention was to present Laura as a strong person. She explained her interpretation the following:

Many people identify with Laura, and consider her to be wispy, a butterfly. I wanted to give the audience a Laura they would not be relaxed to see. Laura has strength, but her family has made her weak. They have smothered her in love. They have treated her too carefully, like glass animals. I tried to show the underlying strength, go below the surface of the shy cripple. (Plummer, personal interview with Jane O’Niell, 11 June 1991, 162)

Nevertheless, her interpretation was not well received by her critics. In fact, of all the actresses who had previously performed the role on Broadway, Plummer came off worst. Similar to the reviews of her colleagues Tandy and Davison, the major point of criticism was the lack of depth, sympathy for the character and sensitivity in Plummer’s portrayal.<sup>124</sup> Some critics explicitly felt that Plummer was miscast in the role. One of them was Mimi Leahey, who criticized her “simple-minded and earthbound” (Leahey, *The Westsider* 22 Dec. 1983, quoted in O’Niell, 158) interpretation. Concurring with Leahey, Frank Rich wrote:

Though she works hard, Amanda Plummer is miscast as Laura: as you’d expect, she captures the pathological shyness of a young woman who lives in a fantasy world of glass figurines, but a gleaming smile alone can’t convey the inner radiance that is waiting to be unlocked; we just don’t believe that she would haunt her brother for the rest of his life. (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983)

Michael Feingold compared the unsympathetic way “she lays out her lines” to the image of a “short-order cook dishing fried eggs onto a plate” (Feingold, *Village Voice* 13 Dec. 1983, quoted in O’Niell, 159). Thus, the strength that Plummer intended to give to her interpretation of the role was completely misunderstood or considered inadequate by most of the reviewers. Jack Kroll, however, remarked positively on her performance and seemed to grasp Plummer’s interpretation the right way. He stated, “[S]he imbues the role with an odd passivity, as if determined not to be the other-worldly dreamer of most other interpretations” and pointed out that her “clenched inertia” (Kroll, *Newsweek* 12 Dec. 1983, quoted in O’Niell, 162) added a powerful dimension to the role.

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<sup>124</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 157 – 158.

d) Gentleman Caller

In the fourth Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie*, John Heard embodied the Gentleman Caller. Heard's performance was commended by ten out of thirteen New York reviews, and there was only one critic who disliked his interpretation.<sup>125</sup> Thus, he clearly was the cast member who fared best among his reviewers. It may be surmised that the sensitivity with which he rendered the role was the reason for the critical enthusiasm. After all, this was the feature that his colleagues reportedly lacked in their portrayals. Michael Feingold, for instance, declared that Heard was "by far the most interesting character on the stage" (Feingold, *Village Voice* 13 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 182) and that the Gentleman Caller scene was the only highlight of this evening. Nevertheless, by claiming Heard would have been better suited for the role of Tom, he made the same point as Bruce Davison.<sup>126</sup> According to Feingold, "the fact remains that [Heard's] performance and the other male role are crying out for each other through the whole second act, and *The Glass Menagerie* needs one Tom, not two" (Feingold, *Village Voice* 13 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 182).

Similar to Rudd's performance in 1975<sup>127</sup>, John Heard triggered associations with Dale Carnegie. Jack Kroll considered him "heartbreaking as he dispenses his Dale Carnegie self-help wisdom to Laura – wisdom that clearly won't keep him from his own destiny of failure" (Kroll, *Newsweek* 12 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 182), and Frank Rich wrote:

[John Heard's] flights of Dale Carnegie-style self-boosterism are accompanied by artificial and anachronistic gestures – as if he and Mr. Dexter were guessing blindly at the manners of a bygone American prototype. (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983)

The theatricality, which was criticized in Rich's review, was also regarded as inappropriate by Howard Kissel, who wrote:

John Heard is strong as the gentleman caller, although his occasional efforts at conveying the character's bluff attempts to be a go-getter seem theatrical rather than poignant. (At the final preview his exit drew hearty applause – shouldn't our response be one of profound sadness?) (Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 2 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 183)

What Kissel put into brackets interestingly alludes to the assumptions that are bound to the play. As *The Glass Menagerie* had already become a classic, people were familiar

<sup>125</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 181 – 182.

<sup>126</sup> Cf. Davison, personal interview with Jane O'Niell, quoted in O'Niell, 133; O'Niell, 182.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Rudd, personal interview, 25 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 180.

with the content and had prefabricated expectations the performance had to meet. These expectations were accompanied by an unwritten code of conduct among the audience, which is what Kissel hinted at. Accordingly, the Gentleman Caller was expected to touch the emotions of his spectators profoundly, and the required response on the side of the audience was a pausing in sadness. Since in this production, John Heard reversed the public response by means of his theatrical rendering, the critics were partly left puzzled.

e) Designer

When asked by John Dexter, Ming Cho Lee, who was already in charge of the setting in the revival of 1975, agreed to again design the set for the production in the Eugene O’Niell Theater. In contrast to the realistic setting which he realized in the preceding *Glass Menagerie* on Broadway, the approach in this revival was expressionistic.<sup>128</sup> In an interview, Lee described his initial conception of the set design as follows:

Instead of dealing with the past, we thought perhaps we should deal with the present. And the present is limbo in this play. So we decided to have scrim panels with paintings of clouds, representing limbo, and a realistic apartment within the clouds. And then, the design improved. I decided to take all of the flooring out of the stage so the apartment would be floating in space. The actors would enter through traps. (Lee, personal interview, quoted in O’Niell, 251)

Unfortunately, these ideas could not be realized due to economic reasons. The removal of the floors would have cost an estimated \$15,000, which Dexter deemed too expensive. As in the 1975 production, Ming Cho Lee’s conception was not fully considered and he had to put up with a compromise he was utterly dissatisfied with. By keeping the floor, his central “idea of a place floating in memory, in limbo, was entirely lost”. As a result, the clouds seemed inadequate since they had a “skyscraper effect” (Lee, personal interview, quoted in O’Niell, 251) on the apartment of the Wingfields.

It is striking that the set design of this production was reviewed by more New York critics than that of any other Broadway revival, which might be traced back to its innovative and idiosyncratic style.<sup>129</sup> The critical response was in equal measure favorable and unfavorable. According to Michael Feingold, the set was the most remarkable asset of the production. He proclaimed:

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<sup>128</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 247; 255.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 248.

The greatest tribute [the production] offers, apart from providing triumphantly the play's ability to survive every stupidity in the staging, is Ming Cho Lee's set, a grimly real room floating in a sea of clouds, and flanked by rows of reflecting pillars which suggest that the family is living, like the collection of some cosmic Laura, on a glass etagere (Feingold, *Village Voice* 13 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 249).

John Beaufort also considered the expressionistic set design very appealing. According to him, it complemented the era that is depicted in the play. He wrote:

The shabby but genteel setting seems suspended in a looming urban surround as surreal and tangible as the play's passing references to economic depression and imminent war. (Beaufort, *Christian Science Monitor* 7 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 249)

The other camp of the critics shared the impression that the surreal quality of the set produced a cold and alienating effect, which was untrue to Williams' intentions.<sup>130</sup>

Frank Rich argued:

The exemplary designer Ming Cho Lee has created a set that appropriately serves the abstraction of memory rather than kitchen-sink reality, but it is too big, too contemporary and too icy in its austere high-tech design. (Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983)

What Frank Rich hints at is a subtle rejection to transfer *The Glass Menagerie* in a contemporary theatrical reality. Despite the passage of almost four decades that stretched between the Broadway premiere and the present revival, he might still have preferred the much simpler set of Jo Mielzinger.

Although Edwin Wilson found Cho Ming Lee's design esthetically appealing, he did not feel it captured Williams' intentions. He wrote:

The first miscalculation of the production at the Eugene O'Niell Theatre is its failure to convey the Wingfields' suffocating entrapment. Instead of cramped quarters, Ming Cho Lee has designed an apartment surrounded by transparent panels and blue sky. It is surely the most beautiful set ever created for "Glass Menagerie" – and totally wrong. (Wilson, *Wall Street Journal* 7 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 251)

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<sup>130</sup> Cf. O'Niell, 250.

### 2.5.5. Recapitulation

In 1944 *The Glass Menagerie* was Williams' breakthrough success, and it was the first of his plays to be revived on a Broadway stage after his death. Although it may be argued that it is not Williams' best play, it is undoubtedly one of his most significant. Throughout the past four decades it had fascinated the American audience and had not forfeited its popularity. Although the Depression Era and Amanda's past as the daughter of a plantation owner had lost most of their relevance, people could identify with the universal aspects inherent in the play and its characters. This enduring validity turned *The Glass Menagerie* into a modern classic, and by the 1980s, its stage survival was assured.

In an attempt to be as truthful to the author's intention as possible, John Dexter used the Reading Edition of the play. In accordance with the opulent production style, which he was accustomed to from his opera stagings, he inserted the title slides that were prescribed in Williams' original manuscript. The Reading Edition repeatedly proved to be inadequate, and thus, parts of the Acting Edition were squeezed in.

Dexter was a very eccentric and domineering director, who did not give much leeway to the actors and their interpretations. The actors felt insecure, since they were literally prevented to realize fully their acting potential.

According to some critics, Jessica Tandy rendered an ordinary mother who downplayed all of Amanda's unnerving features. Other reviewers described her portrayal as hard and cruel, but mentioned favorably that she did not shy away from arousing contempt in the audience. This hard depiction may have been reflective of the general mood of the era, which was determined by "greed and selfishness" (Clinton, quoted in Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008). Overall, Tandy's character study was considered emotionally incomplete, which was due to a superficial dealing with the text. Similarly, Bruce Davison and Amanda Plummer were both said to have presented their roles with a lack of depth and sympathy. John Heard was lauded for the sensitivity he brought to the role, a feature which made him appear as a second Tom, rather than the Gentleman Caller.

Except for John Heard, all the cast members were criticized for a lack of depth in their portrayals. The alleged superficiality might have originated from various sources. It might just have been the result of John Dexter's director-dictatorship, which tied the hands of his actors and prohibited a more profound character analysis. However, after severe drawbacks in the 1970s, the 1980s marked a time in which the Americans were concerned with polishing up their self-image. In this endeavour, appearances mattered

more than actual substance, and it may thus be surmised that this prevalent superficiality may also have percolated theatrical undertakings.

Another explanation takes account of the fact that the *Glass Menagerie* revival of 1983 was the first production subsequent to Williams' death. Even though Benedict Nightingale dared to question the superiority of the play, its image as the author's best-loved and most admired work prevailed. The revival may thus be understood as a symbolic reminder of Williams' past greatness. The supposed superficiality of the production may have arisen from the enshrining of the text and the perpetuation of a former status quo that resulted in an attempted *repetition* rather than a *re-interpretation* of the play. This would also account for the fixed set of beliefs the audience shared about the play.

Over time, *The Glass Menagerie* had assumed features of a ritual that was constituted by cast and audience alike. While the actors in their representation of Williams' characters were supposed to be as close to "the original" as possible (and were benchmarked by the critics against *their* idea of "the original"), hence emulating former performances, the audience actively participated in this ritual by re-enacting the expected and internalized behavior at the right time. A flouting of these unwritten codes of conduct thus created an unsettling effect and distorted the familiarity of the ritual. This can be detected in Howard Kissel's irritated reaction to the "hearty applause" (Kissel, *Women's Wear Daily* 2 Dec. 1983, quoted in O'Niell, 183) upon the Gentleman Caller's departure, which, to him, had inadequately replaced a pausing in sadness ("shouldn't our response be one of profound sadness?").

## 2.6. *The Glass Menagerie's* 50th Anniversary (1994)

The 50th anniversary production of *The Glass Menagerie* premiered on 15 November 1994 in the Criterion Center Stage Right. It was a production of the Roundabout Theatre Company under the direction of Frank Galati and ran for only two months, or 57 performances. Julie Harris, Željko Ivanek, Calista Flockhart and Kevin Kilner starred as Amanda Wingfield, her son, her daughter and the Gentleman Caller, respectively.

### 2.6.1. The Age of Technological Revolution

The 1990s marked a time of sustained economic success in the United States, which manifested itself not only in economic variables such as low inflation, low unemployment, strong profits and economic growth, but also in the social climate, which was characterized by a strong sense of optimism and confidence.<sup>131</sup>

It was a decade of technological development, which yielded pioneering inventions in the field of electronics and telecommunication. With the advent of the Internet, national barriers were virtually eliminated and “globalization” gained a new significance. Computer hardware and software gave rise to a whole new industry which “revolutionized the way many industries operate[d]” (Conte and Karr, *An Outline of the U.S. Economy*).

These innovations accounted for a decisive shift in America’s labor force: the primary sector continued to lose ground, while the service industry emerged as the sector in which by far most of the Americans worked. As Conte and Karr put it, “If steel and shoes were no longer American manufacturing mainstays, computers and the software that make them run were” (*An Outline of the U.S. Economy*).

In the 1980s America’s economic hegemony had been seriously challenged by the booming Asian economies<sup>132</sup>, and it was only in the mid-1990s that the “U.S. began to reassert its technological and economic leadership” (Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008).

After twelve years of Republican rule, the Democrat Bill Clinton was elected president in 1993, and held the office for two presidential terms. Clinton considered himself a reformer, a “new Democrat” (Kennedy, *New York Times* 2 Nov. 2000), who aimed at implementing his reformative ideas in both a domestic and international sphere, in order to be prepared for a globalized future. Surprisingly, even though the globalized

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<sup>131</sup> Cf. Conte and Karr, *An Outline of the U.S. Economy*; Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008.

<sup>132</sup> Cf. Conte and Karr, *An Outline of the U.S. Economy*.

economy and the rapid expansion of computer networking suggested open-mindedness and a spirit of change, both the Congress and the country were not ready for Clinton's reform.<sup>133</sup> Looking back on the Clinton Era, David M. Kennedy thus arrived at the conclusion that "[h]e announced grand schemes but accomplished little" (Kennedy, *New York Times* 2 Nov. 2000). Similar to Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, the actual achievements of a president were not of prime importance, though. As Thomas Cronin pointed out, Americans measure the greatness of a president by "criteria that are over and above popularity and re-election" (Cronin, quoted in Berger, *New York Times* 6 June 2004). In that sense, Bill Clinton, a man "of supreme self-confidence, could be classified a "great president". However, his positive image was severely threatened when his extra-marital affair with the White House - intern Monica Lewinsky became public knowledge. Comparing Clinton to Jimmy Carter, Dudley Clendinen arrived at the following conclusion:

Mr. Carter was defeated in 1980 amid the general feeling that he may have been a moral success, but was a failure as a leader. For Bill Clinton, the more gifted politician, re-elected but unable to resist temptation, it is the reverse. (Clendinen, *New York Times* 2 Nov. 2000)

However, by 2008 the Lewinsky-scandal had faded, and in retrospect, other aspects of Clinton's presidency seemed to carry higher relevance. Reflecting on the Clinton Era, Paul Krugman does not even mention the former president's salacious fallibility. Rather, he identifies the two failures of the Clinton administration in the inability to accomplish a health care reform and the failure to disrupt the Republican narrative discourse, which led to a perpetuation of the Reagan myth up to the Bush administration in the new millenium.<sup>134</sup>

### **2.6.2. Generations in Between**

In 1994, half a century had elapsed since Williams' breakthrough drama celebrated its stage premiere. The years had shown that the play had survived a myriad of different approaches and interpretations and had consolidated its status as a modern classic. To what extent Tennessee Williams' masterpiece has already been integrated into contemporary American consciousness can be gathered from Jan Stuart's question:

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<sup>133</sup> Cf. Kennedy, *New York Times* 2 Nov. 2000.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Krugman, *New York Times* 21 Jan. 2008.

Is it possible to see *The Glass Menagerie* – a work that should be second nature to anyone with a high school diploma – and experience what an audience felt at its Chicago premiere in 1944? (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994)

Halfway through the nineties, the play has already become a cultural heritage to be passed on in American classrooms. Apart from the older generation, the Americans only knew about the Depression era and the post-depression years from history books or their grandparents' stories, but could not relate directly to that time any more. Thus, the second and third generations could not exactly share the memories with their older family members, which most probably affected the theatrical experience of *The Glass Menagerie* as well. On the other hand, "[...] memory invariably distorts facts and reshapes events" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994), and there is no evidence how accurately the individual recollections comported with the historical reality. There is, however, a universal appeal inherent in the play, which transcends the notion of time. The contemporary American audience could still identify with the family tragedy of the Wingfields and appeared to be moved by the romantic encounter between Laura and her putative suitor in the same way as the audiences before them.<sup>135</sup> According to *New York Newsday* critic Jan Stuart, the play had not lost any of its fascination, and the ensemble of this production "sa[id] the lines as if the playwright's ink had barely dried" (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994). David Richards judged *The Glass Menagerie* as Williams' most heartbreaking play, but adds that "you'll have to bide your time for a while [...] before the play [...] exerts its considerable pull" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994).

### 2.6.3. A Balanced Cast

#### a) Amanda Wingfield

The role of Amanda was enacted by the famous Julie Harris, who had acquired a reputation of being highly eccentric. In her previous stage appearances, she had particularly excelled in roles that carried some tinge of madness, as in her delineations of Emily Dickinson, Sally Bowles and Mary Todd Lincoln.<sup>136</sup> David Richards described Harris' interpretation as follows:

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>136</sup> Cf. Richards *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994.

Without forgoing Amanda's gentility, [Harris] emphasizes the woman's feverishness, her tendency to spin silvery dreams out of straws of hope, and, similarly, to inflate momentary disappointments into catastrophes for the ages. (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994)

While Richards felt that Harris brought the madness of Amanda Wingfield to the fore, Jan Stuart deemed her interpretation too ordinary and disapproved of her realistic approach.<sup>137</sup> Contrary to his colleague, he wrote:

Harris' Amanda is resolutely life-sized, as if the spark of vivacity had long ago drained away [...] The actress doesn't allow us to laugh at the woman's excesses, because nothing seems excessive beyond a southern talent for manipulating the English language in novel ways. (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994)

However, Richards did not only praise Harris but also detected a flaw in her verbal delivery. He pointed out that "Ms. Harris has always had a rasp in her voice, breathiness wrapped in barbed wire, and a habit of underscoring the unexpected word in a line of dialogue" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994).

Unlike Richards, who deemed Harris' performance "eccentric" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994), Stuart described it as "grimly realistic" (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994). The critic of the *New York Newsday* felt that Amanda Wingfield was divested of her pivotal status in this production.<sup>138</sup> In fact, he even gained the impression that "[e]verything conspires to eclipse Harris' Amanda, who lacks the manic ferocity to send both of her men running from the family" (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994).

Indeed, Frank Galati intentionally avoided the centering of the Mother, but instead added equal importance on all roles. This approach was rather unusual, since many previous revivals as well as the famous movie version of 1950 starring Gertrude Lawrence and the ABC TV adaptation with Katharine Hepburn in the lead clearly presented Amanda Wingfield as *the* pivotal figure of the play. One critic, however, found this mainstream approach problematic, since he asserted that "Amanda is not a star role" ("The Glass Menagerie", 20 Nov. 1994), but represents merely one role within the ensemble. Consequently, he preferred Galati's interpretation, in which the focus was not on the celebrity appeal of the actress, but on Williams' text. He adduced:<sup>139</sup>

<sup>137</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>138</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994; "The Glass Menagerie", 20 Nov. 1994.

<sup>139</sup> Cf. "The Glass Menagerie", 20 Nov. 1994.

This “Glass Menagerie” allows the audience to rediscover the beauty of the Williams dialogue that in other productions I’ve seen has been upstaged by star turns or by pushy directorial flourishes. (“The Glass Menagerie”, *New York Times* 20 Nov. 1994)

Unlike Jan Stuart, this critic thought that Harris’ character presentation was both strong and moving and lacked neither madness nor humor.<sup>140</sup> The discrepant perception might arise from two diverging sets of expectations. While Stuart viewed Amanda as the character of capital importance, his colleague attached equal value to each of the ensemble members. Therefore, the expectations of the latter reviewer were met, whereas the former was left dissatisfied.

b) Tom Wingfield

The native-born Slovenian Zeljko Ivanek played Tom Wingfield. Prior to the actual opening on Broadway, Ivanek was portrayed in the *American Theater* magazine. The opening lines already revealed much of the actor’s individualism on stage:

Expect the unexpected when Zeljko Ivanek’s Tom strolls onto the Wingfield’s fire-escape landing in the Roundabout Theatre Company of New York’s production of *The Glass Menagerie* this fall. Ivanek is among those American actors with the capacity to consistently surprise and intrigue audiences [...] (Hill, 55)

Ivanek had appeared in many different roles on and off Broadway as well as in film productions, which showed his versatility and open-mindedness as an actor. In his interpretation of Tom Wingfield he aimed at a balancing of humor and pain and endeavored to express the emotions vigorously so as to endow the character with life.<sup>141</sup> The emotional outburst in Ivanek’s presentation did not go unnoticed by his reviewers. In fact, the critics generally noted an aggressive and angry element which was prominent in the actor’s performance. While some reviewers considered this intense portrayal commendable, others deplored the resulting detriment to the poetic element. Jan Stuart, who belonged to the former group, observed, “Every utterance cuts with an extra undercoating of bile. [Ivanek is] altogether extraordinary” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994). He thought that Ivanek stuck out of the cast as the member who had best internalized the “Wingfield charisma” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994). According to him, Ivanek authentically recreated the spirit of the Southern

<sup>140</sup> Cf. “The Glass Menagerie”, 20 Nov. 1994.

<sup>141</sup> Cf. Hill, 55.

charm, hence the presence of his errant father. However, Stuart found fault with the actor's imitation of the Southern accent, which he considered too thick.<sup>142</sup> In fact, the linguistic aspect of Ivanek's portrayal was unanimously criticized by his reviewers. One critic of the *New York Times* thought that "Ivanek's [...] Deep South accents [...] overwhelm Ms. Harris' more delicate and accurate Southern speech" ("The Glass Menagerie, 20 Nov. 1994) and Richards asserted in an utterly unfavorable review:

The performance that doesn't entirely work [...] is Mr. Ivanek's. [...] Sometimes when anger seizes him, he has as much difficulty wriggling free of his jacket as he does spitting out his words. That's half of it, of course, but only half. You get little sense of the incipient artist, the dreamer who scribbles verse on the lids of shoe boxes. Since he is also the play's narrator, looking back in sorrow, a vital poetic element is missing. (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994)

Richards' colleague from the *New York Times* described Ivanek's Tom as a "jittery, change-rattling [*sic!*] young man", whose physical gestures were exaggerated and were a "distract[ion] from the play's inner logic" ("The Glass Menagerie, 20 Nov. 1994). According to this critic, Ivanek followed a different path in his interpretation than his colleagues, which made him the odd man out of this ensemble.<sup>143</sup>

c) Laura Wingfield

Calista Flockhart performed Laura Wingfield. Like her predecessors, she presented the character as strong and unbreakable.<sup>144</sup> According to Jan Stuart, "you [got] the feeling this Laura will prevail after her misbegotten meeting with Jim" (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994).

d) Gentleman Caller

The Gentleman Caller was portrayed by Kevin Kilner and formed the composed counterpart to Ivanek's rather aggressive Tom. David Richards wrote in a highly favorable review of Kilner's performance, "Mr. Kilner, the real discovery of this production, is tall and strapping, and looks like the glossy male models in 1940's magazines" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994).

As in the previous revivals of *The Glass Menagerie*, the Gentleman Caller scene still signified the emotional climax of the production. Even though Laura turned out to be

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>143</sup> Cf. "The Glass Menagerie, 20 Nov. 1994.

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

much stronger than she initially seemed, the effectiveness of the scene was not curtailed<sup>145</sup>:

That does nothing to undercut the heartstopping power of Jim and Laura's encounter, measured out with aching precision by Kilner and Flockhart till we almost turn blue from holding our breath. (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994)

In the same tenor, Richards agreed that the Gentleman Caller scene exuded strong emotions:

It's nothing, really, just a romantic encounter that was never meant to be. Yet so resonant is Williams's writing and so beautifully meshed are the performances, that the world itself might as well be collapsing. (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994)

#### e) Designer

Loy Arcenas, the set designer of this production, recreated the sinister atmosphere of the dreary St. Louis of the 1930s. He used a steel scaffolding to denote the fire escapes, and presented the platforms and the walls in grey, with the only accentuation being the lace curtains. As in the previous revival, the set also featured clouds that veiled the top of the stage and were slightly lighted.<sup>146</sup> The impression obtained by the lighting effect reminded Richards of "seductive eyes staring intensely at the audience, as Amanda's peripatetic husband once stared at her" (Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994).

As in the revival of 1983, the new production made use of the screen device suggested in the Reading Edition. While in 1983 the title cards were generally perceived as having an alienating and distancing effect<sup>147</sup>, they were accepted slightly more readily in the present production. Jan Stuart, for instance, perceived the title projections as a highly appropriate device, which he introduced to his readers as follows:

For those who [*sic!*] only acquaintance with the play comes from the 1987 film directed by Paul Newman or the made-for-TV version with Katherine Hepburn, the evening's revelation is in the eloquent use of slide projections, which flash traces of dialogue and giant images of roses, gentleman callers and Daddy Wingfield. The blown-up words float over the players' heads like whispers from the past that come and go; the effect is gorgeously resonant and strikingly contemporary. (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994)

<sup>145</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>146</sup> Cf. Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994; Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>147</sup> Cf. Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

It is interesting to note that the attribute “contemporary” bore negative connotations in 1983<sup>148</sup>, but seemed to denote a desirable quality in the subsequent decade. While the critics agreed on their appreciation of a contemporary staging, their definitions of contemporariness diverged. While Stuart considered the slide projections “strikingly contemporary” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994), Richards thought the audience needed getting used to the “*old-fashioned* magic lantern show on the back wall of the Wingfields’ dingy St. Louis apartment” (Richards, *New York Times* 16. Nov. 1994, my emphasis). According to Stuart, these “multimedia splashes” functioned prominently in modernizing the script, or, as he puts it, in “jazzing up an old melody” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994). Contrary to this opinion, Richards, who disapproved of the title slides, held the view that they were an unpleasant and redundant distraction, since the projections only contained information that was already inherent in the text and hence transported by the actors anyway.<sup>149</sup>

Both Stuart and Richards emphasized that the slides did not emanate from the director’s flash of genius, but in fact were the “stunningly modern stylizations” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994) of the visionary Tennessee Williams himself.<sup>150</sup> Therefore, Stuart explained the success of the production the following:

“It’s a testament to the play’s rich textures and a director’s fidelity to the playwright’s vision that *The Glass Menagerie* remains so poignantly shatter-proof.” (Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994)

#### 2.6.4. Recapitulation

*The Glass Menagerie* had not only become a modern American classic, but also an integral part of the canon. It had become part of the American cultural heritage, which was taught to high-school students and formed part of the American literary consciousness. As was the case in the previous revival, Galati’s production basically served the purpose of reminding the American audience of Tennessee Williams’ past greatness. Since the revival intended a repetition and re-enactment of the American classic as known from schoolbooks or prior stagings, not much leeway was given to individual interpretations.

As did George Keathley in his revival in 1975, Frank Galati, too, put equal weight on all four characters. Therefore, Julie harris did not stick out as prominently as Helen Hayes,

<sup>148</sup> Cf. Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

<sup>149</sup> Cf. Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Richards, *New York Times* 16 Nov. 1994; Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

although she had a similar celebrity appeal. Her delineation of the Mother was perceived ambivalently. Some critics felt that she especially worked on a presentation of Amanda's madness, whereas others deemed her portrayal too ordinary and realistic. Zeljko Ivanek displayed emotional outbursts in the role of Tom Wingfield. He appeared as an aggressive and angry character, which was not perceived very positively by his critics. Similar to the former Laura Wingfields on the Broadway stages, Calista Flockhart interpreted the character with vigor and strength. Her lack of fragility was not to the detriment of the Gentleman Caller scene, which was still perceived as the emotional core of the play. Jim O'Connor again proved to be the character that enjoyed the greatest audience appeal. Apart from being easy on the eye, Kevin Kilner contributed prominently to the evocation of romantic feelings in the Gentleman Caller scene.

As in the previous Broadway revival, Galati also employed the title projections. While most of the critics had dismissed their use in Dexter's production, many commented favorably on the device in the present revival.

In contrast Galati's revival of 1983, "contemporariness" was deemed a desirable feature in the set design of the present production. Read in the context of the time, this might suggest a certain extent of open-mindedness. In fact, the 1990s represented an era that was characteristic of pioneering innovations in the realm of technology and computer networking and the economy was flourishing. These developments were also reflected in the general mood of American society, which was characterized by optimism and confidence. Since Americans obviously approved of contemporary trends, it may be surmised that they also appreciated a contemporary coloring of theater stagings.

It is worth noting that Galati's production was performed 57 times and was taken out of the repertoire after only two months. Even though no explanation is given on the relatively short performance period, it may be hypothesized that the play was not considered as relevant as it used to be in the past. After all, Williams laid out a dreary setting in the aftermath of the Great Depression, a time that was reminiscent of economic recession, unemployment, poverty and resultant personal hardships. In contrast, the 1990s were a period of economic success, low unemployment, and social satisfaction. This difference might have caused a diminished audience interest in the play, which may have been revived primarily in order to perpetuate the memory of the late Tennessee Williams in the public consciousness of American society.

## 2.7. *The Glass Menagerie* in the New Millennium

The most recent Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie* opened on 22 March 2005 in the Barrymore Theatre. It was directed by the Englishman David Leveaux and starred Jessica Lange, Christian Slater, Sarah Paulson and Josh Lucas in the lead. With a total of 120 performances, it ran significantly longer than the past three revivals.

### 2.7.1. Tennessee Williams' Evergreen

The general critical tenor still suggested a pro-Williams attitude, and the play still seemed to be safe from any criticism. *The Glass Menagerie* had been approved as an American classic, whose significance no one dared to contest. There was only one critic, namely Michael Feingold from *The Village Voice*, who questioned the producers' choice of *The Glass Menagerie*: "The real puzzle for me is why people felt compelled to raise large amounts of money to assemble [the actors], under the aegis of this director, for this play at this time" (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005). The only decisive factor, for him, seemed to be the degree of popularity the play, the actors and the director enjoyed among the public, which the producers relied upon. To favor Tennessee Williams' evergreen over other plays such as *Everybody Loves Opal* or *The Revenger's Tragedy* meant that the producers were merely driven by financial considerations. Conclusively, Feingold arrived at the following conclusion:

What it suggests is a theater asleep on its feet, not noticing its own talents and traditions, but always looking outside for fashion tips, and relying on a desiccated 10-best list for moneymakers. A theater so far out of things will soon topple over and be buried. And what will we then have in its place? (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005)

Feingold's critical remark hints at the fact that contemporary theater did no longer function as a cultural response to its social, economic and political environment, but rather as a venue of bourgeois entertainment. This trend already began to show in the 1960s, when the drama turned out to be "a losing venture" (Zolotow, *New York Times* 21 June 1965) on Broadway. Back then, Seymour Vall, president of the First Theater Investing Service, had observed:

"The nature of the drama [...] is to attack the ethics and values of our society. Those people who have achieved enough success to afford theater tickets reject the idea of attending a theater which attacks their way of life." (quoted in Zolotow, *New York Times* 21 June 1965)

Notwithstanding the demise of the drama, however, *The Glass Menagerie* had not been banished from the theater repertoires, but had successfully lured the audiences into the playhouses throughout all decades. This apparently had qualified the play for the consistently valid “10-best list for moneymakers” (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005), which contemporary directors still desperately resorted to. Thus, these “classics” appeared to have been turned into mere sources of income, while their content had clearly become secondary.

### **2.7.2. David Leveaux – Dreamy Experimentalism and the Juxtaposition of Past and Present**

David Leveaux chose to re-invent *The Glass Menagerie* on stage and tried to approach the play from a novel perspective. This experimentalism, however, was not to everybody’s taste. *Chicago Tribune* critic Chris Jones, for instance, advocated the retention of Williams’ “original style”. He wrote:

Despite its apparent simplicity, Tennessee Williams’ little memory play from 1944 has a way of confounding contemporary auteurs who try to mess with its carefully crafted stylistic rules. The British director David Leveaux is its latest victim. (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005)

Leveaux, who was well-known for his successful Broadway stagings of the musicals *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Nine*, had a reputation of favoring form over content.<sup>151</sup> In this production, he emphasized the dreaminess and nostalgia of the play, an aspect which had been neglected in many previous revivals. Furthermore, he aimed at a clear juxtaposition of the memorized nostalgic past and the present, which was expressed through Tom Pey’s setting and Natasha Katz’ lighting. The stage was equipped with realistic ornate furnishings, but the exteriors were “plain and boldly contemporary” (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 March 2005). The central theatrical element was a lace curtain, whose overt function was to demarcate “[t]he room where Amanda shoves her agonized loneliness down her crippled daughter’s throat” (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 March 2005). But the lace draperies also fulfilled a metaphorical purpose, namely the separation between the surreal memories and real life.<sup>152</sup> Accordingly, the curtain was constantly drawn, adjusted and re-adjusted, and some parts of the play were even

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<sup>151</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005; Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005.

<sup>152</sup> Cf. Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005; Marks, *Washington Post* 23 Mar. 2005.

performed behind the draperies, which made the actors hardly visible for the audience.<sup>153</sup>

Leveaux's direction was almost unanimously rejected by the New York critics, and the shortcomings of this production were almost exclusively ascribed to his infelicitous directorial choices. His production could not bear comparison with Gregory Mosher's exuberantly acclaimed *Glass Menagerie* revival at the Kennedy Center, which had been performed in Washington the year before. The critics agreed that the "grittier, refreshingly bracing social realism" (Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005) with which Mosher approached the play, was much more accurate than the approach chosen by Leveaux<sup>154</sup>, whose fusion of impressionistic and realistic elements caused confusion and was perceived as contradictory.

Lisa Schwarzbaum considered the production as "tonally unstable" (Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly* 1 Apr. 2005) and Chris Jones pointed out that "[...] it has none of the necessary visual or directorial unity that can make one believe that [the characters] inhabit any kind of consistent single world, be it one of dream or real life" (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005).

Moreover, the metaphoric meaning of the curtain was only comprehended by very few reviewers. Rather, the majority of the critics dismissed Leveaux's major stylistic device as a redundant distraction.

Chris Jones wrote:

Parts of the scenes play behind [the curtain], which has a curiously alienating effect and merely removes [Jessica] Lange from her audience. Too often, it becomes a play about a curtain. [...] Leveaux has Lange wandering in and out of the light, fussing at the back of the stage, messing with that darn curtain. All he needed to do was get out of her way. Had Williams been alive to see it, he would have insisted. (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005)

In a similar manner, *Washington Post* critic Peter Marks remarked:

Lange, Slater and Paulson are constantly yanking the curtains this way and that, and for no clear reason some of the scenes are played behind the drawn drapes or completely offstage. When we're deprived, for example, of the actress's expressions as she makes one of Amanda's funny-frantic phone solicitations, the impact is nil. (Marks, *Washington Post* 23. Mar. 2005)

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<sup>153</sup> Cf. Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005.

<sup>154</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005; Marks, *Washington Post* 23 Mar. 2005.

Michael Feingold thought that the claustrophobic atmosphere was completely forfeited by this eccentric stage device. The drapery reminded him of a “shower curtain”, and evoked the impression of “the Wingfield family [...] living in the hospital bed from *Wit*” (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005).

The only critic who lauded the employment of the curtains was Hilton Als from *The New Yorker*. Als observed that by presenting the characters only in silhouettes through the draperies, Leveaux “force[d] them – and the audience – to rely on the timbre of their voices, rather than their faces, to impart meaning”, which he called “a theatrical radio” (Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005).

Some critics felt that David Leveaux’s interpretation sacrificed the strong emotional content of the play. *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley commented:

Audiences new to the 1945 classic [...] may have trouble figuring out just what the family dynamics are that tear the Wingfields apart during the hardscrabble years of the Great Depression. [...] [T]he stinging emotional core that keeps “The Glass Menagerie” in the repertory of evergreen dramas is obscured by gauzy impressionism. (Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005)

In the same line, *Variety* critic David Rooney observed:

Th[e] failure to identify the emotional heart of a scene is a constant through Leveaux’s monotonous production, most alarmingly when Amanda learns her investment in the Gentleman Caller has been wasted. The shattered dreams that follow her rejuvenation should be devastating but instead are overblown and unintentionally amusing. (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005)

Michael Feingold pointed out that Leveaux’s staging of the *Glass Menagerie* conformed to his personal directorial style that also surfaced in his other productions. According to the critic, “Every play [directed by Leveaux] is reduced to a harsh and emotionally diminishing basic concept, every undercurrent or secondary motif to a crude oversimplification” (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005). As the worst of his simplistic ideas, Feingold identified the representation of an unnaturally affectionate relationship between Tom and Laura, which was widely perceived as an allusion to incest by the critics.<sup>155</sup> As observed by David Rooney, “[Christian Slater’s] Tom gives off the wrong kind of sexual energy around his mother and sister, clearly a conscious choice made by Leveaux but an offputting one” (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar., 2005).

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<sup>155</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005; Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005; Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005; Marks, *Washington Post* 23 Mar. 2005; Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005; Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly* 1 Apr. 2005.

### 2.7.3. The Impure Cast

#### a) Amanda Wingfield

The Oscar – winning actress Jessica Lange, who enacted the role of Blanche Du Bois in the Broadway revival of 1992, played Amanda Wingfield in Leveaux’s production. Several critics considered her miscast and felt that Lange rendered another Blanche Du Bois instead of the nagging mother required in *The Glass Menagerie*.<sup>156</sup> The sensuality which Lange added to the role was considered desirable for Blanche, but mostly inadequate for the domineering mother. Peter Marks from *The Washington Post* declared that the Amanda of Leveaux’s production “[l]ook[ed] suspiciously alluring for a Tennessee Williams lady worn down by penury and care” (Marks, *Washington Post* 23 Mar. 2005). Some critics felt that she perfectly externalized Amanda’s wounded quality, but for the most part disregarded her maternal cruelty and dictatorial assertiveness, both of which essentially constitute Amanda’s personality.<sup>157</sup> Her soft and sympathetic representation undoubtedly provoked a different audience response than did Jessica Tandy’s in 1983. While Tandy, who had played Blanche in the legendary movie version of Elia Kazan, deliberately stirred contempt in her spectators, Lange preserved the audience’s empathy. The reception of this rather cautious approach varied. Similar to some critical voices from former productions<sup>158</sup>, several reviewers identified the feeling of contempt as crucial to comprehend Tom’s abandonment of his family. In a markedly unfavorable review Peter Marks stated:

[...] Lange makes the fatal mistake of feeling sorry for Amanda [...] From the first scene to the last, her Amanda is always on the verge of tears. [...] Lange’s waterworks are meant to show us a compassionate if neurotic nature. [...] Boring! Who is she, Mother Courage? If we don’t hate Amanda a little, then how big a jerk is Tom, the family’s sole support, for leaving her and Laura? (Marks, *Washington Post* 23 Mar. 2005)

Chris Jones, however, evaluated Lange’s interpretation favorably. He wrote:

[Lange] ignores any and all stylistic dickerings, launching into a risky, rather grand Amanda of high period style. It’s an astonishingly energetic performance that adroitly captures the character’s internal disarray and capacity for damage, yet without destroying out empathy. (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005, 1)

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<sup>156</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005; Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005; Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005.

<sup>157</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005; Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005.

<sup>158</sup> Cf. Rich, *New York Times* 2 Dec. 1983.

The energy in Lange's performance was also noted by Lisa Schwarzbaum, yet in a negative sense. She criticized the deliberately girlish approach of the actress, which resulted in exaggerated movements and gestures that exuded an exhausting amount of nervous energy.<sup>159</sup> Interestingly, Ada Calhoun believed that the girlishness in Lange's performance was only a means to belie her inability to authentically render a woman of the South:

What Lange does to bridge the gap between her natural stoicism and her weathered-coquette character is to overcorrect[.] [...] Rather than transmuting her northern power into southern power, she affects a far-off gaze and a lilting, girlish accent, heavy on the elision. She recalls a much gentler, softer Williams heroine than the frequently aggressive Amanda. (Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005)

Calhoun clearly distinguished between the schema of a "northern mother" and the one of a "southern mother". While she attributed Lange's soft performance to the former stereotype, she required Williams' Amanda to embody the latter, who was supposed to be more straight-forward and assertive.<sup>160</sup> However, these stereotypes were not uniformly valid, since people would have different associations with and assumptions of the notion of "Southernness". *Variety* critic David Rooney, for instance, regarded the girlish and fluttery rendition of Lange's Amanda as highly accurate and considered it suggestive of "Amanda's Southern flightiness" (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005). Hilton Als from *The New Yorker* agreed with Rooney and pointed out that "[Lange's] Amanda is never too far from the plantation [.]" (Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005). According to him, Jessica Lange radicalized the established picture of Amanda Wingfield and was the first actress to emancipate herself fully from Laurette Taylor's performance, which had overshadowed production history hitherto. He thought that up to then, "Amanda ha[d] always been played as something of an overweight frump [...]" (Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005), but Lange displayed a beautiful, slim and unusually young Mother, which facilitated a changed perception of *The Glass Menagerie*.<sup>161</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> Cf. Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly* 1 Apr. 2005.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005.

<sup>161</sup> Cf. Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005.

b) Tom Wingfield

The son was played by Christian Slater, who joined the ensemble only a few weeks before the play's opening to take over the part which originally would have been played by Dallas Roberts. No official reason was given why Roberts left the cast, but it was speculated that he was dismissed due to incongruities with Jessica Lange.<sup>162</sup>

Christian Slater had gained his popularity on screen, but had proved his acting talent on stage to the critics' acclaim in the recent London production of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*.<sup>163</sup> Nevertheless, his main reputation as a movie star was unforgiven and unforgotten. Michael Feingold considered Slater and his cast members to be "bankable stars, meaning people whose frequent on-camera work has leached away their sense of working in three dimensions" (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005). Although Als was aware of the problematic move from the film industry to the Broadway stage, he assessed the situation differently:

Like the other actors, Slater surprises us with the sacrifices he's willing to make for the role; not once do we feel as if he is just another movie star turning a trick on Broadway, or that the play needs him in order to survive. (Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005)

Slater was regarded as an unusual choice by numerous critics. Most of his reviewers noted a lack of the poetic, lyrical quality that essentially characterizes Tennessee Williams' alter ego. Claudia Puig considered Slater as "the weak link in this production" (Puig, *USA Today* 23 Mar. 2005) and wrote:

Christian Slater [...] captures Tom's frustration but fails to convey his sensitivity. Best known for hip films such as *Heathers* and *True Romance*, Slater projects too much of a snide, smart-alecky quality to make Tom's more tender and complex feelings toward Amanda and Laura convincing. (Puig, *USA Today* 23 Mar. 2005)

Chris Jones locates Slater's Tom Wingfield in the American West, rather than St. Louis: "[Slater's] Tom plays like a West Coast creature, a modern slacker from Melrose Avenue, not an artist trapped [...] in Midwestern manufacturing drudgery" (Jones, *Chicago Tribune* 23 Mar. 2005).

Some critics considered Slater too masculine for the role, which was perceived contradictory to Tom's poetic nature and enhanced the impression of an incestuous relationship between him and his sister Laura. Ada Calhoun wrote:

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<sup>162</sup> Cf. Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005; Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005.

<sup>163</sup> Cf. Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005.

[...] Tom [...] is usually played as a sensitive poet[,] [...] [but] instead of getting a sympathetic, pretty-boy daydreamer, here we have the masculine Slater, who galumphs around in ill-fitting work clothes and is so heterosexual that the scenes of fraternal affection with his crippled sister have an almost sexual charge. (Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005)

David Rooney shared the opinion that (heterosexual) masculinity and the poetic were two mutually exclusive concepts. He stated, “[T]he badly miscast Christian Slater is too old at 35 and seems too ruggedly masculine to play Tom, a character so often brushed with sexual ambiguity” (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005). According to Thomas Adler, there is little doubt about the latent homosexuality in Tom Wingfield; After all, we know that the play is largely autobiographical, and Tom Wingfield had repeatedly been interpreted as Williams’ alter ego.<sup>164</sup> However, what these reviews expressed was a pre-fixed, stereotypical set of associations assigned to homosexuality, which was seen in conflict with “the masculine”. The poetic, which had historically been associated with masculinity (one just has to recall Virginia Woolf’s fictional account of Shakespeare’s imaginary sister Judith, who, albeit equally talented, was barred from pursuing a career as a poetess<sup>165</sup>), gradually turned into an anti-masculine domain in the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the beginning of the previous century, the American Dream yielded male prototypes such as the high-school hero who excelled in sports and was popular among his peers and the traveling salesman who was emblematic for a new age of mobility. In the story of the American Dream, the poetic homosexual outsider can be seen as the antihero, the Other. Thus, it is not surprising that American society projects these assumptions onto *The Glass Menagerie*, a play which integrates but subverts the American Dream. As Hilton Als pointed out, the roles in the play are unmistakably allocated: “[W]e do not think of Tom as a tough, masculine force in the world; it falls to the Gentleman Caller to be the bull in this menagerie of romantics” (Als, *The New Yorker* 4 Apr. 2005).

### c) Laura Wingfield

Tom’s sister Laura was enacted by Sarah Paulson. Like her colleagues, she gained her reputation as an actress in the film industry. Up to then, her most notable appearance was in the Doris Day and Rock Hudson parody *Down With Love*, which the critics of *The Glass Menagerie* frequently referred to. Her interpretation of Laura Wingfield was

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<sup>164</sup> Cf. Adler, 34, 36, 39; Boxill, 62.

<sup>165</sup> Cf. Woolf, 55-56.

only discussed by a couple of critics, the majority, however, only mentioned the actress briefly and in connection with the Gentleman Caller. In a highly favorable review, Claudia Puig wrote:

Sarah Paulson is a revelation as Laura, as heartbreaking in her shyness and lack of self-regard as she is radiant in her generosity. In her key scene with the Gentleman Caller [...] Paulson manages to seem at once angelic and painfully human. (Puig, *USA Today* 23 Mar. 2005)

Among the unfavorable reviews, Paulson was unanimously criticized for representing Laura not only as physically challenged, but also mentally retarded or infantile. Ben Brantley was reminded of “an anguished, terrified 2-year-old” (Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005) and David Rooney felt that “[...] Paulson’s infantile slowness of speech unfortunately makes her seem not just withdrawn but feeble-minded” (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005). Her unsatisfying portrayal was attributed to infelicitous directorial choices. Defending Paulson, Feingold argued, “[A]s Leveaux conceives [Laura], she seems nearly retarded. Sarah Paulson, pretty and graceful, does what she can inside this constricting interpretation” (Feingold, 29 Mar. 2005).

Leveaux’ concept of a feeble and retarded Laura stood in stark contrast to the Broadway interpretations of the previous four decades, which had marginalized her handicap and instead had presented her as a rather strong character.

#### d) Gentleman Caller

“It’s a relief in *Glass Menagerie* [*sic!*] when Josh Lucas finally makes his appearance as The Gentleman Caller” (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005). Michael Feingold’s reaction to the established climax of the play was shared by a number of critics. According to Feingold, unless an actress of Laurette Taylor’s caliber forms part of the ensemble, the Gentleman Caller is the most rewarding role of *The Glass Menagerie*. The critic asserted that the role enjoys the highest audience appeal, since it is set apart from the burdened family tragedy of the Wingfields.<sup>166</sup> Underlining this hypothesis, Feingold wrote:

John Heard’s Gentleman Caller was the best thing about the Jessica Tandy revival, and Lucas’s, though nowhere near what Heard achieved, is very much the best thing about this one: appealing, funny, a little awkward, a little menacing, and a thoroughly three-dimensional presence. (Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 Mar. 2005)

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<sup>166</sup> Cf. Feingold, 29 Mar. 2005

This attitude was shared by Lisa Schwarzbaum, who noted:

There's an interlude of excitement when the Gentleman Caller arrives: Josh Lucas brings an energizing American-boy openness to the role, and his pivotal scene with Paulson is a delicate pas de deux containing love's tendernesses and treacheries. (Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly* 1 Apr. 2005)

However, Lucas did not reap only favorable reviews. In fact, quite a few critics disagreed with his interpretation. Ben Brantley considered his performance "strangely contemporary and goofy" (Brantley, *New York Times* 23 Mar. 2005) and David Rooney felt that the actor did not match with Williams' depiction of Tom in the script:

Lucas is a little too handsome, and he's confident to the point of self-absorption. Jim's attentions toward Laura should prompt a surge of hope for this forlorn, broken woman [...] But Lucas appears almost smugly condescending, taking far too long to locate Jim's compassion. (Rooney, *Variety* 28 Mar. 2005).

#### **2.7.4. Recapitulation**

David Leveaux' recent production of *The Glass Menagerie* deviated in many points from the previous revivals. His attempt to refresh the nostalgia and lyricism, which had been neglected in many of the former stagings, much to the regret of the critics, did not turn out as successful as he expected. His fusion of impressionistic and realistic elements, which was meant to discernibly detach the past from the present, was perceived as creating a sense of incoherence. Leveaux' main device, the curtain, mostly failed to convey the intended metaphoric meaning, and instead was dismissed as an unwise distraction.

Due to infelicitous choices of the director, an unsavory light was thrown on the Wingfields in this production. Jessica Lange was too sensuous for the role of the aging mother and her affected girlishness was understood as an overcompensation of her incapability to authentically render a mother of the American South. This shows that cultural translation does not necessarily imply the crossing of national borders, but can also be of vital importance *within* the confines of a country. Even though Jessica Lange was of American origin, she lacked the direct experience of living in the American South and thus could not convey an authentic picture of Amanda Wingfield, a woman who apparently was so utterly different from her own persona. This seems to verify Joseph Roach propitious assumption that "a fixed and unified culture exists only as a convenient but dangerous fiction" (Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 5). Although one might identify oneself as "American", this signifier merely denotes citizenship and a sense of

belonging, but in reality encompasses various distinctive cultures and historical memories.

Similar to Jessica Lange, Christian Slater's depiction was not located in the American South, either. Rather, he evoked associations of the American West. However, this involuntary displacement of Tom Wingfield was not the only shortcoming of his portrayal. Indeed, Christian Slater was felt to be the weak link in this production, and his brimming masculinity was considered completely inadequate for a portrayal of the homosexual Tom. It was largely due to his outright heterosexual manliness that the close relationship with his sister Laura appeared to be incestuous.

Unlike the previous Broadway Lauras, Sarah Paulson did not portray Williams' sister as vivid or strong, but evoked the impression of being either mentally retarded or an infant.

Josh Lucas received the highest praise as the Gentleman Caller, a role which was again identified as typically American and which was free from the family affliction of the Wingfields.

Looking back on the performance history of *The Glass Menagerie* on Broadway, it is striking that despite different directorial choices or deviating character interpretations, the text has never been radicalized or de-constructed. As one of the theater mainstays of the United States, Broadway certainly fulfilled a significant representative function. Apart from minor changes, *The Glass Menagerie* had to be *re-enacted* rather than *re-interpreted* to feed the expectations of a predominantly conservative bourgeois clientele. Subsequent to Williams' death in 1983, the revivals of the play could be decoded as reminders of the great American author, which were meant to restore his presence in the collective memory and literary consciousness of American society.

## 3. Austrian Reception

### 3.1. The Austrian Premiere (1949)

#### 3.1.1. Setting the Scene

##### a) Post-War Politics and The Marshall Plan

When *The Glass Menagerie* arrived in Vienna five years after its American premiere, post-war Austria was concerned with the reconstruction of the country and the formation of a new national identity. Despite their apparent differences, the two major Austrian political parties, ÖVP and SPÖ, formed a coalition government. They both knew that the political antagonism between the Christian Conservatives and the Socialists had not only resulted in the Civil War, but as a consequence had also paved the way for Hitler to exert his power. After the war, the two parties were forced to collaborate and recover the country from the trauma of National Socialism.<sup>167</sup>

Austria was divided between the Allied Forces - Great Britain, France, the Soviet Union and the United States. While Austria as a whole was split up into four occupation zones, Vienna was quadripartite between all four of them.

In the initial phase of total occupation, the uniform endeavor of the allies was to denazify Austria. However, with the outbreak of the Cold War, the ideological disparities between the Western powers and the Soviet Union began to show. The former ally strove to implement a stable democratic political system as well as economic capitalism, whereas the latter aimed at an introduction of communism and a system of economic control. The United States pursued a vigorous anti-communistic campaign, and gradually they emerged as the most influential occupying power. They gained increasing influence on the politics, economy and culture of Austria and sparked a phenomenon called “Americanization”.<sup>168</sup> The term has generally come to be used as a synonym of *modernity* or *modernization* and refers to the embracing of American popular culture, commodification and mass consumerism, which started off during the interwar years.<sup>169</sup>

As a result, the Austrian focus, which was traditionally targeted towards the East, was dramatically shifted to the West. This “Westernization” was strongly enhanced by the Marshall Plan in 1948 – 1952: On top of a 500 million dollar investment in the immediate postwar years, the US provided Austria with another one billion dollars in

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<sup>167</sup> Cf Bischof and Kofler, 203.

<sup>168</sup> Cf. Bischof and Kofler, 200 - 202.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Bischof (2004), 2 – 3.

the form of food, raw materials, machinery, and business know-how in order to reconstruct the country's economy.<sup>170</sup>

b) Americanization of Vienna and the Resistance to it

After World War II, the economic and military hegemony of the United States was uncontested.<sup>171</sup> The Marshall Plan, which, apart from economic aid, was essentially a propaganda tool to contain communism and boost the image of America, was understood as a proof of American generosity and peacefulness. Therefore, it was not surprising that the Austrians were receptive towards Americanization trends. It was particularly the young generation who enthusiastically adopted American popular culture and turned their backs on the bourgeois prejudices of traditional Austrian High Culture.<sup>172</sup> As Bischof puts it, “jazz, jeans and rock’n’ roll stood for freedom and liberation from hidebound Austrian folk culture and condescending elite high culture.” (Bischof 2004, 5)

However, Americanization neither succeeded in all areas of life nor among the entire population. The Viennese journalist and editor Armin Thurnher indicates that Austria has always been especially cautious when it comes to business and politics.<sup>173</sup> In search of explanations for Austria's resistance towards full Americanization, he reasoned:

I am not sure whether one should consider Vienna's resistance against modernization as a kind of conservatism of the heart, as a remembrance of the past greatness which manifests itself in pride of traditions, or whether it is just existential fear of new things and experiences, which would be natural for people who lived in feudal circumstances for so long and have not yet embraced independence as an individual value. (Thurnher, 30)

Nevertheless, Thurnher makes clear that anti-Americanism is inextricably bound to the cultural identity of the Austrians, who perceived certain kinds of Americanization as the “cultural occupation of [the] victors” (Thurnher, 32). He traces this negative connotation back to the failure of the allies to strategically reconstruct Austrian media after the war. While in West Germany, they carefully distributed the licenses to the publishers, in Vienna, they sponsored their own newspapers. Furthermore, Thurnher points out that anti-Americanism has especially been perpetuated by the *Kronen-Zeitung*, a newspaper whose readership amounts to 44 percent of the population.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> Cf. Bischof and Kofler, 206.

<sup>171</sup> Cf. Bischof and Kofler, 210.

<sup>172</sup> Cf. Bischof (2004), 5.

<sup>173</sup> Cf. Thurnher, 30.

<sup>174</sup> Cf. Thurnher, 32.

### 3.1.2. Cultural Transfer

As Bischof emphasizes, “Americanization and Westernization is never a one-way transfer, but always a complex give-and-take between societies” (Bischof 2004, 6). Rather than a simple imposition of one culture upon the other, it is a societal *encounter*, in which the influences of the source culture and their integration into the target culture are being negotiated. Thus, cultural transfer can be described as a dynamic and selective process which presupposes the receptiveness of the target culture.<sup>175</sup> It always implies intercultural mediation processes, which may be induced by personal mediators, mediating institutions and/or media-based intermediary entities.<sup>176</sup> Personal mediators include travelers, freelance journalists, translators and other professionals who temporarily live and work in the foreign culture.

The main representatives of mediating institutions are state-owned cultural institutes as well as culture-political departments of the foreign ministry. The *Amerikahäuser*, which were abundant in Austria’s post-war scenery, also constituted an important intermediary example. Generally speaking, mediating institutions encompass a variety of organizations as well as publishing houses which center cultural education and the implementation of foreign cultural elements into the native culture. After the war, this task was largely accomplished by so-called “cultural officers”, i.e. public officials who were employed by the American occupation authorities and whose main role was the de-nazification and restoration of Austria’s cultural scene and the promotion of American culture. They functioned prominently in the licensing process of American plays, seeking performance permission from American authorities, negotiating copyright regulations as well as payments and issuing permits to those theater directors whose playhouses were situated within the American occupation zone. Interestingly, this position was almost exclusively assigned to exiled ex-Austrians, such as Otto de Pasetti, Henry Alter, Ernst Lothar and Ernst Haeusserman, who had grown up in Europe and were familiar with its cultural traditions. From 1947, the Cold-War affected the theater scene and turned theater into a weapon of propaganda. It became increasingly important to convey and implement the “right” (Rathkolb, 1997, 59, *my translation*) image of America. Any play that was felt to be an infringement of this maxim was blacklisted on the “schwarzen Liste des Kalten Krieges” (Rathkolb, 1997, 58). Thus, cultural officers did not only serve a mediating but also a censoring function, since they channeled the Austrian perception of the United States into a given direction.

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<sup>175</sup> Cf. Bischof (2004), 6 – 7; Lüsebrink, 130.

<sup>176</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 133.

The third intercultural intermediary is constituted by the media. In print, on the radio and on television, the media convey information and images of other cultures and function significantly in the shaping of cultural identity.<sup>177</sup>

*The Glass Menagerie* was staged in Vienna with a time lag of only five years between its American premiere and its Austrian debut performance, which points to a relatively fast reception. After all, World War II had only come to an end four years earlier and the communication network did not bear any resemblance to the globalized and technically mature environment of today. Internet and no-frills airlines did not exist back then, which made America appear more distant than now.

The reason why Williams' play found its way into the Viennese theater culture so quickly nevertheless, can be largely attributed to the intercultural mediator Berthold Viertel.

#### a) Berthold Viertel – The Cultural Agent

Without Berthold Viertel, *The Glass Menagerie* would have arrived in Vienna much later. Viertel did not only function as the cultural agent who eventually brought the play to Austria, but was also responsible for the transfer into the German language, thus enabling the (linguistic) accessibility to the target culture.

Viertel was born in Vienna in 1885 into a wealthy Jewish family. He was still a young boy when he first encountered Karl Kraus and acquainted himself with his journal *Die Fackel*. Kraus inspired Viertel's interest for literature, fostered his writing skills and published numerous of his poems, essays and reviews in *Die Fackel*.<sup>178</sup>

Apart from his writing activity, Viertel soon started his career as a director in the *Freien Volksbühne* in Vienna. He worked with a group of talented actors such as Ernst Deutsch and Helene Thimig and introduced the Viennese theatergoers to a repertoire of contemporary plays, modeled after the avant-garde theater he had experienced in Berlin. However, his project failed due to commercial restrictions and the culture-political disorientation of the participants.<sup>179</sup>

Eager to realize his plan nevertheless, the Austrian director went to Berlin in 1923 and founded his experimental ensemble *Die Truppe*. His purpose was to counter the *Geschäftstheater* with its compliance to law and order and to confront capitalistic

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<sup>177</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 133.

<sup>178</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 1 – 3.

<sup>179</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 6 - 7.

materialism. His idealistic experiment did not prove successful, though. *Die Truppe* fractured and Viertel was left with a mountain of debt.<sup>180</sup>

Between 1928 and 1932, Viertel worked as a movie director in Hollywood and New York, although he abhorred the commercialism and profligacy characteristic of this industry, which, to him, reflected the values of the American Bourgeoisie.<sup>181</sup>

In 1932, Viertel returned to Europe and worked in Germany and England, but his Jewish background increasingly turned out detrimental to his career, since he would no longer receive a work permit and had scarce job opportunities.<sup>182</sup> Due to his dismal work prospects in Europe under the National Socialist regime, he was forced to emigrate to the United States in 1939.

Despite his residency in exile, Berthold Viertel had always felt emotionally attached to Austria and had perceived himself as a member of the “deutschen Kultur” (Kaiser, 9). However, his deeply rooted sense of a cultural identity was disrupted by the Second World War, and he abandoned his thoughts of a potential return to Austria. He identified National Socialism as an alienating force which shattered the distinct identity of an entire cultural group.<sup>183</sup>

Although his status as an exile proved an impediment to gain foot on Broadway, it did not only carry negative consequences. Viertel, who accepted American citizenship in 1942, had become a significant cultural mediator. Owing to his prolonged residency in the United States and his theater work in Hollywood and New York, he was not only perfectly familiar with the English language, but also with American culture. He was acquainted with prominent actors and writers such as Charlie Chaplin, Greta Garbo, Arthur Miller or Sinclair Lewis and he utilized these contacts to facilitate the emigration of jeopardized Europeans. He was vividly engaged in cultural activities and was a member of various associations: Among celebrities such as Oskar Kokoschka, Albert Einstein and Heinrich Mann, he was in the chairmanship of the *Freie Deutscher Kulturbund*. He actively contributed to the *Tribüne für Freie Deutsche Kunst und Literatur in Amerika*, was a co-founder of the *Aurora Verlag* and wrote for the *Austro American Tribune*, a monthly journal that bridged Austrian and American culture.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 7.

<sup>181</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 8.

<sup>182</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 13.

<sup>183</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 10 – 11.

<sup>184</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 13 – 15.

In 1947, Viertel returned to Europe, since he was contracted by the BBC to direct and write for German-speaking radio broadcasts.<sup>185</sup>

A year later, Viertel returned to Vienna, yet he merely considered it an occupational visit, without any intention to stay. Upon arrival, he was shocked at the “deformed style” (Haider-Pregler, 1997, 105, *my translation*) that seemed to inhabit the entire German-speaking theater scene. He titled it the “Reichskanzleistil” and described it the following:

Dieser Ton war entweder so laut, daß ich ihn nicht anzuhören vermochte, und mit den Worten den Sinn verlor – oder, in jäher Abwechslung, so leise, so privat [...], daß ich erst recht nichts [...] in mich aufnehmen konnte. (Viertel, quoted in Kaiser, 16)

Viertel considered the Reichskanzleistil emblematic of the dehumanizing and destructive consequences of National Socialism. He noted a lack of transitions and the subtle nuances that are characteristic of human speech. Furthermore, he identified two predominant genres that were shown on post-war theater stages. The first genre presented trivialities to entertain and console, which Viertel interpreted as an expression of resignation. The second genre concerned itself with the de-humanized presentation of heroic deeds and their glorification. As a director he worked hard on eliminating these two genres, which he considered residuals of the *Reichskanzleistil*.<sup>186</sup>

Viertel availed himself of his expertise in American culture and staged predominantly modern American dramas, which he had partly translated himself.<sup>187</sup> As Kaiser pointed out:

Er nützte damit den Rückenwind, den alles Amerikanische in der Nachkriegszeit für sich hatte, und unterlief zugleich die offizielle Selbstdarstellung der USA, in der eine Selbstkritik der amerikanischen Lebensverhältnisse, wie sie Tennessee Williams und Carson McCullers leisteten, kaum gefragt war. (Kaiser, 18)

Although Berthold Viertel had spent most of his life outside of Austria, the Austrians perceived him as “one of them”. This fact played an essential role in the reception of *The Glass Menagerie*, which was summed up well by Hugo Huppert:

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<sup>185</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 16.

<sup>186</sup> Cf. Haider-Pregler (1997), 105; Kaiser, 17.

<sup>187</sup> Cf. Kaiser, 18.

„Die Glasmenagerie“ kommt unterm Sternbild eines doppelten Glücksfalls nach Wien. Ein Dichter und Künstler vom Range Berthold Viertel hat als Übersetzer die sprachliche, als Regisseur die szenische Vergeistigung der amerikanischen Vorlage auf sich genommen. Ohne Zweifel mag diese Gunst der Umstände in wirksamem Maß dazu beigetragen haben, daß die Aufführung im Akademietheater zu einem künstlerisch hochinteressanten Ereignis wird. (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan 1949)

Viertel's significance as the translator of the play was acknowledged by almost all the critics.<sup>188</sup> According to Mühlbauer, Viertel succeeded in preserving the lyrical quality in his translation.<sup>189</sup> Otto Basil was the only reviewer who did not refer to Viertel's *translation*, but to his *transfer* of the play, which implies a small but important difference. While *translation* denotes a rather literal process of linguistic transformation, a *transfer* adapts the text more freely to fit the context of the other speech community. Therefore, it can be argued that *translation* is a process which focuses on the source culture, whereas *transfer* concentrates on the target culture. Following this definition, Basil assigned much of the production's merit and its audience appeal to Berthold Viertel's mediating work. "Berthold Viertel [hat] dieses zerbrechliche Stück [...] in ein poetisches, gläsern-durchsichtiges Deutsch übertragen und ebenso inszeniert" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949). With reference to the Second World War, he wrote:

[Berthold] Viertel [...] hat auch mit seiner Williams-Inszenierung nichts anderes geboten als: Theater der Dichtung. Und dies muß ihm in einer so poesiearmen Zeit wie der unsrigen besonders gedankt werden. (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949)

### 3.1.3. The Performance

*The Glass Menagerie* premiered in the Akademietheater on 22 January 1949. Berthold Viertel and the actors were acclaimed by the critics and the audience alike. For Hugo Huppert from the *Österreichische Zeitung* it was a "künstlerisch hochinteressante[s] Ereignis"(26 Jan. 1949). The *Wiener Kurier* critic Herbert Mühlbauer talked about a "glanzvolle Aufführung" and felt that the play presented "die wundervollste Liebesszene, die seit langem auf der Bühne zu sehen war" (Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949). The critic of *Die Presse* was equally full of praise for this "wonderful performance":

<sup>188</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949; Heer, *Die Furche*, 5 Feb. 1949; Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1949; Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949; Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949.

<sup>189</sup> Cf. Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949.

So genießt man wieder Freude an einer vollendeten und erfüllten Darstellung. Berthold Viertel und das Quartett der Schauspieler mussten oftmals vor dem Vorhang erscheinen. (R.H., *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949)

Several of the reviewers mentioned the hearty applause at the end of the performance, which was taken as an obvious sign of audience approval.<sup>190</sup>

### 3.1.4. The Melancholic Cast

The acting quartet was composed of Austrian top-class actors of that time: Helene Thimig created the role of Amanda Wingfield, Curd Jürgens embodied Tom Wingfield, Käthe Gold starred as Laura and Josef Meinrad played the role of the Gentleman Caller. Like Eddie Dowling's production of 1944, the Viennese *Glass Menagerie* of 1949 also focused on the dreaminess and melancholy of the play. As noted by Otto Basil, “[alle Schauspieler] erfüllen die Atmosphäre des Stücks mit leiser Melancholie, Traumhaftigkeit und Musik“ (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949).

#### a) Amanda Wingfield

Although all four actors received favorable reviews, the acting of Helene Thimig was especially highlighted. Similar to the Broadway Premiere of 1945, Amanda Wingfield was regarded as the pivotal character in the play by the Austrian audience.<sup>191</sup>

The critic of *Die Presse* praised Thimig's successful realization of Tennessee Williams' intentions and emotions.<sup>192</sup> In fact, most of the reviewers agreed that her portrayal was outstandingly accurate and authentic.

[S]ie war einfach diese gewaltsam – liebende Mutter bis in die kleinsten Nuancen des Tonfalls und der Geste; ein warmer, lebendiger Mensch aus einer anderen Zeit, aber stark und unbedenklich auch dem Heute gegenüber, wenn es um die Kinder geht. (hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949, 5)

This optimistic interpretation of Amanda Wingfield stressed that her past could not destroy her strength and positive energy in the present. In a war-shattered Austria, this endurance and persistence seemed to be desirable features, and instead of dismissing Amanda as a mother who failed, the Austrians identified with and felt sympathy for her. This identification can be detected in the critic's depiction of the character. He described Amanda Wingfield, as conceived by Tennessee Williams, as “echt bis in

<sup>190</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949; Hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949, 5; Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949; R.H., *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949, 4.

<sup>191</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949.

<sup>192</sup> Cf. R.H. *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949, 4.

kleinsten Fingerspitzenbewegung, echt von der schrill-hysterischen Gluckhennenliebe bis zum vornehm-verlogenen, verblichenen Konversationston vergangener Zeit“ (hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949).

In a similar tenor, Herbert Mühlbauer praised Helene Thimig's delineation of the Mother, but also implied a certain appreciation for the character:

Helene Thimig spielt die Mutter mit einer hinreißenden Skala der Darstellung. Wie da Angst vor der grausamen Realität des Lebens durch Willen überwunden werden soll, wie sie in die Welt ihrer Träume versteht, wie sie tapfer den Kampf um das vermeintliche Glück ihrer Kinder führt und schließlich zusammenbricht, das wird Helene Thimig nicht so bald jemand nachspielen. (Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949)

b) Tom Wingfield

Tom Wingfield, who was played by Curd Jürgens, was referred to as the “Ansager” of the play (Mühlbauer, *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949; R.H. *Die Presse*, 25 Jan. 1949).

Edwin Rollett described Tom's dual function as follows:

Curd Jürgens hat dadurch also neben dem eigentlichen Stück noch eine Art Monodram zu spielen, das den Kontrast des Heute mit dem Damals und gleichzeitig die Brücke von hier nach dort herstellt. (Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949)

This description points to the fact that the Austrians were not perfectly familiar with this literary device. However, in the reviews there were no indications of the audience's reaction towards Tom's dual role.

Jürgens endowed the role with humor and irony and presented it naturally and full of spirit.<sup>193</sup>

c) Laura Wingfield

Käthe Gold enacted Laura with a focus on the girl's frailty and passivity, and her hopelessness left the audience deeply moved. Otto Basil was reminded of a “Märchengestalt der Unerlöstheit in einer trivialen Umwelt” (*Neues Österreich*, 25 Jan. 1949) and considered Laura as a symbol of the futility and absurdity of life.<sup>194</sup> Rollett, too, realized her stunning potential to grow, which was stifled by her environment, and in particular, her mother: “Käthe Gold [...] spielt die halb gelähmte Tochter wie einen am Schattenfenster verkümmerten Blumenstock, der die Sonne nur ahnt und nicht

<sup>193</sup> Cf. Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan 1949; R.H. *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949.

<sup>194</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949.

hat“ (Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1945). Hugo Huppert even felt that Laura was the character who exuded the most energy. He stated:

Käthe Gold macht ein flackerndes Wundergebild [*sic!*] aus ihr: eine bebend in jeden Zugwind der Empfindung hingelehnte, taumelnde Feuerblüte der Armut. Ihre Überfülle wird zum Kraftquell dieses Poems. (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan. 1949)

d) Gentleman Caller

Josef Meinrad played the “Herr[n] zu Besuch” (R.H., *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949) with cordiality and boyish optimism. He was perceived as a naïve and trivial character, less complex and more realistic than the other figures.<sup>195</sup> R.H. noted, “Josef Meinrad tritt als wirklicher Mensch in diesen verzauberten Kreis, voll naturhafter Frische, Lebensfreude und Tatsächlichkeit“ (*Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949). Hugo Huppert marked the Gentleman Caller as the most American character and described him as a mediocre American on his quest for happiness.<sup>196</sup> The critic of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* stated, “Josef Meinrad spielte [Jim O’Connor] dafür, daß es sich um einen ihm sehr wesensfremden Typ handelt ausgezeichnet“ (hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949). It is interesting to note that although American culture, lifestyle and philosophy had been vividly propagated by cultural officers<sup>197</sup>, “the American” was still perceived as un-Austrian, hence alien. Resonating with a negative air, “naïve”, “trivial” or “mediocre” seemed to be attributes associated with being American. It may be surmised that this adverse depiction functioned as a vehicle for the latent Anti-Americanism of the middle-aged or older generation, who felt the need to demarcate the “more sophisticated”, more “complex” and “high-class” European (or Austrian) culture from the “inferior” American culture.

e) Designer

The set was designed by Theo Otto, who was critically acclaimed for the accurate realization of Williams’ stage requirements. Basil praised the designer’s “Verschachtelung von Interieur und Außenwelt”, which he skilfully attained by means of a “Zinskaserne mit altmodischen Feuerrettungstreppen” (Basil, *Neues Österreich*, 25 Jan. 1949).

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<sup>195</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949; Mühlbauer *Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949; R.H. *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1949.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan. 1949.

<sup>197</sup> Cf. Rathkolb (1997), 59.

### 3.1.5. The Play

It is interesting to note that upon its arrival, *The Glass Menagerie* was evaluated more positively in Vienna than in New York. To recall, the American reviewers of 1945 explicitly criticized Williams' literary style and noted certain textual and interpersonal incongruencies as well as a general lack of coherence. Furthermore, the double role of Tom as protagonist and narrator was considered to be a redundant copy of other playwrights.

Although many Austrian critics could not fully identify with the play, criticism in Vienna seemed to have been more subdued. The dual function of Tom, for instance, was depicted neutrally, and there was no reference to textual incoherence or a lack of substance. Some of the Viennese reviewers pointed out that the play lacked a real plot, yet they did not express any value judgment.

Herbert Mühlbauer neutrally stated, “[A]uf Handlung im gewöhnlichen Sinn wird verzichtet“ (*Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan 1949) and for Friedrich Heer, it was „[e]in Stück, das [...] ganz aus Atmosphäre besteht“ (*Die Furche* 5 Feb. 1949). The critic of *Die Presse* could identify a plot, but he asserted that “Handlung und Schauplatz sind unreal zu verstehen” (R.H., *Die Presse*, 25 Jan. 1949).

The question of genre posed a problem which was not consistently resolved by the critics. While Rollett referred to *The Glass Menagerie* as a “Tragödie des Kleinbürgerlebens” (*Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949), Huppert called it a “Schicksalsdrama” (*Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan. 1949) and Otto Basil classified it as a “Tragikomödie” (*Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949).

As diverse as these genre categorizations were the individual assessments of the play itself. For Mühlbauer, Tennessee Williams' writing style meant an innovation and a breaking with traditional literary conventions:

Es gehört zu jenen Schöpfungen der amerikanischen Bühnenliteratur, die, der Starre der überlieferten Form abhold, neue Möglichkeiten der dramatischen Komposition suchen.  
(*Wiener Kurier* 25 Jan. 1949)

*Die Furche* critic Friedrich Heer regarded Tennessee Williams as a “Spürer, ein[en] Pfadfinder, ein[en] Pionier”, who did not display “Broadwaymelodies mit Luxuscars, Girls und Showbetrieben, sondern den leisen Ton, der gewoben ist aus verschwiegener Sehnsucht, aus Verzicht und aus täglichem Versagen” (Heer, *Die Furche* 5 Feb. 1949).

The critic of *Die Presse* concurred with his colleagues and suggested that Tennessee Williams, following Thornton Wilder, was tracing a new form of literary expression

which aimed at a formal rejection of the “normal theater” (R.H., 25 Jänner, 1949, *my translation*). He appreciated Williams’ experimentalism and acknowledged the play as a great work of art, yet distanced himself from it:

In seinem Gefühle, seinem Geiste ist das Stück eine feine, tiefe Dichtung – wenn man sich als älterer europäischer Theatermensch in all seine literarischen Absonderlichkeiten auch nicht einfühlen kann. (R.H., *Die Presse*, 25 Jan. 1949)

Not all the critics evaluated the novelty value of Tennessee Williams’ poetic style as objectively. Rollett, for instance, was irritated by the play and considered it as „[ein] seltsame[s] Stück[...], das wohl in jeder Hinsicht als ein Gewächs an der ‚Seitengasse‘ erscheinen kann“ (*Wiener Zeitung*, 25 Jan. 1949). According to the critic of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, “Die äußere Handlung dieses Stückes ist nichts als ein Stück merkwürdigen Alltags“ (hub, 25 Jan. 1949). However, he noticed that Williams created his characters very skillfully and made their internal lives movingly perceptible to the audience.

Throughout all of the reviews, there is a pronounced tendency to (over-)interpret Tennessee Williams’ characters and their actions. The decoding of what was assumed to be the rich symbolism inherent in the play seemed to aim at a cultural approximation of *The Glass Menagerie* and its adjustment to the distinctive mood prevailing in post-war Austria.

Hugo Huppert, for instance, seemed to equate the setting of *The Glass Menagerie* in the post-Depression era with the situation in Austria after the Second World War:

Tom träumt davon, das Glück, wie sein Vater, auf fernen Meeren zu suchen. Und ringsum – Erschütterungen und Zusammenbrüche der Dreißigerjahre, das Land muß die Blindenschrift der Krisen-Oekonomik [*sic!*] erlernen, und an deren metallisch heißen Lettern verbrennt sich manch einer die Finger. (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1949)

The critic continued by elaborating on Laura’s hopeless situation and the disappointment which the visit of the Gentleman Caller resulted in. Quite metaphorically, Huppert concluded:

[Laura] muß [...] erkennen, daß es keine Chance gibt, denn Jim ist schon verlobt, ja daß es keine Chance geben kann, denn kleine Leute haben keine Chance in der großen Zeit der Krise. (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1949)

Huppert seemed to identify with Laura on a very personal level, since she apparently mirrored the desperation and passivity of the war-shattered Austrian society. This impression can also be obtained by other interpretations of Laura. As I have already

pointed out earlier, Basil and Rollett both realized in her a potential to thrive and prosper which was oppressed by her stifling environment.<sup>198</sup> Williams set the play in the post-Depression years, and the problematic character of the Mother is mostly shaped by her past as a Southern Belle. However, this was not the core interpretation of the Austrian readings of the play. As the critic of *Die Presse* clarified, “Handlung und Schauplatz sind unreal zu verstehen” (R.H., *Die Presse* 25 Jan. 1994), hence subject to individual analyses. Huppert, who undertook an overtly political reading, considered the domineering Amanda Wingfield to be reflective of “die häusliche ‘Realpolitik’ der Gealterten” (*Österreichische Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1949), which manifested itself in her almost coercive endeavor to marry off her daughter. He classified Jim O’Connor as a mediocre American on his quest for happiness, who proclaimed his own definition of democracy: “‘Erfolg, Geld, Macht’, deklamiert er, ‘das ist der vollendete Zyklus der Demokratie’” (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung*, 26 Jan. 1949). It may be surmised that by selectively quoting these lines, Huppert tried to represent the Gentleman Caller as an allegory of the Americans, whose intention was also to teach their system of democracy to the Austrians. Huppert seemed to have appropriated the play by reading contemporary Austrian history and politics into it.

### 3.1.6. The Presentation of America

As already discussed earlier, Bischof suggested that Austria was very americanophile after the World War. Thurnher agreed to a certain extent, but also pointed out that Vienna has always shown resistance towards modernizations, which he attributed to “a kind of conservatism of the heart” (30).

With respect to *The Glass Menagerie*, both positions can be detected in the reviews. Friedrich Heer displayed a pro-American attitude and assigned positive qualities to “Americanism”:

Amerika, jung, voll Lebenswillen – und romantisch. Im Zeichen des romantischen Realismus, der Zeit und Zustände durchaus so sehen will, wie sie wirklich sind, und der dieselben, liebenden Herzens, in kritischer und poetischer Aussage verdichtet, stehen zwei Stücke, die gegenwärtig auf Wiener Bühnen zu sehen sind. (Heer, *Die Furche* 5 Feb. 1949)

Otto Basil admitted America’s superiority in the technical field and the realm of popular culture, but emphasized that literature was a domain still ruled by the “Old World”. Indeed, what is sold as American avant-garde is in fact an old European hat:

<sup>198</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich*, 25 Jan. 1949; Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949.

Amerika, das es bekanntlich schon zu Goethes Zeiten besser hatte, ist uns in vielem voraus: es hat nicht nur die Air condition und den Bebop, es hat auch das Fernsehen und den Salvador Dali für die Hosiery-Reklame. Nur in einem ist es in der Entwicklung hinter unserem Kontinent zurück: in der Literatur. Längst von uns Herrschaften abgelegte Stile sind drüben nicht nur noch immer ein fesches Tragen, sondern geradezu der New Look. (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949).

Thus, Basil distanced himself from the majority of his colleagues, who regarded Williams' style as a literary innovation. To him, the epic elements, symbolic types and other devices he identified in *The Glass Menagerie*, were reminiscent of a writing method used in "Berlin und überall sonstwo in Deutschland" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949) more than twenty years ago. Therefore, he maintained that Williams, O'Neill and Wilder merely availed themselves of European styles, rather than creating something new. However, he considered this particular way of writing a reaction to the feeling "daß es mit der Kunst, mit dem Theater und Gott und der Welt *so* nicht weitergehen könne" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 25 Jan. 1949). By persistently claiming that the American playwrights were going through a phase which Europe had already gone through some two decades ago, Basil almost defiantly demarcated the (inferior) American from the (superior) European culture.

In agreement with Basil, Edwin Rollett argued that the genre of *The Glass Menagerie* was already common a few decades ago. However, he voiced his rejection more outspokenly and deemed the subject matter of *The Glass Menagerie* inadequate and trifling for the traumatized Austrian audience:

Die Tragödie des Kleinbürgerlebens [...] findet uns heute spröder und weniger aufnahmebereit vor. Mag sein, daß in einem Land mit weniger großen Sorgen die kleinen noch so schwer wiegen. (*Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949)

Both Basil and Rollett distanced themselves from the American play and evinced a strong patriotism in their reviews. Basil expressed eurocentric superiority claims with regard to literature, while Rollett dismissed the play's subject matter as inadequate and unacceptable for the contemporary Austrian audience.

### 3.1.7. Recapitulation

In a war-shattered Austrian society, anything American signified the prospect of a better future. Besides, Austrian theater again felt it was part of an international network, viz., the Western cultural world, which facilitated again the stagings of plays that had been critically acclaimed on Broadway.

However, from time immemorial the Austrians have evinced a considerable conservatism, which did not halt at *The Glass Menagerie*. Therefore, the fact that Berthold Viertel transferred the drama into German and adapted it for the stage of the Akademietheater, was of crucial importance for the Austrians, since it somehow made it appear “more Austrian” for the Viennese audience.

In fact, the attempt to “austrianize” the play can be discovered throughout the reviews. In terms of Tennessee Williams’ literary style, only some reviewers acknowledged it as American and considered it to be innovative. Many critics however, defined it in terms of an out-dated European style which had prevailed in Europe at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, “the new” was presented as “the old” to disguise it as familiar and innocuous for the Austrian audiences and to imply a cultural superiority on the part of Europe vis-à-vis the economic and military superpower of the United States.

A more radical way to circumvent the distinctly American in the play was to construe *The Glass Menagerie* in a way that could fit the Austrian political environment. There was a pronounced tendency to overinterpret the characters symbolically and ascribe an allegorical meaning to them. Thus, the tragic fate of Laura was seen in parallel to the desperate post-war situation, Amanda seemed to represent domineering politics and the Gentleman Caller was allegorically interpreted as the Americans.

Generally though, the performance was embraced gratefully by the Viennese audience, and the actors were critically acclaimed. Similar to the Broadway premiere, the predominant mood conveyed by the cast was melancholy and dreaminess.

## 3.2. The First Viennese Revival (1957)

### 3.2.1. Setting the Scene

As Günter Bischof states, “[t]he 1950s in Austrian history constitute the hinge between the cruel fates of World War II and today’s political stability and widespread prosperity” (Bischof 1995, 1). Thus, it can be seen as an important transition phase which introduced major changes in Austrian culture and social structure. The years between 1951 and 1964 showed the fastest economic growth of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a stimulated consumerism and a considerable enhancement of the standard of living.<sup>199</sup>

Most importantly, the Austrian State Treaty signed in 1955 marked a radical caesura. The Allied forces withdrew, and Austria’s sovereignty was reestablished.<sup>200</sup> Although the direct American influence on Austria seemed to subside, Americanization still continued. Schmidlechner argued that the new focus of orientation and source of cultural inspiration was West-Germany, which she called the “catalyst for and distorter of American trends” (118). In terms of socio-political standards and economic development, the neighboring country was not yet up to the mark of the United States, but was still several steps ahead of Austria. Especially with regards to the mass media sector, American influences were only adopted in Austria after having been digested in West-Germany.<sup>201</sup>

This observation, however, seemed to apply more to the older generation than to the younger, who still openly embraced the cultural objects made in America. Strongly influenced by North America and with a time lag of about a decade, a commercial youth culture emerged in Western and Central Europe in the mid-fifties. The cinema gained specific importance as a medium which was particularly popular among young people and associated with modernity.<sup>202</sup>

American movies played a significant role in the shaping of identities and the creation of new cultural norms.<sup>203</sup> Marlon Brando and Elvis Presley were among the leading cult figures of this epoch, who the juveniles modeled themselves on.<sup>204</sup> However, the adult society frowned upon the new-fangled American trends, and the educational climate vehemently resisted the imported culture. Consequently, the Marlon-Brando-style and

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<sup>199</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 118.

<sup>200</sup> Cf. Bischof (1995), 1 – 2.

<sup>201</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 118.

<sup>202</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 117, 119; Schober, 124 – 127, 133.

<sup>203</sup> Cf. Schober, 126.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 119; Schober, 131 – 132.

Rock'n'Roll set off as a phenomenon linked to the Austrian working class. However, towards the end of the decade, it transformed from a subculture into a commercial mainstream culture, comprising representatives from all social backgrounds.<sup>205</sup>

Schober quite propitiously refers to cinema-going and the dancing of Rock'n'Roll as “invent[ed] new rituals” (133), thus suggesting a performative aspect. As Joseph Roach points out, “memory, performance, and substitution” (*Cities of the Dead 2*, 14) are closely interrelated. He hypothesizes that every culture strives for “social continuity and cultural preservation” (*Cities of the Dead 2*), which is accomplished by a process he refers to as “surrogation” (*Cities of the Dead 2*). With regard to the Americanized Austrian youth culture of the 50s, it can be argued that the adult generation aimed at a conservation of the traditional Austrian culture by perpetuating the behavioral codes that had already been restored by their predecessors<sup>206</sup>, whereas the young generation deliberately disrupted this “genealogy of performance” (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 25*) by substituting the old forms by new forms, or rather, “resituat[ing] popular behaviors [...] in new locales” (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 28*). Roach explains that “[n]ewness enacts a kind of surrogation” (Roach, *Cities of the Dead 4*), which causes a state of anxiety and disturbs the collective memory of a nation.<sup>207</sup> Therefore, it is not surprising that the new American styles initially faced rejection by the older generation.

The slow re-shaping of collective memory conditioned a process of forgetting, which can, at least to a certain extent, be attributed to another innovation, namely the introduction of television.

In October 1955, television was first launched in Austria. Two months later, the Austrian Broadcasting Corporation (ORF) started to transmit the “world news” which they bought from the American news agency (United Press).<sup>208</sup> And although by 1958 only 2 percent of the Austrian households possessed a TV set<sup>209</sup>, television played a crucial role in “the processes of national identity-building” (Bernold, 118). It was a paradigmatic tool of globalization, since it “serializ[ed] and standardiz[ed] [the] life experiences [,] homogeniz[ed] [...] the audience” and induced a “loss of history and the excess of the surface” (Bernold, 118).

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<sup>205</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 126.

<sup>206</sup> Cf. Schechner, 36 – 37.

<sup>207</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead 3*; 6.

<sup>208</sup> Cf. Bernold, 112.

<sup>209</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 119.

As can be deduced from this background information, Austrian culture saw numerous changes in the early years of the country's established neutrality. But did these transformations also surface in the theater scene?

### 3.2.2. The Performance

The first revival of *The Glass Menagerie* in Vienna premiered on 5 November 1957 in the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken*, i.e. a theater format designed for playing to working class audiences not normally frequenting the theater and usually performed in venues without elaborate stage equipment. The production was directed by Hermann Kutscher and starred Elisabeth Epp as Amanda, Karl Blühm as Tom, Maria Urban as Laura and Rudolf Strobl as the Gentleman Caller. Measured by the applause, the audience fully approved of the performance.<sup>210</sup> However, the critics called it a problematic production and adduced difficulties in understanding the play which they discerned among the theatregoers. Kurt Kahl from the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* summarized the audience response as follows:

Das Publikum folgte der Handlung, nachdem sich die anfängliche Verwirrung einigermaßen gelegt hatte, mit sichtlicher Spannung. Der Applaus für die Darsteller erreichte beachtliche Lautstärke. (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

What were the concrete problems that the production entailed? Was it a question of directorial choices or was it due to the content of the play?

### 3.2.3. Hermann Kutscher – The Blurred Lines of Reality and Surrealism

In his direction, Hermann Kutscher played with the differentiation between realism and surrealism. He paid great attention to recreating the distinct atmosphere represented in Williams' drama. However, his approach bewildered the audience, since they could not understand his fusion of realistic and unrealistic elements. The critic of the *Neuer Kurier* complained:

Auf dem haarfeinen Zickzackkurs der Grenzlinie zwischen Realität und Irrealität vollführt der Regisseur Hermann Kutscher einen gefährlichen Balanceakt. Sichtlich bemüht, den Intentionen des Dichters zu folgen, stiftet er manch unnötige Verwirrung, wenn er zum Beispiel einmal die Personen ein imaginäres Mahl einnehmen und gleich darauf aber ganz richtig Tee trinken läßt. (L.E., *Neuer Kurier* 8 Nov. 1957)

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<sup>210</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957; R.H., *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957.

Further confusion was caused by the introduction of black-and-white tablets bearing the titles, which Kutscher used as a substitution for the slide projections. They were placed on the steel scaffolding and were manually exchanged by the actors in the course of the scenes<sup>211</sup>, which may well have been a practical necessity considering the nature of the stage equipment available. Kurt Kahl described the device and the audience's reaction as follows:

Der Regisseur der Volkstheateraufführung für die Außenbezirke, Hermann Kutscher, verzichtet auf den Projektionsapparat, er läßt die Schauspieler mit Spruchtafeln jonglieren und die Illustrationen leibhaftig auftreten. Das Publikum zeigte sich davon über das geplante Maß hinaus irritiert [...] (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

As the story unfolded, the spectators adjusted to the titles, and the confusion abated. Kahl observed:

[I]n den vergleichsweise geschlossenen Schlußszenen [...] lebte [das Publikum] gerührt mit den Gestalten des Dichters. Hier erwies sich auch die gute Hand des Regisseurs für das Atmosphärische, obgleich er die ganze Bühne, entgegen den Regieanweisungen, zu sehr ins grelle Licht rückte. (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

### 3.2.4. The Polarizing Cast

Generally speaking, the actors of this production were not praised as jubilantly as their predecessors in 1949. However, as the critic of *Die Furche* stated, “Gespielt wurde bei der Eröffnung der Spielserie jenseits des Gürtels im Amalienkino gut“ (H.S., *Die Furche* 23 Nov. 1957). Similar to the first Broadway revival, the actors of the Viennese revival had to stand up to the highly praised cast of the original performance. While the Americans compared the actors with each other overtly and rather extensively, there was not one Viennese reviewer who measured the performers of 1957 against those of 1949. Nevertheless, the importance of the Viennese debut performance had not faded in the memory of the theatre aficionados, as was expressed by one critic:

Das Volkstheater hat für seine jüngste Tournee in die Außenbezirke Tennessee Williams' „Glasmengerie“ gewählt, deren ausgezeichnete Aufführung im Akademietheater, mit Käthe Gold, Helene Thimig, Curd Jürgen und Josef Meinrad, ebenso wie die Hollywooder [*sic!*] Verfilmung mit Jane Wyman, Kirk Douglas und Montgomery Clift, noch in Erinnerung ist. (F.K., *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957)

<sup>211</sup> Cf. F.K. *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957.

It is worth noting that Kutscher's revival was not only silhouetted against the production in the *Akademietheater*, but also against the Hollywood adaptation. This can be seen as an indication of how deeply American popular culture had already been anchored into the cultural consciousness of the Austrians.

a) Amanda Wingfield

Amanda Wingfield was enacted by Elisabeth Epp. According to the critic of the *Wiener Zeitung*, she accomplished a character sketch that was closest to Williams' intentions:

Selbstverständlich erforderte die restlose Erfüllung dieses psychopathischen [*sic!*] Schulfalles Schauspieler von höchster, raffiniertester seelischer Transparenz, Schauspieler, die über eine virtuose Skala seelischer Dämmertöne verfügen. Am nächsten kam damit Elisabeth Epp als die seelisch durch die irrationalsten Räume ihrer Erinnerung [...] wandernde Mutter [.]. (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

The classification of the play as a paradigmatic example of a psychopathic family suggests a distancing of the critic from the "problematic content". R.H. stressed that *The Glass Menagerie* dealt with the reality of the "amerikanischen Kleinbürgers in der Epoche 'einer sich zersetzenden Ökonomie'" (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957, *my emphasis*) and thus identified the subject matter as unrelated to the Austrians - not only in a geographic, but also in a temporal sense. Instead of being universally valid, *The Glass Menagerie*, to him, was evocative of a past time in America.

Unlike the original production in 1949, Amanda Wingfield was not taken as deadly seriously anymore. As the critic from the *Neues Österreich* observed, the audience also noted the humorous element in the Mother:

Elisabeth Epp als Mutter Wingfield schuf ein beklemmendes Frauenporträt voll der Muffigkeit kleinstbürgerlicher Enge und törichtem Hochhinauswollens und erzielte damit manches Schmunzeln. (F.K. *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957)

Interestingly, F.K. seemed to hint at the fact that the recognition of a familiar (Austrian) character type divested Amanda Wingfield of her Americanness and made her appear in a more universal light. Thus, F.K.'s argumentation varied from that of R.H: While the former critic perceived Epp's Amanda as a woman without a distinctive American tinge, the latter defined her as forming part of a typically American reality.

b) Tom Wingfield

Tom Wingfield was played by Karl Blühm, who brought vitality and youthfulness to the role.

This presentation of a strong and robust Tom who is full of life conflicted with the interpretation of some critics. R.H. felt that Blühm's "robuste Vitalität läßt nicht recht an eine gebrochene Seele glauben" (*Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957). Concurring with his colleague, the critic of the *Neuer Kurier* stated:

Karl Blühm [...] benimmt sich eine Spur zu robust, zu vernünftig und zu humorvoll für diese ebenfalls sehr gebrochene Figur, doch bietet er vor allem am Anfang dem Zuschauer den einzigen realen Halt. (L.E., *Neuer Kurier* 8 Nov. 1957)

Apparently, Tom Wingfield was perceived as the most reliable character of the play. After all, he is the one who relates the story. *Arbeiter-Zeitung* critic Kurt Kahl noted that Blühm convinced his audience more in his function as the narrator: "Karl Blühm gab dem Erzähler größere Eindringlichkeit als dem Bruder" (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957).

c) Laura Wingfield

Maria Urban's delineation of Laura Wingfield yielded both positive and less approving reviews. The critics who assessed her presentation favorably praised her subtle and subdued style, which enhanced the emotional impact on the audience.<sup>212</sup> Kurt Kahl observed:

Maria Urban zeigt sich als Laura wieder als eine hervorragende Darstellerin junger Mädchen, die ein schweres Schicksal zu tragen haben. Ihr stummes Spiel, der Wechsel von verllorener Glückseligkeit zur zitternden Hoffnungslosigkeit auf ihrem Gesicht, erschütterte die Zuschauer. (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

The same quality was evaluated unfavorably by the critic of the *Neues Österreich*, who wrote:

Die Rolle [der] verwachsenen Tochter Laura wurde von Maria Urban, wohl aus Angst ins allzu Sentimentale abzugleiten, so sehr unterspielt, daß sie gar zu blaß blieb. (F.K., *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957)

In a mixed review, the critic of the *Neuer Kurier* stated that Maria Urban played her role satisfyingly, but was eclipsed by Elfriede Epp's Amanda.<sup>213</sup>

<sup>212</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957; R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957.

<sup>213</sup> Cf. L.E., *Neuer Kurier* 8 Nov. 1957.

d) Gentleman Caller

The critical response to Rudolf Strobl's *Gentleman Caller* was similar to that of Blühm's *Tom Wingfield*. Interestingly, the same critics who approved of Blühm's delineation also praised Strobl's interpretation, and the same holds true for the reverse.

The critics of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and the *Neues Österreich* praised Strobl's charming and humorous rendition of the role<sup>214</sup>:

Der Besucher, dem hinter vorgetäuschter Selbstsicherheit das Zeichen der Erfolglosigkeit angehaftet ist, fand in Rudolf Strobl einen humorvollen Darsteller, der auch in ernstesten Szenen zu überzeugen wusste. (Kahl, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

The critics of the *Wiener Zeitung* and the *Neuer Kurier* did not share this positive opinion. They considered Strobl too affectionate to fit into the story of the Wingfields.

R.H. wrote:

Rudolf Strobl als der „Herr auf Besuch“ – symbolisch – das von der Familie erwartete große Glück, das nur eine weitere furchtbare Enttäuschung zurücklässt, ist wieder zu herzhaft sympathisch und lebensfrisch, um der Vierte in dieser „Glasmengerie“ von lebensunfähigen Traummenschen zu sein. (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

In accord with his colleague, L.E. declared:

Und vollends zu strahlend und natürlich agiert Rudolf Strobl als „der Herr zu Besuch“, der doch genau wie die anderen zur Klasse der Erfolglosen, Untüchtigen gehört und dessen „Sicherheit“ nur von der Lektüre eines Buches über „Die Kunst der freien Rede“ herrührt. Seine echte Herzenswärme ist nicht ganz am Platz, denn obwohl er Anteil nimmt an dem Mädchen, sein Selbstbewusstsein aufstacheln will und es küßt: er gehört mit zur großen Glasmengerie und dürfte nichts tun, als einem kleinen gläsernen Einhorn das Horn abbrechen. (L.E. *Neuer Kurier* 8 Nov. 1957)

Both of these reviewers asked for a *Gentleman Caller* who does not stand out of the ensemble as the happy-go-lucky Prince Charming, but for one who seamlessly integrates into the tristesse of the Wingfields.

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<sup>214</sup> Cf. F.K., *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957; Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957.

e) Designer

Gustav Manker was the set designer for the production in the outer districts. By means of a steel scaffolding and transparent walls, he separated the rooms in the Wingfield apartment from each other and from the audience. The critic of the *Wiener Zeitung* rendered the following depiction:

Die Wände des Hauses Wingfield sind undurchsichtig; die Bühne ist aufgeteilt auf etliche Räume der Wohnung; das Publikum sieht die Szenen durch transparente Wände oder den Raum durch geometrisches Eisengestänge abgeteilt. (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

For Kahl, the designer was a passive tool to realize the abstract conception of the director. Therefore, he identified the title-tablets as a confusing directorial choice, rather than a faulty device conceived by the designer: “Das Bühnenbild Gustav Mankers erfüllte, wenn man die Konzeption des Regisseurs hinnimmt, seinen Zweck“ (Kahl, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957).

In the same way, the critic of the *Neuer Kurier* freed Manker from any blame. Such as the other reviewers, he seemed to favor the (identifiable) realistic over the (alienating) unrealistic. He wrote:

Gustav Manker hatte es mit dem Bild leichter, denn die Trostlosigkeit der Behausung ist durchaus real, und die erläuternden Transparente, die ziemlich befremdend im Zimmer herumhängen, gehen auf das Konto des Autors. (L.E., *Neuer Kurier* 8 Nov. 1957)

Thus, Manker was generally praised for his stage design, since the shortcomings were either attributed to wrong directorial choices or to alienating concepts of the author.

### 3.2.5. The Play

In the late 50s, *The Glass Menagerie* was assessed quite unfavourably by the critics. The reviewer of the *Neues Österreich* called it an “autobiographische Abreaktion” (F.K., *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957) and announced that the genre of the play was outdated and no longer bore any appeal for the Austrians:

„Ou sont les neiges?“ lautete, sehr prätenziös, die erste [...] Überschrift[...] [.]. „Wo ist der Schnee?“ – gemeint ist der der verflommenen Jahre. Wie völlig er zerronnen ist, seit derlei neonaturalistische Milieuschilderungen aus den USA für die europäische Heimat dieser literarischen Richtung noch einen gewissen Reiz der Altneuheit hatten, das wurde dem Zuschauer sehr bald nur zu deutlich. (F.K. *Neues Österreich* 9 Nov. 1957)

Furthermore, he pointed to the unsuccessful effort of the Austrian director to make this American play meaningful to his audience, which was not only due to the subject itself. Rather, the critics unanimously agreed that the story of the Wingfields was too complex for the spectators of the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken*. They strongly hinted at an education divide between the “cultured” theatergoers of the inner districts and those of the Viennese “periphery” (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957). The critic of the *Wiener Zeitung* stated:

Das „Spiel der Erinnerungen“, „Die Glasmenagerie“ von Tennessee Williams, gehört zu den problematischsten Erscheinungen des amerikanischen Theaters und ist daher besonders für ein zu bildendes, dem Theater zu gewinnendes Publikum nur schwer zugänglich. (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957)

In the same tenor, the reviewer of *Die Furche* argued:

Ob die Hintergründigkeit und die Symbolik der „Glasmenagerie“ von Tennessee Williams ganz das Geeignete für die Volkstheater in den Wiener Außenbezirken sind, darf vielleicht bezweifelt werden. (H.S. *Die Furche* 23 Nov. 1957)

Apart from the symbolism, the dual role of Tom as a narrator and character in the play was considered to be the main source of confusion:

Wenn nun noch eine Regie waltet, die einmal Tätigkeiten fingiert – ähnlich wie das Thornton Wilder in seiner “Kleinen Stadt” macht – und gleich hernach die gleiche Handhabung sichtbarlich real vollziehen läßt, kann der Zuschauer, besonders der unvorbereitete, der kleine Angestellte und Arbeiter, das Ladenmädchen und die einfache Hausfrau aus Favoriten, verwirrt werden. (H.S. *Die Furche* 23 Nov. 1957)

Evidently, in 1957 plain realism was considered adequate fare for the working-class audience. In contrast, *The Glass Menagerie* exuded a sophistication and complexity reserved only for the educated Viennese who were well-versed in theater. As outlined by the critics, the audience of the outer districts, who was largely composed of blue-collar workers, did not qualify intellectually for such a realm of sophistication. The distinction between “in-group” and “out-group” did not only apply to the demarcation between “Austrian” and “American” – as was the case in 1949 – but had also gained a regional significance. This reveals that theater, such as the city itself, constitutes a “social space”<sup>215</sup> in which a diversity of people encounter.

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<sup>215</sup>The term was coined by Henri Lefèbvre; defines space as a socially constructed concept.

[T]he city space of Vienna in the 1950s and 1960s is perceived, represented, and lived by [...] ex-Nazi officials as well as by ex-members of resistance groups, by policemen as well as school teachers, by marketing experts as well as by city planners. All these groups bring with them different wishes, fears, projects, projections, interests, or disavowals and are hit at different times and places by “significant moments” of perception, which together form a certain plurality of hegemonic nodal points. (Schober, 134 – 135)

Quite apart from these (hierarchical) social differences what emerges from these reviews is the insight that in 1957 *The Glass Menagerie* was not really fashionable in Vienna. Those who claimed to understand it, regarded the play as out-dated, hence uninteresting, and those who seemed to take an interest in the play, did not understand it.

### 3.2.6. Recapitulation

The 1950s marked a decade of significant changes and innovations. Austria was slowly recovering from the traumas of the Second World War, which could be detected most clearly in the accelerated economic growth. The signing of the State Treaty in 1955 and the concomitant withdrawal of the Allied forces instituted Austrian’s sovereignty and established its neutrality. In the same year, television was introduced, which proved to have a cultural impact on society.

Although the American troops had left the country in 1955, Americanization still continued. Mainly conveyed via American movies, American cultural influences spread in Austrian youth culture and strongly influenced the process of identity shaping. This caused a generation conflict, since the older generation aimed at a preservation and perpetuation of the traditional Austrian codes of behavior. As Joseph Roach elucidates, newness inevitably triggers anxiety, which needs to be overcome in order to allow for a process of surrogation. In that sense, the reaction of the older generation can at least partly be explained. Their reluctance to accept “newness” could be noticed in the reviews of *The Glass Menagerie* production of the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken* under the direction of Hermann Kutscher.

Similar to the first revival on Broadway, the Austrian cast did not restore the dreaminess and melancholy that had prevailed in the original interpretation, but rather endowed Amanda, Tom and the Gentleman Caller with humor and vitality. While Elisabeth Epp’s delineation of the Mother was unanimously praised by the critics, the other actors strongly polarized their audience. While one camp of critics approved of

the humorous and robust portrayal of Karl Blühm's Tom and Rudolf Strobl's Gentleman Caller, the other group of reviewers criticized exactly these aspects of their rendition, thus rejecting "the new" and favoring "the old". In fact, these critics objected to the new character interpretations for similar reasons that the older Austrian generation opposed the penetration of new American trends into Austrian youth culture: a desire to recreate collective memory by re-enacting "the original".

The fact that the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*-critic and the reviewer of the *Neues Österreich* approved of the altered interpretations of Karl Blühm and Rudolf Strobl does not necessarily contradict Roach's hypothesis. Rather, it may be surmised that their endorsement was incited by political considerations. From 1948 onwards, the *Volkstheater* was largely in the hands of the Austrian Labor Union (ÖGB) and therefore had acquired the reputation of being a "red" theater. Equally "red", the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* represented the organ of the Social Democrats, which might explain the affinity between the newspaper and the theater. The political orientation of the *Neues Österreich* could be situated between Socialism and Conservatism, a positioning which appeared to be sympathetic to the *Volkstheater*, too. Although director Leon Epp was a Socialist, his attitude towards theater was conservative, which was why he also appealed to people that had affiliations with the ÖVP. Of course, these are mere speculations, but they seem plausible to me, since theater and politics have always been closely interrelated.

As concerns the script of *The Glass Menagerie*, the critics generally reiterated that Tennessee Williams' style was out-dated and no longer interesting for an educated audience. For the largely uneducated audience of the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken*, however, the play bore many inaccessible complexities. The dual role of Tom as well as the black-and-white title-tablets were said to constitute the main sources of confusion, but the critics also considered the rich symbolism of the play to be beyond the audience's comprehension.

Thus, in 1957 *The Glass Menagerie* was classified as a piece of "high" literature which separated the socially and educationally elevated "in-group" from the inferior "out-group", or, in other words, the urban cultural elite from the working-class on the outskirts of the city.

### 3.3. *The Glass Menagerie* in the Age of Aquarius

In the 1960s, *The Glass Menagerie* was staged an incredible five times in Vienna. The *Theater in der Josefgasse* opened the decade with a production in March 1960 and showed another revival in April 1961. The latter production precluded the performance of the Theater Guild American Repertory Company, who was hosted by the *Burgtheater* in April 1961 to render Thornton Wilder's *Skin of Teeth*, Williams' *Glass Menagerie* as well as *The Miracle Worker* by William Gibson on three consecutive evenings in the course of their promotion tour through Europe. The probably most significant *Glass Menagerie* of the 60s was constituted by Willi Schmidt's revival in the *Akademietheater* halfway through the decade, which starred Paula Wessely, Annemarie Düringer, Helmut Griem and Ernst Anders in the lead. The last production of the decade was realized by the *Theater im Zentrum* in March 1966.

The numerous revivals of *The Glass Menagerie* in the 60s suggest a high popularity of the play among the public. Reviewing the 1965 performance, Paul Blaha asks the rhetorical question, "Wer kennt dies [sic!] Stück nicht, wer erinnert sich Tom Wingfields nicht" (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965) and leaves no doubt about the high level of familiarity that the play enjoyed halfway through the sixties.

In view of that, a few questions beg to be asked: Why was *The Glass Menagerie* so popular at a time which, at least in America, stood for liberations and liberalizations within virtually all areas of living? Was this stage frequency simply a result of the arbitrary decisions of the various directors or could the Austrians identify better with the play than they did in the previous decades?

In the following, I will examine if the mood that was typical of a new era in the United States was also prevalent in Austria, or if the country was rather clinging to its traditional conservatism. Based on the analyses of the two major stagings of *The Glass Menagerie* in this decade, I will try to draw conclusions and answer the questions raised above.

#### 3.3.1. Setting the Scene

##### a) Austria in the 1960s

The upswing in Austria's economy in the 50s, which was nurtured by the heavy post-war-investments, remained unbroken in the 1960s. Indeed, the economic growth and general prosperity comprised all of Western Europe, and the standard of living was very high. Consumerism gained importance, the housing culture was paid more attention to

than in the previous decades and leisure received a new significance. In 1959, for instance, the average Austrian household spent more than 40% of its income on recreation, sports and holidays.<sup>216</sup> Concomitant with the new prosperity, the typically Austrian *Gemütlichkeit* experienced a renaissance, which manifested itself in the common desire to spend more leisure time at home. This explained why the modern media of that time significantly increased in popularity. Towards the end of 1961, the statistics showed that out of 100 households, 87 had a radio and 12 held a TV set.<sup>217</sup> Although the latter figure might sound quite marginal, it proved considerably higher than in 1958, when only two out of 100 households were connected to television.<sup>218</sup>

Modeled on the American example, the aesthetic aspect of commodities gradually received prime importance, and the actual use-value of the goods became secondary. Advertising and Brand Marketing boosted the sales and created new needs, and sales promoters already realized back then the advertising force of eroticized images.<sup>219</sup> The Catholic Church of Austria observed this development with great discomfort. In the spring of 1960, the poster of Fred Zinnemann's movie *Verdammt in alle Ewigkeit*, which pictured a kissing scene, was banned by the Church "weil die gesundheitliche Entwicklung jugendlicher Personen durch die Reizung der Lüsternheit gefährdet werde" (Veigl, 117). Although many Austrians distanced themselves from the outdated dogmas of the Catholic Church in the course of the 1960s, by 1969 there were still 85% of the Austrians who believed in God. In a European comparison on devoutness, Austria thus ranked second and was preceded only by Greece.<sup>220</sup>

In defiance of the conservative rules of the older generation, the youth gradually developed into a social stratum of their own. Throughout all of the Western World, the youngsters largely shared their value targets and the mass consumption industry functioned as their standardizing nexus.<sup>221</sup> Since 1967 at the latest, the cultural conflict between the generations was also palpable in Austria.<sup>222</sup> However, the infamous student protests of 1968, which took place throughout all of Western Europe, only manifested themselves in Austria in a more subdued manner. In April 1968, juvenile activists protested against the assassination of Rudi Dutschke in the inner districts of Vienna, which caused the road traffic to collapse. Unlike in other European countries, however,

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<sup>216</sup> Cf. Veigl, 111 – 113.

<sup>217</sup> Cf. Veigl, 133 – 134; 139.

<sup>218</sup> Cf. Schmidlechner, 119.

<sup>219</sup> Cf. Veigl, 117, 161.

<sup>220</sup> Cf. Veigl, 165.

<sup>221</sup> Cf. Veigl, 120 – 121.

<sup>222</sup> Cf. Veigl, 181.

the Austrian police abstained from using water cannons or nightsticks to put down the revolting crowd.<sup>223</sup>

As already in the 50s, music played a crucial role in terms of identification and social distancing. While Elvis Presley musically and stylistically had shaped the youth culture of the previous decade, The Beatles became the icons of the 60s. The reaction of the adults to the four musicians from Liverpool was equally dismissive as it had been to Elvis Presley in the fifties. In a letter to the editor, which was published in the weekly magazine *Stern*, an Austrian reader aired his displeasure with The Beatles:

Die Menschheit verblödet. Wenn sie sich so etwas wie diese vier Schreihälse gefallen läßt und sie noch dazu akklamiert, scheint ihr wirklich nicht mehr zu helfen zu sein. Sigrun Blasl, Salzburg (quoted in Veigl, 146 – 147)

Despite the record-breaking success of The Beatles, the Austrian radio stations avoided playing their music. Thus, until the entertainment radio channel Ö3 was founded in 1967, the Austrian Beatles-aficionados had to listen to their music via *Radio Free Europe* and the radio station *Luxemburg*.<sup>224</sup>

As was already the case in the past, the conservatism of the (more mature) Austrian society was closely interrelated to a pronounced traditionalism. When The Beatles visited Austria for the first time in 1965, one journalist, quite inadequately, asked them for their knowledge of Mozart.<sup>225</sup> John Lennon casually countered “Wie geht es ihm?”(quoted in Veigl, 147), clearly mocking the desperate need of the Austrians to define themselves in terms of their distant past.

The prevalent mood of the sixties, which was coined by libertinism and incipient gender equality, seemed to threaten Austria’s rootedness in past traditions which still structured society decisively. By 1964, the proportion of women in the total population of the country exceeded that of men by half a million. Nevertheless, only a third of Austria’s workforce was constituted by women, and most of them were employed in low-wage industries.<sup>226</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Cf. Veigl, 185 – 186.

<sup>224</sup> Cf. Veigl, 147.

<sup>225</sup> Cf. Veigl, 147.

<sup>226</sup> Cf. Veigl, 166; 168.

b) The Theatrical Landscape of Vienna in the Dawn of the 60s

In his article on the Viennese theater tradition, the author, journalist, editor and translator Friedrich Torberg challenges the question whether Austria's capital lives up to its reputation of being a theater metropolis. After all, fin-de-siècle Vienna experienced a cultural heyday and counted ten big theaters back then, twice as many as in 1961. After the First World War, the city could even pride itself of calling 22 repertory stages its own. However, a few years after the Second World War many playhouses closed down, leaving Vienna with five big theaters, which were basically in the hands of three directors.

Torberg points out that each of the theaters enjoyed its own reputation, which of course was largely acquired by the choice of the repertoire. He wrote:

[W]ir [...] machen nachdrücklich darauf aufmerksam, daß jedes einzelne [...] Theater sein eigenes Gesicht und Gepräge hat, daß es Stücke gibt die „nur im Burgtheater“ denkbar sind, und solche, die unverkennbar „ins Akademietheater gehören“, daß jedermann die „Note“ des Josefstädter Theaters von der des Volkstheaters zu unterscheiden weiß, daß ein Lustspiel in den Kammerspielen etwas ganz anderes ist als eines in der Kleinen Josefstadt und daß die Überschneidungsfelder zwischen den einzelnen Häusern gerade groß genug sind, um eine gesunde, anregende Konkurrenz zu gewährleisten. (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961)

The number of playhouses in 1961 was the same as in 1850, even though the population had risen from 300.000 to two million. Nevertheless, Torberg justifies Vienna's status as a theatre metropolis in three ways: First of all, he argues that Vienna has always been related to theater. Thus, the Viennese have internalized this “rückwirkend realisierte Legende” (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961) not only in their mentality but also in their vernacular (as in “Gestern haben wir ein Theater gehabt”<sup>227</sup>). The critic quite rightly states that to understand Austrian contemporariness, one has to tap into the past. He said, “Blicken wir, wohin wir hierzulande immer gerne blicken: zurück” (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961).

Secondly, Torberg identifies Vienna as a city who favors the “culinary theater” over the “problematic”, or, in other words, cast over content. He encapsulates this assumption as follows:

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<sup>227</sup> Example given by Torberg. He explains that in this sense, “Theater” signifies “ein[...] vergnügte[r] Abend schlechthin, eine Hetz, eine Gaudi, eine willkommene Lustbarkeit”.

Wien dürfte heute die einzige Stadt sein, in der sich nach dem Auftreten eines berühmten Schauspielers oder einer berühmten Sängerin am betreffenden „Bühnentürl“ ungleich größere Mengen von Enthusiasten stauen als vor dem Kino, in dem sich ein berühmter Filmstar verbeugt hat. (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961)

Thirdly, the critic argues that theatre is still an issue which moves the Viennese without comparison. He points out:

Wiens Theaterleben ist eine Angelegenheit des “Volks” so gut wie der “Gesellschaft”, und eine Krise in der Bundestheaterverwaltung, ein Machtkampf um den Posten des Burgtheaterdirektors verdrängt noch heute alle politischen Schlagzeilen von den ersten Seiten der Tagespresse. (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961)

With regard to theater, the impression is gained that Vienna liked to hold on to past traditions and preserve its reputation as a stronghold of High Art. To recall, the situation in future-oriented America was quite different. Drama was a losing venture, and the new locus of interest was (musical) comedies.

It was uncontested that the most representative Viennese playhouse was the prestigious *Burgtheater* with its major target group being the elitist bourgeoisie. Similarly, in New York Broadway had turned into an institution for the well-off and conservative, while the hippie generation flocked to the cheaper and more socio-critical off-off-Broadway venues. Although there were no “off-off-Burgtheater” venues in Vienna, there seemed to be an Austrian answer to the off-beat theater culture of America. Austria’s affluent society of that time confined *Kultur* to its function of public representation and rejected any transgressions of this one-dimensional perspective.<sup>228</sup> As Veigl points out, “Das Theater flüchtet in den Keller oder reduziert sich zur Kleinbühne“ (116). Similar to the United States, there was evidence that this secession was not so much triggered by differences of social background, but rather by the young crowd’s desire to distance themselves from the conservative older generation.

*The Glass Menagerie* was revived three times in small theaters in the 60s, and the reviews provide interesting information on their clientele. In 1960, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*–critic introduced his review with the following words:

*Viele jugendliche Besucher* wurden im Theater in der Josefsgasse Zeugen eines ebenso gewagten wie geglückten Experiments, als das Ensemble der ehrgeizigen Neuen Wiener Bühne “Die Glasmenagerie” von Tennessee Williams aufführte. (I.O., *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 17 March 1960, *my emphasis*)

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<sup>228</sup> Cf. Veigl, 116.

In the subsequent year, another critic of the same newspaper characterized the audience of the *Theater in der Josefgasse* as the “sympathischste [sic!], unpräntiöseste, interessierteste Premierenpublikum von Wien” (F.W., *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 11 April 1961), whose motivation for attendance deviated fundamentally from that of the established core audience of playhouses such as the Burgtheater. He wrote, “[D]ort [i.e. im Theater in der Josefgasse] will man nicht gesehen werden, sondern Stücke der Theaterliteratur sozusagen zu billigen Preisen, in Taschenbuchausgabe, kennenlernen” (F.W., *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 11 April 1961).

However, it was not only the bargain prices that drew the younger generation into the smaller theaters, but also the repertoire. The critic of the *Wiener Zeitung*, for instance, referred to the *Theater in der Josefgasse* as a venue “das in letzter Zeit durch einige interessante Premieren von sich reden machte” (H.L., *Wiener Zeitung* 13 April 1961).

Furthermore, both the *Theater in der Josefgasse* and the *Theater im Zentrum* did not rely on Austrian stage celebrities in their productions, but rather put their focus, to use Friedrich Torberg’s words, on the problematic rather than the culinary aspect of theater. Similar to the off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway tradition in the United States, the smaller Viennese stages did not claim perfection, but endorsed a certain extent of “trying out”. Harald Sterk, for instance called Kitty Speiser’s performance of Laura Wingfield in the *Theater im Zentrum* a “Talentprobe” (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 13 March 1966), which mirrors the improvisation aspect of the performance quite well. Besides, the pronunciation did not resemble the variety spoken on the stages of the big theaters, either. Instead of conforming to the so-called *Burgtheaterdeutsch*, the actors of the smaller theaters revealed linguistic features of the Viennese vernacular, which Paul Hitzenberger remarked on in his review:

Grete Binter [...] trübt ihre Leistung [...] durch ein vor allem nach Ü-Lauten störendes wienerisches R; das müßte doch abzustellen sein! Auch Georg Trenkwith (Tom) hat ein wenig Nachhilfeunterricht im Sprechen nötig. (Hitzenberger, *Neues Österreich* 13 March 1966)

As such criticism shows, the critics measured the performances of the small venues against those of the big ones, rather than realizing that they are so utterly distinct in their theatrical intention and target audience that they cannot bear any comparison. Speech, like celebrity appeal and artistic perfection are esthetic aspects which the small theaters abandoned deliberately.

Thus, in terms of theater, Vienna seemed to show some parallels to New York City.

### 3.3.2. *The Glass Menagerie in the Burgtheater (1961)*

As Torberg assessed quite rightly, the Burgtheater has always been the venue “der grandiosen Klassikeraufführungen<sup>229</sup> und der repräsentativen zeitgenössischen Dramenliteratur” (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 April 1961). Therefore, it is not surprising that the Theater Guild American Repertory Company presented their guest performances of Wilder, Williams and Gibson in Vienna’s most prestigious playhouse. It is worth noting that the performances were presented in their original English versions, which points to the fact that the target group was indeed the clientele of the Burgtheater, i.e. the educated elite.

The intention of the group was to promote and represent American culture, as Helen Hayes, the figurehead of the company, explained to the Austrian media:

Wir hoffen, daß die Vorstellungen von Österreichern besucht werden. Wir wollen nicht für unsere Landsleute spielen, sondern sind mit der Mission nach Europa gefahren, das Theater der USA hier zu zeigen [...] („Wir spielen das Theater der USA“, *Kronen-Zeitung* 19 April 1961)

All three plays were rehearsed with their authors, Wilder, Williams and Gibson, who reportedly approved of the individual interpretations.<sup>230</sup> But did the Austrians approve, too?

#### a) The Performance

Similar to the first Broadway revival in 1956, Helen Hayes overshadowed the other cast members and judging from the reviews, the success (or failure?) of the production was almost solely attributed to the celebrity actress. Walden talked about an “orgiastic applause for Helen Hayes” (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961, *my translation*) and Otto Basil referred to an “endless jubilation for Helen Hayes *and the others*” (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961, *my translation and emphasis*). Hans Weigel from the *Kronen-Zeitung* even declared, “Von einer Inszenierung war auch an diesem zweiten Gastspielabend der Amerikaner wenig zu merken. Dafür um so mehr von Helen Hayes“ (Weigel, *Kronen-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961).

The detailed discussions about the actress in the reviews support Torberg’s assumption that the Viennese theater tradition of 1961 indeed favored the cast over the content. In

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<sup>229</sup> Torberg’s definition of a classic is quite interesting. With reference to the classic operetta he concedes that “die Einstufung ‘klassisch’ [hat] zur Voraussetzung [...], daß der betreffende Komponist nicht mehr lebt“ (Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 April 1961).

<sup>230</sup> Cf. „Wir spielen das Theater der USA“, *Kronen-Zeitung* 19 April 1961.

that sense, the language barrier lost its relevance, since the culinary aspect<sup>231</sup> was clearly in the foreground. The well-known Viennese actor and director Peter Josch, who staged *Die Glasmenerie* in the Ateliertheater in 1989, corroborated this hypothesis in a personal interview:

Ich muss sagen, ich habe zu dem Zeitpunkt zu dem ich [das Stück] inszeniert hab' *Die Glasmenerie* einmal gesehen. Das war mit der Helen Hayes. Und [...] es ist ja so – es verklärt sich ja im Laufe der Zeit. Man sagt „Es ist alles früher schöner gewesen“, was ja natürlich nicht stimmt. Es sind gewisse Dinge, es ist hier auch eine gewisse Jungfräulichkeit, wo man das erste Mal ein Erlebnis hat. Und *Die Glasmenerie*, obwohl ich ja des Englischen nicht so ganz kundig bin, [...] war für mich [eine] faszinierend[e] Aufführung. (Josch, *personal interview* 22 Nov. 2007)

Not all the critics perceived the American production as positively as the then 20-year-old Peter Josch. Many of them had already experienced the *virginity* of *The Glass Menagerie* in Berthold Viertel's post-war production, which they measured against the present performance. Friedrich Heer, who already reviewed *Die Glasmenerie* in 1949, stated, “Uns ist die zauberhafte Aufführung im Akademietheater in Erinnerung” (Heer, *Die Furche* 29 Apr. 1961) and Otto Basil looked back with the same nostalgia. According to him, the American production lacked “die lyrische Transparenz und Zerbrechlichkeit der Viertelschen Inszen[e] [sic!]“ (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965).

#### b) George Keathley – The Absent Presence

George Keathley, the director of this production, who also staged the Broadway revival of *The Glass Menagerie* in 1965, appeared to be an absent presence in the reviews of the Austrian newspapers. Out of eight available reviews of this performance, four critics did not even mention Keathley, and the other four only touched upon his direction very briefly. Basil compared Keathley's “prosaic” and “more tangible” direction to Viertel's “purely lyrical” interpretation and considered it a wise choice of the former to center on the mother instead of the daughter (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961, *my translation*). The only other reviewer who thought that Keathley played an influential part in the production was the critic of the *Wiener Zeitung*. Like Basil, he felt that Keathley endowed the production with more palpability and “Kontur” (tin, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961). The other two critics who mentioned Keathley, did not attach

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<sup>231</sup> Cf. Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961.

much importance to his direction. According to Torberg, the direction would have been pleasingly unobtrusive if Keathley had not destroyed the theatrical experience of the spectator with “naïve[...] Musik- und Lichteffekte” (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr.1961). In the same way, Weiser also thought that the director was not instrumental in guaranteeing the production’s success. For him, it was the text itself that secured the emotional pull of the production.<sup>232</sup>

As Whitney Bolton indicated in his review, Keathley did not make major modifications in his direction of 1965, but rather adopted his style and interpretation from the tour of 1961.<sup>233</sup> Nevertheless, in terms of the cast there was a significant difference between these two stagings: While in the Theater-Guild-production Helen Hayes clearly stood out as the most prominent character, overshadowing her co-actors, the cast in 1965 was well-balanced and each of the four characters was given equal importance. Interestingly, Keathley later stated in an interview, “You cannot have one actress standing out” (Keathley, interview with Jane O’Niell, 17 June 1991, quoted in O’Niell, 204), which points to the fact that the constellation of the cast in 1961 did not quite meet his expectations.

In the United States, Keathley’s directorial approach appealed to the mainstream papers, which praised his controlled and perceptive staging, but found criticism among the more alternative papers, which missed innovation and called for a performance that spoke to the reality of a changed world view.<sup>234</sup> Interestingly, with regard to the performance none of these claims were raised in the Austrian newspapers of 1961.

### c) The Theater Guild American Repertory Company

The Theater Guild American Repertory Company provoked quite diverse reactions among the Austrian reviewers. The critical response ranged from complete rejection to a rather unemotional approbation. Unsurprisingly, Hans Weigel from the *Kronen-Zeitung* belonged to the former camp of critics. Clearly demarcating “the American” from “the Austrian”, he wrote:

Alle miteinander spielen sie Steinzeittheater. Auch bei uns wird, weiß Gott, oft mit Wasser gekocht; aber unser Wasser ist frischer, viel weniger abgestanden als dieses. (Weigel, *Kronen-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961)

Peter Weiser felt strong ambivalence towards the performance. He stated:

<sup>232</sup> Cf. Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961.

<sup>233</sup> Cf. Bolton, *Morning Telegraph* 6 May 1965, quoted in O’Niell, 201 – 202.

<sup>234</sup> Cf. O’Niell, 201 – 204.

Der Kritiker [...] kann sich eines nicht erklären: wieso er selten so viel an einer Aufführung auszusetzen hatte und dennoch selten so gern im Theater war wie am gestrigen Abend. (Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961)

Weiser's statement implies a discrepancy between his rational and the emotional theatrical experience. While he clearly approved of the performance on an emotional level, there was obviously some (rational) refusal to accept this appreciation. It may be surmised that the critic's resistance was caused by the direct associations with America which the performance undoubtedly evoked. After all, the intention of the group was to culturally represent the United States and promote American theater in Europe, the formerly uncontested theatrical epicenter of the Western World. Unwilling to cede any (theatrical) territory to the Americans, Hans Weigel was still clinging to that past tradition and insisted upon Europe's unchallenged hegemony. Peter Weiser was left with "Zweifeln und einer gewissen Ungläubigkeit" (Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961), but at least admitted that his perception was characterized by a feeling of ambivalence.

In contrast, Otto Basil approved of the rendition, and even considered it superior to Berthold Viertel's production, which up to that point had been beheld as the *ne plus ultra*:

Wie wir heute erkennen müssen, ist diese gewiß großartige Besetzung<sup>235</sup> im Typischen unzureichend gewesen. Das amerikanische Theater mit seinem nahezu unbegrenzten Vorrat an guten Schauspielern aller erdenklicher Typen hat es da viel leichter: es ist eben in erster Linie „Typentheater“. Dadurch werden die Menschen und Vorgänge viel echter, viel plausibler, viel realer und [...] viel realistischer. (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961)

As concerns the representativeness of the group, Torberg concurred with Basil:

Nun war's auch nicht eben bestes amerikanisches Theater, was uns die „American Repertory Company“ geboten hat, so war's doch in vielerlei Hinsicht typisches: in der naht- und mätzchenlosen Präzision der Inszenierungen, in der handwerklichen Könnerschaft aller Mitwirkenden, in der Disziplin, die noch dem kleinsten Part den größten schauspielerischen Einsatz sicherte. (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961)

Still, the *Presse* – critic claimed that the Company was not as representative for the American Theater as was the “Old Vic” for the British or the “Théâtre National Populaire” for the French, which he primarily ascribed to the temporary character of the

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<sup>235</sup> i.e. the original cast of 1949: Helene Thimig, Käthe Gold, Curd Jürgens and Josef Meinrad.

group. The Jewish journalist, who lived in American exile between 1938 and 1951<sup>236</sup>, was really speaking from experience when he declared that “Am Broadway wird viel besser Theater gespielt” (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961). Nevertheless, this generalized assertion is devoid of any plausible explanation. After all, each of the cast members had a previous Broadway record and George Keathley debuted as a Broadway director in 1957.<sup>237</sup> Thus, Torberg seemed to suggest that American Theater should not be played outside an American reality. Although he responded to the company in an emotionally more composed way than some of his colleagues, his statement resonated with the same patriotism that was prevalent in the reviews of the other critics. Basil, who did not share the exile experience with Torberg, felt that the American actors succeeded in recreating a *typically* American atmosphere. In contrast, Torberg attached typicality not to the nationality of the actors, but to their specific acting style.

d) Austria favors High Art and Emotional Retention

What Torberg considered American stage professionalism, appeared to be mere exaggeration for other reviewers. The best example was provided by Peter Weiser, who criticized the entire cast for what he believed to be a lack of emotional subtlety. He felt that Helen Hayes, in her depiction of **Amanda Wingfield**, forced her audience to laugh where only a smile would have been appropriate and tried to break their hearts, “wo man bloß Trauer zu fühlen hatte” (Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961).

James Broderick, who enacted **Tom Wingfield** in this production, could not live up to Weiser’s expectations, either. The critic found fault with Broderick’s blunt and monotonous speech habits and facial expressions, as well as his clumsy gestures.<sup>238</sup>

He also dismissed Nancy Coleman’s portrayal of **Laura Wingfield**, since he felt intimidated by her movements and her way to speak, to sigh and to sob.

Finally, he criticized Leif Erickson’s **Gentleman Caller** for the same reason as Helen Hayes. He wrote:

Den Besucher [...] spielt Leif Erickson mit einem Aufwand an Stimme und Gesten und Mienenspiel, mit dem im Burgtheater sonst ein ganzer Shakespeare-Abend bestritten wird und der für einen einzelnen, auch wenn er einen hohlen Kraftburschen darstellen muß, entschieden zuviel ist. (Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961)

<sup>236</sup> Cf. Fillitz, *Ö1 Morgenjournal* 16 Sept. 2008.

<sup>237</sup> Cf. Internet Broadway Database.

<sup>238</sup> Cf. Weiser, *Kurier* 20 Apr. 1961.

Hans Weigel's evaluation of the actors turned out equally unfavorable. Similarly to his colleague, he criticized the exaggerated emotional display of the characters. He considered Hayes to play "an einem einzigen Abend, was ein durchschnittlicher Josefstädter Schauspieler innerhalb einer ganzen Spielzeit spielt" (Weigel, *Kronen-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961). Most significantly, he was outraged at Helen Hayes' flirting with the audience:

Helen Hayes - man wird es mir nicht glauben, aber ich erkläre es an Eides Statt und habe Hunderte von Zeugen – Helen Hayes steckt im Lauf der "Glass Menagerie" einmal den kleinen Finger und einmal den Zeigefinger neckisch in den Mund. (Weigel, *Kronen-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961)

Almost half a century later, it seems hard to believe that a trifling gesture such as that stirred up the audience and was almost considered an offense. Indeed, Weigel's comment spoke to the moral concept of the time. After all, good manners were considered a public imperative at the beginning of the 60s, since they were interpreted as *the* social marker which separated the in-group from the out-group.<sup>239</sup>

Friedrich Heer from *Die Furche* reiterated this unwritten code of conduct:

[Helen Hayes ist] eine Schauspielerin, die mit herzhafter Unbekümmertheit das Komödiantische ausspielt, mit einer Naivität, die hierzulande Schauspielerinnen ersten Ranges nicht gestattet ist. (Heer, *Die Furche* 29 Apr. 1961)

Everything points to the fact that the clientele of the Burgtheater of 1961 preferred tragedies to comedies. Was this still a relic of the past in which the former genre was associated with "High Art" and the latter was degraded to "Low Art"? The critic of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* supported this assumption by declaring that Amanda Wingfield's "ganz und gar undamenhafte Reaktion" in the last act, in which she spilt lemonade on herself, rather belonged on a "Lustspielbühne" (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961).

Not all the reviewers assessed the humorous interpretation of the American Repertory Company unfavorably, though. Otto Basil, for instance, explicitly approved of Helen Hayes' rendition. He commented:

Durch diese große Künstlerin [i.e. Helen Hayes] wird [...] das Stück nicht seines clownesken und polychromen Humors beraubt, was in der Viertelschen Einrichtung leider der Fall war. Man konnte diesmal sehr oft und sehr herzlich lachen[.] [...] [Hayes] kehrte das Innere nach außen und vice versa. (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961)

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<sup>239</sup> Cf. Veigl, 116.

Not only was Basil one of the few critics who did not cling to “Poesie” as the Austrian shibboleth of *The Glass Menagerie*, but he also indicated that the American actors were liberally externalizing their emotions. As I have pointed out before, the majority of the Austrian reviewers were irritated by these emotional outbursts, which they perceived as blunt, bold and graceless. Thus, the rejection of Hayes’ Amanda seemed to be not only a question of High and Low Art, but also of culturally contingent display rules of emotional expression and - retention. In the light of this consideration, the question arises whether the Austrians were not only conservative but also emotionally inhibited.

e) The Universal Amanda Wingfield

For the promotion tour of the Theater Guild American Repertory Company, George Keathley chose to “universalize” Amanda Wingfield, most probably to facilitate a closer identification with the role among the European audiences. The Austrian critics responded differently to this geographically and culturally deracinated character study. The *Wiener-Zeitung* commended the universal portrayal:

Großartig Helen Hayes als Mutter Amanda, eine alternde Frau mit der sentimentalischen Seele und der enervierenden wirren Betriebsamkeit, allzeit um das Wohl ihrer Kinder bemüht. (tin, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961).

Friedrich Heer rendered a non-judgemental observation:

[...] Helen Hayes [...] spielt eine von den hunderttausenden Müttern, die um ihre nicht ganz wohlgeratenen Kinder bangen; sie ist selbst kein Symbol, [...] sondern eben ein sehr braves, sehr tüchtiges, sehr menschliches Mütterchen. (Heer, *Die Furche* 29 Apr. 1961)

Finally, the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* critic considered the presentation of Amanda Wingfield as a universal mother detrimental to the play’s logic. According to him, under Keathley’s direction, the play’s genre mutated from a “Schicksalsdrama” (Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan. 1949) and “Tragödie des Kleinbürgerlebens” (Rollett, *Wiener Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949) into a “soziale Hochstaplerinnenkomödie” (Walden, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961). Walden felt that due to the universalization the play forfeited its credibility:

Statt einer deklassierten Plantagenbesitzerstochter spielt Helen Hayes eine sympathische vitale Waschfrau, die ihre angebliche Vergangenheit usurpiert, der man aber in keinem Wort, in keiner Geste die vorgeflunkerte Plantage ihrer Mädchenjahre glaubt. (Walden, *Arbeiter – Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961)

f) The Play

Eleven years had elapsed since *The Glass Menagerie* was first enacted in the Akademietheater. It was still considered to be Tennessee Williams' best, purest and most beautiful play<sup>240</sup>, but its perception had changed within the course of time. For one thing, Torberg felt that the drama had already forfeited some of its original "poetische[n] Glanz" (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961), which he ascribed to Tennessee Williams' development as well as to the numerous writers who followed in his footsteps. Furthermore, he perceived the "Zeitbezogenheit" (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961) of the play much more powerfully than in 1949. However, in its totality, the critic endorsed *The Glass Menagerie*:

[D]ie eindringlich gerade Linie des Geschehens selbst, die Zeichnung der Charaktere und die Motive ihres Handelns haben nichts von ihrer dichterischen Glaubhaftigkeit eingebüßt. (Torberg, *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961)

Most critics did not reflect upon the play and the perception of it in such a differentiated manner. Without even having seen the performance<sup>241</sup>, the critic of the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* gave free rein to his displeasure:

Mit Tennessee Williams [sic!] "The glass menagerie" kommen uns die Amerikaner just in einem Augenblick, wo wir endlich drum und dran sind, uns den Tennessee Williams abzugewöhnen, weil wir beschämt erkennen müssen, daß wir ihn eine Zeitlang [sic!] zu Unrecht für so etwas Aehnliches [sic!] wie einen Dichter gehalten haben, diesen Neon-Ibsen aus sechster psychoanalytischer Hand. (Polz, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 25 Apr. 1961)

Polz did not only reject *The Glass Menagerie*, but considered the overall choice of the repertoire "für die Zwecke der beabsichtigten kulturellen Werbung denkbar ungünstig [...]" (Polz, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 25 Apr. 1961).

Hans Weigel wrote in the customarily sensational style of the *Kronen-Zeitung*:

Das Stück namens "Glasmenagerie" ist verlogen, melodramatisch, unzusammenhängend, überflüssig, maniert, unappetitlich, oberflächlich, antiquiert, unbeholfen, kitschig, peinlich, unreif, ekelhaft, zusammengestückelt. (Weigel, *Kronen-Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961)

<sup>240</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961; Torberg *Die Presse* 22 Apr. 1961.

<sup>241</sup> Polz complained about the Burgtheater, which did not provide tickets for the second and third night of the guest performance. Polz took this as a personal affront against Upper Austria. He wrote: "Für die beiden anderen Abende hatte das Burgtheater den "OÖN" keine Karten zur Verfügung gestellt: vielleicht aus der Erwägung heraus, daß unser Bundesland nur zum Teil zu wissen brauche, was im Burgtheater los sei." (Polz, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 25 Apr. 1961)

Unlike Polz, Weigel formed his opinion not on the basis of the play but of the performance. He emphasized that the roles of the play were artistically conceived and contained a great potential for talented actors, which the American cast did not realize, though.

Similar to the reviews of the Viennese debut performance, there was again a tendency among some critics to overinterpret the characters of *The Glass Menagerie*. In 1949 the reviewers read the story of Laura as an allegory of Austrian post-war society, which was a means of cultural approximation and schematization. By 1961, Austria had economically recovered from the war and its aftermath. Thus, the characters were no longer incorporated into a post-war reality, but were construed within a more generalized context. Otto Basil, for instance, interpreted Laura's shorter leg as a "Symbol für ihr Zukurzgekommensein im Leben" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 Apr. 1961). The critic of the *Wiener Zeitung* read the characters of *The Glass Menagerie* in terms of a clash between the real and the unreal. While he considered the Wingfields as a symbol of the "unwirklichen Welt", he read the Gentleman Caller as an allegory of the real life. He wrote, "[D]iese Welt [i.e. die unwirkliche Welt der Wingfields] zerbricht wie Glas, wenn man das reale Leben in ihr zu Gast lädt" (tin, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961). He reiterated his interpretation by claiming that Tom was the only one of the Wingfield family „der [...] den Weg in die Wirklichkeit zu gehen vermag" (tin, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 Apr. 1961).

### 3.3.3. *Die Glasménagerie* in the Akademietheater (1965)

Halfway through the 60s, *The Glass Menagerie* was revived in German in the Akademietheater for the first time, in a production that bore little resemblance to the Viennese debut performance. Willi Schmidt's revival premiered on 19 March 1965 and starred Austrian top-class actors: Paula Wessely enacted Amanda Wingfield, Helmut Griem played the role of Tom, Annemarie Düringer represented Laura and Ernst Anders portrayed the Gentleman Caller.

The audience response of the opening night was described quite differently by the various critics, and it stands to reason that the reviewers' perception of the general resonance was blurred by their own evaluation of the performance.

Walden referred to a "stürmische[n] Premierenapplaus" (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965) and Basil talked about an "echt ergriffenen Premierenpublikum[...]" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 2008) who strongly acclaimed the performance.

Pablé, however, perceived the echo of the audience as less enthusiastic. She talked about a „[g]ute[n] Schlußapplaus“, but relativized this positive remark by claiming that the audience "reagierte während der Vorstellung kaum" (Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965). In a pointedly neutral tone, Blaha described the audience resonance as "aufmerksam und höflich" and closed his review with the words "Es war ein Abend der Rückschau und Erinnerung" (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965).

#### a) Willi Schmidt – Stripping off Americanness and "Poesie"

Willi Schmidt functioned both as director and stage designer in this revival. His directorial style was described as clear and realistic and his staging was perceived by many as scant. Schmidt's intention was to strip *The Glass Menagerie* to its core, which for him consisted in the universal message of the play. As a consequence, he dispensed with a representation of typically American features as well as the evocation of "Poesie". The critical reaction towards Schmidt's interpretation was divided. While one camp of the reviewers commended his realistic and universal approach and felt that it corresponded to the zeitgeist, the other group felt that it distorted the play almost beyond recognition.

The critic of the *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten* favored Schmidt's interpretation. He wrote:

Willi Schmidt hat sich, soweit es möglich war, dem Kitsch und den Peinlichkeiten widersetzt, dem, was wir früher für eine neue Poesie gehalten haben [...] (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965)

For Siegfried Melchinger, “Poesie” bore equally negative connotations of a past sensation that he deemed inadequate for a contemporary context. Therefore, he was grateful to the director for leaving out the devices which used to provoke this particular nostalgic mood in former productions:

Willi Schmidt hat, wie das von diesem klugen, bedächtigen, die Form in der Aufrichtigkeit suchenden Regisseur nicht anders zu erwarten war, das ganze Projektions-, Musik- und Beleuchtungs-Brimborium aus dem Stück hinausgeworfen. Man sagt seiner Inszenierung Kargheit nach. Man sollte dankbar dafür sein. Was da als „Poesie“ in den Gespinsten der Erinnerung an frühere Inszenierungen haften mag, hätte sich im Licht einer veränderten Zeit gewiß recht fadenscheinig ausgenommen. (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* Mai 1965)

However, not all the reviewers shared this opinion. *Furche*-critic Julius Mader, for instance, perceived Schmidt’s performance as “zu realistisch, zu stofflich, zu wenig entmaterialisiert” (Mader, *Die Furche* 27 March 1965). He missed the fairy-tale atmosphere which he considered to be inherent in the play. Similarly, Otto Basil missed the “filigran-fragilen Zauber” (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 2008) that endowed *The Glass Menagerie* with a tragicomic glow. By divesting the play of this magical appeal, Schmidt directs the focus on the “Lebensphilosophie á la Ibsen (Lebenslüge und dergleichen)” (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 2008). As Fontana observed, “Willi Schmidt [...] rückt ‚Die Glasmenagerie‘ von der Exotik des Geschehens ins allgemein Gültige ab“ (Fontana, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 24 March 1965). He pointed out that Schmidt did not portray Amanda Wingfield’s background as distinctly American, but presented it as a “verblichenen bürgerlichen Wohlstand [...] ohne besondere Eigenprägung” (Fontana, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 24 March 1965). *Kurier* – critic Paul Blaha considered this specific cultural imprint a crucial characteristic of *The Glass Menagerie*, without which the play appeared in a strikingly different light:

Willi Schmidt gab [das Stück] im Akademietheater wieder – und es ist kaum noch zu erkennen. Vordergründig, trocken, kühl begegnet uns die versponnene Treibhausatmosphäre wieder. Willi Schmidt normalisiert – und entzaubert. Vielleicht fürchtete er die Melancholie, die leicht in Sentimentalität umschlägt, vielleicht vertraute er dem Stück nicht mehr. Er läßt die Schleier fallen, der Schauplatz wird deutlich, alltäglich. Es blüht nichts auf, die Schwingungen bleiben Pausen. Kein Süden, kein Klima. Tempo und Stimmung wechseln. (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965)

The critic of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* also conjectured that Schmidt did not rely on Williams' script anymore. He even alleged that the director was leading a "Kampf gegen Tennessee Williams", nurtured by his professed intention to prove that "alles, was der Autor sagt, nicht wahr sei" (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965).

Although Melchinger generally favored the "universalization" or "de-americanization" of the play, he also had some qualms about it. He wondered, "Sind die Vorgänge des Stückes noch spielbar, wenn sie derart aus der vorgeschriebenen Zeit herauspräpariert werden?" (Melchinger, *Theater Heute Mai* 1965) Eventually, though, he arrived at the conclusion that Willi Schmidt did not have any other choice if he wanted to make the play accessible for an "un-American" audience.

b) The Very Austrian Cast

- *Amanda Wingfield*

Willi Schmidt's decision to approach the play from a universal perspective probably affected most his interpretation of Amanda Wingfield. After all, the Mother constitutes the most American character, due to her background as a Southern Belle. Siegfried Melchinger considered the Americanness inherent in the character as problematic for an audience who cannot relate directly to the time and place Amanda represents. Thus, he reasoned that the former Southern Belle was a character that could be largely understood and identified with by an *American* audience, but was completely incomprehensible for the *Austrian* spectators. He argued:

Weder die südstaatlichen Illusionen noch die Krisenjahre sind unserem Publikum verständlich zu machen. So stellt sich, wie in allen ähnlichen Stücken, die Frage: ist etwas an dieser Welt und ihren Menschen, das sich übertragen läßt? (Melchinger, *Theater Heute Mai* 1965)

Melchinger subsumed the (transferable) universal themes of Amanda Wingfield as "die Tyrannei der Güte [,] [d]ie Präpotenz der Mütterlichkeit, die in Grausamkeit umschlägt [and] [d]as Einander-nicht-verstehen-Können der Generationen" (Melchinger, *Theater Heute May* 1965).

In line with this premise, Paula Wessely translated the *American* Amanda Wingfield into a mother who could be understood and identified with by the Austrian audience. Rismondo commended the clarity of Wessely's portrayal:

Dieses Durchsichtigwerden einer vergangenen Wirklichkeit erfährt durch Paula Wessely als Amanda eine Darstellung von unfaßbarer Einfachheit. Mit einer Kunst, die reine und natürliche Menschlichkeit ist, vermeidet sie alles, was in dieser Rolle zu „Artistik“ verleiten könnte. (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965)

It is worth noting that Rismondo perceived Wessely's universal and "Austrianized" interpretation as the norm from which a decidedly American rendition would have deviated.<sup>242</sup> Thus, he reversed the character's origin and fully divested it of its American anchorage. In the same way, Basil presumed that Wessely represented the role exactly the way Williams had imagined it to be.<sup>243</sup> Elisabeth Pablé also considered the Austrian actress to have rendered "the original" Amanda Wingfield:

Ich sah in diesem vielgespielten, prominentbesetzten [*sic!*] Stück die Rolle der Mutter [...] noch nie so überzeugend dargestellt wie jetzt durch Paula Wessely. Nichts entgleist hier wie sonst üblich in die Karikatur oder in unsere Klischeevorstellung einer amerikanischen Nervensäge. [...] Sie ist ganz einfach die an einen Tunichtgut geratene Frau, die ihre zwei Kinder in schlechter Zeit allein durchbringen muß. (Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965)

It is striking that neither Rismondo nor Pablé assessed Wessely's portrayal as "un-American". Rather, they emphasized the authenticity of her character representation and considered her to embody the "original Amanda". How could Paula Wessely really render the role so credibly, without conveying the impression of being "un-American"? Siegfried Melchinger attributed this accomplishment to a nodal point between the actress and her enacted character. Eventually, Amanda Wingfield turned out to be not as remote from Wessely's personality as it might have appeared to be at first glance. As the critic pointed out, Wessely loved to play the strict teacher when she was a child, a characteristic which she apparently recognized in Amanda Wingfield. Therefore, Melchinger concluded:

Es gelang der Wessely, die Figur, ohne deren Konturen zu verletzen, in ihre eigene Natur "einzubinden" und damit auch denen, die das Amerika von damals und die besonderen Verhältnisse der Südstaaten höchstens aus den Romanen des Faulkner kennen, die Zeit zu vergegenwärtigen. (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* Mai 1965)

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<sup>242</sup> This argument is based on the assumption that Rismondo's reference to "Artistik" denotes the opposite of "authenticity", whereby he associates the former with an American representation of Amanda and the latter with the universal (Austrianized) version of *The Mother*.

<sup>243</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965.

According to the critic, the only way to authentically revive a historic time on stage is to identify “einen Anklang, einen Reflex, eine Idee, die der Autor in die von ihm dargestellte Zeit eingezeichnet hat” (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* Mai 1965) in one's own being or consciousness. Amanda's nostalgic reminiscence of her youth was one of these ideas that could be presented beyond the notion of time. Fontana felt that the power of Wessely's performance was largely caused by the spectator's possibility to recognize in her “den Traum *jeder* Mutter von den Kindern, [das] Wahngemälde *jeder* Frau von der eigenen Jugend, [die] Härte eines durch viele Enttäuschungen gegangenen Lebens“ (Fontana, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 24 March 1965, *my emphases*). While Fontana lauded the comprehensibility of Wessely's Amanda, Paul Blaha criticized exactly this aspect of her performance.

Paula Wesselys Mutter Wingfield [...] ist ein durchaus realistisches Familienoberhaupt. [...] Anmutvoll versonnener Gesten [*sic!*] läßt sie doch das konfuse, enervante Wesen dieses herabgekommenen Falters missen. Hier flackert keiner Weltfremdheit unerträgliches Selbstmitleid. Keiner Aufdringlichkeit Herrschsucht. Keiner hilflosen Zärtlichkeit Tragik. Alles ist durchwegs verständig [*sic!*]. Vor solcher Mutter muß kein Sohn das Weite suchen. (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965)

For Blaha, the “normalization” of the Mother challenged the play's logic and made Tom's abandonment of his family appear incomprehensible. *Arbeiter-Zeitung*-critic Walden could not sympathize with the normalized Amanda Wingfield, either. Like Blaha, he considered Wessely's interpretation as a reversal of the role which proved detrimental to the play's logic:

[Williams'] dramatische Poesie zeigt sich am stärksten dort, wo aus seiner scheinbaren Karikatur, hier aus der Nervensäge Amanda, der blutende Mensch erwächst. Wenn Paula Wessely zum Schluß vor den Trümmern ihrer Illusionen zum erstenmal [*sic!*] zugibt, daß ihre Tochter ein Krüppel ist, verwandelt sich gerade umgekehrt eine gütige Mutter in eine skurrile Hexe, die unser Mitleid nun erst verscheucht. (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965)

Interestingly, Walden called for the “caricature” and the “Artistik” that Pablé and Rismondo rejected. He perceived *The Glass Menagerie* as Williams' conception of the American Dream and considered the roles to constitute a crucial part of this American ideology.

- *Tom Wingfield*

Helmut Griem, a new engagement of the Burgtheater, enacted the role of Tom Wingfield. His acting style was described as contemplative and momentous, which earned him predominantly mixed reviews.

The reviewers generally agreed that Griem rendered stronger the lyrical passages than the emotional outbursts.<sup>244</sup>

Rismondo was one of the few critics who assessed Griem's performance entirely favorably. He lauded the actor's "nachdenkliche[...] Kraft" (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965) and the perceptible individuality he endowed the role with.

Blaha found similar adjectives for Griem's rendition, even though he was not fully convinced:

Helmut Griem als Tom ist bedächtig, voll einsamer Traurigkeit, von hitziger, verzweifelter Revolte. Manchmal überdeutlich. Manchmal überdreht. Alles in allem mag sich dies Debüt doch sehen lassen. (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965)

The same impression was gained by Otto Basil. Although he considered Griem's acting strong and convincing, he felt that it was "zu expressionistisch überhitzt" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965).

Two reviewers also criticized the pace of his acting and his movements, which they considered too hectic.<sup>245</sup>

Walden was the only critic who expressed his complete disapproval with Griem's portrayal of Tom Wingfield. He was convinced that the actor functioned as a puppet in Schmidt's conspiracy against the author:

Der Regisseur ließ den sicherlich begabten jungen Schauspieler den erzählenden Zwischentext deklamieren, als wäre es der „Cornet“ von Rilke, und wieder kommt der Dichter hiebei ungerechtfertigterweise zu Schaden. Dafür hat Griem in seinen Ausbrüchen zu rasen wie ein Karl Moor. (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965)

In view of Schmidt's "normalized" directorial approach, it is not surprising that Tom Wingfield was perceived as a universal character by most of the critics. For Schreyvogel, Helmut Griem represented "ein[en] zornige[n] Halbwüchsige[n], der mit dem Leben nicht zu Rande kommt" (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965) and Plakolb described him as "ein[en] Mensch[en] ohne Anfang und Ziel" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965). Even more generally, Fontana

<sup>244</sup> Cf. Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965; Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 March 1965.

<sup>245</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965; Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 March 1965.

construed Helmut Griem's Tom as an emblem of "das Trotzige, das Aufsässige, das Exhibitionistische, den Ekel an der Lebensenge, das vergebliche Hämmern mit den Fäusten am Kerker des Ich" (Fontana, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 24 March 1965).

Otto Basil was the only critic who explicitly designated Tom Wingfield as an American character. He saw Williams' "problematic" figure perfectly represented by Helmut Griem, whom he characterized as "ein[en] dynamische[n] James-Dean-Typ" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965). In fact, this comparison turns out to be more accurate than one might initially assume. As Germaine Greer points out, "[James] Dean projected a new, sensitive masculinity, with a broad streak of brutality running across it" (Greer, *Guardian online* 14 May 2005). Obviously, Basil seemed to have recognized this type of masculinity in Griem's performance. Unlike George Grizzard, the Tom Wingfield in the Broadway production of 1965, Griem did not focus on the soft and gentle qualities of the character but rather brought to the fore his aggressive side. Grizzard modelled his role on the artist (Tennessee Williams)<sup>246</sup>, whereas Griem rendered the (imagined American) stereotype (James Dean).

But it is not only the sensitive masculinity that provided a nexus between James Dean and Tom Wingfield, but also the ambivalence in terms of their sexual orientation. Both the American icon and Williams' alter ego were sexually inclined towards men, even though they did not exactly come out. While the former was supplied with starlets whenever he was in public in order to uphold his overt masculine appeal<sup>247</sup>, the latter veiled his sexual orientation altogether.

- *Laura Wingfield*

In the role of Laura Wingfield, Annemarie Düringer received predominantly favorable appraisals. Otto Basil, who had already reviewed the debut performance in 1949 as well as the guest performance with Helen Hayes in 1961, considered Düringer to be the "ideale Besetzung" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965) of the Daughter.

The critics unanimously agreed that Düringer's acting style was simple and restrained,<sup>248</sup> and most of the reviewers praised her for this approach. Rismondo wrote:

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<sup>246</sup> Cf. Grizzard, personal interview, 5 June 1991, quoted in O'Niell, 122.

<sup>247</sup> Cf. Greer, *Guardian online* 14 May 2005.

<sup>248</sup> Cf. Mader, *Die Furche* 27 March 1965; Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965; Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965; Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965.

Stille und Einfachheit ist auch der Laura Annemarie Düringers nachzurühen. Sie löst das Neurotische der Gestalt wahrhaftig in eine Innerlichkeit von träumerischer Zartheit auf. Das „Klinische“ in einen inneren Zustand, in ein innerliches Verhalten zu verwandeln, das ist der Düringer wunderschön gelungen. (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965)

It is exactly this *mélange* of feelings and impressions that Walden subsumed under the term “Poesie”. He felt that Düringer succeeded in preventing Willi Schmidt’s anti-Tennessee-Williams-conspiracy by saving the poetic element of the play:

Schmidts konzentrischer Angriff auf die “Glasmengerie” hat nur eine schwache Stelle, durch die die dem Stück inwohnende Poesie zu sickern vermag: Es ist die Laura Annemarie Düringers! Und ob die Welt voll Willi Schmidts wäre, sie spielt, sie spricht, sie schweigt Tennessee Williams. In ihrem Lager ist die Glasmengerie, und mit einem einzigen Blick, einer Geste schiebt sie, eine dramaturgische Antigone, ihr auf den Schindanger verbanntes gläsernes Getier wieder in den Mittelpunkt. (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965)

Walden’s impression, however, stood in stark contrast to Plakolb’s perception. The critic of the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* thought that it was exactly the exclusion of “Poesie” that marked Düringer’s portrayal as particularly appealing.

Plakolb felt that the actress stripped off the “greulichen ‘Heiligenschein’” and laid bare a “humanized” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965, *my translation*) Laura Wingfield. Paul Blaha also noted a lack of “Poesie”, but he did not praise it. Rather, he criticized Düringer’s performance as “flach”, “dünn” and “vertrocknet” (Blaha, *Kurier* 20 March 1965).

Schreyvogel, who compared Willi Schmidt’s production to Berthold Viertel’s original staging, stated that Düringer’s performance could not bear any comparison to Gold’s, due to her pronounced individualization of the role.<sup>249</sup> *Theater Heute* – critic Melchinger revealed some of the differences between the original production and the 1965 revival. In 1949, Berthold Viertel quite arbitrarily nicknamed Laura Wingfield “Annamirl”, which was changed by Willi Schmidt into the polysemous, hence more felicitous, moniker “Anemone”.<sup>250</sup> Similarly to Piper Laurie’s presentation on Broadway, Düringer endowed Laura Wingfield with more strength than in the former revivals. Melchinger noted that Düringer’s Laura “hinkte [...] nur ein wenig” (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965) and was not as fragile as her glass figurines.

<sup>249</sup> Cf. Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965.

<sup>250</sup> Cf. Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965.

According to the critic, the actress presented the shyness of the character rather than her weakness.<sup>251</sup>

As was the case with the other characters, some critics interpreted Laura allegorically. Basil reiterated his speculation of 1961 that Laura's shorter leg was "ein Symbol für das Zukurzgekommensein im Leben" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965) and Fontana ascribed the following meaning to the character:

[Laura Wingfield] gilt nach dem Willen des Autors für alle die vielen Schüchternen und Scheuen. Diese Ermutigung besagt: Jeder Mensch, er sei, wer er sei, ist in seiner Art, wenn es nur seine eigene Art ist, wertvoll. (Fontana, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 24 March 1965)

- *Gentleman Caller*

Ernst Anders, who played the Gentleman Caller, received largely favorable reviews. His performance, which was described as optimistic and easy-going, seemed to meet the expectations of the critics perfectly. Schreyvogel felt that the actor embodied the role very authentically:

Ernst Anders wird für den Jim das, was man eine Idealbesetzung nennt. Er ist das, was er spielt, jung, liebenswürdig, mit dem Leben auf du und du. (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965)

In an equally positive tone, Basil praised Anders' "unkompliziert-banale[n], gesund optimistische[n] 'Gentleman Caller'" and called it "eine Leistung, die keinen Wunsch offenläßt [*sic!*]" (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965).

Pablé criticized Anders' overarticulate pronunciation, but commended his unpretentious character study. According to her, his particular approach yielded a better audience understanding of the role. She wrote:

Ernst Anders [...] geht seine Rolle nicht von der Kraftmeierei des ehemaligen Sportchampions an; das tut ihr zweifellos gut. Man begreift so den Helden der Schule, der sich dann im Leben nicht besonders bewährt und der erst wieder Auftrieb bekommt, nachdem er das richtige Mädchen findet, viel besser. (Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965)

What Pablé indicated was the difficulty to grasp the importance of Jim O'Connor's athletic career at high school. This, of course, can be linked to a major cultural difference between the United States and Austria as concerns the status of sport in school as well as in everyday life. Mauk and Oakland describe the realm of sport as "a

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965.

microcosm of [American] national life [that] reflects the national condition” (387). Indeed, in the United States, sports are strongly commercialized, and the pronounced pressure to succeed entails an “almost obsessive and serious competitiveness” (Mauk and Oakland, 389). This mentality of team spirit and (athletic) ambition is already fostered at school, where sports play an integral part in the academic agenda. To excel in sports does not only win the students the esteem of their peers and teachers, but may also enable them to get sports scholarships and to attend a prestigious college or university.<sup>252</sup> In Austria, in contrast, sports play a rather subordinate role in the educational system and even professional sport certainly does not enjoy the same public attention as in America. Therefore, Jim O Connor’s athletic success may have appeared to be insignificant to the Austrians, since they could not relate to its social importance the same way as the Americans.

But although Ernst Anders neglected this aspect of Jim O Connor’s personality in his portrayal, there seemed to be other characteristics that made the role appear different from Austrian culture. Interestingly, the Gentleman Caller, who was marked as “wesensfremd” (hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949) in 1949, was still perceived as a rather problematic character in 1965. The critic of the *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten* pointed out:

Ernst Anders ist ein reizender Besucher, ein sympathischer, weil leicht angeknickter Optimist und Bildungsgläubiger, Amerika, wie es kaum ist, Anders, wie es seinen Möglichkeiten nicht ganz entspricht. (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965)

What can be read out of Plakolb’s observation? Firstly, he regarded the Gentleman Caller as an epitome of America, and therefore raised an implicit claim for an “American representation” of the character. Ernst Anders, however, refrained from presenting the role as distinctly American, and therefore could not satisfy Plakolb’s expectations of a faithful replication of the other culture (“Amerika, wie es kaum ist”). Secondly, he implied that the Austrian actor could not live up to the role anyways, since it was outside of his acting scope (“Anders, wie es seinen Möglichkeiten nicht ganz entspricht”). It may be surmised that he deemed Anders too Austrian to authentically render a typical American character.

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<sup>252</sup> Cf. Mauk and Oakland, 389 – 390.

Siegfried Melchinger uttered (t)his doubt more clearly. He stated, “[I]ch frage mich [...], wie soll ein Schauspieler oder eine Schauspielerin von heute diese Zeit, und noch dazu diese Zeit in Amerika *darstellen*“ (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965)?

Similar to Plakolb, Rismondo read the Gentleman Caller as an allegory of America. Thus, he perceived Jim O’Connor as an alienating character and utilized him as a projection screen for latent Anti-Americanism. The *Presse* - critic saw the Gentleman Caller in contrast to Amanda Wingfield:

An einer Stelle sagt Amanda: “Manche meinen, die Wissenschaft kläre für uns alle Geheimnisse. Meiner Ansicht nach schafft sie nur noch größere.“ Höchst ironische Pointe: Wie platt ist doch dieser „nette, gewöhnliche Junge“ Jim, mit dem Amanda ihre Tochter verkuppeln möchte. [...] Ja, er hat die „Wissenschaft“ aus dem Eff-eff studiert. Wie praktisch schal ist sie doch! Und welch rätselhaft verklärende Poesie ist doch in den „Unpraktischen“, in diesen Lebensuntüchtigen, vom Leben Verschütteten und die Flucht in die Illusionen Suchenden! Am Beispiel des gläsernen Einhorns wird es ausgedrückt, das auf die Erde fällt und sein Horn verliert. Nun ist dieses poetische, aus einer nicht mehr existierenden Welt stammende Tier lediglich ein ganz gewöhnliches Pferd wie alle anderen. (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965)

With his proficiency in sciences, Jim O’Connor represented America, which by 1960 inhabited a pioneering role in scientific research and development. Amanda Wingfield, in contrast, seemed to represent the values of “Old Europe”, which met the innovations from America with suspicion. Indeed, this comparison is not as arbitrary as it might appear to be, but rather echoes the apprehensive attitude towards technological innovation that pervaded a decisive part of the Austrian society at that time. At a conference of Austrian priests in 1962, a vicar by the name of Martin Stur expressed his concerns about the social change that was triggered by the proliferation of the modern media and the heightened mobility as a result of improved means of transportation:

„Der technische Fortschritt läßt [den heutigen Menschen im Dorf] die bisherige Lebens- und Berufsform als überholt begreifen – und bringt ihn in die Gefahr, nirgends mehr Geheimnis, keusche Verhüllung und Grenzen des Begehrens zu erleben, obwohl es diese Dinge auch weiter geben wird.“ (Stur, quoted in Veigl, 163)

Stur feared that the confrontation with these new modes of living deracinated people from their home, shattered their traditional values and caused a state of disorientation.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> Cf. Veigl, 163 – 164.

- *Designer*

Willi Schmidt was not only the director of the production, but also functioned as the stage and costume designer. While his directorial approach polarized the critics, his stage design was evaluated more positively overall. Basil concluded that “[d]as Bühnenbild ist Schmidt besser gelungen [als die Regie] (Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965) and Rismondo praised his stage design as “[g]anz und gar meisterhaft” (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965). Like his direction, Schmidt’s stage design was described as „klar” (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965; Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965), albeit the boundary between reality and irreality was barely perceptible.<sup>254</sup>

Schmidt layed out the room in a triangular shape<sup>255</sup>, and only the center of the stage allowed for unrestricted visibility.<sup>256</sup> Some critics perceived this particular stage arrangement as dispersed: Rismondo felt that the arena provided a “perspektivische Flucht” (Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965) and Walden gained the impression that Schmidt designed a stage “auf de[r] sich alle Darsteller seltsam verkrabbeln können” (Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965). Friedrich Schreyvogel was the only critic who assumed that the different positioning of the actors, “am Rand der Szene oder an der Rampe” (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965), served as a delineation of the separate strands of action.

Furthemore, Schmidt strongly employed light effects in order to achieve a certain atmosphere or reflect the internal life of a character. Schreyvogel wrote:

Eine rasche Verdunkelung ersetzt den Vorhang. Die Beleuchtung spielt richtig mit, der innere Szenewechsel, das Versinken der Amanda Wingfield in ihre Erinnerungen wird durch den plötzlichen Übergang zu einer anderen Farbe des Lichtes im wahren Sinne „untermalt“. (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung* 21 March 1965)

Schmidt, who de-coupled the play from its American atmosphere, also dispensed with the recreation of the prescribed temporal setting. Rather than robing his cast in costumes of the 30s, he clothed them in contemporary dress. Interestingly, Melchinger was the only critic who seemed to be aware of this stylistic adjustment. He remarked:

Die dreißiger Jahre? Wo waren sie geblieben? Paula Wessely trug keines der komisch-altmodischen Kostüme, die der Autor

<sup>254</sup> Cf. Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965.

<sup>255</sup> Cf. Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. Walden, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 21 March 1965.

vorschreibt. Annemarie Düringer, die Laura, war nicht gerade neumodisch angezogen, aber doch nur ganz allgemein sonderbar. Die Jungen, Helmut Griem als Tom und Ernst Anders als der Herrenbesuch, waren völlig up to date: dieser trug den letzten Chic aus dem Warenhaus von 1965. (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* Mai 1965)

Thus, the Austrian director did not only universalize the distinct geography of the play, but also approximated the time to a contemporary setting. In that sense, he eliminated the potential cultural difficulties an Austrian audience could have had with the play for the sake of simplicity and clarity.

c) A Changed World, A Changed Perception

In 1965, the critics unanimously agreed that the perception of the *The Glass Menagerie* had changed. However, their opinions about the play varied sharply, ranging from a temporally reinforced acknowledgment to complete rejection.

*Wiener Zeitung*- critic Friedrich Schreyvogel was leaning towards the positive end of the scale. He wrote:

1952<sup>257</sup> bezauberte die Wiener das fremdartige Kolorit der Südstaaten das erstemal [*sic!*]. Sie fanden eine Atmosphäre, die sie anzog und überraschte. Heute, da der halbe Spielplan von der amerikanischen Theaterdichtung bestimmt wird, ist, was damals neu war, selbstverständlich geworden. Der Stimmungszauber, der wie ein Zwischenvorhang das Stück entrückte und milderte, ist verschwunden. Das Stück an sich wird wichtiger. Deutlicher als damals merkt man, daß es auch im dramaturgischen Sinn eines der besten in der amerikanischen Literatur des letzten Vierteljahrhunderts ist. (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965)

Schreyvogel maintained that by 1965 *The Glass Menagerie* had stripped off its distinctive “Americanness”, which had obscured the play in the original performance. This assumption is contingent upon the following consideration: Has the play become more Austrian or have the Austrians become more American? The fact that American plays were incorporated heavily into the Austrian theater repertoires suggests that a considerable acquisition of American culture has taken place. As Schreyvogel indicates, the other culture was initially perceived as alienating, but due to the persistent exposure to the plays, the Austrians had to find a way to deal with the intrusive American influences.

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<sup>257</sup> Schreyvogel made a mistake here. The debut performance in Vienna was in 1949, not in 1952.

One type of response was the fierce rejection of Tennessee Williams and/or his play which obviously served the purpose of demarcating the Austrian from the American. Elisabeth Pablé from the *Kronen-Zeitung* was one of the critics who responded in that manner. She excoriated Tennessee Williams for his literary style:

Es ist was Fürchterliches und was Bitteres um die Abnutzung des Tennessee Williams! Nach langer geistig-theatralischer Aushungerung war man nach 1945 beeindruckt von seinen frühen Stücken; in den fünfziger Jahren begannen Katzenjammer und Abwertung: zunehmend sah man die Mache, die Pseudolyrismen, das gesucht Abnorme in der Themenwahl, die unselige Verquickung von Sexualität und Psychologie; Tennessee Williams erschien einem als Enfant terrible eines Volkes und einer Zeit, die nicht mit ihren Erkenntnissen fertig wurden. Aber man war immerhin mit den Schauspielern der Meinung, es handle sich in diesen Stücken um herrliche Rollen. Nun, nach der jüngsten Aufführung im Akademietheater, die im liebevoll ausgestalteten Zyklus „Welche Stücke brauchen wir nicht?“ läuft, entschwindet auch die Illusion, daß Tennessee Williams der Sudermann der Südstaaten ist. Rollen, die seinerzeit von Peinlichkeiten lebten, gehen an diesen heute nicht mehr erträglichen Peinlichkeiten ein. Die Abwertung ist vollkommen und man begreift sich selbst nicht mehr, daß man das alles einst nicht nur überhörte, sondern als fremdartige „Poesie“ empfand. Ein einziger Blick allein auf die Regieanweisungen überführt Tennessee Williams als sentimental Kitschler, dem es auch entscheidend an Intelligenz mangelt. (Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965)

Quite perceptibly, Pablé’s review carries a significant emotional loading. Not only did she see herself under the obligation to justify the audience appeal of the play upon its arrival in 1949, but she also raised the public imperative to feel remorse for this past affinity. This unfavorable review encapsulates anti-Americanism par excellence: Pablé accentuates that Tennessee Williams is the representative of a failing and incapable America. Thus, she deems it a logical consequence to fiercely reject *The Glass Menagerie*, a product generated by Williams’ lack of intelligence and his affinity for sentimental kitsch, which provides nothing but an arena for embarrassing roles.<sup>258</sup>

Ludwig Plakolb, critic of the *Oberösterreichischen Nachrichten*, voiced his criticism in line with Pablé, albeit in slightly more subdued form. Like his colleague, he questioned Williams’ intellectuality and based his judgments on Williams’ stage directions, which he found most irritating. He labeled Williams’ language as “poor” and “conventional” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1965, *my translation*) and shared

<sup>258</sup> Cf. Pablé, *Kronen-Zeitung* 25 March 1965.

Pablé's opinion that the play was outdated. With the title "Wie lange wird man Tennessee Williams noch spielen?", Plakolb proposed an expiry date of *The Glass Menagerie* on the Austrian stages:

Bei der „Katze auf dem heißen Blechdach“ etwa erkannte man hierzulande, daß man sich mit dem hohen Lob für Tennessee Williams die Finger verbrannt hatte. Aber die früh empfangenen Eindrücke von „Glasmenerie“ und von „Endstation Sehnsucht“ blieben bestehen; Eindrücke von seltsam bannenden und ungewöhnlichen Theaterabenden, von Bühnenexotismus und psychoanalytischem Poesiedschungel. Und ich fürchte, diese Eindrücke werden so stark geblieben sein und der Mut so gering, die eigene Einstellung zu revidieren, daß man diese im Akademietheater mit Zurückhaltung aufgenommene Neueinstudierung von „Glasmenerie“ einfach als eine den legendären Nachkriegsaufführungen nicht gleichzusetzende halten wird. (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1965)

Similar to Pablé, Plakolb did not deny the audience's fascination with *The Glass Menagerie* in 1949, but he could not comprehend Berthold Viertel's motivation to bring the play to Austria in the first place. He wondered, "Welche Verwirrung muß über die Menschen im Exil gekommen sein?" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 22 March 1965).

Another way of coming to terms with the penetration of American influences into Austrian culture was to force them into the corset of an already existing schema in order to "austrianize" them. This phenomenon could already be detected throughout the reviews of the previous productions, but it is even more observable with regard to this revival. It is striking that those critics who did not reject the play on the basis of anti-Americanism emphasized that *The Glass Menagerie* was a memory play, a fact which constituted the free variable in their endeavor to austrianize it. In Friedrich Schreyvogel's review, Tennessee Williams' genre description takes up a completely new significance:

Williams nennt seine "Glasmenerie" ein "Spiel der Erinnerung". Das ist es diesmal für die Wiener in einem besonderen Sinn: neben dem Heute steht das Gestern. Man erinnert sich an die Aufführung vor 14 Jahren mit Helene Thimig, Käthe Gold, Curd Jürgens und Josef Meinrad. Berthold Viertel, der das Stück auch übertragen hatte, führte Regie. Es war eine seiner wichtigsten Inszenierungen. Nun begegnen wir dem Werk in einer Aufführung von gleichem Rang. Manche Farben und Proportionen haben sich geändert – aber rechtfertigt nicht gerade das, daß man es wieder spielt? (Schreyvogel, *Wiener Zeitung*, 21 March 1965)

It seemed completely irrelevant for the critic that the “memory” Williams’ was hinting at was Tom Wingfield’s recollection of his adolescence in the dreary St. Louis of the late 1930s. Rather, Schreyvogel displaced the signifier from its original signified and redefined it within an Austrian context.

Piero Rismondo, critic of *Die Presse*, employed a different point of reference to justify *The Glass Menagerie*’s status as a memory play. Although he identified Tom’s recollections as one layer of the memory-aspect in the drama, he extended the semantic field of the word to fit a European context:

Es ist zugleich die Erinnerung an eine bestimmte historische Zeit. An die Zeit des spanischen Bürgerkriegs, die Zeit von Guernica, die Zeit von „Chamberlains Regenschirm“.  
(Rismondo, *Die Presse* 22 March 1965)

It is interesting to note that Rismondo apparently considered *The Glass Menagerie* to be primarily reflective of European, rather than of American history. Thus, instead of referencing the Post-Depression- Era or the decadence of the plantation aristocracy, he referred to the British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and the Spanish Civil War.

### 3.3.4. Recapitulation

In the introduction of this chapter I raised the question why the play enjoyed such a high stage frequency in Vienna during the 1960s. After all, the choice of staging a play like *The Glass Menagerie* in a decade that saw large-scale liberalizations and modernizations in the West almost needed a justification.

As I have exemplified, the mood that was prevalent in America at that time penetrated Austrian society only marginally. No matter if it concerned the field of popular music, sexuality, gender equality, technical progress or theater – the majority of Austrians proved to be lagging behind many other countries of the Western World. This conservatism may partly be explained by the still relatively strong influence of the Catholic Church, which had deeply inculcated its dogmas and moral principles in the religious community. Although the dialectic between “good” and “evil” appeared to be outdated in the light of the 60s, the people had not yet dissociated themselves from it completely.

However, religion seemed to be not the major factor that kept alive the rejection towards liberalizations among the wide public. More accurately, the main reason seemed to be the traditional Austrian “conservatism of the heart” (Thurnher, 30), which almost starts to constitute itself as a leitmotif in Austrian postwar history. In many

instances, the Austrian population showed a pronounced tendency to live not in the present but in the past<sup>259</sup>, and no cultural space was allotted to change and innovation. The theater repertoire of the prestigious playhouses remained equally unchallenged, since the actual plays were only of secondary importance. Public representation was the main function of theater in the circles of the social elite, hence the cast was given more importance than the content.

More subdued than in other countries but still palpably, the Austrian youth split off from the conservative older generations and formed a social stratum of their own. This counterculture was also visible with regard to theater, a cultural domain which proved to be a perfect mirror of the social dynamics at that time. Similarly to the off-Broadway tradition, the young generation flocked to the small Viennese venues, which offered interesting repertoires at bargain prices. Unlike the big playhouses, the small theaters endorsed improvisation and focused on the content, rather than the cast. Interestingly, *The Glass Menagerie* was revived three times in the 1960s on small Viennese stages, as opposed to only two productions that were performed in the prestigious theaters.

While Willi Schmidt's decision to stage the drama in 1965 might well have been an arbitrary decision based on a wish to satisfy the "culinary" claims of a conservative older audience, the question remains why this play in particular enjoyed such popularity among the younger generation. One possible explanation could have arisen from the fact that the play was an import from the United States, and hence attractive for the americanophile youth, who liked to distance themselves from the great part of the Austrian society that doggedly strove to preserve its traditional culture.

The extent to which the older generations still resisted American cultural influences was reflected quite well in the critical response to the guest performance of the Theater Guild American Repertory Company in 1961. Although the majority of critics approved of the performance on an emotional level, they refused to accept the endorsement rationally. The professed intention of the troupe was to promote American culture, which obviously threatened the self-image of the Austrian population, who still felt obliged to defend Europe as the true theater stronghold.

In order to facilitate a close identification and transgress cultural boundaries, George Keathley's staging distinguished itself by a universalized depiction of Amanda Wingfield, an interpretation that was not accepted by all the reviewers. Still, the major point of criticism concerned the overt emotional display of the cast member, and

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<sup>259</sup> Cf. Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961.

particularly of Helen Hayes. The conservative disposition of the wealthy theatergoers apparently encompassed a certain degree of emotional inhibition as well as a pronounced favoring of tragedies over comedies.

Willi Schmidt's *Glass Menagerie* of 1965 constituted the second revival in a big playhouse during that decade. Strongly relying on a celebrity cast, he divested the play of Americanness and *Poesie*, a quality that had been beheld as the chief essential of the play so far. His normalized and disenchanting interpretation strongly polarized the critics. While some reviewers appreciated his clear and realistic style and lauded him for the modernization and contemporary feel he created, others deemed that he had marred *The Glass Menagerie* to be beyond recognition since it lacked the magic flair that made it work on stage.

Interestingly, the "normalized" Mother of Schmidt's revival was perceived much more positively than Helen Hayes' equally universal rendition four years earlier. Paula Wessely was widely acclaimed for her "authentic" representation of the role, and the critics considered her to embody perfectly the Amanda Tennessee Williams must have imagined. Thus, she was made an "original", even though she could neither relate directly to Amanda's past nor to her Americanness.

As in the previous decades, two major reactions to American culture could be noted in the critical response of the *Glass Menagerie* revivals. One way of responding to the unwanted American influences was their rejection, by means of a clear separation between "us" and "them", whereby the former was clearly defined as the superior. Concomitantly, justifications were made to explain and excuse the original appeal of the play in 1947.

Another way of coming to terms with American culture was to imbed it in an Austrian context. A common denominator was constituted by the memory – aspect of the play, which was liberally extended by the critics to make the drama seem relevant to the Austrians. Thus, the signified was not Tom's reminiscences of a dreary childhood in Saint Louis, but rather the Viennese debut performance right after the war or historical incidents of the European past.

### 3.4. *The Glass Menagerie* in the 70s

The 1970s saw only two revivals of *The Glass Menagerie*, which will not be discussed in great detail, though, due to the minor and less representative character of the small venues. The first production was realized by *Vienna's English Theatre* in 1971, and the second was staged in the *Theater im Zentrum* in 1978.

#### 3.4.1. Setting the Scene

When Bruno Kreisky, the descendant of a well-off Jewish family and party leader of the Social Democratic Party (SPÖ), became Austrian chancellor in 1970, Austria adopted a different line than the rest of the Western World. While in the vast majority of the industrial states both the political and economic spheres were regimented by conservative directives, Austria saw the dawn of a purely socialist period of governance.<sup>260</sup> Kreisky employed a policy mix which has been termed “Austro-Keynesianism” (Rothschild, 119). He countered the slow-down in the world economy with the retention and stabilization of the public demand even at the cost of a rising budget deficit. Furthermore, he propagated the effectiveness of a high employment, which he believed to enhance the business confidence and boost the investments.<sup>261</sup> Kreisky’s professed goal was the modernization of Austrian society<sup>262</sup>, which he tried to obtain by the constitution of social peace and welfare in combination with the constant adaptation of his domestic policies to international changes as well as a close economic integration into the markets of the European Community (EC).<sup>263</sup> In the light of the receding economic growth, which began to show in 1974 and sustained until the beginning of the 1980s, Austria remained an international model state of a “successful, anti-cyclical policy” (Höll, 46), in which inflation could be reduced, with a simultaneous increase of employment.<sup>264</sup>

The social democratic chancellor, who had founded the Federal Ministry of Foreign affairs in 1959, used to appear on the international political arena as a mediator between conflicting parties, which made him a respected person of “internationally high reputation” (Höll, 50).<sup>265</sup> Especially in the United States, Kreisky maintained “fertile contacts” (Höll, 34). His living room was decorated with pictures of the American

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<sup>260</sup> Cf. Höll, 32 – 33; Rothschild, 120.

<sup>261</sup> Cf. Rothschild, 121 – 122.

<sup>262</sup> Cf. Fischer Kowalski, 96.

<sup>263</sup> Cf. Höll, 46.

<sup>264</sup> Cf. Rothschild, 119.

<sup>265</sup> Cf. Höll, 32 – 33; 50; Rathkolb (1999), 40.

presidents from Harry S. Truman to Jimmy Carter, which demonstrated quite well his close identification with the United States and their politics. In his speeches, Kreisky repeatedly incorporated quotations from Roosevelt, Churchill and Truman, and he openly admired J. F. Kennedy, whose political ideas he considered very similar to his own.<sup>266</sup>

His americanophile attitude was nourished by his strong appreciation of the policy of containment as it was encouraged by President Truman, the diplomat George F. Kennan or the former U.S. Foreign Minister Dean Acheson, as well as his deep indebtedness to the Marshall Plan, which to him did not only save Western Europe in 1947, but was also a virtuous sign of international solidarity.<sup>267</sup>

In 1963, Kreisky undertook a lecture tour through the United States, in which he talked about “The new Image of America in Europe”, in the course of which he became acquainted with President Kennedy.<sup>268</sup> Despite his pro-American sentiments, however, the cosmopolitan chancellor always prioritized the national interests<sup>269</sup>, and he managed the balancing act between inheriting “the new values of liberal reform” and at the same time preserving “the fidelity to social – democratic traditions” (Ulram, 82).

In sum, post-war Austria, which traditionally had been associated with cultural clichés as conveyed by *The Sound of Music*, strengthened its international reputation in the Kreisky era, the time which has been described as the “most significant and active period of Austrian foreign affairs since 1955” (Höll, 53).<sup>270</sup>

### **3.4.2. The Pro-American Sentiment Affects the Reception of *The Glass Menagerie***

In 1971, the play was staged in the *Amerikahaus* in an English-language production of *Vienna's English Theatre* under the direction of Franz Schafranek. Both the play and the production were largely praised by the critics. Even though *The Glass Menagerie* was perceived as reflective of an *American* environment, it was critically endorsed. Harald Sterk stated:

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<sup>266</sup> Cf. Höll, 40; Rathkolb, 43.

<sup>267</sup> Cf. Rathkolb (1999), 38.

<sup>268</sup> Cf. Höll, 34; Rathkolb (1999), 43 – 44.

<sup>269</sup> Cf. Rathkolb (1999), 40.

<sup>270</sup> Cf. Bunzl, 25 – 26; Höll, 34.

“[D]ie Glasmenagerie” ist heute auch ein historisches Stück: Weil es, subtrahiert man das, was an Dichterisch-Subjektivem in ihm enthalten ist, viel über die Stimmung junger Amerikaner in den dreißiger Jahren besagt (und über die Reflektionen, die ein amerikanischer Dichter 1944 über sie anstellte). (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971)

At the same time, he emphasized that this historical feel does not necessarily translate as out-datedness. Much rather, he felt that “[d]a gibt es nichts zu ‘aktualisieren’, man muß nur den doppelten Zeitsprung mit einkalkulieren” (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971).

The critic of the *Wiener-Zeitung* especially lauded the authentic appeal of Franz Schafranek’s production. He wrote:

Die Aufführung berührt den *empfänglichen* Zuschauer durch ihre Stilechtheit und durch die absolute Souveränität der Darsteller. Sie ist ein „Muß“ für alle, die einen authentischen Tennessee Williams sehen wollen. (B., *Wiener Zeitung* 3 July 1971, *my emphasis*)

The critic quite interestingly implied a distinction between the *receptive* as opposed to the *rejective* spectator, which indeed seemed to affect the theatrical experience decisively. *Kronen-Zeitung*-critic Richard Winger appeared to fall into the second category. Unlike his colleagues, he deemed the play out-dated and irrelevant for a contemporary audience: „[D]er Dialog, der Wunden schlagen sollte, der trifft nicht mehr, wenn Schemen der Erinnerung ihn sprechen“ (Winger, *Kronen-Zeitung* 4 July 1971). Indeed, Winger seemed to take a dismissive stance on Americanness. Apart from the rejection of the play, he also defined the Gentleman Caller as a “Besuch aus einer *fremden*, normalen Welt” (Winger, *Kronen-Zeitung* 4 July 1971, *my emphasis*). It was only the *Kronen-Zeitung*-critic who perceived Jim O’Connor as *fremd*. The other reviewers shared very positive images and associations of the “American hero”. For the *Wiener-Zeitung*-critic, Stephen Turner’s Gentleman Caller appeared as a “frischer und lebendiger ‘Superman’” (B., *Wiener Zeitung* 3 July 1971), and Harald Sterk perceived the Gentleman Caller as the “truest” (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971, *my translation*) role of the production. He characterized Jim as a “gewöhnliche[n] Junge[n]”, der auch die ungewollt brutale jugendliche College-Unbekümmertheit, an der das Mädchen zerbricht, verkörpert” (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971).

However, not only the very American Gentleman Caller, but also the other characters conjured up American images. Vernon Morris’ Tom Wingfield, for instance, was considered a guy that could be met on a “Californian campus of today” (Sterk,

*Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971, *my translation*). Even Laura, who had been perceived as very universal, if not to say Austrian, hitherto, was identified as an American type:

Jean Harrington (Laura) ist der Typ der jugendlich-molligen, pausbäckigen Hollywood-Blondine, der damals (als Abklatsch) nicht gängig war, aber sie trifft doch immer wieder richtige Töne, obwohl sie zu “gesund” aussieht”. (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971)

In view of the associations with California/Hollywood, it seems quite plausible that Sterk interpreted Williams’ characters according to concepts he already knew from American Hollywood movies or sitcoms.

It is worth noting that only for Ruth Brinkmann’s Amanda no apposite comparison was found. B. called her a woman of “großer, aber verwirrender Vitalität” (B., *Wiener Zeitung* 3 July 1971), and Sterk felt that „Ruth Brinkmann (Amanda) stimmt *zumindest* vom Alter her noch nicht“ (Sterk, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 3 July 1971, *my emphasis*). It may be presumed that Ruth Brinkmann, a native-born American, rendered the Mother in a decidedly *American* way, yet the critics could not relate to a schema into which this Amanda could be fitted. Apparently, Hollywood had already conveyed concepts of the American “Superman”, the college-student or the Hollywood-blonde, but not yet of the Southern Belle.

The second revival was realized in the *Theater im Zentrum* in 1978 in a production of the *Theater der Jugend*. It was directed by Peter Weihs and starred Friederike Dorff, Klaus Rott, Sylvia Eisenberger and Raimund Lang in the lead. Similar to the revival in 1971, both the play and the production found favor with the critics. As the critic of the *Wiener Zeitung* pointed out, it was still perceived as timely:

Über dreißig Jahre sind seit der Uraufführung von Tennessee Williams’ episodenhafter Dichtung “Die Glasmenerie” vergangen, ohne daß die hier angerissenen Familienprobleme etwas von ihrer Aktualität verloren hätten. (JEK, *Wiener Zeitung* 7 Oct.1978)

As played by an Austrian actress, Amanda Wingfield appeared to be not as alienating:

Friederike Dorff erfüllt die Figur der Mutter großartig mit herrisch-penetranter Fürsorge und jenem bis an die grenze der Lächerlichkeit reichenden Versinken in eine überschwenglich vergoldete Vergangenheit [...] (JEK, *Wiener Zeitung* 7 Oct.1978)

This seems to consolidate the assumption that the audience's recognition of a familiar (Austrian) character type had a universalizing effect on the perception of Amanda Wingfield.

### 3.4.3. Recapitulation

The 1970s marked a time of economic prosperity in Austria. The new state chancellor Bruno Kreisky paid great attention to the people's social needs as well as to welfare, but also strove for a more international orientation. He maintained strong relations to the United States, which positively affected Austria's reputation in America. It appears to be quite plausible that the americanophile disposition of the chancellor also spilt over into the general mood of Austrian society. At least this can be assumed when we review the *Glass Menagerie* production of 1971. Even though the characters were perceived as utterly American, they were readily fitted into an existing schema of Americanness, as conveyed and consolidated by Hollywood's film industry.

Most probably, the English language further enhanced the authentic appeal of the production. Although Anti-Americanism still surfaced in isolated attempts to resist foreign cultural "intrusions", the pro-American sentiment and the receptiveness towards American concepts seemed to prevail.

The only character that caused confusion and seemed to be inaccessible for an Austrian audience was Amanda Wingfield as played by an American actress in an American way. Despite the open-mindedness towards American concepts, the audience was at odds with Ruth Brinkmann's interpretation of the Mother and gained the impression that something was "not right". In contrast, Friederike Dorff's Amanda Wingfield in the production of 1978 neither caused confusion nor a feeling of inconsistency. It seems as if the Austrian background of the actress familiarized the character who was so difficult to access for an Austrian audience.

It is worth noting that *The Glass Menagerie* was only staged by minor venues during the 1970s. The lack of interest of the main playhouses in the play may be ascribed to the dreary subject matter, which might have appeared irrelevant for Austria in a time of economic success and political and cultural innovation.

### 3.5. *The Glass Menagerie in the 80s*

#### 3.5.1. **Setting the Scene**

##### a) The End of the Kreisky Era and the Waldheim Affair

After a decade of economic success, Kreisky's policies experienced a set-back at the beginning of the new decade. By employing Austro-Keynesianism, the chancellor relied on the assumption that the world's economic stagflation was only a transitory phenomenon, which turned out to be false in 1981.<sup>271</sup> The international environment was partly deteriorating and Kreisky was discredited for a regressive foreign policy and had to face increasing domestic criticism.<sup>272</sup> By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the significant financial costs of Kreisky's social – welfare politics bothered large groups of the population, and high taxes put a burden on the private households. Furthermore, the incrementing public debt tied the hands of the government in terms of state intervention.<sup>273</sup> Between 1970 and 1980, the government debt had risen from 47 billion Schilling in 1970 (12,5 % of the GDP) to 261 billion Schilling in 1980 (26,2 % of the GDP), and it continued growing until 1990, when it stabilized at a 48% of the GDP.<sup>274</sup> Thus, Kreisky's legacy was a mountain of debt, even though he had succeeded in modernizing and internationalizing Austria in a way that made a whole country realize its own backwardness in the mid - 1960s.<sup>275</sup>

Interestingly, even though Kreisky had to face increasing domestic criticism at the beginning of the 1980s, the Austrians apparently were aware of his international esteem. In 1980/1982, 72% of the population considered Austrian politics to be a source of national pride. In 1987, only 27% reinforced this statement. While the national consciousness had grown steadily from the 1950s onwards, the national pride experienced an all-time low towards the end of the 1980s.<sup>276</sup> This negative development can be linked to the series of disagreeable revelations concerning the former United Nations secretary general Kurt Waldheim, which became known as the "Waldheim affair" and seriously tarnished Austria's image abroad, most significantly in the United States.<sup>277</sup>

During his run for presidency in the spring of 1986, the Austrian weekly magazine *Profil* published documents disclosing Waldheim's dubious past. One day later an

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<sup>271</sup> Cf. Rothschild, 122 – 123.

<sup>272</sup> Cf. Höll, 35.

<sup>273</sup> Cf. Ulram, 84.

<sup>274</sup> Cf. Rothschild, 123.

<sup>275</sup> Cf. Fischer – Kowalski, 96.

<sup>276</sup> Cf. Plasser /Ulram, quoted in Ulram, 91.

<sup>277</sup> Cf. Höll, 52 – 53.

almost identical account was rendered by the *New York Times* and the World Jewish Congress (WJC). The presidential candidate of the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) was accused of having been a member of the Nazi Student Union and the Sturmabteilung (SA), both of which he denied fervently. Paradoxically, the Waldheim camp confronted the international accusations with a construction of a Jewish *Feindbild*, by means of which they presented the revelations as a plot foiled by Jews all over the world, a "defamation campaign" initiated by socialists, led by the WJC, and promoted by the international press, particularly the *New York Times* (Mitten, 67).<sup>278</sup>

Despite his vehement disavowal of a Nazi past, the Yugoslav file *Odluka* substantiated the allegations against the presidential candidate. The document charged Waldheim, who claimed that he had "merely done his duty" (Mitten, 67), with participating in war crimes at the Balkans during the Second World War and was considered a corroboration of the hitherto unproven assumptions. At the request of the WJC, the *Odluka* - file resulted in an entry of Waldheim's name on the American watch list of undesirable aliens, which prohibited the former UN secretary general from entering the United States.<sup>279</sup>

Needless to say, these infamous incidents cast a damning light on Austria and its recovering process from the Holocaust past. In fact, Austria's image abroad suffered an all-time low in the second half of the decade<sup>280</sup>, and it especially deteriorated the American perception of the country. The reason for that can be described as an interplay between two factors. Firstly, Austria's reaction towards the international accusations were perceived as "defiant" and "xenophobic" (Deming and Seward, *Newsweek* 14 Apr. 1986, quoted in Bunzl, 27), which conveyed the impression of a unified social collective who effectively endorsed the elected president. This perception intertwined with an "increased awareness and presence of the Holocaust in the public [American] consciousness" (Bunzl, 27). Exhibitions, museums and movies "Americanized" (Bunzl, 28) Jewish concerns and turned the Holocaust into a national issue that was quasi omnipresent.<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>278</sup> Cf. Mitten, 65 – 67.

<sup>279</sup> Cf. Mitten, 66 – 67.

<sup>280</sup> Cf. Höll, 52 – 53.

<sup>281</sup> Cf. Bunzl, 27 - 28.

b) The Tennessee Williams Renaissance

With a time lag of about five years, the Tennessee Williams boom on Broadway arrived at the Viennese stages. While the publication of the playwright's *Memoirs* in 1975 was considered as the reason that sparked off the series of Tennessee Williams revivals on Broadway in the season of 1975/1976<sup>282</sup>, the renaissance of his plays in Vienna could not be as easily explained.

Tennessee Williams' "Comeback" (*Die Bühne* March 1981, 4) was precluded by the *Ateliertheater* with a production of *Endstation Sehnsucht*. Only two weeks later, on 4 February 1981, *Die Glasmenerie* premiered in the *Volkstheater in der Treitlstraße*, an alternative facility of the *Volkstheater*. Shortly after, the "inzwischen wagemutiger gewordene *Burgtheater*" (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981, *my italics*) also jumped on the bandwagon and announced a revival of *Die Katze auf dem heißen Blechdach*.

The majority of the Austrian critics remarked on the Tennessee Williams renaissance, and their reaction to as well as their explanation of it differed significantly.

The *Furche* – critic could not understand the resurgent popularity of Williams' plays: "Ich weiß nicht, warum man Tennessee Williams plötzlich allenthalben für so aktuell hält, aber die Wiederbegegnung mit der ‚Glasmenerie‘ ist ja immer wieder ein starkes Erlebnis" (H.B., *Die Furche* 11 Feb. 1981). Thus, he confirmed the hypothesis of Oliver vom Hove, who maintained that there was no compulsory necessity to revive Williams' dramas but that the need could nevertheless be created easily. He adduced that it was Hollywood which endowed the author with a special aura that suggested a perpetuation of his fame.<sup>283</sup> Unlike his colleague of the *Furche*, the critic of the *Salzburger Nachrichten* did not endorse the re-encounter with *The Glass Menagerie*. Conversely, he made no secret of his pronounced disfavour with the Williams – renaissance and voiced his concern that the climax of this boom is yet to come.<sup>284</sup> According to Hove, the recourse to erstwhile theater successes attested to the directors' lack of imagination and their persistent monotony with which they tried to lure the (absent) audience to the playhouses. Furthermore, he considered it to be a pathetic display of a "vermeintliche Stagnation des zeitgenössischen Dramenangebots" (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981). Thus, the Austrian critic anticipated an observation that was reiterated by *Village Voice* critic Michael Feingold in a review of the *Glass Menagerie* revival on

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<sup>282</sup> Cf Berkvist, 104.

<sup>283</sup> Cf. Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb 1981.

<sup>284</sup> Cf. Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981.

Broadway in 2005. To recall, Feingold equally lamented the financial exigencies that induced the producers to “rely[...] on a desiccated 10-best list for moneymakers” (Feingold, 29 Mar. 2005), rather than acknowledging contemporary theater talents and – traditions.<sup>285</sup>

However, this impression was not shared by the critics of *Die Presse* and the *Wiener Zeitung*. Rather than interpreting the resort to Tennessee Williams as an act of ignorance towards theatrical novelties, they both considered the stagnation to be a de-facto reality. Consequently, the recurrence of his plays functioned as a filler of the void that was created by the absence of an attractive contemporary drama scene. In this context, Karin Kathrein raised the following questions:

Wo ist der zeitgenössische Dramatiker, der mit ähnlichem Geschick [wie Tennessee Williams] dramatische Situationen aufbaut? Mit ähnlicher Ehrlichkeit und Genauigkeit Menschen nachspürt? Ihre Schicksale in Theaterbilder zu fassen versteht? (Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981)

Rudolf Klaus from the *Wiener Zeitung* seemed equally relieved about the re-encounter with Tennessee Williams. He wrote:

Eine Tennessee – Williams- Renaissance ist ebenso wie die Wiederbelebung anderer Klassiker der Moderne längst fällig gewesen. [...] [Es ist] ihnen allen kaum Besseres nachgefolgt [...]. (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981)

He speculated that Williams’ comeback on the Viennese stages reflected a renewed desire to experience *Poesie*, a development which was fuelled by the “Trend zum Privatistischen, zum rein Menschlichen zuungunsten politisch rhetorischen Ideentheaters” (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981).

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<sup>285</sup> Cf. Feingold, 29 Mar. 2005.

### 3.5.2. *The Glass Menagerie in the Volkstheater in der Treitlstraße (1981)*

The first *Glass Menagerie* revival of the decade was realized by the *Volkstheater* and was performed in the Labor Union house in the Treitlstraße, which constituted a provisional accommodation of the *Volkstheater*<sup>286</sup>. It premiered on 4 February 1981 and was directed by Peter M. Preissler. Maria Urban, who enacted Laura Wingfield in the 1957 production of the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken*, portrayed the Mother in the present revival, Ulli Meier presented the role of Laura and Johannes Seilern played the Gentleman Caller. A new introduction in Peter Preissler's production was the explicit representation of the split of Tom Wingfield by means of two actors. The older (narrating) Tom, who looks back on his youth in St. Louis, was enacted by Ernst Meister, whereas the younger (experiencing) side of the character was embodied by Ernst Cohen.

The critical responses to the performance varied sharply. While the *Kurier* acclaimed it as a "dichte [und] hervorragende Aufführung" (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb 1981), the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* described it as "unzulänglich" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb 1981). The *Kronen – Zeitung* considered the revival mediocre, but emphasized that Ulli Meier's outstanding portrayal of Laura Wingfield deserved a consideration of its own,<sup>287</sup> an opinion that was not echoed by the *Salzburger Nachrichten*: Hove dismissed both the performance and the actors<sup>288</sup>.

It is striking that in the reviews of this production the critics hardly reflected upon the response of the general public. While in the previous revivals, the reaction of the audience was traditionally incorporated in the reviews, in 1981 it was left out completely by the vast majority of the critics. Only the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* and the *Wiener Zeitung* provided information on the audience response. In keeping with the usual manner, Plakolb and Klaus observed the final applause, which had traditionally been considered as a clear parameter to measure the approval or rejection of the audience. Klaus closed his review with the words "Langanhaltender, ergriffener Beifall bedankte den denkwürdigen Abend" (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981). Plakolb confirmed the audience's endorsement of the performance, even though he felt that in many instances they laughed "an falschen Stellen" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981).

<sup>286</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>287</sup> Cf. Reimann, *Kronen – Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>288</sup> Cf. Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981.

a) Peter M. Preissler – Time Travel into the 50s

As the director of this *Glass Menagerie* revival, the Viennese drama expert Peter M. Preissler, who also worked for the *Bayrischen Rundfunk*<sup>289</sup>, was able to convince the majority of the critics. The enthusiasm, however, was kept within limits, since many reviewers appeared to be irritated by the split of Tom Wingfield.

Unlike the previous directors, Peter Preissler eliminated the intermission and let the play run through in one go, an alteration which Hove considered “[d]as Intelligenteste an Peter M. Preisslers spielführenden [*sic!*] Wiederbelegungsversuch, in künstlerischer wie psychologischer Hinsicht” (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981).

The critics who evaluated Preissler’s direction favorably described his approach as tight but still delicate and perceptive, praised his sense of mood and atmosphere and lauded him for his skilled direction of the cast.<sup>290</sup>

Besides, Kathrein mentioned that Preissler’s starting point and major concern was the psychology of the characters. This focus on the inner lives of the characters was fiercely rejected by Ludwig Plakolb, who felt that Preissler’s “klinische Auseinandersetzung mit den Figuren” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981) sacrificed the *Poesie* and thus made the performance appear superficial and lacking in emotion. It is worth noting that in 1965 Plakolb had rendered an utterly different opinion. Back then, he had considered *Poesie* as a “greulichen Heiligenschein” which cloaked the *Glass Menagerie* in a veil of “Kitsch und [...] Peinlichkeiten” and had thanked director Willi Schmidt for stripping it off (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 22 March 1965). Oliver vom Hove criticized Preissler’s direction for a different reason, namely his ignorance of the distance between the play and the contemporary audience. He wrote:

Bilder, brav und rundum nichtssagend. In [einer] Inszenierung, die man requisitengetreu in die frühen fünfziger Jahre zurückversetzen könnte, wenn nur die Mehrzahl der Schauspieler erträglicher spielte. So aber möchte man nicht einmal ein vergangenes Publikum damit behelligen. (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981)

According to Hove, the language of the play was the most exigent aspect in need of change. He felt that the translation was antiquated and clumsy, which he demonstrated with the following example:

<sup>289</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>290</sup> Cf. H.B. *Die Furche* 11 Feb. 1981; Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981; Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981; Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

„Einen jungen Mann bei einem Mädchen einführen“ ist heutigen Ohren von solch stilblütenprächtiger Unverblümtheit, daß selbst des Autors neurosengeplagte Südstaaten – Puritaner den schlichten Doppelsinn darin mühelos zu ergründen wüßten. (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981)

Astonishingly, neither of the other reviewers commented on the seemingly outdated language. Rather, Preissler's deliberately retro staging seemed to meet perfectly the taste of his audience. The critic of the *Bühne* benevolently considered his *Glass Menagerie* "werkgerecht" (*Bühne*, March 1981) and Klaus explained the reason why the play had regained its audience appeal:

Williams schrieb notabene „Nostalgie“ 30 Jahre bevor das Wort in Mode kam, vor. Denn Nostalgie assoziiert für alle drei Mitglieder der Familie Wingfield eine proustisch angehauchte „recherche du temps perdu“ (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981).

Klaus, who had also reviewed the 1960 *Glass Menagerie* revival of the *Theater in der Josefsgasse*, represented a very good example of how the attitude towards the play had changed in a time span of 30 years. Back in 1960, he had declared that the play's "Furore machende[...] poetische[...] Stellen heute doch reichlich stockfleckig anmuten" (Klaus, *Kurier*, 15 March 1960). Two decades later, he really seemed to have reversed this opinion. What he had once perceived to be outdated suddenly appeared to hold a new fascination. It may be surmised that this reconsideration of the play was shared by the general public, which would account for the critical acclaim of Preissler's decidedly nostalgic production.

In many ways Preissler's production can be seen as an antipode to Willi Schmidt's revival in 1965. While the former accentuated a feeling of nostalgia and deliberately recreated a retro style, the latter aimed at an emphatically realistic interpretation that approximated a contemporary understanding and captured the zeitgeist. Another important distinction among these two directors was the different emphases on location they endowed their productions with. In 1965, Schmidt dispensed with the markedly American elements as well as the depiction of the setting as distinctly American in order to arrive at a universal interpretation. Conversely, Preissler left no doubt that the play's action unfolds in an American locale. As Kurt Kahl pointed out:

Preissler erweist seine sichere Hand in der Führung der Darsteller, auch hat er ein Gespür für Stimmung, für Atmosphäre: St. Louis ist gegenwärtig mit seiner Hitze und seinem Blues. (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981)

b) The Nostalgic Cast

- *Amanda Wingfield*

Maria Urban, who had received mixed reviews for her portrayal of Laura Wingfield in 1957, could not convince many of her reviewers as Amanda Wingfield in 1981, either. Only the critics of the *Furche* and of the *Wiener Zeitung* evaluated her performance favorably. Rudolf Klaus even felt that the actress could tap her full potential with the role and praised her for a credible rendition:

Wer etwa meinte, [Maria Urban] müsse die Rolle à rebours zu ihrem eher sanften, fraulich-stillen Typ spielen, irrt. Frau Urban bringt es fertig, die gewisse nervös flackernde Aufgesetztheit dieser noch jungen Frau und Mutter ohne jede Übertreibung und fern jeder Schablone glaubhaft zu machen und dabei ein zutiefst leidender, verwundeter Mensch zu bleiben. (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981)

Apparently, the role of the dominant Mother was not tailor-made for Urban, and some critics implied that the discrepancy between the actress and the character was too pronounced to be reconciled on stage. Viktor Reimann considered her portrayal “*trotz enormen Einsatzes zu vordergründig*” (Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981, *my italics*) and Hove regretted that the audience had to witness “wie hilflos [...] sich Maria Urban mit der Rolle der Hysterikerin Amanda Wingfield abquält” (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981).

Ludwig Plakolb felt that Urban overcompensated her inability to render the dominance and grandeur of Amanda Wingfield by a hectic and nervous depiction that was completely inadequate.<sup>291</sup> Another point of criticism was Urban’s handling of her voice and movements. The reviewer of the *Bühne* criticized her monotonous pitch and the resultant lack of the “Musik der Zwischentöne” (*Bühne* March 1981). This opinion was reiterated by Hove, who felt that the actress performed “mit falschen schrillen Tönen und immergleichem, stereotypem Gesten – und Bewegungsrepertoire” (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981).

In the abstract, Urban’s major deficiency seemed to rest upon her inability to represent Amanda Wingfield as an *American* character. Preissler’s explicitly American interpretation of the play required her to endow the role with an unmistakable American tinge, which she endeavored to do but failed. This was pinpointed by Reimann, who stated that “[Amanda Wingfield’s] Herkunft aus der großen Gesellschaft des

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<sup>291</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981.

amerikanischen Südens würde man ohne die direkten Hinweise kaum erraten” (Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981).

- *Tom Wingfield*

Splitting the role of Tom Wingfield was something new in the Viennese performance tradition of *The Glass Menagerie*. The idea found favour with some critics, but left others irritated. While Kathrein acclaimed it as an “interessante und durchaus Bühnenwirksame Lösung” (Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981), Plakolb did not deem it good enough to be worth the effort.<sup>292</sup>

Ernst Meister, who played the older, retrospective Tom, silently wandered around with his duffel bag on stage whenever the past action was reconstructed. Thus, he was a constant presence that (physically) interrupted the ongoing action of the play and reminded the audience of the duality within Tom Wingfield. Seeing both Toms on stage at the same time seemed to be the major source of confusion. The critic of the *Bühne* felt that Preissler’s decision had both pros and cons. According to him, the main disadvantage was that “[Meister] streckenweise die Stätte der Handlung wie ein stummes Gespenst zu umkreisen hatte” (*Bühne* March 1981). Reimann was similarly irritated by Ernst Meister’s “spooking” (Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981, *my translation*) in the back of the stage and considered this to be a squandering of the actor’s talent.

In contrast, Kurt Kahl gained the impression that the split of the role enhanced the coherence of the action, since the young Tom did not have to step out of his role in order to relate the story in retrospect. Other than the critics from the *Kronen-Zeitung* and the *Bühne*, Kahl endorsed the wandering around of the older Tom, since he felt that it endowed the performance with an epic element.<sup>293</sup>

Furthermore, Rudolf Klaus speculated that Ernst Meister’s role was a means to get rid of the projections.<sup>294</sup>

If we analyze the two Toms individually, it is worth noting that Ernst Cohen received considerably more plaudits as the young Tom Wingfield than Ernst Meister as the older. The *Kronen-Zeitung* considered Cohen as “überaus sympathisch” (Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981), and the *Wiener Zeitung* commended his wide register of

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<sup>292</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>293</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>294</sup> Cf. Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

expressiveness which made his performance rich in nuances.<sup>295</sup> Less favorably, the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* praised Cohen's presentation of Tom's awkwardness, but felt that he failed in the decisive emotional outbursts.<sup>296</sup> Oliver vom Hove perfectly agreed with his colleague and simply added that Cohen's attempt to present anger and despair were comical rather than moving.

Ernst Meister's performance was generally described as serious and weighty, which appealed to some reviewers, but was also dismissed by others. Klaus felt that the actor lived up to his name by playing the role "ernst und meisterlich" (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981). Even though Reimann did not consider the split role a good idea, he conceded that Meister contributed significantly to the success of the play, especially through his powerful recitation of the play's closing words.<sup>297</sup>

Hove, who perceived the commentating function of Tom Wingfield as a device of an "altbacken anmutender Dramentechnik", criticized the vocal quality of Meister's character delineation, which he considered as "zu sonor, wohl auch zu blasiert, für das gebotene kratzbürstige Timbre des streunend gewordenen Abenteurers Tom, der zurückblickt ins Neurosennest seiner Kindheit" (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981). Kathrein endorsed this observation: "Als Erzähler überzeugt Ernst Meister vor allem im stummen Spiel, den rechten Ton für diese Figur kann er nicht finden" (Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981). Meister's performance was rated most unfavourably by the critic of the *Furche*, who deemed the actor miscast and pallid.<sup>298</sup>

- *Laura Wingfield*

Unanimous praise was given to Ulli Meier for her credible and touching portrayal of the Daughter. Even though her enchanting outward appearance and vitality did not bear much resemblance to the fragile and inconspicuous Laura Wingfield<sup>299</sup>, she succeeded in rendering the role "geradezu schmerzhaft berührend" (Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981). Ulli Meier did not only play her way into the audience's hearts, but also took center stage. For Viktor Reimann, she was the star that outshone the entire performance, Kathrein called her "[d]as Ereignis des Abends" (*Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981) and Kahl

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<sup>295</sup> Cf. Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>296</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>297</sup> Cf. Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>298</sup> Cf. H.B., *Die Furche* 11 Feb. 1981.

<sup>299</sup> Cf. Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981; Reimann, *Kronen – Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

could not think of a more enchanting and enthralling portrait than the one presented by Ulli Meier.<sup>300</sup> He wrote:

Ulli Meier ist, linkisch und unendlich liebenswert, das Mädchen Laura, das in einer eigenen Welt dahinträumt. Wortlos, mit knappen, im Ansatz innegehaltenen Gesten sind Zartheit, Empfindsamkeit, Verlorenheit ausgedrückt [...] (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981)

The *Bühne* – critic praised the actress with equal profusion. He felt that Ulli Meier impressed not only with her verbal delivery, but was even more stunning in the mute scenes.<sup>301</sup> This impression was also gained by Rudolf Klaus, who wrote:

Ulli Meier übertrifft sich wieder einmal selbst, sie scheint sich dermaßen total mit der schüchternen Hilflosigkeit der Laura zu identifizieren, daß ihr starkes Fluidum sie auch, wenn sie nur wortlos dasitzt, zum Blickfang und zum suggestiven Mittelpunkt macht. (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981)

Surprisingly, the critics of the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* and the *Salzburger Nachrichten*, who fulminated against the performance, had laudatory words for Meier's rendition. In particular the Gentleman Caller scene found favour with both; they considered it to be the only felicitous part of the production.<sup>302</sup>

- *Gentleman Caller*

In the role of the Gentleman Caller, Johannes Seilern could convince the majority of his reviewers. His acting style was described as down-to-earth and unconstrained, which enabled him to draw a comprehensible portrait of Jim O'Connor.<sup>303</sup> Klaus perceived Seilern as “[a]usgezeichnet und völlig überzeugend in seiner ehrlichen, erfrischenden Normalität“ (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981). He understood the Gentleman Caller as a “‘Yankee’, [der] [...] ebenso hilfbereit wie commonsensed [ist]” (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981), hence as an archetypal American. It is interesting that Klaus used the English past participle “commonsensed” without putting it in inverted commas. Thus, he treated it as if it was a German word (unlike “Yankee”, which he *did* put in inverted commas) and obviously took for granted that his readership had a certain knowledge of the English language.

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<sup>300</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>301</sup> Cf. *Bühne* March 1981.

<sup>302</sup> Cf. Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981; Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>303</sup> Cf. H.B., *Die Furche*, 11 Feb. 1981; Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981; Kathrein, *Die Presse*, 6 Feb. 1981; Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

In terms of Jim O'Connor's origin, *Kronen – Zeitung* critic Viktor Reimann was at variance with his colleague. He wrote:

Johannes Seilern als Jimm [*sic!*] gestaltet seine Rolle sehr eindrucksvoll, wenn er auch nicht ganz die Ausstrahlung besitzt, die man von dem *irischen Draufgänger* erwartet. (Reimann, *Kronen – Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981, *my italics*).

This is an interesting statement, since it suggests that for some critics the distinctive Americanness of the character has faded over the years. So far, the American nationality of the character had not yet been put into question.

In view of his traditionally Irish surname, it would be unwise to deny Jim's Irish descent without any further knowledge. After all, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century many Irish people emigrated to the United States, e.g. as a consequence of the potato famine. Nevertheless, it is quite obvious that the potential Irish background of the Gentleman Caller is not really significant for the story, since he is a young man who represents the achievement and failure of the American Dream.

The critic of the *Bühne* refrained from imbuing the character with a particular nationality, but agreed with Reimann that Seilern lacked the "jugendliche[...] Draufgängertum" to credibly create the role.

- *Designer*

Manfred Noky, the stage designer of Preissler's production, had a difficult task in creating a convincing setting in the provisional accommodation of the *Volkstheater*. Those critics who were aware of the challenging stage condition Noky had to work with acknowledged his effort even more. Plakolb wrote: „Bühnenzauber ist auf der Notbühne in der Treitlstraße schwer zu bieten, dennoch ist das Bemühen von Manfred Noky anzuerkennen“ (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981). Similarly, Reimann stated that Noky was very much constrained and could not give his fancy full scope, but that he realized his task conscientiously.<sup>304</sup>

Noky placed an illuminated glass cabinet in the center of the stage<sup>305</sup> which was surrounded by a transparent curtain. Thus, he created a semi-realistic, semi-symbolic scenery<sup>306</sup> in which the various settings merged seamlessly<sup>307</sup>.

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<sup>304</sup> Cf. Reimann, *Kronen – Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>305</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>306</sup> Cf. Kathrein, *Die Presse*, 6 Feb. 1981; Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>307</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

The critics unanimously approved of Noky's design. Kurt Kahl praised it as "spinnwebenzart und transparent" (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981) and Rudolf Klaus described it as "delicate" and "imaginative" (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981, *my translation*).

Birgit Hutter's costumes were mentioned in five reviews, and all of them were favorable. Suited to the nostalgic mood of the production, Hutter robed the cast in subdued and withered colors, which some critics deemed evocative of the American South. Plakolb spoke about "Kostüme im Südstaatenflair" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981) and Kahl noted that „Birgit Hutters Kostüme haben den vergilbten Spitzencharme des Südens“ (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981).

### c) The Play

In 1981, *The Glass Menagerie* was still met with controversy. The critics neither agreed on the genre of the play nor on its effect. While Hove categorized the play as an "ebenso mäßige[s] wie müßige[s] Melodram" (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981), Klaus classified it as a "musikalisches, im Grunde hochromantisches Kammerspiel" (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981). Furthermore, Hove considered it „längst totgespielt[...]“ (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981), whereas for Kahl it appeared to be "unzerbrechlich" (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981). Similar to the reviews of former productions, many critics read the play as a one-to-one rendering of Tennessee Williams autobiography. Without acknowledging the play as a work of fiction, Plakolb felt that the author "erzählt [...] von *seinem* Zuhause, von der beherrschenden Mutter, der leicht verkrüppelten Schwester; von *seinem* Ausbruch" (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb 1981, *my italics*). In the same way, Kathrein believed that Williams expressed his "private Qual" (Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981) in the play.

Another phenomenon which repeated itself was the referencing of European playwrights and psychoanalysts in the same breath with Tennessee Williams. In that way, Hove called Tennessee Williams an "ebenso gewiegtten wie gelehrigen Ibsen- und Strindberg – Epigonen" (Hove, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981) and Klaus introduced the author as a "brilliant[e] Szeniker der Neurose', [...] [der] u.a. (und vor allem) an Freud, Jung und D.H. Lawrence geschult sowie zuerst von Piscator als Theatraliker unterwiesen [wurde]" (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981). As in the reviews of the previous revivals, the intention of these comparisons seemed to be a

diminution of Tennessee Williams “Americanness” and an incorporation of “the foreign” (“the American”) into a familiar schema (“the European”). By claiming that Williams availed himself of a *European* literary style and the findings of *European* psychoanalysts, the critics not only seemed to familiarize the potential alien, but also claimed originality and European hegemony. According to them, the American author only copied what had originated and been coined in Europe.

The representation of Tennessee Williams as a quasi-European seemed to have succeeded better than in the previous decades. Interestingly, America was not considered to be as different from Europe as it was in earlier productions. By comparing two reviews of Rudolf Klaus, this can be illustrated quite clearly. In 1960, Klaus reviewed the revival in the *Theater in der Josefs-gasse* and left no doubt that he distanced himself from this very American play. He called *The Glass Menagerie* a “weitschweifig-pessimistischen Kurs in ‘American way of life’, dem für den jungen Tennessee Williams typischen amerikanischen Lebensstil” (Klaus, *Kurier* 13 Feb. 1960) and considered its literary style to be outdated. Twenty-one years later, Klaus had not only changed the newspaper he worked for<sup>308</sup>, but also his attitude towards the play. Apart from his sudden endorsement of the play, he also discovered a certain degree of familiarity with the now not-so-American play. He wrote:

Es handelt sich um ein gleichsam romantisches Kammerspiel, atmosphärisch grundiert vom betäubenden Duft und vom farbenglühend-subtropischen Glanz der gleichwohl Europa ähnelnden Südstaaten [...]. (Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981)

Possibly the perceived similarity between America and Europe was a direct consequence of Bruno Kreisky’s americanophile governance. After all, he nurtured the relations between Austria and the United States, refurbished the Austrian image abroad and in many ways accomplished an espousal of American and Austrian interests. This may account for the sudden familiarity the audience detected in Tennessee Williams and his depiction of America.

So, one way of coming to terms with “the unknown” was to find “the European” in Tennessee Williams’ writing and to focus on the similarities between Europe and America, which seem to have accreted over the years.

Another way of schematizing the American play was to trace universal symbols that could be applied to a familiar environment. Similar to the Austrian debut performance in 1949, *Laura* was seen as an allegory of (Austrian) society. While in the post-war

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<sup>308</sup> In 1960 he wrote for the *Kurier*, whereas in 1981 his review was published in the *Wiener Zeitung*.

years she had been interpreted as a mirror of the war-shattered and weakened society<sup>309</sup>, in the early 80s the character was read in a more general context. Kurt Kahl elucidated:

Im Grunde handelt das Stück von dem Versuch, dieses verlorene Geschöpf [i.e. Laura] unter die Haube zu bringen. Doch drückt sich in der simplen Handlung die Befindlichkeit unserer Gesellschaft aus, in der kaum Platz bleibt für die Träume und Versponnenheit des Individuums. Wer sich nicht anzupassen, nicht aufzudrängen vermag, bleibt über. (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981)

It is striking, however, that the general tenor of the reviews was far more realistic than in the previous decades and the need to over-interpret Williams' symbols or adjust them to Austrian contemporary history or politics was apparently did no longer so urgent. It may be surmised that in 1981, America did not appear to be so utterly different from Austria any longer.

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<sup>309</sup> Cf. Huppert, *Österreichische Zeitung* 26 Jan. 1949.

### 3.5.3. *Die Glasmenagerie* in the Akademietheater (1986)

On 8 March 1986, amidst the culmination of the Waldheim affair, *The Glass Menagerie* premiered in the Akademietheater, in a revival by Gerhard Klingenberg. The audience saw Hilde Krahl in the role of the Mother, Günther Einbrodt as the Son, Leslie Malton as Laura Wingfield and Rudolf Bissegger in the role of the Gentleman Caller. The stage was designed by Matthias Kralj, and Friederike Binkaus was responsible for the costumes.

#### a) Gerhard Klingenberg – Sentimentalism Takes Over

Gerhard Klingenberg, the former director of the Burgtheater<sup>310</sup>, received predominantly mixed reviews for the direction of *The Glass Menagerie*. While some critics felt that he successfully evaded the authorial stage directions and dared an innovative approach to the play, others sensed exactly the opposite. According to Plakolb, Klingenberg deliberately ignored the meticulous stage instructions of the original script and rather created his own “Regiebuch” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986). Similarly, the critic of the *Furche* pointed out that the director arrived at a performance that bore no resemblance to the original text. He claimed that Klingenberg turned the “Psychodrama” into a “poetisches Kammerspiel” (H.B., *Die Furche* 14 March 1986). Interestingly, he approved of the production nevertheless:

Da also gar nichts stimmt, paßt alles zusammen und ergibt eine hübsche, poetische Aufführung, in der das Stück schmerzlos vorbeigeht, ohne jemanden zu nerven. Ein echter Triumph der Schauspielkunst! (H.B., *Die Furche* 14 March 1986)

Contrary to the critics of the *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* and *Die Furche*, their colleagues of the *Wiener Zeitung* and *Die Presse* deemed Klingenberg’s direction quite true to the original. Otto Hochreiter criticized that the director failed to translate the “verstaubte ‚Glasmenagerie’” (*Die Presse* 10 March 1986) into the world of today. In a review of the same tenor, Hilde Haider – Pregler diagnosed that the revival was presented “ohne Aktualisierungsansprüche oder –versuche” (*Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986).

Klingenberg’s staging was described as superficial and inconspicuous, and he heavily relied on the acting skills of his cast.<sup>311</sup>

<sup>310</sup> Cf. Hochreiter, *Die Presse*, 10 March 1986.

<sup>311</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986; Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986; Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986; Pfooser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

Most of the critics agreed that the performance drifted into sentimentalism, which, however, was not necessarily perceived as something negative. Kurt Kahl, for instance, pointed out that the performance was “vordergründig”, but nevertheless succeeded in its sentimental endeavour to speak to the “Gemüt” (*Kurier*, 10 March 1986). This observation was confirmed by Ludwig Plakolb, who considered the first part of the performance as “Schwank” (*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986), but appeared to be poignantly moved by the strong emotions exhibited in the second part. What was taken rather seriously by Plakolb, was perceived as a caricature by his colleague from *The Furche*. Although H.B. affirmed that the second act bore more sadness than the first, he continued to be amused by the “Kammerspiel-Ton” (H.B., *Die Furche* 14 March 1986) that was not once interrupted throughout the entire performance. In an equal manner, *Kronen – Zeitung* critic Thomas Gabler identified the sentimental loading of Klingenberg’s interpretation as the core reason for the lack of credibility. He wrote:

Viel Sentimentalität, in der Gerhard Klingenbergs Versuch, die Einsamkeit des seelisch und körperlich behinderten Mädchens als stets aktuelles Problem der Gesellschaft darzustellen, eher ins Leere trifft. (Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986)

Thus, it can be deduced that at least for some critics the sentimentalism of the production was perceived to create a distance between the play and the audience.

Klingenberg did not depict the play as markedly American, but rather focused on the universal aspects in the play. Kurt Kahl, who had felt that in Peter Preissler’s revival of 1981 “St Louis [war] gegenwärtig mit seiner Hitze und seinem Blues” (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981), noted that Gerhard Klingenberg’s production was devoid of the “schläfrig – überhitzte Südstaaten Exotik, die für Tennessee Williams charakteristisch ist” (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986). This impression was also shared by Ludwig Plakolb, who had also reviewed the previous revival of the *Volkstheater*. Similar to Kahl, he had observed the “Südstaatenflair” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichisch Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981) in Preissler’s staging, which he considered to be absent in the present revival: “[A]merikanisches Kolorit, auch nicht südstaatliches, wird man vergeblich suchen“ (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986).

While both of the above mentioned critics commented on the lack of a distinctly American tinge rather neutrally, Thomas Gabler identified it - together with the exaggerated sentimentalism - as the reason for the failure of the performance. He stated:

[Klingenberg] schwelgt im Einheitsrealismus, erzeugt nicht die typische Williamssche [sic!] Beklommenheit sommerliche Schwüle in St. Louis [.] [...] Statt einer aufregenden amerikanischen Psychostudie Allerweltstheater, oft voll neutraler Belanglosigkeit. (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 10 March 1986)

Thus, Klingenberg's two major intentions, namely to provoke strong empathy with the characters and to represent Laura's fate as a universal and timeless phenomenon of society, were not embraced by the majority of the critics. Rather, his production was said to have drifted into an excessive sentimentalism, and his universal approach was considered to lack the essential coloring of the American South.

#### b) The Observant Cast

As the reviews suggest, Gerhard Klingenberg focused on the culinary<sup>312</sup> rather than the problematic aspect and favored, like many Austrian directors before him, the cast over the content. This might have been one of the reasons why he was accused of a "recht vordergründig[e]" (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986) staging that did not meet Tennessee Williams' conception of *The Glass Menagerie*. According to Thomas Gabler, the alienation of the play's original tenor was rooted in the presentation of the "Burgschauspieler[...], die souverän am Stück vorbeispiel[t]en, weil sie in diesem Ritual der Verstrickungen nicht Verstrickte, sondern Zuschauer sind. Weil ihre 'Fieberkurve' fehlt..." (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 10 March 1986). Gabler seemed to suggest a lack of identification of the *Burgtheater* cast with the roles as conceived by Tennessee Williams, which he partly blamed on Klingenberg's sentimental approach, but also implicitly referred to an inherent and irreconcilable discrepancy between the Austrian actors and the unmistakably American characters presented in *The Glass Menagerie*. Similar to Siegfried Melchinger in 1965, who had raised the question "[I]ch frage mich [...], wie soll ein Schauspieler oder eine Schauspielerin von heute diese Zeit, und noch dazu diese Zeit in Amerika darstellen" (Melchinger, *Theater Heute* May 1965), Gabler profoundly doubted the possibility to authentically reconstruct the specific time and atmosphere, the "overheated" and distinctly American tone. According to the *Kronen – Zeitung* critic, the Viennese cast could only step into the role of the observer to mimic an imagined, but never physically experienced time under circumstances that did not encompass a shared collective.

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<sup>312</sup> Cf. Torberg, *Süddeutsche Zeitung* 19 Apr. 1961.

- *Amanda Wingfield*

In the role of the Mother, Hilde Krahl polarized her audience. Krahl apparently focused on the hysteric and irksome features of Amanda Wingfield, without notably emphasizing her background in the American South. Thomas Gabler asserted in this context, “Die Krahl bleibt immer die Krahl!” (Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986). Thus, he suggested that Amanda Wingfield remained so utterly alien to the nature of the actress that she could not possibly incorporate the character into her own existing schemata. The critics of the *Salzburger Nachrichten* and the *Presse* equally hinted at an incompatibility between the actress and her role. Alfred Pfoser stated: “Hilde Krahl stattet die Mutter mit der ganzen *ihr zur Verfügung stehenden* Kraft aus“ (*Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986, *my italics*) indicating that although the actress reached her limits, she did not approximate an authentic rendition of the multi-faceted Amanda Wingfield.

Otto Hochreiter observed that Klingenberg’s trivialization of the tyranny in the Wingfield family played to Krahl’s acting style. He wrote:

[Klingenbergs] Konzept kommt Hilde Krahl als Mutter sehr entgegen, da sie sich offensichtlich nicht dazu überwinden kann, die pentrant-bösartigen Züge dieser Figur freizulegen. Mit einem gestischen Repertoire, das sich rasch erschöpft, versucht sie der Amanda Wingfield eine tragische Größe zu geben und isoliert sich dabei gegenüber den viel naturalistischer agierenden Mitspielern [...] [.] Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986)

Thus, the critic felt that Krahl used an artificial approach to the role, which made her stick out of the cast as the odd one out. This impression was shared by Kurt Kahl, who noted that the actress tore “mit audringlichem Spiel und tyrannischer Suada empfindliche Löcher ins zarte Gespinnst des Stücks” (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986). Nonetheless, he described Krahl’s performance as “erdrückend” (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986), which implied an emotional effectiveness of her acting.

Pfoser was not left cold by Krahl’s rendition, either. In fact, he deemed the “poignant duel” (Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986, *my translation*) between Hilde Krahl’s Amanda and Günther Einbrodt’s Tom to be the uncontested climax of the evening.

A completely different impression was gained by the critic of the *Furche*, who felt that Krahl turned the overwhelming neurotic who burdens her whole family into a “liebenswerte, lästige Glucke” and described the relationship between Mother and Son

as “so witzig, daß es eine Freude ist” (H.B., *Die Furche* 14 March 1986). Ludwig Plakolb could not take the problem of the Wingfields seriously, either. He wrote:

[D]ie Mutter in der Person Hilde Krals [*sic!*] [ist] nur noch eine überzuckerte Nervensäge, eine „komische Alte“ amerikanischer Prägung, nahezu eine böse Parodie auf die „liebe Familie“, ganz ohne jene Differenzierung, die gerade hier doch so wichtig wäre. (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986)

Interestingly, Plakolb was the only critic who distinguished Krahl’s Amanda as a character of unmistakable American imprint.

The overall critical assessment of Hilde Krahl’s rendition was rather negative. Most of the reviewers criticized her for a shallow portrayal of the mother and her disregard of the complexities of Amanda Wingfield. While some critics attributed these shortcomings to an inherent difference between the personality of the actress and that of Amanda Wingfield, others blamed Gerhard Klingenberg’s interpretation.

- *Tom Wingfield*

Günther Einbrodt, who enacted the Son in Klingenberg’s revival, convinced the majority of his critics with a sensitive and empathetic portrayal. Hochreiter positively highlighted Einbrodt’s representation of the retrospective Tom and called it an “ansprechende Leistung” (Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986). Haider – Pregler lauded his performance all-embracingly, since she felt that the actor succeeded in establishing a nexus between the experiencing younger and the narrating older Tom.<sup>313</sup>

Kurt Kahl praised the subtleness in his rebellion, which never overshadowed the affection towards his sister.<sup>314</sup> Pfoser also considered Einbrodt’s performance as emotionally very strong. For him, the mother – son conflict constituted the climax, in which both Krahl and Einbrodt tapped their full acting potential.<sup>315</sup>

As already discussed earlier, the critic of the *Furche* was amused rather than moved by the relationship between Tom and Amanda Wingfield as depicted by Einbrodt and Krahl. He wrote: “Günther Einbrodt [macht] aus dem Sohn einen so geduldigen jungen Mann, daß man ihm zurufen möchte: ‚Probier‘ es doch noch einmal, bleib!’“(H.B., *Die Furche* 14 March 1986)

Einbrodt’s gentle interpretation of Tom Wingfield was received quite favorably overall. For Thomas Gabler, however, this approach was too meek to render the role

<sup>313</sup> Cf. Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986.

<sup>314</sup> Cf. Kahl, 10 March 1986.

<sup>315</sup> Cf. Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

authentically. He stated: „[Günther Einbrodt] verspielt die Chance, sein Gefühlschaos von Schwesterliebe und Ausbruchswillen zur Explosion zu bringen“ (Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung*, 10 March 1986).

The only review which seemed to contradict all the others was that by Ludwig Plakolb, who obviously gained a completely different impression of Einbrodt's acting. He wrote: “[Einbrodt] ist lediglich ein trotziger, aufsässiger junger Mann, der mit seinem Leben unzufrieden ist, sich als etwas Besseres dünkt” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986).

As in the previous productions, Tom Wingfield was seen as an exact copy of Tennessee Williams. Plakolb called him a “Williamsdouble” (*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986) and Haider – Pregler asserted that the character “darf getrost als Eigenbild des Autors angesehen werden” (*Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986). Some critics, however, dared a more audacious analysis of Tom Wingfield and transcended the notion of Williams' therapeutical creation of a literary alter-ego. One of these critics was Hedwig Jürg of the *Bühne*, who emphasized the allusions to the time that were made in the script. He quoted:

„Abwechslung und Abenteuer gab es sonst in diesem Jahr genug. Man brauchte nur um die Ecke zu gehen, da warteten sie auf die Kinder der Zeit. Sie hingen in der Luft, in den Nebeln hoch über Berchtesgaden. Sie verfangen sich in den Falten von Mister Chamberlains Regenschirm. – In Spanien ereignete sich Guernica. Aber hier bei uns gab es nur aufputschende Swing – Musik und geistige Getränke, Tanzhallen, Bars, Kinos, und die Sexualität leuchtete im Trüben wie ein Kronleuchter und überflutete die Welt mit flüchtigen Regenbogenlichtern... Die ganze Welt wartete darauf, mit Bomben beworfen zu werden.“ (Jürg, *Bühne* March 1986)

For Jürg, these time references endowed Tom Wingfield with as much significance on an intellectual plane as Laura has on an emotional level.<sup>316</sup>

For the critic of the *Presse*, the major difference between the two siblings rests on Tom's decided effort to realize his dreams. Even though all family members are characterized by a fear of reality and a resultant escape into an artificial, illusory world, Tom is the only one who tries to break with this life-lie:

Toms Sehnsucht nach der Flucht ins Unbekannte, die er zuletzt mit quälenden Schuldgefühlen antritt, ist einerseits begründet in seiner Ablehnung des “American Way of Life”, andererseits im Versuch, der “Hast der Zeit” und ihrem “verderblichen Einfluß” zu entinnen. (k.k. *Die Presse* 7 March 1986)

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<sup>316</sup> Cf. Jürg, *Bühne* March 1986.

Thus, the reviewer identified Tom Wingfield as a character who turned his back on the American way of life and the modern capitalist lifestyle.

- *Laura Wingfield*

The role of Laura Wingfield was enacted by Leslie Malton, whose portrayal found general favor with the critics. Gabler described her acting style as “behutsam” (*Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986) and appeared to be moved by the way she presented Laura’s escape into the world of her glass figurines. Similarly, Kahl felt that Malton presented the role “zerbrechlich [und] mit sensibler Traurigkeit” (*Kurier* 10 March 1986).

The general tenor of the reviews, however, suggested that Malton’s depiction of Laura Wingfield was rather strong than fragile. Haider – Pregler noted:

Die Laura von Leslie Malton verfügt in ihrer *nur diskret angedeuteten psychischen und physischen Gebrechlichkeit* über eine versponnene und zugleich rührende Schönheit. (Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986, *my emphasis*)

This observation was reiterated by Otto Hochreiter, who acknowledged Malton’s acting skills, but pointed out that the role was “insgesamt zu hübsch, zu wenig angeknackst angelegt” (Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986). The *Furche* – critic concurred with his colleagues and declared, “Es ist in dieser Aufführung schwer, sich Sorgen um Laura zu machen. Leslie Malton zeichnet die vom Schicksal Benachteiligte so apart, daß sich einfach ein Märchenprinz finden muß“ (H.B. *Die Furche* 14 March 1986). Thus, he suggested an emotional distance between the character as embodied by Leslie Malton and the audience.

According to an interview, the intention of Gerhard Klingenberg was to represent Laura as an epitome of all the social outcasts and thus make the audience recognize her loneliness as a constantly relevant social problem. Gabler and Hochreiter concurred that this notion did not coincide with the experience of the audience. While the former critic blamed the exorbitant sentimentalism of the performance for the failure of Klingenberg’s intended message, the latter identified the reason in a general trivialization of the subject matter and the domestication of any social criticism.<sup>317</sup>

As in the previous *Glass Menagerie* revival of 1981, Laura Wingfield was considered to be the pivotal character of the play. Previewing the production, a reviewer of *Die Presse* wrote: „Im Mittelpunkt [dieses Dramas] steht die poetische und wohl auch poetisierte Figur Lauras mit ihren zerbrechenden Illusionen und ihrer Vereinsamung [...] (k.k., *Die*

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<sup>317</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986; Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986.

*Presse* 7 March 1986). Unlike Ulli Meier, however, Leslie Malton did not succeed in taking center stage in this production, since she paled in comparison to her co-actors. Pfoser observed: “Von soviel Intensität wird Leslie Malton merklich zur Seite gedrängt” (*Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986). This opinion was also held by Ludwig Plakolb, who claimed that the actress was “mitgerissen” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986) and that the success of the Gentleman Caller scene was largely the merit of Rudolf Bissegger.

- *Gentleman Caller*

As the Gentleman Caller, Rudolf Bissegger received the most favorable reviews of this revival. The critics agreed that he approached the role with much empathy, genuine affection and tact.<sup>318</sup> Kurt Kahl wrote:

Als karrierebewußter Realist, der in die Traumwelt der Wingfields gelockt wird und falsche Hoffnungen auslöst, beweist Rudolf Bissegger bei aller Robustheit viel Takt. (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986)

As in previous productions, the Gentleman Caller was seen as the realistic counterpart to the escapist and “dreamy” Wingfield family. Hedwig Jürg called him the “für Laura herbeizitierte Gast aus der Wirklichkeit” (Jürg, *Bühne* March 1986) and for Haider – Pregler Jim O’Connor was the only character “für den Spießrealität und Lebenstraum eins sind” (Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 10 March 1986).

The Gentleman Caller scene still proved to be efficient in playing on the audience’s heartstrings, despite the prevalent criticism of Klingenberg’s undue sentimentalism. Ludwig Plakolb dismissed the first part, but pointed out that after the intermission, the performance changed its mood perceptibly: “Plötzlich ist man berührt, rührt die große, mit soviel stillem Heroismus getragene Enttäuschung” (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986). The critic ascribed the turn in the second part largely to Rudolf Bisseggers sensitive acting.<sup>319</sup>

For Pfoser, both Malton and Bissegger showed considerable dedication to their roles in the Gentleman Caller scene, yet “ohne das Moralische dieser Aktion allzusehr hervorzukehren” (Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986). Thus, the superficiality<sup>320</sup> of the production and its deliberate evasion of a socio-critical

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<sup>318</sup> Cf. Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986; Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986; Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

<sup>319</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

<sup>320</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986.

depiction<sup>321</sup> were also manifest in the scene which traditionally carried the strongest emotional appeal of the play. This inherent shallowness might explain why Thomas Gabler considered Bissegger's portrayal not entirely credible. He wrote: "Rudolf Bissegger ist ein Dandy und Charmeur, der für [Laura] einen kurzen Glückstraum inszeniert, dem man aber die Gewissensregungen am Schluß nicht glaubt" (Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986).

- *Designer*

Matthias Kralj functioned as the stage designer in Klingenberg's revival. He demarcated the stage with fire ladders and highlighted the grayish set with light effects that bore metaphoric relevance.<sup>322</sup> As Gabler described, "Blackouts trennen die Erinnerungsbruchstücke, die Gedankenketten. Mal werden drohende Gewitterwolken, mal liebliche Schäfchenwolken projiziert" (*Kronen – Zeitung*, 10 March 1986).

Kralj dispensed with the "Verfremdungseffekte" (Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986), the projections of the titles and the musical leitmotifs that Tennessee Williams proposed in his script.<sup>323</sup> However, he did not abandon all of the author's ideas of a stage implementation. Referring to the original stage directions, Hedwig Jürg pointed out that the "Beleuchtung [...] soll eine Beziehung herstellen 'etwa zu El Greco, dessen Figuren aus einer relative düsteren Atmosphäre herausleuchten'" (Jürg, *Bühne* March 1986). In that respect, the stage designer heeded the author's advice. As Kahl observed, apart from the successful enacting of Tom's dual function, "nur [...] die Scheinwerfer, die - durch transparente Wände hindurch – Menschen und Objekte, vor allem Lauras Glastiere, herausgreifen, erinnern [an das epische Rankenwerk, mit dem der Autor den psychologischen Realismus seiner Geschichte umkleidet hat]" (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986).

Kralj's stage design was rated favorably by some critics, and unfavorably by others, but the decisive criterion seemed to pivot around the question whether an authentic atmosphere was created or not. Plakolb was one of the critics who approved of Kralj's setting. He wrote:

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<sup>321</sup> Cf. Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986.

<sup>322</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986; Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

<sup>323</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986.

Matthias Kraljs *atmosphärisches* Bühnenbild stimmt mit Tennessee Williams' Vorstellungen überein: die vielen Feuertreppen der Substandardwohnung lassen an ein Gefängnis denken, an seelische Beengtheit [...] (Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986, *my emphasis*)

Similar associations were expressed by Alfred Pfoser, who stated that “Matthias Kraljs Bühnenbild bringt den Gegensatz zwischen trostlosem Hinterhofdasein und bedrohter Familienwelt durch die mehrfachen Feuerleitern gut zur Geltung (*Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986).

Less positively, Kahl felt that the fire ladders and the cloudy sky that was projected on the curtain created only “ein bißchen Atmosphäre” (*Kurier*, 10 March 1986). Most of the remaining reviewers shared the opinion that the stage design lacked the characteristic atmosphere altogether.<sup>324</sup> Hochreiter considered the ambience “neat” and “spacious” rather than narrow and dismal (*Die Presse* 10 March 1986, *my translation*). In the same tenor, the *Furche* – critic stated that the setting “bleibt das Elend schuldig” (H.B. *Die Furche* 14 March 1986), which contributed to the “painlessness” of the performance.

The auto-biographic reference, which was deemed quite central by some critics, found also expression in Kralj's stage design. Both Kahl and Haider – Pregler remarked that the photograph of the runaway father on the wall strongly resembled Tennessee Williams.<sup>325</sup>

Friederike Binkaus designed the costumes in this production, but only one critic commented on them. Plakolb wrote that her “Kostüme füg[t]en sich unauffällig ein” (*Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986). The fact that they were rather inconspicuous might have been the reason why the rest of the reviewers did not consider them worth mentioning.

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<sup>324</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986; H.B. *Die Furche* 14 March 1986; Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986.

<sup>325</sup> Cf. Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986; Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986.

c) The Play

It is striking that the play itself was rated more negatively in 1986 than in 1981. The critics who still endorsed *The Glass Menagerie* praised its “große Bühnenwirksamkeit” (k.k. *Die Presse* 7 March 1986), the great acting potential it holds for the performers<sup>326</sup>, its nostalgic and poetic appeal<sup>327</sup> and its delicateness<sup>328</sup>.

Kurt Kahl, who had already communicated his admiration of the play in 1957 and in 1981, again repeated his encomium:

Ein Stück Nostalgie, ein Spiel der Erinnerung: Tennessee Williams’ „Glasmenergie“ ist Spitze, zart und zerreibar wie die Spitzenkleider, die Amanda Wingfield in ihren verklaren [sic!] Mdchenjahren im Mississippi – Delta getragen hat. (Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986)

In an equally positive tone, *The Presse* – critic under the pseudonym “k.k.”, justified the frequent recurrence of Tennessee Williams’ dramas by pointing to the great roles they offer as well as their great stage value. Furthermore, he speculated: “Zhlen ‘Endstation Sehnsucht’ oder ‘Die Glasmenergie’ also zu den groen Evergreens des Theaters?” (k.k., *Die Presse* 7 March 1986).

Less favorable reviews claimed that the play was antiquated and criticized linguistic shortcomings and sentimentality, but conceded that *The Glass Menagerie* still had its eligibility for the contemporary stage<sup>329</sup>. Haider – Pregler wrote:

Die Staubschicht ber den Problemen der „Glasmenergie“ von Tennessee Williams lt sich nicht wegleugnen. Da sich dieses „Spiel der Erinnerungen“ jedoch nach wie vor als exzellentes Rollenstck bewhrt, beweist die von Gerhard Klingenberg [...] vorgenommenen Neuinszenierung im Akademietheater. (Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986)

In a review of the same tenor, Alfred Pfoser stated:

Die Story mag fr unseren heutigen Geschmack ein bischen zu melodramatisch, sentimental ausgefallen sein. Tennessee Williams scheute sich nicht, dick aufzutragen. Aber es gibt gute Grnde, wieso „Die Glasmenergie“ zu jenen Stcken gehrt, die im Theater noch immer znden. Sind gute Schauspieler am Werk [...], so ist der Erfolg der kleinen Familiengeschichte nahezu gesichert. (Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986)

<sup>326</sup> Cf. k.k. *Die Presse* 7 March 1986.

<sup>327</sup> Cf. Jrg, *Bhne* March 1986; Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986.

<sup>328</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 10 March 1986.

<sup>329</sup> Cf. Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 11 March 1986; Pfoser, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 10 March 1986; Plakolb, *Obersterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986.

Quite contrary to the other critics, Otto Hochreiter excoriated the play and held an entirely negative view. He asserted, “Es gibt stichhaltige Gründe, Tennessee Williams’ ‚Glasmenagerie‘ immer seltener in die Spielpläne von für heutige Theateransprüche repräsentativen Bühnen zu rücken“ (Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986). In fact, the critic found fault with all the major aspects of *The Glass Menagerie*. Firstly, he considered it to be “extrem zeitgebunden[...]” (*Die Presse* 10 March 1986), and appeared to be dissatisfied with the deliberate refusal of the dramaturg and director to produce contemporary validity for the play. He dismissed the text as a therapeutic measure of the author, who created an “autobiographisches Rechtfertigungs-drama” (*Die Presse* 10 March 1986) full of sentimentality. Furthermore, he considered Tom’s retrospective narrations as “weitschweifig” and “undramatisch” (*Die Presse* 10 March 1986) and assessed Williams’ language as one – dimensional. Equally dismissively did he react to the perceived message of the play, namely that vivacity only covers the life’s surface under which the dark and persistent sorrow is simmering.<sup>330</sup>

It is worth noting that Hochreiter distanced himself almost aggressively from *The Glass Menagerie*, and in his attempt to explain its success he left no doubt that the play encapsulated the very notion of “Americanness”.

Der Erfolg der “Glasmenagerie” erklärt sich vielleicht daraus, daß sie einer fortschrittsorientierten Gesellschaft voller Glauben an die Lösbarkeit von Problemen jeder Art eben jene dramatisierte US – amerikanische Schmalspurphilosophie vorsetzte, die mit dem Scheinhaften von Realität, mit Hybris, tragischen Konflikten und dergleichen nur kokettierte, oder sie in einen flachen, sogenannten psychologischen Realismus wendete, der von unserem literarischen Verständnis her schlicht als trivial angesehen wird, als eine bloße Ausgangsbasis für Startheater, das sich im Film nicht minder gewinnbringend verkaufen läßt. (Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986)

Considering the historical background of that time, this statement implicitly corroborates that the domain of literature is strongly contingent upon the realm of politics. More precisely, Hochreiter’s account may be read against the background of the Waldheim debate, which allows for some audacious, yet plausible conclusions.

As a traditionally bourgeois – conservative paper, the *Presse* seems to have reflected the ideology of the Waldheim camp, i.e. the conservative Austrian People’s Party. Since the Waldheim affair not only stirred bad publicity but also serious allegations from America, the Waldheim camp was busy fending them off. The dismissal of the play as a

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<sup>330</sup> Cf. Hochreiter, *Die Presse* 10 March 1986.

cultural object made in America thus might be read as an abasement of American culture and lifestyle, which served a sharp distinction between “self” and “other” and can be read as a reaction to the American anti-Waldheim campaign.

Bischof and Uhl interestingly elucidate that the Waldheim affair constituted a significant turning point in Austria’s historical memory, since it necessitated a rethinking of its coming to terms with the past (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*). Shortly after the end of the war, Austria “externalized” (Bischof *Historical* 3; Uhl, 73) the cruel Nazi- regime and shifted the entire responsibility for the crimes of the Holocaust to the West Germans.<sup>331</sup> Austria conveniently assumed the role of the victim, while the role of the culprit was assigned to Germany. This myth of Austria’s victimhood became an integral part of its national identity and was perpetuated by the collective memory of the citizens.<sup>332</sup> The wide-spread enthusiasm over the Anschluss in 1938 was equally kept taboo as the fact that around 25% of the Austrians had sympathized with the National Socialist Party in 1942.<sup>333</sup>

On a global scale, the country’s internalization of the “victim mythology” (Bischof, *Historical* 4) correlated with Austria’s positive image abroad.<sup>334</sup> Its role as the first victim of the Hitler regime remained uncontested until the mid-eighties when the past of Kurt Waldheim was revealed. By claiming that he “had only done exactly what hundreds of thousands of Austrians had done, namely fulfil my duty as a soldier” (quoted in Uhl, 80), Waldheim added dimension to Austria’s role in the Second World War. The “lifelong lie” (Pelinka, 98) was exposed and Austria emerged as a country that had been both – victim *and* perpetrator.<sup>335</sup> According to Uhl, the Waldheim affair constituted the “most profound identity crisis in the history of postwar Austria” (80). She expounds why the paradigmatic shift eventually comprised the whole nation:

Waldheim was no exception; he was the archetype. The majority of Austrians had acted in a similar fashion and – after the war – tried to fit the years spent under Nazi rule smoothly into their life histories. For this war generation, Waldheim was a symbolic figure. Every criticism of the presidential candidate’s past was interpreted as a critique of their own past and thus a threat to their own identity which had been so painfully constructed. (Uhl, 81)

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<sup>331</sup> Cf. Bischof *Historical* 3; Uhl, 73.

<sup>332</sup> Cf. Bischof *Historical* 4.

<sup>333</sup> Cf. Uhl, 66; 73.

<sup>334</sup> Cf. Uhl, 69.

<sup>335</sup> Cf. Bischof *Historical* 8.

In that context, Hochreiter not only defended the bourgeois - conservative interests of the Austrian People's Party or of the traditional readership of the *Presse*, but also his own identity, which he felt to be menaced by the Americans. What Hochreiter seemed to allude to was the post-war era, in which Austria strongly oriented itself towards the United States, who appeared as an altruistic ally that provided the war-shattered and identity-seeking country with capital to rebuild itself/ its self (Austria's "Glauben an [Amerikas] Lösbarkeit von Problemen jeder Art"). Back then, America fostered the myth of "Austria as the war-victim". Four decades later, however, the former ally had turned into the fiercest political antagonist, who accused Austria of complicity in war crimes and brought the congenial victim mythology to an abrupt termination. However, the right and ability of the Americans to do so was fiercely contested. After all, they had been mere spectators, since they did not share the immediate war experience and therefore could not in the slightest grasp the tragedy of World War II. (Americans are "flach[...]” and only "kokettier[en] [mit] tragischen Konflikten und dergleichen“) Every American attempt to reconstruct the truth of the Second World War was doomed to fail. ("Hybris") Their vacuous assumptions correspond to their "Schmalspurphilosophie", which finds its cultural expression in the "trivial[ity]" of American "Startheater", which is only geared towards commercialization, not towards the creation of genuine art.

#### 3.5.4. Recapitulation

After *The Glass Menagerie* had disappeared from Vienna's major stages in the 1970s, the 1980s heralded a Tennessee Williams comeback. Some critics were jubilant to reexperience the stage "Evergreens" (k.k., *Die Presse* 7 March 1986) which had proved their value over the last decades, whereas others lamented their priority over contemporary dramas.

The decade saw two major productions of Williams' first success: Towards the end of the Kreisky era, namely in 1981, Peter Preissler revived the play in the *Volkstheater in der Treitlstraße*. Five years later, when the Waldheim affair was beginning to cast a damning light on Austria, Gerhard Klingenberg staged his interpretation of the drama in the *Akademietheater*.

Both productions tried to recreate a feeling of nostalgia by leaving the play in the past rather than transferring it into a contemporary milieu. However, while Klingenberg depicted the play as universal, Preissler presented it as distinctly American. Interestingly, in 1981 both Tennessee Williams and his script were more willingly

integrated into a European schema than had been the case in any other performance hitherto. The author was declared to be quasi – European, the American South suddenly bore much resemblance to Europe and the Gentleman Caller had lost most of his American connotations. The sudden harmonization of American elements with the Austrian “conservatism of the heart” (Thurnher, 30) leaves us to speculate that Kreisky’s americanophile governance, his attempt to modernize the country and espouse Austria and the United States had indeed conditioned a change in the Austrian perception of Americanness.

Still, Amanda Wingfield remained a character that presented insurmountable difficulties for an Austrian actress. As the critics agreed, Maria Urban’s natural disposition differed so much from that of her role that she could not possibly reconcile these character discrepancies.

The same was stated about Hilde Krahl, whose portrayal was described as shallow since she could only display her own persona on stage (“Die Krahl bleibt immer die Krahl”). Even though Gerhard Klingenberg dispensed with an American coloring of his revival, the entire cast was perceived as lacking the required idiosyncratic disposition to authentically render the American characters of Tennessee Williams’ script. This was part of the reason why many critics felt that the production remained shallow and the gulf between the action presented on stage and the emotionally quite distant audience could not be bridged.

Moreover, Klingenberg had to acquiesce to the criticism that his production drifted into excessive sentimentalism, which made the plot appear trivial so that the poignancy of the play faded. Compared to Peter Preissler’s revival in 1981, Klingenberg’s audience appeared to be much more introverted and less receptive to the emotions presented on stage. Not only was the performance rated more unfavorably, but also the play itself received harsher criticism. There was no doubt that the play was again perceived as an American (cultural) object that some critics vehemently tried to distance themselves from. The Austrian – American relations, which had flourished under chancellor Kreisky, were burdened heavily by the Waldheim affair. America was not only the nation that fired off the fiercest criticism against the newly elected Federal President, they also shattered the victim mythology in which Austria had wallowed since the end of the Second World War.

How much the notion of victimhood was anchored in the Austrian consciousness could again be detected in the two revivals of the eighties. In 1981, Kurt Kahl identified

Laura's fate as reflective of the "Befindlichkeit unserer Gesellschaft" (Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981) and in 1986, Klingenberg's professed intention was to depict Laura's loneliness as a perpetual and always relevant problem of society.<sup>336</sup>

Ever since *The Glass Menagerie* premiered in 1949, the Austrian audiences identified most closely with the victim of the play, Laura Wingfield. I think this shows quite well how the role as a war-victim, which had doggedly been adhered to throughout the past 40 years, had imbued the individual consciousness, become part of national identity and was liberally projected on other areas of life.

Thus, the detachment of the audience in the 1986 production of *The Glass Menagerie* and the conscious or unconscious dismissal of "the American" may well be interpreted as a defensive reaction to the American allegations and to their "hubristic" attack of a part of the Austrian identity.

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<sup>336</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986.

### 3.6. *The Glass Menagerie* in the 90s

After the Tennessee Williams boom during the 1980s, the subsequent decade again suggested a lack of popularity of the author and his works. Similar to the 1970s, *The Glass Menagerie* was not revived on any of the major Viennese stages. Instead, it was only staged once in a smaller venue, namely in an English-language production in *Vienna's English Theater*.

#### 3.6.1. Setting the Scene

As Hella Pick points out, “In 1990, Austria was bubbling with optimism” (Pick, 181). She based this assumption on the felicitous coincidence of various political and economic factors: The Cold War was coming towards an end, which lifted the tension on Austria as a bridging nation between the two formerly competing superpowers and facilitated the restoration of its position as a diplomatic, political and cultural point of intersection that provided a neutral arena for negotiations among different European countries. Furthermore, the economic situation was good due to the large influx of foreign investment. The prospective entry into the EU sparked speculations of a further upswing in Austria’s economy due to the expected strengthening of its business ties to Eastern Europe.<sup>337</sup>

Still, the country also experienced the ostracism caused by the Waldheim affair. The Federal President, who had severely tarnished Austria’s image in the outside world, resisted the majority wish to resign and vehemently insisted on serving out his term of office until 1992. His function as head of state was considered disreputable though, and was hence given only marginal importance.<sup>338</sup>

It was the social democrat Franz Vranitzky, a former banker and previous Finance Minister, who successfully strove to contain the damage of the Waldheim presidency and restored the country’s image abroad. Upon the advice of Hugo Portisch, albeit with a delay of four years, Vranitzky appeared in public in 1991 to officially render an apology on behalf of the entire nation for its culpable participation in the Holocaust. Thus, he forced his fellow citizens to assume liability and put an end to the amnesia and self-delusion that had perpetuated the myth of Austria as a nation of victims.<sup>339</sup>

Although acknowledged as a gesture that had long been overdue, it did not trigger an instantaneous change of Austria’s international reputation. The United States and Israel

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<sup>337</sup> Cf. Pick, 181.

<sup>338</sup> Cf. Pick, 181.

<sup>339</sup> Cf. Pick 195 – 198.

were those countries which seemed to adhere most firmly to the negative convictions they had assumed about Austria.<sup>340</sup> However, the Austrian Government, and most notably Chancellor Vranitzky, gradually tried to convey a new image of Austria. Measures included the establishment of a national fund to support the Jewish war survivors and an emphasis on public education in order to foster a better knowledge and heightened awareness of the Holocaust.<sup>341</sup>

In 1993, Vranitzky continued to make official statements of apology in the course of his official visit to Israel. At the Hebrew University, he stressed Austria's acknowledgement of its responsibility in the war crimes of World War II and sought forgiveness from the Jewish victims.<sup>342</sup>

Thus, the general atmosphere was optimistic and conciliatory, which could also be noticed in the reviews of the *Glass Menagerie* production of Franz Schafranek and First Lady Ruth Brinkmann.

### 3.6.2. Neither Anti-Americanism nor Self-Pity

In 1986, the *Furche*-critic H.B. entitled his review with "Nix stimmt oder alles" (H.B. *Die Furche* 14 March 1986) and arrived at the conclusion that in Klinger's revival the former was true, namely that nothing was right. In Schafranek's production, however, he stated the opposite: "Alles stimmt" (H.B. *Die Furche* 31 Jan. 1991). Indeed, the positive perception of the production was shared by the other critics as well, even though the play was deemed rather outdated. Andrea Amort wrote:

Das Regie – Duo hat den am Papier von Williams' autobiographischem Psycho-Schmalz tiefenden Text aus den 40er Jahren pikant instzeniert: mit gut geführten Schauspielern und im passenden Ambiente [...] ist die altmodisch gewordene Rührgeschichte glaubwürdig. (Amort, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 1991)

Both H.B. and Pizzini lauded the „unsentimental“ (H.B. *Die Furche* 31 Jan. 1991; Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991) tone of the production, even though the director Franz Schafranek and his co-director Ruth Brinkmann staged the play in its original and without undertaking any modernizations.<sup>343</sup>

Gunther Martin was convinced that "die beiden [i.e. Schafranek and Brinkmann] verstehen and lieben das Stück" (Martin, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 1991) and doubted if that held true for every contemporary director.

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<sup>340</sup> Cf. Pick, 200.

<sup>341</sup> Cf. Pick, 201.

<sup>342</sup> Cf. Pick, 200.

<sup>343</sup> Cf. Amort, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 1991; Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 30 Jan. 1991.

### 3.6.3. The American Cast

The cast was assessed quite favorably as well. Martin pointed out that the four roles had been adequately assigned and concluded: “So kann man Williams hier im Original spielen” (Martin, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 1991).

Franz Schafranek’s wife Ruth Brinkmann enacted the role of **Amanda Wingfield**. She endowed the role with a humorous element<sup>344</sup>, which was approved of by most of the critics. Amort considered the attitudes of the aging Southern Belle “verständlich” and compared Amanda to the “liebenswerte[n] Schrullen von vorgestern” (Amort, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 1991). Pizzini considered Brinkmann’s portrayal as a “Karikatur einer gealterten Southern Beauty” (Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991) and Thomas Gabler labelled her the “alternden Showstar” (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 30 Jan. 1991), hinting at Brinkmann’s rather sensational acting style. It may be surmised that Brinkmann imitated the divaesque interpretation of Helen Hayes by aggressively taking center stage.<sup>345</sup> As was the case with Helen Hayes’ Broadway rendition of 1956, Brinkmann did not only receive favorable reviews, though. *Presse* – critic Duglore Pizzini stated:

Dem Regisseur waren [...] wohl die Hände gebunden, sonst hätte er [Brinkmanns] ungebremste Solonummer, ihre Suada, ihre Ausbrüche in allen Richtungen, sicherlich eingebremst und damit der schönen Vorstellung nur gut getan. Auch der heftige Beifall konnte die Dissonanz nicht übertönen, die zwischen den ganz einfachen, zurückgenommenen Leistungen der jungen Leute und dem großen Theater einer Diva entsteht. (Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991)

Due to Ruth Brinkmann’s positioning in the limelight, the production’s focus was clearly shifted to Amanda Wingfield. It may be argued that this interpretation possibly answered to the prevalence of a pro-American sentiment in Austria. After all, the character of the Mother had repeatedly been associated with the United States. Thus, Brinkmann’s approach to the role may be classified as *American*, which was underlined by Martin’s comparison between the Southern Beauty and the American urfather of our modern-day businessman, Willy Loman:

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<sup>344</sup> Cf. Amort, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 1991.

<sup>345</sup> Cf. Hewes, *Saturday Review* 8 Dec. 1956, 29; O’Niell, 70 – 73.

Ruth Brinkmann [...] spielt die Mutter, und zwar so [als] sei [sie] eine Cousine, wenn nicht sogar eine Schwester des Willy Loman aus Arthur Millers „Tod eines Handlungsreisenden“. Sie hat die gleiche forcierte Sanguinik, hinter der sich eine große Existenzangst verbirgt, die gleiche hektische Eloquenz und den gleichen Drang, ihren schon erwachsenen Kindern unentwegt Lebensregeln zu dozieren, einen „rechten Weg“ zu weisen, dessen Ziel nicht erkennbar wird. (Martin, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 1991)

Corey Johnson, an American from New Orleans, embodied **Tom Wingfield**. Pizzini praised him for a high degree of professionalism<sup>346</sup> and for Gabler, Johnson stood out from the cast as the most convincing actor.<sup>347</sup>

For Pizzini, it was Sarah Anson, in the role of **Laura Wingfield**, whose acting elated the most. He wrote:

Die Entdeckung des Abends heißt Sarah Anson, sie spielt das Mädchen Laura. [...] Anders als sie das tut, kann man diese Rolle heute wohl kaum spielen, besser kann man jene spezielle Qualität nicht vermitteln, die man früher einmal Unschuld genannt hat. (Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991)

The critic felt that Anson embodied the *original* Laura Wingfield in the same way as Otto Basil had believed that Paula Wessely must have represented the *original* Amanda Wingfield.<sup>348</sup> As it turned out, both critics were mistaken. Paula Wessely had not depicted a truly *American* character, but had only *translated* it to fit an Austrian context but was still American enough to be perceived as such by her fellow citizens.<sup>349</sup>

Similarly, Anson focused on Laura's fragility and presented Laura Wingfield as a very vulnerable character<sup>350</sup>, yet Williams asserted that he conceived of Laura as an utterly strong character.<sup>351</sup> However, for the Austrians it was the weakness and submissiveness which represented Laura's *original* trait. Thus, to picture Laura as the fragile victim of the play was an interpretation which had at all times particularly appealed to the Austrians.

Even though the reviews of this production featured neither metaphoric references to the Austrian "victimology" (Riekmann, 81) nor other allegoric comparisons, one gains the impression that the Austrians *wanted* to see a weak and humble Laura onstage, one

<sup>346</sup> Cf. Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991.

<sup>347</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 30 Jan. 1991.

<sup>348</sup> Cf. Basil, *Neues Österreich* 21 March 1965.

<sup>349</sup> Cf. Melchinger, *Theater Heute* Mai 1965.

<sup>350</sup> Cf. Martin, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 1991.

<sup>351</sup> Cf. Piper Laurie, quoted in O'Niell, 150.

who succumbs to her role as the victim. After all, the critics praised Anson's intimidated, introverted and helpless portrayal of the crippled Daughter.<sup>352</sup> They seem to have felt a particular interest in a victimised Laura.

What was behind this affinity for feebleness? Was it still Austria's cumbersome and undigested past and the conscious or unconscious assumption of the role as a victim that accounted for this phenomenon? Or was it rather a particular feature of the Austrians' mentality to identify more closely with the weak than with the strong?

Michael John-Paliotti embodied the **Gentleman Caller** in a very masculine manner. Andrea Amort classified him as a "Holzfäller-Typ" (Amort, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 1991) and Martin felt that the actor provided the role with the "Vitalität eines ganzen und netten Kerls" (Martin, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 1991, *my emphasis*).

Pizzini described John-Paliotti as a "Theater-Allrounder, [...] [und] ein[en] Feschak" (Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991) and, interestingly, identified the character as the second victim of the play. He claimed that Jim O'Connor - as enacted by John-Paliotti - was rather sensitive and thus suffered himself because of his destruction of Laura's illusions.<sup>353</sup>

### 3.6.4. Recapitulation

At the dawn of the 1990s, the atmosphere in Austria was characterized by a strong sense of optimism. Chancellor Vranitzky's conciliatory gestures towards the Jewish victims of the Second World War meant a deliberate shedding of Kurt Waldheim's sinister legacy. Austria appeared to be quite future-oriented, the entry into the EU was on the horizon and the economy was booming.

The positive mood prevalent in the country also resonated in the reviews of the *Glass Menagerie* – revival of 1991. Although the play was perceived as rather antiquated, Franz Schafranek's production was critically acclaimed. Ruth Brinkmann approached the role of Amanda Wingfield in quite an "American" manner, overdrawing the humorous aspects of the role and depicting her as the most important character of the production.

Sarah Anson could virtually be seen as her shadow, depicting Laura Wingfield as utterly fragile, vulnerable and helpless. Interestingly, it was exactly this feeble innocence that the Austrian audience admired and considered faithful to the author's

<sup>352</sup> Cf. Amort, *Kurier*, 29 Jan. 1991; Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 20 Jan. 1991.

<sup>353</sup> Cf. Pizzini, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 1991.

conception of the role. Paradoxically, even though Austria appeared to be immersed with optimism, its citizens still identified most closely with Laura Wingfield, whom they insisted on considering the victim of the play.

### 3.7. *The Glass Menagerie* after the Turn of the Century

From 2000 to 2008, *The Glass Menagerie* was revived in Vienna three times. The first production was directed by Peter M. Preissler, who staged the play in the *Volkstheater in the Außenbezirken* in May 2000. Five years later, the *Theater in the Josefstadt* responded to the resurgence of Tennessee Williams plays on the Viennese stages with a revival of *The Glass Menagerie* under the direction of Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger. The most recent production was undertaken by the *International Theater* in October 2006. However, the present chapter is only concerned with the analysis of the revivals by Preissler and Sprenger. Since the *International Theater* - production was staged in a minor venue, it will not be considered in this paper.

#### 3.7.1. Setting the Scene

The new millennium started off under the rule of a new government, which was formed by a coalition between the Austrian People's Party (ÖVP) and the Austrian Freedom Party (FPÖ). This constellation meant a political novelty in the history of the Second Republic, which for most of the time had been ruled by the traditional "Great Coalition" between the People's party and the Social Democratic party. The Social Democrats, however, had lost a significant share of the vote in the federal elections of October 1999, and the Freedom Party emerged as the second largest party, with a voter support of 27%.<sup>354</sup>

The rise of the Freedom Party could be attributed to its party leader Jörg Haider, who took over the enfeebled FPÖ in 1986 and increased his political support enormously by means of a strategic "modernization of faces and forms" (Riekmann, 86).

By publicly admiring the employment policies of the Third Reich and calling the members of the *Waffen SS*<sup>355</sup> "men of decent character" (Pick, 183), he soon gained the image of a neo-fascist.<sup>356</sup> As Riekmann points out, however, the political ascension of Jörg Haider and his FPÖ was rather complex and could not simply be attributed to a renaissance of nationalsocialist sentiments. After all, the strongly right-wing old guard of the party, which consisted of the likes of Otto Scrinzi and Kriemhild Trattinig, was pushed aside shortly after Haider was made head of the party.<sup>357</sup> For Riekmann, the nationalsocialist discourse which repeatedly immersed Haider's rhetoric was not

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<sup>354</sup> Cf. Pick, 182.

<sup>355</sup> Protective Squadron of the NSDAP

<sup>356</sup> Cf. Klingst and Perger, *Die Zeit Online* Feb. 2000; Pick, 183.

<sup>357</sup> Cf. Riekmann, 86.

necessarily born of his own conviction, but was rather a strategic device that he employed as a vote-maximizing stimulant to attract the “ever smaller group of old Nazis” (Riekman, 79-80). She described his political program as an “ideology mix made of pro-marketism, anti-statism and xenophobia embedded in a rhetoric oscillating between economic liberalism and political illiberalism, modernism and anti-modernism, focusing on the ‘man in the street’ allegedly betrayed and hampered in his pursuit of happiness by deeply corrupt elites” (Riekman, 79). Pick concurred that Haider’s acolytes were not only composed of right-wing demagogues, but also, and primarily, of blue-collar workers.<sup>358</sup> By Jörg Haider’s own account, the FPÖ electorate consisted of “überdurchschnittlich viele Arbeiter und Frauen” (Klingst and Perger, *Die Zeit Online* Feb. 2000), which he took as an indicator for a rather leftist positioning of his party. He stated, “Wir treten in die Fußstapfen der jetzigen SPÖ” (Klingst and Perger, *Die Zeit Online* Feb. 2000). Needless to say, not many people would have subscribed to this estimation. After all, the former Chancellor Franz Vranitzky and his successor Viktor Klima, both affiliates of the Social Democratic Party, pursued a policy of *Ausgrenzung* by vigorously rejecting any collaboration with Haider and his FPÖ.<sup>359</sup> However, with his fierce attack on the Austrian system of *Proporz*<sup>360</sup>, which had statically dominated both the public and the private sector for more than half a century, he struck the nerve of a significant part of the population. With his reformist attitude he particularly won over young professionals who were not put off by his xenophobic rhetoric.<sup>361</sup>

The outcome of the federal elections eventually caused an international uproar, and many countries interpreted Haider’s success as a neo-fascist renaissance in Austria.<sup>362</sup> Haider was seen as a “modern tyrant[...]” (Pick, 183), along with Idi Amin and Saddam Hussein.<sup>363</sup>

As Riekman clarifies, the existence and national acknowledgement of a far-right party was not unique to Austria alone, but was also a prevalent phenomenon within the political systems of other European countries. To illustrate her argument, she names the French *Front National*, the Italian *Alleanza Nazionale* and the *Lega Nord* and asserts

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<sup>358</sup> Cf. Pick, 187.

<sup>359</sup> Cf. Riekman, 84; 97.

<sup>360</sup> i.e. “the system under which the two old-established parties [SPÖ and ÖVP] entrenched themselves in Austria’s power structure” (Pick, 183)

<sup>361</sup> Cf. Pick, 183 - 184; 188.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. Pick, 182.

<sup>363</sup> Cf. Pick, 183.

that Haider could be compared to Gianfranco Fini and Umberto Bossi much rather than to Adolf Hitler.<sup>364</sup>

However, Haider's rise triggered an alarm from abroad which resulted in the announcement of drastic political measures. As the *Zeit Online* noted, "France, Spain, Israel and Germany were protesting against [Haider's] participation in government [and] the European Union was threatening to isolate Austria" (Klingst and Perger, *Zeit Online* Feb. 2000, *my translation*). Most interesting was the reaction of the Austrian citizens towards the international attacks:

The campaign by EU countries, Israel and the US to punish Austria by isolating it politically initially reinforced support for Haider *even from Austrians who dislike[d] and mistrust[ed] him. Once again, many Austrians felt victimised.* (Pick, 183, *my italics*)

The collective cohesion of the Austrians against pressure from abroad, even against their own ideological conviction, together with the renewed assumption of the role of a victim, was a phenomenon that had already been discerned with regard to the Waldheim affair. The relapse into former behavioral patterns, including the perpetuation of the long-cultivated "victimology" (Riekman, 81), thus corroborated the hypothesis that Austria had still not overcome its burdened past. Pick elucidated:

If Austria thought it had achieved peace with itself and with the world at large, it was mistaken. If the international community hoped that Austria had finally come to terms with its past, and no longer sought to paint itself as a victim of contemporary history, it was to be disappointed. (Pick, 182)

This can also be implied by Jörg Haider's assertion, "Wir haben keine Kollektivschuld, aber sicherlich eine Gedächtnislast" (Klingst and Perger *Zeit Online* Feb. 2000, *my italics*). In his interview with *Die Zeit*, he presented the FPÖ as a party who deliberately wanted to break with the legacy of the Austrian past and instead focus on the future. He stated:

Irgendwann muss man auch mal aus der Vergangenheit ausbrechen können. [...] Diese ganze Entschuldigerei für die Vergangenheit führt letztlich nur dazu, dass in der Bevölkerung Emotionen aufkommen und gefragt wird, was soll das Ganze eigentlich noch nach so vielen Jahrzehnten. (Klingst and Perger, *Zeit Online* Feb. 2000)

The FPÖ – a haven for those who wanted to put Austria's Nazi-past behind themselves? Or rather for those who wanted to cater to its old supporters? Without doubt, the

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<sup>364</sup> Cf. Riekman, 80; 83.

Austrian population was still traumatized at the dawning of the new millennium, which was characterized by a persistence of the notion of victimhood on the one hand, and the determined desire to move on and leave the burdensome past behind on the other. This ambivalence apparently proved compatible with Tennessee Williams' *Glass Menagerie*, since it was staged in Vienna three times in the subsequent eight years.

### **3.7.2. Die Glasmenagerie in the Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken (2000)**

On 3 May 2000, the ensemble of the *Volkstheater* set off on a tour through the Viennese outer districts to show Williams' opus to the working-class population. To recall, the *Volkstheater* had already sent a troupe into the Viennese "periphery" (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957) to perform *The Glass Menagerie* in 1957. Back then, the critics had strongly hinted at an educational gap between the city dwellers and their neighbours from the lower-class suburbs, which had been considered problematic in terms of the understanding of the play. Classified as a piece of High Literature, *The Glass Menagerie* had served as a benchmark against which the intelligence and educational status of the working-class population was measured. Thus, many critics concluded that the play bore too many complexities which could not be grasped or untangled by a "zu bildendes, dem Theater zu gewinnendes Publikum" (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957). The dual role of Tom, the title tablets and the rich symbolism were named as the major sources of confusion, which separated the "in-group", who could understand them, from the "out-group".

More than four decades later, Peter M. Preissler, who had already directed the revival of *The Glass Menagerie* in 1981, resumed the missionary "culturalization" of the people in the *Außenbezirke*. But was the tour into the outer districts still perceived as such a missionary endeavor? Or had an educational and cultural harmonization of the urban and the suburban population taken place within the past decades? Judging from the reviews, no obvious distinction was made between the audience of the inner and that of the outer districts. However, in the *Bühne* - portrait of Erika Mottl, who played Amanda Wingfield in that production, the hierarchy in value between a tour in the *Außenbezirke* and the inner-city main house still became palpable. Renate Wagner wrote:

Nun ist es soweit: In ihrem Stammhaus, dem Volkstheater, darf [Erika Mottl] die berühmte alternde Südstaaten – Schönheit, die zum Muttertier geworden ist, verkörpern, wenn auch „nur“ auf dem Weg durch die „Bezirke“ (wie die frühere „Außenbezirks – Tournee“ des Hauses nun heißt). (Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000, *my emphasis*)

There still seems to have been a marked distinction between the “insiders” of the city and the “outsiders” of the suburbs, which also becomes apparent in a quotation by Erika Mottl:

“Die Menschen ‘draußen’ sind ein so ungemein aufmerksames und auch so treues Publikum, daß man immer wieder spürt, wieviel Berechtigung es doch hat, mit dem Theater zu ihnen zu kommen.“ (Mottl, quoted in Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000)

Even though the actress expressed appreciation for her audience on a superficial level, her remark unmistakably resonated with a patronizing quality. The adjectives “attentive” and “faithful”, which Mottl used to characterize the theater behavior of the suburban spectators, and the lofty assumption that *they* (the company) bring theater (i.e. culture, something the “others” do not have) to *them* (the uncivilized) suggests the underlying notion of the “noble savage”. In this context, an interesting parallel may be drawn to Lévi-Strauss’s account of the introduction of writing in the Brazilian jungle.

In the course of his fieldwork between 1935 and 1938, the European anthropologist sojourned among the Nambikwara people, a group of native Indians, whose approximate size he intended to find out. At that time, the Nambikwara had largely been unencumbered by Western intrusion and several of them even “appeared never to have seen a white man before” (Lévi-Strauss, 1420). When Lévi-Strauss provided them with pencils and paper, the natives, who had no previous knowledge of writing or even drawing, started to draw “wavy, horizontal lines” (Lévi-Strauss, 1421). As the researcher soon found out, they were trying to imitate his use of the pencil. Meanwhile, the chief of the tribe had grasped the power inherent in writing. He asked Lévi-Strauss for a writing pad, and no longer answered his questions verbally, but rather took to drawing unintelligible lines on the pad. To avoid the disappointment of the tribe leader and preserve his status of authority, the anthropologist pretended to understand the meaning of the chief’s “writing”. When the native later read out his scribbling to his folk, it became clear that he had assumed a powerful intermediary function between the white man and his own people.<sup>365</sup> Lévi-Strauss concluded the following:

Writing had, on that occasion, made its appearance among the Nambikwara but not, as one might have imagined, as a result of long and laborious training. It had been borrowed as a symbol, and for a sociological rather than an intellectual purpose, while its reality remained unknown. (Lévi-Strauss, 1422)

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<sup>365</sup> Cf. Lévi-Strauss, 1420 – 1422.

This quote allows for some interesting analogies with Mottl's statement above. Similar to the Westerner Lévi – Strauss, who introduced writing among a “primitive” tribe in the Brazilian jungle, the “sophisticated” ensemble of the *Volkstheater* brought the theater to the “less cultured” people of the outer districts. Both encounters (that of the Nambikwara with writing and that of the suburban people with theater) can be described as a process of culturalization,

hence “civilization”, which meant a fall into a system of representation (written representation, theatrical representation). The Nambikwara tried to imitate Lévi-Strauss's use of the pencil in the same way as the suburban theatergoers mimicked the theatrical behavior of the city dwellers (they were described as “attentive”). After all, theater had traditionally been the domain of the educated elite, which separated the insiders from the outsiders. Thus, to go into the theater conveyed the impression of belonging to the “in-group” of society.

Similarly, the tribal chief felt that writing facilitated his access to the previously unknown territory that exuded power and authority. Since his writing was neither genuine nor intelligible, though, it only functioned as a symbol and had sociological, rather than intellectual value.

Considering Mottl's description of the suburban theatergoers, one might arrive at a similar assumption. As the reviews from 1957 had openly revealed, *The Glass Menagerie* was perceived as too complicated for the inhabitants of the Viennese blue-collar districts. By 2000, the reviewers undoubtedly conformed to the rules of political correctness and avoided blunt side blows. Erika Mottl, however, prolonged the fantasy of the “noble savage” by describing her suburban audience as “faithful” and “attentive” as opposed to, let's say, “critical” or “sophisticated”.

A “faithful” audience connotes theater as a social venue, rather than a place of intellectual exchange. The people would come to see the performances, regardless of the choice of play, which points to the fact that the act of going to the theater (the social) was given priority over the genuine interest in the play (the intellectual). Thus, theater also in Vienna's *Außenbezirke* had a symbolic value attached to it.

a) Peter M. Preissler – Repeated Excursion into the Past

Almost two decades after his revival in the *Volkstheater*, Peter M. Preissler again undertook the task of directing *The Glass Menagerie*. Although he maintained the basic concept of his previous production, he also made minor, but significant modifications that affected the interpretation of the play.

As in 1981, Preissler unfolded the action in the past and adhered to the original script. His focus on nostalgia, however, did not yield the same acclaim as back in the early eighties. According to the critic of the *Kronen-Zeitung*, at least the audience seemed to like the retro staging. He wrote: “Das Publikum genoss den Ausflug in eine poetische Vergangenheit” (HM, *Kronen – Zeitung* 5 May 2000). In contrast, *Der Standard* – critic Stephan Hilpold sharply criticized Preissler’s old-fashioned approach to the play:

[D]as erste Erfolgsstück des amerikanischen Südstaaten – Desperados mutet in der Version des Volkstheaters in den Bezirken noch um einiges älter an, als es tatsächlich ist. Falsch verstandenes Literaturtheater, das glaubt, Worte wären Selbstläufer. Blind vertraut man nämlich [...] der Ausstaffierung und nicht der Versinnlichung des Stücks. Aus Williams’ „Spiel der Erinnerungen“ wird so weniger ein vibrierender Psychokosmos als hölzernes Gestentheater. Die Zerbrechlichkeit der Figuren muß man an Äußerlichkeiten ablesen[.] [...] (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000)

It seems as if Preissler’s intention was to repeat the performance aspects that had been praised in 1981 and modify those that had been criticized. This would explain why he recreated the nostalgic atmosphere while he refrained from an in-depth character analysis and rather prioritized the set design. To recall, in his previous revival, he had strongly focused on the psychology of the characters, which was said to have sacrificed part of the play’s poetic appeal.<sup>366</sup>

However, the director repeated his most significant change of 1981, namely the role split of Tom Wingfield, even though it had constituted a source of confusion. In the present revival, the reviewers surprisingly did not appear to be irritated at all, which might relate to the fact that Preissler introduced a further distinguishing feature between the two Toms: He made the older Tom an outright alcoholic.

Overall, the role split was perceived more positively than in 1981. Only the *Kronen – Zeitung* rejected the idea, albeit without giving any justification. Conversely, Renate Wagner called it a “treffende Idee” (*Bühne* May 2000) and for Christine Dobretsberger it perfectly illustrated the intertwining of the past and the present, which reflected the

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<sup>366</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981.

message of the play, namely “dass bei Tennessee Williams’ ‘Glasmenagerie’ Zukunft nichts anderes ist als ein matter Spiegel der Gegenwart” (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000).

Furthermore, Preissler created a hopeful ending, which can be seen as a significant deviation from Williams’ original script. While in the previous revivals of *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura Wingfield had been left emotionally shattered by her disappointment with the Gentleman Caller, in the present production the infelicitous acquaintance with her suitor even made her stronger.<sup>367</sup>

While in the reviews of 1981 Preissler had been said to have authentically recreated the atmosphere of the American South<sup>368</sup>, the newspaper articles of 2000 did not provide any evidence of a distinctly American performance. The most obvious reason for that might be that Preissler might have deliberately chosen to approach the play from a more universal perspective and omit a particular emphasis on the American locale. Conceivably, however, the different perception might also have been due not to the directorial approach but to a certain insensitivity of the audience towards American characteristics as a result of globalization and a growing cultural assimilation.

#### b) The Golden Girl among an Inconspicuous Cast

- *Amanda Wingfield*

Erika Mottl enacted Amanda Wingfield in Preissler’s second revival. A long-time member of the *Volkstheater* – ensemble, Mottl had made a name for herself as a very versatile actress, who did not shy away from representing unattractive roles. She had been awarded the “Skraup-Preis”, i.e. the “hausinternen ‘Oscar’ des Volkstheaters” (Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000), for her performance of Kate Keller in Arthur Miller’s *All my Sons* and, most notably, for her representation of Emma in Horváth’s *Geschichten aus dem Wienerwald*.

Moreover, the actress had also shown directorial ambitions. In the previous year, *Volkstheater*-director Emmy Werner had entrusted Mottl with the staging of Bernhard Slade’s *Nächstes Jahr, gleiche Zeit* in the course of the “Bezirks-Tournee” (Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000).

With regard to *The Glass Menagerie*, Erika Mottl had already played Laura Wingfield in a production that was performed throughout the Burgenland when she was in her early thirties. Even back then, the actress had favored the role of the eccentric Mother

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<sup>367</sup> Cf. publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

<sup>368</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

over the part of the handicapped Daughter. The eventual opportunity to embody Amanda Wingfield herself meant for her to play “die schönste und größte Rolle seit langem” (Mottl, quoted in Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000). Unlike Maria Urban in 1981, Mottl succeeded in presenting the dominance inherent in Amanda Wingfield’s character.<sup>369</sup> Still, the actress considered the former Southern Belle by no means a malicious person, but rather a benevolent character that teemed with optimism and endurance. According to Mottl, the glamour of Amanda’s fortunate youth was not a life-lie that she succumbed to, but rather a de-facto reality which still surrounded her.<sup>370</sup>

The actress aimed at conveying the positive features of the Mother and representing her as a strong character. She said, “Ich möchte sie auch in keiner Weise lächerlich oder unerträglich machen.“ (Mottl, quoted in Wagner *Bühne* May 2000). This intention, however, apparently did not succeed, since it did not match the theatrical experience of her critics. For Annemarie Klinger, Mottl’s depiction of Amanda Wingfield was “nervend bis zur Schmerzgrenze” (Klinger, *Die Furche* 11 May 2000), and HM called her a “Nervensäge” (*Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000), both of which may be paraphrased as “unbearable”, one of the sentiments Mottl explicitly did not want to arouse.

As concerns the deliberate avoidance of ridiculousness in her portrayal of the Mother, Mottl’s intention equally conflicted with the critical perception of her critics. As HM pointed out, the actress provided an “überdrehte Parodie” (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000) of the character and Dobretsberger perceived her as a “völlig überdrehte Mutter” (*Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000). In line with his colleagues, Stephan Hilpold felt that Mottl contributed humour to the production and described her version of Amanda Wingfield as a “Camp-Queen mit den Qualitäten der grandiosen Blanche aus den *Golden Girls*” (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000). This comparison is worth dwelling on, since it allows for a few interesting deductions. Firstly, it leaves no doubt that Mottl’s Amanda was perceived as patently American, but in contrast to most of the previous productions, this difference (Americanness) was not felt to be an alienation anymore. This might be grounded on the fact that the Austrian television landscape was largely populated by American series, sitcoms and movies, which conditioned a familiarization and gradual identification with “Americanness”. In the dawn of the new millennium the “mediale[n] Mittlerinstanzen” (Lüsebrink, 133) were of paramount importance in the process of cultural transfer. In fact, the market share of American TV- and movie-productions in Europe had sharply risen from 69% to 85% in the course of

<sup>369</sup> Cf. HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000; publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

<sup>370</sup> Cf. Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000.

the 1990s.<sup>371</sup> Thus, it is not surprising that Hilpold drew a parallel between the “Golden Girl” Blanche Devereaux and Amanda Wingfield. After all, both stem from the American South and share their background as former Southern Belles as well as their (erstwhile) abundance of male admirers.<sup>372</sup>

Hilpold recognized the familiar (features of Blanche Devereaux) in the unknown (Amanda Wingfield) by means of an already existing schema. Thus, his stereotypical conception of the “Southern Belle” – as gained via the TV series *Golden Girls* - was reinforced and preserved and allowed him to categorize and “understand” Amanda Wingfield.<sup>373</sup>

Similarly, Erika Mottl also named the movies as the creative source of her acting which enabled her to access the role:

„Ich denke nicht an Vorbilder, ich denke auch nicht an eine bestimmte Schauspielerin, die in dieser Rolle vielleicht einmal brilliant war. Ich habe höchstens die vage Idee der Südstaaten-Schönheiten, wie man sie aus manchen Hollywood-Filmen kennt.“ (Mottl, quoted in Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000)

By means of this imitation, Mottl indeed succeeded in creating a character that was perceived as American, even though it was deemed too humorous to fit the prevalent schema of Amanda Wingfield. Hilpold felt that “[e]inzig Erika Mottl als Amanda gibt ihre eigene Performance. Sie spielt ein Stück im Stück, das zwar komisch, aber leider deplatziert ist“ (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000). Although he seemed to recognize in her features he associated with the American South, his schema of Amanda Wingfield apparently was more serious than Mottl’s representation.

Nevertheless, she seemed to have achieved a higher grade of authenticity than many of her predecessors. Maria Urban, who enacted the role of the Mother in 1981, had been criticized for her lack of dominance and the inability to represent Amanda Wingfield as an American character<sup>374</sup>, and Hilde Krahl had equally failed to overcome the difference between her role and her self („Die Krahl bleibt immer die Krahl!” Gabler, *Kronen – Zeitung* 10 March 1986).

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<sup>371</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 156 – 157.

<sup>372</sup> Cf. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden\\_Girls](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Girls)

<sup>373</sup> Cf. Stockwell, 79.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 6 Feb. 1981; Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

- *Tom Wingfield*

As in 1981, Peter M. Preissler split the role of Tom Wingfield into the young and the old Tom, who were embodied by Paul Sigmund and Peter Uray, respectively. Overall, this device was appreciated, since it visually detached the past from the present.<sup>375</sup> The audience endorsement of the split was not the only difference to Preissler's previous staging. While in 1981 the director had let the older Tom "spook[...]"(Reimann, *Kronen-Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981, *my translation*) around on stage rather randomly, he depicted him as an alcoholic in the present production and thus largely excluded the associations with a ghost<sup>376</sup>. Only the critic of the *Kronen-Zeitung*, who was the only one to oppose Preissler's idea of the role split, could not get anything out of the "alten Sandler [...], der durch die Szenen geistert" (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000).

Other reviewers, however, perceived Preissler's interpretation of the role as bearing some significance. The critic of the *Presse* interpreted Tom's refuge in alcoholism as a logical consequence of his failure to overcome the abandonment of his family:

[Peter Uray] nimmt das Ende gleich vorweg: Sein Traum vom Dichter und Matrosen verlor sich in der Schnapsflasche. Wie der Vater ließ auch er die Familie sitzen, doch das schlechte Gewissen verstummte nie. Zu groß ist das Mißbehagen darüber, die zerbrechliche Laura einer verbitterten Zukunft überlassen zu haben. (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000)

For Stephan Hilpold, Tom's alcoholism similarly was an expression of an unattained goal:

[W]eil Orte mit [dem Namen "Paradies"] für Williams Figuren unerreichbar sind, streift der Erzähler des Stücks, der alte Tom, als abgetakelter Säufer durch die doppelten Wände des Gitterkäfigs. (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000)

Surprisingly, the critics seemed to consider Tom Wingfield in both his appearances as a minor character, since they wrote about the role in general but did not assess the individual approaches or performances of the actors. Stephan Hilpold did not even mention Uray and Sigmund by name. In a rather neutral tone, he only indicated that (the young) Tom's departure was a very emotional moment, which visibly left the audience with a feeling of sadness.<sup>377</sup> The reason why Tom and Laura appeared as rather marginal figures in this revival might have been the emphatic dominance of Erika Mottl's Mother. She seemed to have overshadowed not only the other characters in the play, but also the performances of her co-actors.

<sup>375</sup> Cf. Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000.

<sup>376</sup> Cf. *Bühne* March 1981.

<sup>377</sup> Cf. Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000.

- *Laura Wingfield*

In the role of Laura Wingfield, Roswitha Szyszkowitz distinguished herself more from Erika Mottl's performance than Uray and Sigmund. The reviewer from the *Kronen-Zeitung* even assessed Szyszkowitz's performance as the best. He stated that "am eindrucksvollsten ist die zarte, scheue, in die glitzernde Wunderwelt ihrer Glassammlung versponnene Laura von Roswitha Szyszkowitz" (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000). The critics agreed with HM that the actress rendered a fragile and shy portrayal of the Daughter. The *Presse* – critic considered her to be a "Geschöpf [...] mit allen Attributen der unglücklichen Gefalltochter" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000) and Hilpold characterized her as the "leicht verkrüppelte Tochter [...] mit so somnambul geweiteten Augen, die man sonst nur aus Rosamunde-Pilcher-Filmen kennt [...]" (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 5 May 2000).

Laura's glass menagerie was interpreted as her sanctuary<sup>378</sup>, her "fetish" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000) and a "Symbol für leicht zerbrechliches und erstarrtes Dasein" (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000).

Despite being shy and emotionally withdrawn, however, Laura blossomed in the second act. Dobretsberger pointed out:

[D]er zweite Teil des Abends [...] stellt [...] die weitaus griffigere szenische Umsetzung dar. Plötzlich [...] darf sich Laura über greifbares Glück freuen und steigt sogar für einen kurzen Moment aus ihrem Schattendasein hinein in die Lebenssonne [...] (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000)

Even though this happiness proved to be rather short – lived, the encounter with the Gentleman Caller did not turn out to have a detrimental effect on Laura's psyche, as was the case in the previous productions. Quite to the contrary, Jim's visit made her stronger than she was before. As Dobretsberger indicated, Laura admired Jim O'Connor for the "gesellschaftliche Gewandtheit" (*Wiener Zeitung*, 5/6 May 2000) she did not have. Maybe it was this inspiration which allowed her to take a new perspective upon life, at least in this revival of the play. The *Presse* – critic described the outcome of the production as follows: "Während die Mama verzweifelt, zückt Laura Spiegel und Lippenstift und lächelt tapfer: Neuer Versuch, dann wohl mutiger" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000). The reviewer perceived Preissler's modified ending as "nicht hoffnungslos" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000), which is interesting considering the fact that Amanda *did* despair. His perception thus implied that the pivotal figure for him was Laura

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<sup>378</sup> Cf. Publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

Wingfield, with whom he apparently sympathized most. Though nothing new, this serves as a further parameter to corroborate that Austrians at all times have most strongly identified with the victim of the play, Laura, whether individually or collectively as a nation, whereas the nagging Mother has – consciously or unconsciously - been interpreted as the epitome of America.

With regard to Austrian politics and the international furor that was created by the election victory of the FPÖ in October 1999, the subtext of Laura Wingfield must be given major significance. As Hella Pick observed, the fierce reaction from abroad once more caused the Austrians to assume the role of the victim.<sup>379</sup> In Preissler's innovative re-interpretation of the ending Amanda despaired, while Laura emerged as the winner of the play. This may perhaps be read as an optimistic outlook of Austrian society, an appeal to counter the international attacks with sovereignty and stamina in order to emerge victorious.

- *Gentleman Caller*

Similar to Tom Wingfield, the Gentleman Caller appeared to be a minor character in the present revival of the play. Stephan Hilpold did not even find it worth mentioning him at all.<sup>380</sup> It remains unclear whether this was due to Erika Mottl's dominant performance or to the mediocre acting skills of her co-actors. In any case, Günther Wiederschwinger's portrayal of Jim O'Connor sparked off only moderate acclaim. Dobretsberger mentioned his name, but did not comment on his performance. HM appeared to be similarly unimpressed by Wiederschwinger and assessed his stage appearance as "gar nicht strahlend" (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000). Only the *Presse* – critic seemed to be delighted with the actor's performance:

Günther Wiederschwinger erhellt als nichtsahnender Heiratskandidat Jim auf einfühlsame Weise die bedrückende Atmosphäre. Auch er kennt die Tiefen des Minderwertigkeitsgefühls. (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000)

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<sup>379</sup> Cf. Pick, 183.

<sup>380</sup> Cf. Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000.

- *Designer*

Thomas Pekny was responsible for the set design of this production. According to Stephan Hilpold, much attention was paid to the furnishing of the stage, and once again, the aesthetic value was given priority over the interpretation of the content.<sup>381</sup>

From the reviews, it is hard to pin down Pekny's style. According to the critic of the *Kronen-Zeitung*, Pekny's stage design strictly corresponded to Tennessee Williams' stage instructions.<sup>382</sup> Hilpold mentioned a "Leichtmetallkäfig" (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000) as the main object on stage, which evokes associations of a minimalist post-modern scenery. If one reads the review from the *Presse*, a completely different impression is gained. The critic talked about an apartment that was "fensterlos, [mit] abgewohnten Möbel, zweckmäßig" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000) and referred to the old photograph on the wall that pictured the eloped father. From that perspective, the set design seemed to have been old-fashioned rather than postmodern.

Another discrepancy concerned the perceived quality of the scaffolding: While Hilpold referred to a cage made out of *aluminum*, HM talked about a "filigrane[s] Holzgebälk mit Gazevorhängen" (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000, *my italics*). Klinger concurred with HM that Pekny's style was delicate, which resulted in a stage that resembled "[e]inen filigranen Erinnerungsraum" (Klinger, *Die Furche* 11 May 2000).

Furthermore, she pointed out that it was the use of "transparent walls" which created a semi-realistic setting that established a nexus between the past and the present.<sup>383</sup> This description suggests much resemblance to Manfred Noky's setting in 1981, which had equally been described as semi-realistic and semi-symbolic.<sup>384</sup>

However, there was one major difference between the designs of Noky and Pekny. In 1981, Noky had placed the glass cabinet at the center of the stage, and thus drew the major audience focus on it, which he further enhanced by illuminating it.<sup>385</sup> In Pekny's setting, Laura's glass menagerie was positioned "[i]n eine[...] Nische [...], gut geschützt" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000). Thus, in 2000 the claustrophobia caused by the "doppelten Wände des Gitterkäfigs" (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000) might have been considered to be more central than the fragility of Laura's glass figurines.

A more audacious interpretation may be hazarded by a cross-reading of the stage design with the political discourse of the respective time. It has been shown that Austria has

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<sup>381</sup> Cf. Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000.

<sup>382</sup> Cf. HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000.

<sup>383</sup> Cf. Klinger, *Die Furche* 11 May 2000.

<sup>384</sup> Cf. Kathrein, *Die Presse*, 6 Feb. 1981; Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

<sup>385</sup> Cf. Kahl, *Kurier* 6 Feb. 1981.

always closely identified with Laura Wingfield, even to the extent of identifying her as an epitome of the Austrian nation as such. Thus, it may be deduced that Laura's intimate world, her glass menagerie, was subconsciously interpreted by the Austrians as their own world (of politics, of culture, of tradition). During the rule of Bruno Kreisky, Austria had enjoyed a very positive image abroad, which was the reason why between 1980 and 1982, 72% of the population had considered Austrian politics as a source of national pride.<sup>386</sup> At that time the Austrians obviously were proud of their "own world", which was mirrored in Manfred Noky's stage design of 1981. He had placed the glass menagerie right in the center of the stage and had even illuminated it to draw particular attention to it.

In 2000, the Austrians saw themselves as a target of international criticism due to their new political system. As Pick points out, the sanctions that were imposed on Austria triggered a heated debate within the country, which facilitated a truer construction of its past.<sup>387</sup> Even though Jörg Haider and his party enjoyed wide support among the Austrians, it may be surmised that the national pride was significantly hurt by the attacks from abroad. Quite representatively, Thomas Pekny positioned the glass cabinet in a niche.<sup>388</sup> Thus, he did not expose it as clearly as Manfred Noky, but rather presented it as "gut geschützt" (publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000). In parallel, the Austrians defended their political system as a response to the international accusations<sup>389</sup> and thus also protected their (political) world.

The outside world on stage was barred off by the "doppelten Wände des Gitterkäfigs" (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000), which corresponded to the isolation Austria experienced from abroad.

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<sup>386</sup> Cf. Plasser /Ullrich, quoted in Ullrich, 91.

<sup>387</sup> Cf. Pick, 183.

<sup>388</sup> Cf. publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

<sup>389</sup> Cf. Pick, 183.

c) The Play

The majority of the critics agreed that despite the lapse of more than half a century, *The Glass Menagerie* still proved to be a fascinating play. Stephan Hilpold, who criticized the out-of-date-staging of Peter M. Preissler, pointed out that the drama could not even be defeated by infelicitous directorial choices. He wrote:

Tennessee Williams' *Glasmenergie* ist nicht unterzukriegen. Man mag es noch so verstaubt inszenieren, am Ende schlägt die melancholische Schwüle des Stücks zurück. [...] [D]as bleibt wohl einzig allein Williams' Geheimnis. (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000)

This statement ties in with Peter Josch's opinion about the play. In a personal interview, he avowed himself a strong advocate of performances that were faithful to the original, but conceded that the play worked regardless of the chosen interpretation. He said:

„Und wie gesagt, der Erfolg, glaube ich, liegt in erster Linie am Stück selber. Es ist ein wunderbares Stück mit einer wunderbaren Aussage [und] Thematik.“ (Josch, personal interview, 22 Nov. 2007)

In an interview with the *Bühne*, Erika Mottl equally expressed her admiration for the play. She stated:

„Immer wieder stellen wir [i.e. Peter M. Preissler and her co-actors] bei der Arbeit fest, wie voll von Leben dieses Stück ist. Der Text ist so reich, jeder Satz voll Emotionen, Assoziationen, Gedanken, Ausdruckskraft – wir sind alle ganz verblüfft.“ (Mottl in an interview with Renate Wagner, quoted in Wagner, *Bühne* May 2000)

This evaluation contradicts Hilpold's observation that the production disregarded the “Versinnlichung des Stücks” (Hilpold, *Der Standard* 6/7 May 2000). As indicated by Mottl, both the director and his cast were indeed *aware* of the density of the text, and pondered on it extensively. Apparently, though, they could not convey their thoughtful interpretation perceptibly to the audience.

As concerns the genre of the play, Dobretsberger and *publ* called it a “Familiendrama” (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000; *publ*, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000), whereas HM labelled it a “poetische Autobiographie” (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000). Moreover, the critic of the *Presse* described *The Glass Menagerie* as a therapeutic play, written by Williams to digest his own trauma of the “dominante[n] Mutter [und der] psychisch gestörte[n] Schwester” (*publ*, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000) which resulted in a perpetual cycle of rejection, deprivation of love and a feeling of guilt<sup>390</sup>.

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<sup>390</sup> Cf. *publ*, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

For Dobretsberger, the play had become “ein ‘Klassiker’ in Sachen innerer Unzulänglichkeiten” (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000) whose tragedy constituted itself in the discrepancy between the envisioned future and the actual outcome of it, which causes wishes to degenerate into mere illusions and displaces the dreamer into a state of constant dissatisfaction. Thus, she identified the “unterschiedlichen Ausprägungen von Realitätsverlust und Illusionsbereitschaft” (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000) as the main theme of the play. What becomes apparent in all the various perspectives upon the play is that it has largely been universalized. It was either interpreted as the author’s account of his own life or as a family drama devoid of a specific geographic tinge. In that sense, the American setting has lost most, if not all, of its importance. Rather, the setting has become metaphysical and served merely as a symbol within the jungle of metaphors inherent in the play. This becomes clear when we consider Dobretsberger’s indication of the play’s locale: “Ort des Geschehens ist die Wohnung de Wingfields in St. Louis, die irgendwo Kerker der Erinnerung und Versteck vor der Welt zugleich ist“ (Dobretsberger, *Wiener Zeitung* 5/6 May 2000).

While for Dobretsberger the whole story seemed to make perfect sense, the critic of the *Kronen-Zeitung* could not get anything out of it. He wrote:

Für unsere rationale Welt der Computer und des Internets sind Rückzüge aus der Wirklichkeit in die Träume und die Flucht in die Illusion von Glastiersammlungen zu unglaublich geworden. (HM, *Kronen-Zeitung* 5 May 2000).

This statement was not confirmed by Peter Josch, who defined *The Glass Menagerie* as a play that is and has always been topical.<sup>391</sup>

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<sup>391</sup> Cf. Josch, personal interview 22 Nov. 2007.

### 3.7.3. *Die Glasmenagerie* finds its way into the Theater in der Josefstadt

On 27 January 2005 a revival of *The Glass Menagerie* premiered in the *Theater in der Josefstadt* under the direction of Wolf – Dietrich Sprenger. Interestingly, this production was not based on Berthold Viertel’s translation of 1949, but employed the more recent text version of Jörn van Dyck<sup>392</sup>, published in 1987. The widely acclaimed cast was composed of Traute Hoess as Amanda Wingfield, Michael Dangel as Tom, Gertrud Drassl as Laura and Boris Eder as Jim O’Connor.

It is worth noting that a former tradition, namely the evaluation of the audience response at the end of the critical reports, which had been discontinued from the 1980s onwards, was picked up again and surfaced in numerous reviews of this production. Boberski closed his article with the observation: “Die Premiere wurde vom Josefstadt-Publikum sehr zufrieden, aber ohne Überschwang aufgenommen” (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005). Of the same tenor, the *Salzburger Nachrichten* described the audience as “relativ zufrieden“ (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005). More positively, Renate Wagner referred to a “big and deserved success” (Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) and Haider-Pregler praised it as “bestes, mit dementsprechenden [*sic!*] Beifall bedanktes Schauspielertheater” (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan 2005). Guido Tartarotti described the audience response as a “sommerlich milden Begeisterungsregen”. He asserted that it was quite rare to experience so much content among an opening-night-audience and predicted large attendance and the general approval of the theatergoers.<sup>393</sup> This information leaves no doubt that the general public endorsed Sprenger’s revival. However, their acclaim did not necessarily coincide with the opinion of the critics...

#### a) Another Tennessee Williams Renaissance

By now, a certain pattern has become apparent as concerns the fluctuation of Tennessee Williams’ popularity on the Viennese stages. It seems valid to say that interest in the author and his plays used to resurge in periodic intervals of two decades. Accordingly, after its Austrian premiere in 1949, *The Glass Menagerie* was just revived once throughout the 50s and it was only in the 1960s that the play was paid the due attention to, with a total of six revivals. In the course of the following decade, the drama only saw two minor productions, both of which were performed in small venues (*Amerikahaus* and *Theater im Zentrum*). Two decades after the pro-Williams sentiment of the 60s, the

<sup>392</sup> Cf. Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

<sup>393</sup> Cf. Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan 2005.

80s heralded a comeback of his plays on the Viennese stages. Following this established pattern, the 90s then did not show many revivals of the Williams - repertoire. As the year 2005 was dawning, another Tennessee-Williams-renaissance was on the horizon, roughly two decades after the last one.

The *Burgtheater* initiated the boom with a revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* and was followed by the *Theater in the Josefstadt* and Sprenger's *Glass Menagerie*.

*Der Standard* wrote "Alle lieben jetzt Tennessee Williams" (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan 2005), the *Bühne* talked about a Tennessee – Williams „Hype“ (Klinger, *Bühne* Jan. 2005) and *Die Furche* and the *Wiener Zeitung* simply referred to a "Tennessee-Williams-Renaissance" (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005; Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005). Similar to the reactions of the early 80s, the sudden rise in the author's popularity caused some bafflement in 2005. After all, the playwright from the American South had gained quite a scandalous reputation. *Bühne* – critic Eva Maria Klinger characterized him as „ein[en] unangepaßte[n] Autor, trunk- und drogensüchtig, ordinär“ (Klinger, *Bühne* Jan. 2005). The *News* – critic stated: "Auf nicht leicht zu konstruierenden Wegen ist Tennessee Williams plötzlich jemand im Wiener Theaterleben" (H.S., *News* 3 Feb. 2005). Klinger, however, provided an explanation. She elucidated:

[Tennessee Williams] galt jahrzehntelang als schwülstiger Südstaaten-Romantiker mit Hang zum Obszönen, Exzessiven und Neurotischen. Gerade darin haben die Regiestars Frank Castorf, Peter Zadek und jüngst Andrea Breth die Affinität zur Gegenwart entdeckt. (Klinger, *Bühne* Jan. 2005)

Margarete Affenzeller confirmed the strong relation between Williams' literary style and the prevalent zeitgeist. According to her, the theaters were oversaturated with postmodern plays and had thus changed their focus back to "nonpostmodernen Stücken" (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005).

Therefore, the Tennessee - Williams – renaissances of 1981 and of 2005 must have emanated from different motivations. While in 1981, the critics identified *the lack of* (successful) contemporary literature as the reason for the recourse to erstwhile theater successes<sup>394</sup>, the audiences of the new millennium *have had enough* of postmodernity and thus longed for familiarity, which is why they embraced the revivals of modern classics.

Guido Tartarotti subsumed the theater situation of 2005 as follows:

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<sup>394</sup> Cf. Kathrein, *Die Presse* 6 Feb. 1981; Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981.

2005 wird Theater vom Blatt gespielt, nicht zertrümmert. [...] Das Publikum muß das im Theater wiederfinden, was es aus dem Schauspielführer kennt! Wir schreiben es hundert Mal. Das. Regietheater. Ist. Out. Jedenfalls bei jenen Regisseuren, denen es an Anmaßung, Mut oder Können für das Regietheater mangelt. (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005)

His statement may well be understood as a side-blow against Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger, suggesting that it was way easier to please an audience by showing them what they already know than convincing them of something new and unfamiliar.

b) Wolf – Dietrich Sprenger – A Staging Ready For the Museum

Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger, whose recent *Josefstadt* - production of Thomas Bernhard's *Über allen Gipfeln ist Ruh* had earned him wide critical acclaim<sup>395</sup>, staged a "spielfilmlang[e]" (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005) *Glass Menagerie* of only 100 minutes without intermission.<sup>396</sup> While he had approached Thomas Bernhard from a "remarkably vital" (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) perspective, he deliberately tackled *The Glass Menagerie* in a strictly conventional way and rendered it without any attempts of modernization.

Although this directorial tactic proved clearly successful with the audience, it was especially the critics of the so-called quality papers (*Die Presse*, *Der Standard* and the *Salzburger Nachrichten*) who lamented Sprenger's risk-free directorial undertaking.

In a mixed review, Norbert Mayer felt that the production results were "viel zu brav" (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005), since they neglected the subliminal evil inherent in the text and tended to downsize the drama to a shallow "Psycho Schwank" (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005). Nevertheless, he justified Sprenger's superficial dealing with the text as follows:

Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger [...] kommt offenbar dem Bedürfnis entgegen, dass die Josefstadt, dem bedrohlichen Griff des Modernisten Hans Gratzner entronnen, gleich zwei Generationen zurückspringt. Insofern paßt diese grau melierte Inszenierung eines Klassikers schon wieder, und sie hat auch ihre Vorzüge, so wie Schwarz-weiß-Kino bester Machart im Bellaria-Kino. (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005)

Guido Tartarotti's line of argument was indeed quite similar to Norbert Mayer's. He emphasized that the revival was "schnarchbrav[...]" and "irritationsfrei" (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005), which he constituted by stating: "Niemand schreit, niemand ist

<sup>395</sup> Cf. Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005; Klinger, *Bühne* Jan. 2005.

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005; Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

nackt, keine Videoschirme, keine ‘aktualisierten’ Texte” (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005). He left no doubt that Sprenger’s approach perfectly conformed to the taste of the contemporary audience and met the prevalent zeitgeist. However, he unambiguously made clear that the critics’ opinion deviated sharply from that of the general public. He stated:

Selten hat man sich als Kritiker [...] so sehr gewünscht, jemand – ein Castorf *ex machina*? – würde diesen Staubfänger von Bühnentext wenigstens ein bisschen weniger ernst nehmen. Würde zertrümmern, zerschießen, zerfleddern, zerwühlen, zer-irgendwas! (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005)

Tartarotti’s irritation also applied to Helmut Schneider of the *Salzburger Nachrichten*. He considered Sprenger’s *Glass Menagerie* “bis zur Schmerzgrenze konventionell” (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005) and reasoned that stagings like that served to appreciate anew the serious efforts of directors who really want to convey a message to their audience. According to him, Sprenger’s production certainly failed to do so, which was the reason why it left him both frustrated and bored.<sup>397</sup> This impression was also reiterated by Robert Waloch, who equally felt that the production lacked “dramatic tension” (Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005, *my translation*).

In a more neutral tone, Heiner Boberski deemed the revival “sehr gediegen konventionell” and pointed out that it was “für Regietheater-Liebhaber mit Sicherheit [*sic!*] zu museal [...]” (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005).

Thus, the quality papers as well as *XTRA!*, Austria’s biggest gay and lesbian magazine<sup>398</sup>, openly criticized Sprenger’s conventional approach and explicitly favored the recalcitrant and deconstructive director’s theater over a theater which avoided any risk and newness and was only propelled by an eagerness to please its audience. Bearing in mind the readership of the above mentioned papers, it may be conjectured that among the intellectual, the liberal and the younger population, the director’s theater enjoyed a High-Art-appeal, while “Klassikerpflege” (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005) was considered regressive and dull.

The less educated, the conservative and the older population, however, assessed Sprenger’s *Glass Menagerie* very differently. This can be shown on the basis of the reviews published in the *Kronen-Zeitung*, the *Wiener Zeitung*, the *Neues Volksblatt* and the *Vorarlberger Nachrichten*. None of the reviewers of these papers described the production as “conventional” or “boring”, but rather as “unsentimental” (Haider –

<sup>397</sup> Cf. Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>398</sup> Cf. <http://www.xtra-news.at/>

Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005; Wagner, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005; Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt* 29 Jan. 2005) and “erfrischend” (Haider – Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005; Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt* 29 Jan. 2005). Contrary to the assumption that Sprenger staged a revival of *The Glass Menagerie* that was perfectly faithful to the original, *Wiener-Zeitung*-critic Hilde Haider Pregler, who had already reviewed Gerhard Klingenberg’s revival of the play in 1986, perceived the present production as quite different from Williams’ original text: “Die erfrischend unsentimentale Inszenierung überzeugt mehr als das mittlerweile allzu konstruiert wirkende, autobiographisch geprägte ‚Spiel der Erinnerungen’“(Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005). *Kronen-Zeitung* – critic Thomas Gabler agreed with Haider Pregler on her observation. According to him, Sprenger’s version of *The Glass Menagerie* had been freed “from kitsch and from pathos” (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*).

Gabler openly revealed his advocacy of traditional stagings and his aversion to the director’s theater. He wrote: “Sprenger stellt seine Betrachter nicht vor endgültige Tatsachen moderner Theaterstoff-Ausbeuter, stellt dem Publikum kein ‚zeitgeistiges’ Meinungsultimatum“ (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005). This deprecating attitude towards deconstructive directorial approaches was also shared by director Peter Josch, who admitted that he had always leaned towards the conservative side and described himself as an “opponent of outright contemporary stagings” (Josch, *personal interview* 22 Nov. 2007, *my translation*). Similar to Gabler, he felt that drastic modernizations did not *liberate* the audience’s fantasy, but rather *restricted* it.<sup>399</sup> Reflecting on the theater era two decades ago, Josch pointed out that the theatrical style had been utterly different and had been characterized by a certain degree of “Reinheit” (Josch, *personal interview* 22 Nov. 2007).

It can thus be concluded that Sprenger’s direction was disapproved of by aficionados of the *Regietheater*, while it found favor among those critics who opposed an avant-gardist theater.

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<sup>399</sup> Cf. Josch, *personal interview* 22 Nov. 2007.

c) The Cast comes to the Rescue

Although the conventional staging of Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger was widely criticized, many reviewers felt that the cast made up for this due to their outstanding acting skills. Tartarotti praised the “hohe[...] technische[...] Niveau” (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005) of their performances, and Schneider clarified that the frustration of the theatregoer could exclusively be ascribed to the direction and the play itself, but in no way to the cast, whose skills he considered to be beyond question.<sup>400</sup> Affenzeller particularly commended the renditions of the two actresses<sup>401</sup>, who, according to Thomas Gabler, endowed their roles with emotions rather than sentimentalism.<sup>402</sup> In that sense, the cast was generally deemed the saving grace of the production, whose merit it was “dass dieses Stück zu einem vertrauten Erinnerungs-Erlebnis [wurde]” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005).

- *Amanda Wingfield*

Traute Hoess, who had recently been acclaimed for her role in Joe Orton’s *Seid nett zu Mr. Sloane*, also received overall critical approval for her depiction of Amanda Wingfield, even though she considered herself utterly different from the play’s character. In an interview with the *Bühne*, she expounded on her own perception of the role:

„Ich sehe [Amanda Wingfield] als zarte, sich kasteiende Frau. Sie ist nie ehrlich, offen und entspannt. Ihre strengen Vorstellungen, wie das Leben zu führen sei, erdrücken sie wie ein Korsett.“ (Hoess, *interview with Eva Maria Klinger, Bühne* Jan. 2005)

Judging from this role interpretation, one might think that Hoess focussed on the serious aspects of Amanda Wingfield. Contrary to this assumption, though, the majority of the critics noticed a comic character in her portrayal. Norbert Mayer observed:

Traute Hoess spielt die dominante Mutter raffiniert, allerdings erliegt sie der Versuchung, die dämonischen Seiten dieser Figur zu vernachlässigen und das Ulkige hervorzuheben. Das raubt dem Stück die Tiefe. (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005)

Conversely, Waloch embraced the „bemüht gesuchte[...] Komödiantik“ (Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005) since he considered it to be the only effective aspect within the production.

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005.

Helmut Schneider felt that Hoess was “alle paar Minuten *unfreiwillig* komisch” (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005, *my italics*). In fact, it seems as if the interpretation of the actress deviated from that of the director, and it might well have been that Sprenger influenced Hoess in her acting style. At least this is the impression that can be gained when holding Hoess’ own interpretation against her description of Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger. She stated:

“Unser Regisseur Wolf – Dietrich Sprenger hat viel Sinn für feinen Humor. Er selbst ist ein begnadeter Komiker und findet auch bei seiner Regie das richtige Gespür für Eigenheiten und Absonderlichkeiten einer Figur.“ (Hoess, *interview with Eva Maria Klinger*, *Bühne* Jan. 2005)

Most critics who commented on the comedic element of Hoess’ Amanda conceded that she displayed the more serious aspects of the role as well. Heiner Boberski wrote: „Traute Hoess [...] wirkt, insbesondere als sie im blumig-antiquierten Mädchenkleid auftritt, vor allem komisch, hat aber auch starke ernste Momente (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005). Since the flowery dress was also identified by two other critics<sup>403</sup> as a source of Hoess’ comedic effect, it may be reasoned that her costume was put to deliberate use to create a comic relief within the production.

The critics who did not get distracted by Amanda’s flamboyant attire tended to perceive Hoess’ rendition as less comic. H.S. deemed her performance “brilliant” (H.S., *News* 3 Feb. 2005), Wagner felt that the actress succeeded in perfectly balancing out the various facets of Amanda’s personality<sup>404</sup> and Gabler asserted: “Traute Hoess füllt die Rolle der naiven, wehmütig an die Träume von Geld und Männerglück Denkenden mit großer Leidenschaft. [Sie] ist [...] perfekt” (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005).

Guido Tartarotti was the only critic who assessed Hoess’ performance unfavourably. He wrote: „Traute Hoess gibt eine Amanda Wingfield wie aus dem Theaterlexikon, ihre Hände ringende Echauffiertheit mag unterhaltsam sein, berührend ist nur selten“ (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005).

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<sup>403</sup> Cf. Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005; Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>404</sup> Cf. Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt* 29 Jan. 2005.

- *Tom Wingfield*

Michael Dangl enacted Tom Wingfield in Sprenger's revival. Numerous critics commented on his performance only in a scarce manner or abstained from an assessment altogether. Quite vacuously, Wagner described Dangl's performance as "sehr schön" (Wagner, *Neues Volksblatt* 29 Jan. 2005). Gabler remarked in an equally non-descript way: „Michael Dangl als Tom, als emotionsloser Erzähler (und impulsiver Kontrahent der Monotonie) bricht zusammen, bevor er aus diesem Dasein ausbricht“ (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005). *News* – critic H.S. did not even mention Dangl at all.

Consequently, the question begs to be asked whether the role of Tom Wingfield had lost its importance for the Austrian audience or Michael Dangl simply paled beside Traute Hoess? Tartarotti's review seemed to suggest the former assumption, since he assessed Dangl's performance more favorably than Hoess'. According to him, the actor also adhered to the prevalent clichés, yet rendered the role "brüchiger, menschlicher, interessanter" (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005). Considering the review of the *Dolomiten*, both assumptions could be plausible. On the one hand, Bertagnolli argued that Dangl lacked the required serenity with which Tom Wingfield considered his life in retrospect. On the other hand, he identified Amanda Wingfield as the "dramatische[n] Impulsgeber des Stücks" (Bertagnolli, *Dolomiten* 26 Feb. 2005) and thus openly revealed that he considered the role of the Mother as pivotal, despite Tom's authoritarian appearance at the beginning of the play:

Tom dreht die Zeit zurück, erzählt im Checker-Ton, wie er mit Mutter und Schwester in St. Louis einst lebte. Obwohl Dangl der Konzeptrolle schwer standhalten kann, wird ihm sogar der Luxus zuteil, über das Licht zu befehligen: „Gedämpft, sagte ich.“ Tom, the Master of the Ceremony. *Doch dann kam Mama.* (Bertagnolli, *Dolomiten* 26 Feb. 2005, *my italics*)

Haider – Pregler also commented on the significant function of Dangl as the play set off.

Wie in einer Talkshow holt Michael Dangl als Moderator die Personen des Stücks nacheinander auf die Bühne, ehe er die Zeitmaschine auf Rückwärtsgang schaltet und sich selbst als Tom Wingfield in die Handlung einklinkt. (Hilde Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005)

By claiming that Dangl only slipped into the role of Tom Wingfield *after* the time has been turned back, Haider – Pregler seemed to suggest that the introductory part prior to that event was perceived as a performance that was detached from the actual play.

Another opinion was expressed by Boberski, who felt that Dangl succeeded in convincingly oscillating between the role of the older and the younger Tom.<sup>405</sup> Norbert Mayer praised the acting style of Dangl as “sehr engagiert und tüchtig” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005), even though he missed the distinctive atmosphere of the American South, which he felt to have been convincingly conveyed by the felicitous film adaptations of the play.<sup>406</sup>

To conclude, Dangl’s performance overall was assessed favorably. Thus, it may be assumed that the scarce critical remarks on Tom Wingfield by some critics cannot be traced back to Dangl’s acting skills, but rather to the fact that the role itself has lost significance over the years.

- *Laura Wingfield*

The role of Laura Wingfield was enacted by the native-born South Tyrolean Gertrud Drassl, who had won the “Nestroy”- award for talented young actors for her portrayal of Hedwig in Henrik Ibsen’s *Wild Duck* in the previous year.<sup>407</sup> In Sprenger’s *Glass Menagerie*, the 26-year-old actress was once again critically acclaimed.

A number of reviewers held the view that Drassl did not depict the Daughter as submissive and overly fragile, but rather presented her as strong-willed and at times almost recalcitrant.

Tartarotti and Schneider agreed that the actress effectively deconstructed the prevalent image of the character as the victim of the play, and stood out of the cast by choosing an idiosyncratic and unconventional approach. Tartarotti wrote:

Einzig Gertrud Drassl als behindertes, für seine Glastiere und seine Schlagerplatten lebendes Mädchen Laura bricht zumindest ansatzweise die Erwartungen. Diese Laura stolpert nicht als verhuschtes Opferlämmchen, durchs Wohnzimmer, sondern verteidigt ihre Traumwelt [.]. (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005)

In the same tenor, Schneider emphasized that Drassl deliberately refrained from depicting the Daughter, whom he considered as Amanda’s antipode, as the “sacrificial lamb” (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) of the play. Even though Drassl’s Laura largely remained in a state of a sustained and self-chosen state of isolation, her energetic outbursts and her eagerness to defend her precious collection endowed the production with “interesting, new tones” (Schneider, *Salzburger*

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<sup>405</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005.

<sup>406</sup> Cf. Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>407</sup> Cf. Klinger, *Bühne* Jan. 2005.

*Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*). If we consider Laura as an allegory of the Austrian nation and her glass menagerie as emblematic of Austria's politics and culture, this may be interpreted as an interesting turn. While in 2000, Roswitha Szyszkowitz's Laura had only gained strength at the end of the play, induced by the disappointment of the Gentleman Caller, Gertrud Drassl endowed the character with recalcitrance throughout her entire performance. While the former had been put in a state of isolation against her will, the latter remained there voluntarily, having found a way to deal with it. This may be seen in parallel to the development of the coalition between ÖVP and FPÖ. In 2000, Austria had been politically isolated by the European Union, Israel and the United States. However, the country did not back down, but rather defended its political system, which remained unchanged until 2007.

Heiner Boberski mentioned the two faces of Drassl's Laura and described her as "lieblich, naiv und bedauernswert" on the one hand, but as "trotzig und kantig" (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005) on the other. Wagner evaluated Drassl's interpretation as follows:

Gertrud Drassl gibt der Laura weniger die poetische Verhuschtheit als die Unwirschheit der oft verletzten Seele, die bitteschön in Ruhe gelassen sein will, weil sie ahnt, dass das Leben für sie ohnedies nichts bereit hat. (Wagner, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* 20 Jan. 2005)

For Wagner, the power of Drassl's Laura was thus not engendered by her inner strength, but rather by despair over her fate, to which she surrendered without struggle. In contrast, Roswitha Szyszkowitz' Laura had been perceived as rather hopeful<sup>408</sup> and had emerged emotionally bolstered from the disappointing encounter with the Gentleman Caller. Quite differently, Thomas Gabler described the disadvantageous outcome of the acquaintance for Drassl's Laura as a traumatic experience which eventually caused her to succumb to complete agony.<sup>409</sup> This perception was also shared by Haider-Pregler, who wrote:

Gertrud Drassls trotz ihres orthopädischen Schuhs mädchenhaft-attraktiv und irgendwie schwerelos-strahlend wirkende Laura zerbricht an dieser Begegnung mit der realen Welt, deren Schwelle sie für einige Momente staunend und beinahe ungläubig überschreiten gewagt hat. (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005)

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<sup>408</sup> Cf. publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

<sup>409</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung*, 29 Jan. 2005.

For Boberski, it was not exactly the encounter with Jim O'Connor, but rather the shattering of the unicorn, which conditioned Laura's breaking with the external world.<sup>410</sup>

It is interesting to note that for some critics the strong and aggressive aspect of Drassl's portrayal was in the foreground, while others merely identified the fragile side of it. Gabler, for instance, did not refer to the recalcitrance that Drassl bestowed on her role, but merely mentioned her weakness, sensitivity and fragility.<sup>411</sup> And Norbert Mayer wrote:

Die traumhafte Wirkung dieses Dramas hängt [...] von Laura ab. Und Gertrud Drassl, zerbrechlich, traurig, stark in ihrer Einsamkeit, überzeugt. So spielt man Tragödien. (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005)

- *Gentleman Caller*

The role of Jim O'Connor was embodied by Boris Eder. Similar to the reviews of Michael Dangl's Tom Wingfield, some reviewers did not render an assessment of his performance<sup>412</sup>, and *News* – critic H.S. did not even mention his name. While none of the critics provided an explanation for the phenomenon of omission in the case of Tom Wingfield, Norbert Mayer implicitly verbalized the reason for it with regard to the visitor: he defined the Gentleman Caller as a minor role.<sup>413</sup> This may be seen as a major change in the Austrian performance history of *The Glass Menagerie*. After all, the Gentleman Caller had repeatedly been identified as a key figure in the second act.<sup>414</sup>

While in previous productions Jim O'Connor was perceived as the realistic counterpart to the escapist Wingfield family, in this revival the contrast to the other characters was not drawn on the basis of his realism, but rather to his distinctive Americanness. Haider – Pregler, who had defined the Gentleman Caller in 1986 without drawing any particular cultural allusions, described the character in 2005 as “karriere- und selbstbewusste[n] junge[n] Bilderbuchamerikaner” (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005). In the same way, Heiner Boberski considered Jim O'Connor to be the “embodiment of the American Dream” (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005, *my translation*), which he saw manifest in the character's self-confidence and the strong

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<sup>410</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005.

<sup>411</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung*, 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>412</sup> Cf. Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005; Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

<sup>413</sup> Cf. Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Klaus, *Wiener Zeitung* 6 Feb. 1981; Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten* 10 March 1986; publ, *Die Presse* 5 May 2000.

belief in his career. Even though the adjectives associated with America and the American Dream bore rather positive connotations, the character was nevertheless perceived as quite disagreeable. Boberski defined him as the “not particularly likeable sunny boy” (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005, *my translation*), and Margarete Affenzeller felt that he “exuded [...] the charme [...] that nobody needed [...]” (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*).

Boris Schneider’s acting style enhanced the unfavorable perception of the role. According to Tartarotti, Boris Eder played the role “so ölig, eitel und oberflächlich, wie dieser Jim eben zu sein hat“ (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005), thus implying that it was not only a boosting self-confidence and career optimism which was considered *typically American*, but also vanity, shallowness and superficiality.

A different, yet equally symptomatic conclusion was made by Helmut Schneider. He wrote: “Boris Eder ist der besserwisserische und selbstzufriedene “Verehrer”. Er spielt ihn so, dass *alle* froh sind, dass er an Laura nicht interessiert ist“ (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005, *my italics*). What Schneider revealed was not only the overall negative perception of the *American* character, but also the general sympathy for Laura. Therefore, perhaps even in 2005 the Austrians still identified most closely with the victim of the play, Laura Wingfield.

- *Designer*

The stage was designed by Achim Römer, who was also responsible for the costumes. Two critics described the setting he created as “dreary” (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005; Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*), whereas one critic perceived it to be functional and devoid of the distinctive Southern flair.<sup>415</sup>

All the critics who mentioned the stage design remarked on the fire escape at the back of the stage, which was merely hinted at, though. Affenzeller clearly perceived the stage as a “von hohen Feuerleitern eingeschachteten Wohnraum” (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005). Numerous other critics, however, were not so sure about the significance of the steel frame positioned in the background. Norbert Mayer reckoned that the “dreary stage design” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) represented iron cages, which could possibly denote “Feuerleitern in einer schlechten Gegend der amerikanischen Stadt St. Louis” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005). Wagner and Boberski

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<sup>415</sup> Cf. Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

also interpreted the stage to be suggestive of a cage.<sup>416</sup> For Gabler, however, it represented merely an “empty [...] steel frame” (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*).

Despite its suggestive nature, Helmut Schneider felt that the stage design significantly defined the tone of the production. He wrote:

Im Bühnenhintergrund ein Metallgestell, wohl die Stilisierung der Feuerleiter. Noch weiter hinten ein leicht bewölkter Himmel, wohl der Hinweis auf die Sehnsüchte der nur vier Protagonisten des Stücks. Und weil ja doch keine Wünsche in Erfüllung gehen, ist der Himmel schwarz – weiß. (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005)

In a similar tenor, *Furche* – critic Heiner Boberski lauded Römer’s conception of the stage as adequately complementing the dismal mood of the play: “Das Bühnenbild von Achim Römer, ein luftiger Käfig vor einem wolkigen Himmel in verschiedenen Grautönen, schafft [...] das richtige Ambiente“ (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005).

The sky, which delimited the stage at its back, was indeed mentioned by a number of reviewers, even if they did not dwell on it as metaphorically as did Helmut Schneider. Norbert Mayer referred to a “grau verhangene[n] Himmel” and Tartarotti observed “Sturmwolken” (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005), which, to him, were of a menacing character.

Indeed, Römer seemed to have intended a parallel between the dark and gloomy sky and Laura’s tragic fate. After all, the climax of the play, which was defined as the revelation of Jim O’Connor’s liaison and the concomitant regression of Laura into her state of isolation<sup>417</sup>, was marked by a peal of thunder. This noise effect was commented on by two critics, both of whom assessed it unfavorably. Affenzeller stated: “Zu diesem brutalen Moment fällt Sprenger *ausgerechnet* ein gutes, altes Donnerrollen am grauen Himmel über St. Louis ein“ (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005, *my emphasis*). Boberski rejected the device more explicitly. He declared that the „Donnerschlag war jedenfalls entbehrlich“ (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005).

In contrast to most of the previous revivals, both music and light design was given some separable critical consideration. Michael Rüggeberg was responsible for the background music and Emmerich Steigberger functioned as the light designer. The music was mentioned by three critics, and two of them also referred to the light design.

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<sup>416</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005; Wagner, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>417</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005.

Norbert Mayer, who criticized Sprenger's superficial dealing with the text, stated that due to the successful employment of music and lighting the “uncanny and melancholic mood” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) of *The Glass Menagerie* could at least be vaguely discerned.

Haider-Pregler commended the “gekonnte Lichtregie und [die] passende Musik“ (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005), which she claimed to have facilitated the distinction between the Tom's retrospective narrations and the actual unfurling of the past.<sup>418</sup>

Boberski only commented on Michael Rüggeberg's music, which he considered “sehr gediegen konventionell” (Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005) and hence perfectly appropriate for Sprenger's staging.

#### d) The Play

By 2005, *The Glass Menagerie* had been firmly integrated into Austrian culture, which manifested itself in its embedding within the Austrian system of education. This, of course, fostered the familiarity of the (younger) population with the play.<sup>419</sup> Guido Tartarotti defined *The Glass Menagerie* as “[e]in[en] moderne[n] Klassiker, wie man ihn nicht nur aus dem Schauspielführer, sondern *vor allem* aus dem Schulunterricht kennt [...]“ (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005, *my italics*). Helmut Schneider also pointed to the fact that the drama had established itself as a “Schullektüre-Klassiker” (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005) and Robert Waloch wondered if his impression of “bemühtes Schülertheater” (Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005) was caused by the direction, or rather by the play itself. Generally speaking, it seemed as if the accommodation of the classic in the Austrian curricula was rather detrimental to the common perception of the play. Maybe it was the “High-Art- flavor” which had been effaced by the mass distribution of the play and its feeding to a very young readership. To recall, back in 1957 the play had been considered inaccessible for a “zu bildendes, dem Theater zu gewinnendes Publikum” (R.H. *Wiener Zeitung* 10 Nov. 1957), which unmistakably qualified it as a piece of “High Literature”. Now, that the major target group of the play was schoolkids, who by definition fell into the category outlined by R.H. (to-be-educated, theater is typically not *their* domain), the play seemed to have been trivialized and hence divested of its High–Art–appeal. Indeed, it was particularly the critics who mentioned the use of *The Glass Menagerie* in the school system who

<sup>418</sup> Cf. Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005.

<sup>419</sup> Cf. Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005.

assessed the play unfavorably. They all shared the impression that the play had become seriously outdated and was in urgent need of a (contemporary) reinterpretation.<sup>420</sup>

Guido Tartarotti asserted:

1944 mag diese simple Geschichte um zwei junge Menschen, die sich gegen die Drangsalierungen der vom Leben enttäuschten Mutter zur Wehr setzen, aufregend gewesen sein. 61 Jahre später wirkt die Lebensenge der Figuren weit weg, und die bemühte Glück-und-Glas-Metaphorik ein wenig ermüdend. (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005)

In the same tenor, Waloch declared: “Dieses Spiel der Erinnerung ist offensichtlich in die Jahre gekommen!” (Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005). Helmut Schneider criticized not only the conventional approach of Wolf-Dietrich-Sprenger, but also the “dull subject matter” (Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005, *my translation*) of *The Glass Menagerie* which failed to reach a contemporary audience. In view of such criticism, it may be surmised that the rejection of the play can be linked to the fact that it had become a frequent reading at schools. The critics’ collective wish for a contemporary refurbishing of the play may thus be interpreted as an attempt to restore its lost High-Art-appeal. This tied in with the notion that *Regietheater*, which has traditionally worked on the deconstruction of existing scripts, was considered more elitist and high-class than the conventional stagings of original texts.

Even though some other critics who did not comment on the drama’s integration in the Austrian school system also deemed the play outmoded, their evaluations differed decisively from the ones stated above. *News* – critic H.S., for instance, did not believe in the possibility to revive the drama’s former appeal, regardless of the directorial approach. For him, it was a “Museumsstück, unübersetzbar ins Heute, doch in seiner Gestrigkeit nicht überlebensfähig” (H.S., *News* 3 Feb. 2005).

In contrast, the perceived outdatedness of the play found favor with Margarete Affenzeller. While Tartarotti called *The Glass Menagerie* a “Staubfänger” (Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005) and Waloch similarly perceived it to have accumulated a “layer of dust” (Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005), Affenzeller rather compared it to a “vergilbte Fotografie” (Affenzeller, *Der Standard* 29 Jan. 2005). There is no doubt that the latter comparison bore more positive connotations than the former two, resonating with the notion of a nostalgic retrospection. In fact, the *Spiel der Erinnerung* again lived up to its name in the present revival. Waloch remembered previous stagings, first and foremost

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<sup>420</sup> Cf. Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005; Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005; Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

the revival of 1965 with Paula Wessely, Annemarie Düringer, Helmut Griem and Ernst Anders<sup>421</sup>, and Norbert Mayer also alluded to the memories the play evoked. Generalizing his experience, he implied, “*Man erinnert sich genau. Gleich tut sich was: Die Puppe [i.e. Tom Wingfield] bewegt sich [...]*“ (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005, *my italics*). Mayer, who justified Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger’s conventional staging as a response to the need of the contemporary audience, equally endorsed the play. He wrote:

Ist dieses Stück noch zeitgemäß? Beim Boom für die Williams-Stücke muß man das fragen. Aber ja doch, wenn man an der Patina kratzt! Solche zeitlosen Dramen kommen auch heute noch in den interessantesten Familien vor. (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005)

Renate Wagner, who wrote for both the *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* and the *Neues Volksblatt*, assessed the play equally favorably. She considered the subject matter of *The Glass Menagerie*, which she identified as the economic and personal family crisis of the Wingfields, as “[t]raurig, aber alltäglich und solcherart stimmig und gar nicht unaktuell” (Wagner, *Vorarlberger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005).

*Kronen – Zeitung* critic Thomas Gabler reviewed the play rather negatively, but not in terms of its contemporary relevance. He considered it loaded with kitsch and pathos, described the atmosphere as strange and the characters as sentimental, but at the same time pointed out that Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger succeeded in divesting the play OF these features, or at least changed them for the better. Furthermore, he indicated, “[St. Louis] spielt nicht mehr die wichtige Rolle von früheren Inszenierung” (Gabler, *Kronen-Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005) and observed that Sprenger rather focussed on the family tragedy.

#### 3.7.4. Recapitulation

The two major Viennese revivals between 2000 and 2008 laid bare a number of interesting signs which allowed to draw significant deductions in terms of the changed perception of the play and its characters, but also corroborated once more that the impact from the field of politics was digested in the realm of theater.

In 2000, Peter M. Preissler revived *The Glass Menagerie* in the *Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken*. As in 1957, the working-class clientele was considered less educated and cultured than the inner-city audience, even though the critics were careful not to voice any such comment explicitly. Rather, it was Erika Mottl, who exposed the

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<sup>421</sup> Cf. Waloch, *XTRA!* Feb. 2005.

patronizing quality that was still characteristic of the inner city-dwellers. Thus, the hierarchical relationship between the ensemble of the *Volkstheater* and its suburban audience again suggested the intention of a cultural mission.

Peter M. Preissler altered his approach from 1981 in various ways. While he repeated the role split of Tom Wingfield and still adhered to a conventional staging, he deprived the play of its American tinge and essentially changed the ending of the drama. In his production, Laura Wingfield was fragile and shy, but her disappointing encounter with the Gentleman Caller made her a stronger person and endowed her with the courage to face life more vigorously than before. Read in the political context of the time, this sentiment might be applied to Austrian society, who stood up to the international affronts triggered by the election victory of the Austrian Freedom Party and its participation in government. Hella Pick's assumption that Austria had still not overcome the burdens of its Nazi-Past and still wallowed in its role of the victim could be traced not only in the Austrians' sustained sympathy for and identification with Laura Wingfield, but also in Thomas Pekny's set design. He presented Laura's glass menagerie, which may be read as an allegory of Austrian culture and politics, niched and sheltered, rather than exposed and illuminated, as had been the case in Manfred Noky's setting of 1981. Thus, it may be deduced that Austria was concerned with the protection of its own culture, its politics and its deliberate barring off of external interventions.

The myth of victimhood was also perpetuated in the production of the *Theater in der Josefstadt* in 2005 under the direction of Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger. Gertrud Drassl depicted a Laura who was neither shy nor fragile, but rather recalcitrant and defiant, which meant a novelty in the Viennese performance tradition of the play. She vigorously defended her glass menagerie and voluntarily remained in her state of isolation. Unlike Roswitha Szyszkowitz's Laura, who gained strength by the emotional defeat experienced by her encounter with the Gentleman Caller, Drassl's character ended up in a state of complete agony. Even though Drassl depicted the role as not particularly charming or appealing, the strong identification of Austrian society with the role remained unbroken.

Her counterpart, the Gentleman Caller, was perceived as distinctly American in 2005, which had not been the case in the previous revivals. Termed a "Bilderbuchamerikaner" (Haider-Pregler, *Wiener Zeitung* 29 Jan. 2005) and the embodiment of the American

Dream<sup>422</sup>, he displayed the features that were considered *typically American*, namely self-confidence, career-confidence, but also shallowness, superficiality and vanity. Although Boris Eder was praised for his (American) depiction of the character, the role itself was perceived as utterly negative, which might be read as sign of resurgent Anti-Americanism.

While the play was largely commended in 2000 and was considered to survive all kinds of directorial approaches, this opinion had changed radically by 2005. The fact that *The Glass Menagerie* had become inextricably associated with the Austrian school system had tarnished the image of the play. While the drama had always been considered a piece of High Literature it was now perceived as trivialized. Many critics considered it outdated and pleaded for a reinterpretation or a radical deconstruction. Director Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger, however, chose to approach the play strictly conventionally, much to the annoyance of those who advocated the director's theater. Interestingly, the audience of the *Theater in der Josefstadt* embraced the old-fashionedness of Sprenger's staging, suggesting that they had had enough of postmodernism. It was the critics of the quality papers who confronted this contentedness and wished for a less serious dealing with the text.

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<sup>422</sup> Cf. Boberski, *Die Furche* 3 Feb. 2005.

## 4. Comparison

So far, the performance traditions of *The Glass Menagerie* on Broadway and in Vienna have been surveyed individually. The present and final part of this thesis will take a comparative stance on both Austrian and American stage practices and will outline major similarities as well as differences.

Initially declined by Hollywood<sup>423</sup> and discounted by Chicago citizens as a “critics’ play” in 1944, Claudia Cassidy’s unremitting promotion eventually succeeded in making *The Glass Menagerie* palatable to the pre-Broadway audience. When director Eddie Dowling moved the drama to Broadway three months after its American premiere, it immediately hit the bull’s eye. Tennessee Williams’ success as a playwright was sealed overnight, and the play that he himself considered to be “the saddest [...] [he] ha[s] ever written” (Williams, quoted in Leverich, 591) was lavished with numerous awards. Interestingly enough, the acting ensemble incited hymns of praise among the New York critics, whereas Williams’ literary style did not spark off comparably favorable comments. Instead, the reviewers found fault with certain incongruities inherent in the text, and the dual role of Tom as protagonist of the action and narrator of past events was rejected as a redundant theatrical device copied from Chekhov. However, these qualms were hushed by the time of the first Broadway revival in 1956, after which the play gradually manifested itself as an indispensable American cultural object to be transmitted for generations to come.

Even though Williams himself was not particularly fond of the play<sup>424</sup>, the American audiences proved to be so throughout the decades. Its prestigious status was visibly attested in 1983, when *The Glass Menagerie* was selected as the first masterpiece of Williams’ literary repertoire to be revived posthumously on Broadway. Another sign of the play’s rootedness in American culture can be discerned by its incorporation in the high school canon, which was first referred to by the critics in 1994.<sup>425</sup>

But it was not only *American* teachers who taught the drama to their students. As the newspaper reviews of 2005 revealed, the play was also widely employed in Austrian classrooms<sup>426</sup> and thus could be identified as a component of the *Austrian* school canon as well. As Joseph Roach reminds us, “canon formation in European culture parallels

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<sup>423</sup> Cf. Leverich, 518.

<sup>424</sup> Cf. Leverich, 549-550.

<sup>425</sup> Cf. Stuart, *New York Newsday* 16 Nov. 1994.

<sup>426</sup> Cf. Schneider, *Salzburger Nachrichten* 29 Jan. 2005; Tartarotti, *Kurier* 29 Jan. 2005.

the spiritual principle to which bell hooks, in her essay on ‘Black Indians’, attributes the deep affinity of African and Native American peoples: ‘that the dead stay among us so that we will not forget’” (Roach, *Culture and Performance* 133). In that sense, the adoption of *The Glass Menagerie* into the Austrian educational system would signify the intention of the Austrian community to perpetuate the collective memory of Tennessee Williams and uphold his literature as an immortal symbol of his past greatness.

According to Lüsebrink, however, the canonical dealing with Williams’ *Glass Menagerie* rather suggests the pursuit of a pedagogical intent in language teaching, which does not necessarily imply the positive reception of the play.<sup>427</sup> Rather, the text would be treated as a paradigmatic example of American as opposed to Austrian culture in an endeavor to nurture stereotypical assumptions of the United States. Indeed, I consider Joseph Roach’s interpretation apposite with regard to the United States, while Lüsebrink’s approach seems to explain more accurately the use of the play in Austria.

In any case, there is no doubt that the Austrians have maintained an intense relationship with the play throughout the years. This becomes manifest in its frequent realizations on the Viennese stages, which outnumbered its appearances on Broadway by far. Ever since its premiere *The Glass Menagerie* saw a stunning fifteen revivals in Vienna, as opposed to an overall of only seven productions on Broadway. It is worth noting that the play’s popularity underwent decisive fluctuations in Vienna, whereas on Broadway it was revived steadily once in every decade. This, again, points to the fact that the New York revivals of *The Glass Menagerie* could be interpreted as flashing reminders of Tennessee Williams’ legacy, following the mission of consolidating his status as one of the great American playwrights in the collective memory and literary consciousness of the American community. In Austria, on the other hand, the oscillating attitude to Tennessee Williams’ first play proved to be contingent upon the general mood prevalent in the country. Having said this, it has to be conceded that the Austrian stagings of *The Glass Menagerie* did not necessarily imply a pro-American sentiment, but were also instrumentalized to denote nationalism and anti-Americanism.

Upon its arrival in Austria, the play was greeted far more positively than in the United States, and despite its inherent Americanness the Austrian audience was quick to read an Austrian context into the play and relocate the characters into the political setting of the time. While the Gentleman Caller was immediately categorized as

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<sup>427</sup> Cf. Lüsebrink, 136.

American, hence “wesensfremd” (hub, *Arbeiter-Zeitung* 25 Jan. 1949), Laura Wingfield exuded a particular appeal for the post-war audience, who could identify closely with her role as a victim and the state of desperation she was trapped in. In contrast, the American audience related most strongly to Tom and Amanda Wingfield, whereas Laura did not stir much sympathy.<sup>428</sup> The Gentleman Caller was perceived as an entirely positive character, carrying attributes such as dynamic, masculine and extrovert. Unlike the Austrian audience, the American theatergoers could relate to him culturally and thus felt no need to define him as distinctly American.

Surveyed diachronically, the role associations triggered by the premieres in the United States and in Austria gave rise to a recurrent pattern which became reflective of the respective cultural communities. In other words, Laura Wingfield has always represented the strongest point of identification among the Austrians, who have persistently construed her as the feeble victim of the play, evocative of the perpetuated myth of Austrian victimhood. In contrast, the Gentleman Caller was treated as the stereotypical American male, epitomizing not only the clichéd career-drivenness and self-esteem but also stereotyped attributes such as shallowness, vanity and superficiality. Interestingly though, the role has increasingly lost its importance in Austria, and by 2005 it has explicitly degraded into a “Nebenrolle” (Mayer, *Die Presse* 29 Jan. 2005). The eclipsing of Jim O’Connor might be read as an attempt to de-Americanize the play in order to accommodate it more aptly into Austrian culture. After all, the attitude of the Broadway audiences towards the Gentleman Caller has remained unaffected by external circumstances. Regardless of the myriad of directorial choices, the role has at all times been described as the most positive one that clearly enjoyed the highest appeal among American audiences.<sup>429</sup> This suggests that Jim O’Connor exhibits a set of features which the Americans have at all times liked to identify themselves with. The American centrality of the Gentleman Caller indeed seems to be confirmed by the fact that the author himself wanted to put him into the limelight. After all, the script had originally been entitled *The Gentleman Caller*, and was only renamed into *The Glass Menagerie* shortly before its stage premiere.<sup>430</sup>

The different perceptions of Laura Wingfield and the Gentleman Caller can also be detected with regard to the reception of the so-called “Gentleman-Caller-scene”, i.e. the scene which depicts the encounter between Laura and her putative suitor. While the

<sup>428</sup> Cf. Cassidy, *Chicago Tribune* 27 December 1944.

<sup>429</sup> Cf. Feingold, *Village Voice* 29 March 2005.

<sup>430</sup> Cf. Adler, 35; Leverich, 544-554.

American audience tended to focus on the actual acquaintance, repeatedly illustrating it as the most poignant part of the play, the Austrians rather concentrated on the disappointment this meeting entailed. This does not only corroborate the high grade of sympathy they felt towards Laura Wingfield, but also reveals a certain extent of pessimism which seems to permeate Austrian society overall. Furthermore, it is exactly this disenchantment caused by the Gentleman Caller which seals Laura's state of agony and establishes her as the ultimate victim of the play. This of course parallels Austria's "victimology" (Riekmann, 81) in which they have wallowed ever since the Second World War, and which also constituted itself in the resolute enactment of the victim-role and displacement of responsibility and blame for Nazi atrocities.

Closely related to the myth of victimhood and equally characteristic of the Austrian nation is a feature which can be summarized by Peter Josch's accurate observation, "[M]an sagt, es ist alles früher schöner gewesen" (Josch, *personal interview* 22 Nov. 2007) and Armin Thurnher's reference to the Austrian "remembrance of the past greatness" (Thurnher, 30). *The Glass Menagerie* plays to this inclination of (nostalgic) retrospection in a twofold manner, which might at least partly account for the prolonged success the drama enjoyed in Austria. Firstly, the entire story unfolds in retrospect as experienced by Tom Wingfield. He relates the story of his adolescence in St. Louis, which he re-lives in his memories. Secondly, Amanda Wingfield is constantly looking back on her past as the daughter of a plantation aristocrat, which she presents in a romanticized light. Thomas Adler defines her as a "mythmaker" (Adler, 38), who creates a falsified account of her past since she cannot cope with reality.<sup>431</sup> This was certainly a feature that connected the utterly *American* character with the Austrian community, whose myth-making behavior strongly resembled that of Amanda Wingfield. Her distinctly American background was initially considered only of marginal importance. Rather, the Viennese audience focused on her motherliness and her rootedness in a (rather unspecific) past, both of which they could perfectly identify with. The demand to endow the role with "Americanness" was only raised in the 1960s, but from then on it repeatedly proved to be a challenging, if not impossible endeavor.

While on Broadway American actresses such as Helen Hayes and Maureen Stapleton could play themselves without obscuring the American heritage of Amanda Wingfield<sup>432</sup>, the simple re-enactment of one's acquired stage-persona did not suffice on the Viennese stages. By claiming that "Die Krahl bleibt immer die Krahl!" (Gabler,

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<sup>431</sup> Cf. Adler, 38.

<sup>432</sup> Cf. Maureen Stapleton, quoted in O'Niell, 90; O'Niell, 74 – 75.

*Kronen-Zeitung* 10 March 1986), Thomas Gabler suggested how utterly insurmountable the difference between the Austrian Hilde Krahl and Williams' Southern Mother was. Throughout the past five decades, Austrian actresses saw themselves confronted with the difficulty of representing an American character, which inevitably poses the question, "What does it mean to be American?" Maria Urban, Hilde Krahl and Traute Hoess overcompensated for their inability to authentically recreate an American mother with a rendition that was described as overly hectic, hysteric and comic, respectively. However, in focussing on what they perceived to be so American about Amanda Wingfield they rendered a one-dimensional character study and failed to represent the role in as complex a way as Williams had conceived it. It was particularly Amanda's Southern gentility which proved to be intangible and thus irreproducible for Austrian actresses.

One way to circumvent this difficulty was to translate Amanda's Americanness into an Austrian conception by identifying on a personal level with as many nodal points as possible. This approach was chosen by Paula Wessely, who was considered by many critics to have recreated the *original* Amanda. She embedded the features of the Mother in her own personality without distorting her contours and thus conveyed a portrayal which was just "Austrian" enough to be understood by her audience but was nevertheless perceived as American.

In an attempt to imbue the role with a distinctive American tinge, Erika Mottl modelled her Amanda after the stereotype of the Southern Beauty as it was transferred via Hollywood movies. As the reviews of 2000 revealed, she indeed succeeded in embodying features of the American South, but rather than presenting an authentic picture of Williams' former Southern Belle, she conjured up associations with Blanche Devereaux of the US series *Golden Girls*.

When one reviews the Austrian Amandas on the Viennese stages, it may thus be concluded that the most authentic character studies were yielded by *translation* rather than *imitation*. Those actresses who struggled to *become* American onstage were criticized by the reviewers for hypercorrecting their incapacity to overcome their own (i.e. Austrian) habitus. Helene Thimig and Paula Wessely tried to reconcile their own personas with the enacted character without laying claim to an explicit Americanness. Both actresses were perceived as having approximated "the original", since they translated the role understandably for an Austrian audience.

Surprisingly enough, the role of Amanda Wingfield also represented difficulties for American performers, even though the problems were different. Since the Broadway actresses were of American origin, their performances naturally restored American behaviour due to the collective memory that was imprinted on and re-enacted by their bodies.<sup>433</sup> Unlike Austrian actresses, the Broadway performers thus did not have to bridge the difference between nationalities, since their performances automatically resonated with Americanness. In 1965, *New York Times* – critic Howard Taubman identified exactly this Americanness inherent in Amanda Wingfield as one of the features that immunized her against all kinds of interpretations. No matter which approach a director chose, Amanda Wingfield appeared to be indestructible. The audience could immediately discern “national traits” innate in Williams’ female protagonist, which left no doubt about her being “specifically American” (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965). Reviewing the 1965 revival on Broadway, Howard Taubman remarked, “The troubling sense of genteel decay is there, though the geography is not distinctly identified” (Taubman, *New York Times* 16 May 1965). Thus, he hinted at the fact that American audiences could relate directly to Amanda’s social background even without any explicit reference. However, as time proceeded fewer and fewer people immediately shared the memories of the historical past unfurled in *The Glass Menagerie*. Rather, the “textual knowledge” (Roach, *Culture and Performance* 125) of Southern gentility was transmitted by means of history books or grandparents’ stories. This of course subverted the theatrical experience of the younger generation and necessitated a more overt representation of the Southern setting. While the Austrian actresses tried to come to terms with the Americanness of Amanda Wingfield, American performers similarly had to deal with particularities of the American South, which constituted quite a challenging task. In 2005, Jessica Lange was criticized for having rendered a *Northern* -, rather than a *Southern* mother, which manifested itself in her use of language as well as her behavior. Born in Minnesota, Lange was said to overcorrect in her imitation of the Southern drawl. Furthermore, her portrayal was considered too soft to authentically recreate a picture of Amanda Wingfield. As Ada Calhoun put it, “[Lange] seems like one of those northern mothers people in the South make run [*sic!*] of – the ones who can’t say ‘no’ like they mean it” (Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005). Similar to Maria Urban, Jessica Lange was criticized for the hectic gestures and nervous energy characterizing her performance, both of which were

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<sup>433</sup> Cf. Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 25 – 26; Roach, *Culture and Performance* 125.

interpreted as a means to compensate the inability of representing a woman of the South.<sup>434</sup> According to Calhoun, Lange should have “transmut[ed] her northern power into southern power” (Calhoun, *New York* 4 Apr. 2005), suggesting a process of cultural transfer. This substantiates Joseph Roach’s assumption that “a fixed and unified culture exists only as a convenient but dangerous fiction” (Roach, *Cities of the Dead* 5). Evidently, there is a remarkable difference between the American North and the American South, constituted by a deviation of historical experiences and hence collective memories. Thus, to overcome this border and yield an authentic representation of Amanda Wingfield a process of translation is not only necessary in Austria but also *within* the United States.

Numerous American directors dared to deconstruct *The Glass Menagerie* and audaciously challenged the traditional approach to the play. In 1965, the Karamu House Theatre in Cleveland, Ohio, for instance, staged an interracial production, representing the Wingfields by black actors while the Gentleman Caller was embodied by a white performer. In a revival by the Lorraine Hansberry Theatre in San Francisco, the cast was all-black, and the only character “privileged” with a white skin color was the absconded father, whose sustained presence was constantly reinforced by the photograph on the wall. This interpretation insinuated the black experience in America and alluded to the trauma caused by miscegenation.<sup>435</sup> Such radicalized approaches were only realized off-Broadway, though. On Broadway the same conservatism as in Austria prevailed, and the revivals of Williams’ breakthrough drama were all rather conventional. This traditionalism was nourished by a conservative clientele who liked to see a *Glass Menagerie* which they already knew from previous stagings, theater guides or school books. Theater directors readily complied with this audience request, since an unpopular production would result in heavy financial losses.

Interestingly, it was in conservative Austria that the critics yelled loudest for a modernization of the script. In 2005, representatives of the more liberal newspapers lamented Wolf-Dietrich Sprenger’s strictly conventional staging, which they perceived as seriously outmoded. It was not the first Austrian reference to the layer of dust that the play has allegedly acquired over the years. While in the United States *The Glass Menagerie* enjoyed a sacrosanct status which was only challenged by few subversive critics, it has always been quite open to criticism in Austria. Generally, the Austrian

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<sup>434</sup> Cf. Plakolb, *Oberösterreichische Nachrichten*, 6 Feb. 1981; Schwarzbaum, *Entertainment Weekly* 1 April 2005.

<sup>435</sup> Cf. Adler, 44-45.

reactions to the play can be subsumed into either rejection or “Austrianization”. More precisely, the play tended to be accepted by Austrian audiences and reviewers whenever they could and *wanted to (!)* identify with aspects of the play that they could translate into an Austrian reality. *The Glass Menagerie* was emphatically declared to retell Tennessee Williams’ autobiography and one way of incorporating the play into an Austrian context was to de-Americanize its author. Williams was repeatedly associated with European playwrights and psychoanalysts, which functioned as a familiarization of the unknown (the American) by means of incorporation into an already existing schema (the Austrian, the European).

Interestingly, this connection was also used to justify the rejection of the play. Those critics who were not willing to embed *The Glass Menagerie* into an Austrian cultural framework employed this comparison to defend European hegemony in the realm of literature and to argue that the original style and stagecraft had been derived from European models. Another way of rejection surfaced in attributes such as “outdated”, “time-dependent” or “dusty”. The dismissive attitude to the play developed only at times of patent anti-Americanism. More often, though, it was an expression of a desperate clinging to “past greatness” coupled with an “existential fear of new things” (Thurnher, 30), both of which has always constituted a decisive part of the Austrian soul.

The performance history of *The Glass Menagerie* in Austria as well as on Broadway has never been a matter of mere *textual* dealing with Williams’ masterpiece. More importantly, it has also encompassed and necessitated a *cultural* dealing with the text, which directorial choices as well as critical reviews have alluded to. The analysis has thus yielded not only a diachronic comparison of the performance traditions in Vienna and New York, but has also laid bare processes of cultural memory and challenges of cultural transfer.

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1. Broadway Productions of *The Glass Menagerie*

#### 1 Playhouse Theater

<b>Opened:</b>	<b>March 31, 1945</b>
Closed:	August 3, 1946
Number of Performances:	563
Producers:	Eddie Dowling and Louis Singer
Directors:	Eddie Dowling and Margo Jones
Set and Light Design:	Jo Mielzinger
Music:	Paul Bowles
<b>The Cast:</b>	
Amanda Wingfield	Laurette Taylor
Tom Wingfield	Eddie Dowling
Laura Wingfield	Julie Haydon
The Gentleman Caller	Anthony Ross

#### 2 New York City Center

<b>Opened:</b>	<b>November 21, 1956</b>
Closed:	December 2, 1956
Number of Performances:	15
Producer:	Jean Dalrymple
Director:	Alan Schneider
Set and Light Design:	Peggy Clark
Music:	Paul Bowles
<b>The Cast:</b>	
Amanda Wingfield	Helen Hayes
Tom Wingfield	James Daly
Laura Wingfield	Lois Smith
The Gentleman Caller	Lonny Chapman

#### 3 Brooks Atkinson Theatre

<b>Opened:</b>	<b>May 4, 1965</b>
Closed:	October 2, 1965
Number of Performances:	176
Producers:	Claude Giroux and Orrin Christy Jr.
Director:	George Keathley
Set Design:	James A. Taylor, Robert T. Williams
Light Design:	V.C. Fuqua
Music:	Paul Bowles
Costumes:	Patton Campbell

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Maureen Stapleton
Tom Wingfield	George Grizzard
Laura Wingfield	Piper Laurie
The Gentleman Caller	Pat Hingle

**4 Circle-in-the-Square Theater****Opened:** December 18, 1975

Closed: February 22, 1976

Number of Performances: 77

Producer: Circle-in-the-Square

Director: Theodore Mann

Set Design: Ming Cho Lee

Light Design: Thomas Skelton

Music: Craig Wasson

Costumes: Sydney Brooks

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Maureen Stapleton
Tom Wingfield	Rip Torn
Laura Wingfield	Pamela Payton-Wright
The Gentleman Caller	Paul Rudd

**5 Eugene O'Neill Theater****Opened:** December 1, 1983

Closed: February 19, 1984

Number of Performances: 92

Producers: Elizabeth I. McCann, Nelle Nugent, Maurice Rosenfield, Lois Rosenfield, Ray Larsen

Director: Theodore Mann

Set Design: Ming Cho Lee

Light Design: Thomas Skelton

Music: Craig Wasson

Costumes: Sydney Brooks

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Jessica Tandy
Tom Wingfield	Bruce Davison
Laura Wingfield	Amanda Plummer
The Gentleman Caller	John Heard

**6 Criterion Center Stage Right****Opened:** November 15, 1994

Closed: Januar 1, 1995

Number of Performances: 57

Producer:	Roundabout Theatre Company
Director:	Frank Galati
Set Design:	Loy Arcenas
Light Design:	Mimi Jordan Sherin
Music:	Miriam Sturm
Costumes:	Noel Taylor
<b>The Cast:</b>	
Amanda Wingfield	Julie Harris
Tom Wingfield	Željko Ivanek
Laura Wingfield	Calista Flockhart
The Gentleman Caller	Kevin Kilner

### 7 Ethel Barrymore Theatre

<b>Opened:</b>	<b>March 22, 2005</b>
Closed:	July 3, 2005
Number of Performances:	120
Producer:	Bill Kenwright
Director:	David Leveaux
Set Design:	Tom Pye
Light Design:	Natasha Katz
Music:	Dan Moses Schreier
Costumes:	Tom Pye
<b>The Cast:</b>	
Amanda Wingfield	Jessica Lange
Tom Wingfield	Josh Lucas
Laura Wingfield	Sarah Paulson
The Gentleman Caller	Christian Slater

## 7.2. Productions of *The Glass Menagerie* in Vienna

### 1 Akademietheater

**Premiere:** January 22, 1949

Director: Berthold Viertel

Translation: Berthold Viertel

Set Design: Theo Otto

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield Helene Thimig

Tom Wingfield Curd Jürgens

Laura Wingfield Käthe Gold

The Gentleman Caller Josef Meinrad

### 2 Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken

**Premiere:** November 5, 1957

Director: Hermann Kutscher

Translation: Berthold Viertel

Set Design: Gustav Manker

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield Elisabeth Epp

Tom Wingfield Karl Blühm

Laura Wingfield Maria Urban

The Gentleman Caller Rudolf Strobl

### 3 Theater in der Josefgasse

**Premiere:** March 14, 1960

Director: Karl Kelle Riedl

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield Greta Müller

Tom Wingfield Manfred Jaksch

Laura Wingfield Katharina Sillaber

The Gentleman Caller Walter Sommer

### 4 Theater in der Josefgasse

**Premiere:** April 9, 1961

Director: Karl Kelle Riedl

Set Design: A. Achleitner

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield Greta Müller

Tom Wingfield Karl Kelle Riedl

Laura Wingfield Helga David

The Gentleman Caller Walter Brandt

**5 Burgtheater**

**Guest Performance on:** April 19, 1961  
 Produced by: Theatre Guild American Repertory Company  
 Director: George Keathley  
 Set Design: William Pitkin  
 Music: Paul Bowles  
**The Cast:**  
 Amanda Wingfield Helen Hayes  
 Tom Wingfield James Broderick  
 Laura Wingfield Nancy Coleman  
 The Gentleman Caller Leif Erickson

**6 Akademietheater**

**Premiere:** March 19, 1965  
 Director: Willi Schmidt  
 Translation: Berthold Viertel  
 Set Design: Willi Schmidt  
 Music: Herbert Baumann  
 Costumes: Willi Schmidt  
**The Cast:**  
 Amanda Wingfield Paula Wessely  
 Tom Wingfield Helmut Griem  
 Laura Wingfield Annemarie Düringer  
 The Gentleman Caller Ernst Anders

**7 Theater im Zentrum**

**Premiere:** March 10, 1966  
 Producer: Theater der Jugend  
 Director: Walter Kohut  
 Translation: Berthold Viertel  
 Set Design: Gabriel Bauer  
 Costumes: Lucia Giebisch  
**The Cast:**  
 Amanda Wingfield Grete Binter  
 Tom Wingfield Georg Trenkwitz  
 Laura Wingfield Kitty Speiser  
 The Gentleman Caller Frank Dietrich

**8 Amerikahaus**

**Premiere:** July 1, 1971  
 Producer: Vienna's English Theatre  
 Director: Franz Schafranek  
 Set Design: Magnus Olof Bratt  
 Costumes: Fay Compton

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Ruth Brinkmann
Tom Wingfield	Vernon Morris
Laura Wingfield	Jean Harrington
The Gentleman Caller	Stephen Turner

**9 Theater im Zentrum**

<b>Premiere:</b>	<b>October 5, 1978</b>
Producer:	Theater der Jugend
Director:	Peter Weihs

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Friederike Dorff
Tom Wingfield	Klaus Rott
Laura Wingfield	Sylvia Eisenberger
The Gentleman Caller	Raimund Lang

**10 Volkstheater in der Treitlstraße**

<b>Premiere:</b>	<b>Februar 4, 1981</b>
Producer:	Volkstheater
Director:	Peter M. Preissler
Set Design:	Manfred Noky
Costumes:	Birgit Hutter

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Maria Urban
Tom Wingfield (old)	Ernst Meister
Tom Wingfield (young)	Ernst Cohen
Laura Wingfield	Ulli Maier
The Gentleman Caller	Johannes Seilern

**11 Akademietheater**

<b>Premiere:</b>	<b>March 8, 1986</b>
Director:	Gerhard Klingenberg
Set Design:	Matthias Kralj
Costumes:	Friederike Binkaus

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Hilde Krahl
Tom Wingfield	Günther Einbrodt
Laura Wingfield	Leslie Malton
The Gentleman Caller	Rudolf Bissegger

**12 Ateliertheater**

<b>Premiere:</b>	<b>April 3, 1989</b>
Director:	Peter Josch
Set Design:	Doris Ute Reichelt
Costumes:	Mila Janisch

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Inge Rosenberg
Tom Wingfield	Johannes Krisch
Laura Wingfield	Christine Renhardt
The Gentleman Caller	Reinhold Prandl

**13 Vienna's English Theatre****Premiere:** **January 25, 1991**

Director: Franz Schafranek

Set Design: Claire Cahill

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Ruth Brinkmann
Tom Wingfield	Corey Johnson
Laura Wingfield	Sarah Anson
The Gentleman Caller	Michael-John Paliotti

**14 Volkstheater in den Außenbezirken****Premiere:** **January 25, 1991**

Producer: Volkstheater

Director: Peter M. Preissler

Set Design: Thomas Pekny

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Erika Mottl
Tom Wingfield (old)	Peter Uray
Tom Wingfield (young)	Paul Sigmund
Laura Wingfield	Roswitha Szyszkowitz
The Gentleman Caller	Günther Wiederschwinger

**15 Theater in der Josefstadt****Premiere:** **January 27, 2005**

Director: Peter M. Preissler

Translation: Jörn van Dyck

Set Design: Achim Römer

Light Design: Michael Rüggeberg

Music: Michael Rüggeberg

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield	Traute Hoess
Tom Wingfield	Michael Dangl
Laura Wingfield	Gertrud Drassl
The Gentleman Caller	Boris Eder

**16 International Theatre****Premiere:** **October 3, 2006**

Director: Jack Babb

**The Cast:**

Amanda Wingfield

Tom Wingfield

Laura Wingfield

The Gentleman Caller

Laura Mitchell

Michael Nield

Marianna de Fazio

Gregory J. Nelsen

### 7.3. Personal Interview with Peter Josch, 22 November 2007

**P. Josch:** [...] Ich hab, soweit ich mich erinnere, die Musik genommen vom Ennio Morricone, der hat das für den Film gemacht, den der Paul Newman gemacht hat [...]. Und da hab ich glaub ich Teile der Musik, glaub ich, das weiß ich jetzt gar nicht mehr muss ich sagen, ich glaube aber ja, dass man da was runtergenommen hat und im Hintergrund immer dann so eingespielt hat. Das werden Sie ja dann- Also Sie werden das sicher erkennen. Das Stück kennen Sie ja inzwischen, da können Sie's ja dann zuordnen.

**CK:** Und, nur damit Sie sich auskennen, also ich vergleiche die *Glasmengerie* und *Endstation Sehnsucht*<sup>436</sup>, und schau' mir an, vergleiche die Rezensionen von New York und Wien und schau, wie ist das Stück aufgenommen –

**P. Josch:** - ja gut, das ist ja so, da müssen Sie's ja im Grunde vergleichen mit der Aufführung im Akademietheater.

**CK:** Ja natürlich.

**P. Josch:** Nicht mit unserer, weil unsere war ja ein Aufguss dann auf der kleinen Spuckerlbühne, es ist erstaunlich angekommen, ich weiß, ich glaub ich hab damals nicht so tolle Kritiken gekriegt in der Rolle –

**CK:** Ich hab bisher eine gefunden.

**P. Josch:** Und die Sylvia Eisenberger hat Hymnen gehabt. Die war auch hinreißend, mit der hab ich auch viel gespielt und das weiß ich und ich weiß nur, dass ein jeder den Kopf geschüttelt hat auf der kleinen Bühne dieses Riesenstück. Und es ging aber eigentlich sehr gut. Es war sehr dicht natürlich. Und war auch - es war ja – überhaupt diese ganzen Stücke damals– es war ja die Zeit der Kellerbühnen. Das war zu einer Zeit, wo man diese Stücke, die 20 Jahre davor Uraufführung hatten, an den großen Häusern, die zum Beispiel die jungen Leute, so wie Sie auch, also die damals jungen Leute in Ihrem Alter, nicht gesehen haben, und es hat eine wahre Renaissance dieser Stücke gegeben im Kellertheater, eben begonnen hat das mit Virginia Woolf. Das war auch eine Art Notwendigkeit, weil ... finanziell. Da waren vier Leute, ein Bühnenbild, kein Problem bei der Virginia Woolf zum Beispiel. Und ich weiß nur, er hat ja dann noch gespielt *Die Nacht des Leguan*, und zur *Katze auf dem heißen Blechdach* ist es nicht mehr gekommen. Das hätt' ich auch dann wieder machen wollen, weil das hat die Johanna Brix gemacht, *Die Nacht des Leguan* und das war so eine Welle. Damals. Ich selber mag ja den Tennessee Williams irrsinnig gern, der hat auch eine ganz tolle Biographie geschrieben, ich weiß nicht ob sie sie kennen?

**CK:** Nein, die hab ich noch nicht gelesen.

**P. Josch:** Ich borg sie Ihnen, wenn Sie wollen. [...]

**CK:** *Die Glasmengerie* wurde ja seit 1949 in Wien in über 20 verschiedenen Inszenierungen auf die Bühne gebracht. Woran glauben Sie, liegt die große Popularität und hohe Spielfrequenz des Stückes?

**P. Josch:** Naja, erstens einmal ist es ein wunderbares Stück und hat einen hohen Bekanntheitsgrad. Durch den Film, durch die vielen Aufführungen. Ich selber hab auch einmal ein Gastspiel im Wiener Burgtheater gesehen. Mit der Helen Hayes. [...] Und

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<sup>436</sup> Anmerkung: Ursprünglich war geplant, beide Stücke in dieser Diplomarbeit zu analysieren, allerdings musste aufgrund des großen Umfangs dann auf nur ein Stück reduziert werden.

von damals an hat mich das Stück fasziniert. Ich hab als junger Schauspieler nie die Möglichkeit gehabt, diese Rolle zu spielen [...] und war immer fasziniert. Und dann hab ich eben das Glück gehabt, es inszenieren zu dürfen. Das Stück hat einen weiteren Vorteil, man braucht nur vier Personen, es ist also für kleine Bühnen erschwinglich zu machen, und es hat ja sehr viele Interpretationen gegeben, es ist eines der wenigen Stücke von denen ich sage, das kann man vor einer Klotüre spielen. Weil's als Stück so wunderbar ist. Ich mein damit, man braucht eigentlich kein großes Bühnenbild, kein riesiges Dings, ich glaub, soweit ich mich erinnere, ich hab das damals auch im stilisierten Bühnenbild gemacht und mit sehr viel Licht und Musik.

**CK:** Das ist ja auch ganz wesentlich in dem Stück.

**P. Josch:** Ja, das ist ja auch die Symbolik, die drinnen ist. Es ist der Humor, der drinnen ist. Also es ist einfach ein grandioses Stück, das die Leute auch – eines der Stücke, das man auch immer wieder anschaut. Wo man sagt „Ah, das hab ich schon gesehen, jetzt spielt das der, jetzt spielt das der, oder die spielt das und dann geht man halt hin und schaut sich's an. Also es ist gar kein Geheimnis, sondern es ist einfach ein grandioses Stück, eine wunderbare Dichtung. Es ist wunderbar das Stück, faszinierend.

**CK:** Und waren Sie derjenige, der die Entscheidung getroffen hat, dass man das Theaterstück 1989 im Ateliertheater aufführt?

**P. Josch:** Das weiß ich jetzt nicht mehr so genau, aber ich glaube eher, dass das der Direktor damals, der Dr. Janisch, mit dem ich ja sehr viel zusammengearbeitet habe – sind wir gemeinsam draufgekommen oder hab ich's ihm vorgeschlagen – ich weiß es nicht mehr. Das sag ich Ihnen ganz ehrlich. Sicher hab ich daran mitgewirkt, weil ich einfach das Stück mag und vor allem, es ist – er hat auch eine grandiose Besetzung zur Verfügung gehabt. Das muss ich auch noch sagen, die Inge Rosenberg – das ist eine hinreißende Schauspielerin, die ja heute noch sehr aktiv ist, und Filme macht und Theater spielt und und und, also wenn man eine ältere Dame braucht, ich weiß ja nicht, die muss ja schon weit über die 80 sein, wenn ich das richtig sehe, und die Christine Reinhardt – ist eine wunderbare Schauspielerin, die leider keine Karriere gemacht hat, Theater spielt – die ist in Graz jetzt- aber nicht am großen Haus sondern irgendwo – ich weiß es nicht. Naja und der Johannes Krisch, das war glaub ich seine letzte Rolle außerhalb des Burgtheaters, oder eine seiner allerersten großen Rollen und dann der Reinhard Brandl – ein ganz wunderbarer, lyrischer Schauspieler – ein sehr hübscher Bursch', der glaub ich aufgehört hat.

**CK:** Okay, mhm.

**P. Josch:** Soweit ich weiß, weil - Das muss man auch machen, das man sagt „es geht nicht mehr, es geht wirtschaftlich nicht.“ Wenn man nicht viel spielen kann, oder nicht viele Möglichkeiten hat, das war ein bescheidener Bursch [...] Ich hab den kennengelernt ein halbes Jahr zuvor hab ich in Basel gespielt *Zu ebener Erde und erster Stock*. Von Nestroy. Und da war er der Liebhaber. Und da hab ich ihn kennengelernt und hab mir gedacht – für die *Glasmengerie* wär' der ideal.

**CK:** Ach so, aber Sie haben die Schauspieler ausgesucht?

**P. Josch:** Ja. Das mach ich schon, das bespricht man eigentlich. Heute ist es so, heute macht es nur der Regisseur. Damals war es so, dass man sich zusammengesetzt hat und gesprochen hat: „Wie möchtest du das machen, in welchem Stil willst du es machen“ und natürlich – das muss ich jetzt gleich dazusagen- hat man so ein bisschen die Hosen voll, wenn man sich so eines Stückes annehmen soll oder darf oder wie auch immer. Also wenn man das in die Hände kriegt zu inszenieren. Nur damals weiß ich gar nicht, ob ich so... weil wenn man jung ist und strebsam ist und einen Erfolg im Rücken hat.

Und ich hab ja mit den ersten Inszenierungen, also speziell mit der Virginia Woolf [...] das waren Hymnen, da hab ich sogar Preise bekommen dafür als bester Nachwuchsregisseur und da ist man dann – da denkt man nicht soviel nach. Nur ich mach eines *immer* seit ich Regie führe – ich versuche, dem Autor gerecht zu werden und nicht alleine, so wie's ja die meisten heute machen, ihre eigenen Ideen und – was man zuletzt bei Romeo und Julia gesehen hat im Burgtheater [...] – und was sehr viele Aufführungen zeigen – diese Verfremdungen und so weiter, das hab ich eigentlich nie gemacht. Das ist nicht meine Sache, sondern ich finde, der Autor hat eigentlich ein Recht, so gespielt zu werden, oder *versucht*, so interpretiert zu werden wie er es gemeint hat. Nur lässt das grad bei der *Glasmengerie* sowieso so viele Interpretationsmöglichkeiten offen. Und wie gesagt, der Erfolg glaube ich in erster Linie liegt am Stück selber. Es ist ein wunderbares Stück mit einer wunderbaren Aussage, Thematik. Dass es eben auch nicht nur poetisch traurig ist, tieftraurig, sondern auch sehr humorvoll teilweise. [...] und dann ist vor allem eines auch – das Stück ist eigentlich heutig, immer heutig gewesen. Die ganze Thematik, dass einer weg ist, dass die Frau sitzen bleibt mit den Kindern. Dass der Bub nichts wird, dass die Tochter und so weiter. Das kann man ja jetzt nicht nur auf die behinderte Tochter sondern, das kann man ja auf verschiedene Probleme, die die heutige Jugend hat übertragen. Also jetzt geistig übertragen, also einfach das Problem. Es gibt viele Probleme, die hat halt das Problem dass sie behindert ist und die Mutter den Sohn bittet, den Freund mit nach Hause zu bringen.

**CK:** Ja, weil sie natürlich glaubt, dass die Tochter überbleibt.

**P. Josch:** Ja natürlich, sie bleibt ja auch über. Darum auch die Symbolik mit dem Einhorn. Das wissen Sie sicher, das ist das Symbol der Jungfräulichkeit. Und darum eben diese Zerbrechlichkeit, die sie, das Mädchen, eigentlich pflegt. Die pflegt ja eigentlich die Zerbrechlichkeit, sie pflegt ihre Jungfräulichkeit. Eigentlich. Indem sie die Glasmengerie hat.

**CK:** Worauf haben Sie bei Ihrer Interpretation des Stückes das Hauptaugenmerk gelegt? Was ist Ihnen am Wichtigsten oder Interessantesten erschienen?

**P. Josch:** Naja, das kann ich so nicht auseinander nehmen. Ich habe immer das Ganze erst einmal im Sinn. Ich habe eine Vorstellung. Von der Aussage eines Stückes, vom Stück einfach. Und das versuche ich umzusetzen. Und da kommen dann die Komponenten dazu, dass man einfach die Schauspieler da hinbringen muss, das ist ja ein Ganzes, eine Aufführung ist ja ein Ganzes, aber [...] das habe ich schon gesagt, ich lege immer das größte Augenmerk, wenn ich was mache, auf die Werktreue. Und natürlich darauf, dass ich ideale Schauspieler kriege für jede Rolle – je kleiner das Theater ist, umso schwieriger ist das, obwohl für solche Rollen kriegt man immer gute Leute.

**CK:** Ist klar, weil die Leute das Stück ja spielen wollen.

**P. Josch:** Ja und das ist heute noch schlimmer.

**CK:** Dass man Schauspieler kriegt?

**P. Josch:** Dass die Leute spielen wollen. Es wird alles wegrationalisiert. Die ganzen kleinen Theater kommen weg. Sie haben ihre Funktion verloren – teilweise. Es hat meiner Meinung nach begonnen mit dem Herrn Peymann, der auf einmal lauter Nebenschauplätze eingeführt hat auch. [...] Also die ganzen kleinen Nebenspielstellen, die dann sämtliche Stücke optioniert haben von Nachwuchsdichtern oder schon animierten Dichtungen wie der Wolfgang Bauer, die damals alle für die kleinen Bühnen geschrieben haben. Diese Stücke wurden alle optioniert oder *optiert* eigentlich und

waren nicht frei, und wenn sie nicht gespielt wurden, sind sie halt nicht gespielt worden. Und den kleinen Bühnen sind die Stücke ausgegangen, darum haben sie teilweise ja auch auf diese Autoren zurückgegriffen.

**CK:** Ach so war das also.

**P. Josch:** Also zum Teil. Das ist natürlich jetzt vereinfacht alles dargestellt was ich sage, aber das war schon eine Entwicklung. Und dann konnten die, wie es ja damals war, die 10 Schilling Karten für Studenten, das kann ja kein Theater hergeben, das nicht so subventioniert ist wie das große Theater. Also das sind alles die Dinge dahinter, die man nicht sieht und die man nicht bedenkt. Auf die Idee kommt man gar nicht. Aber es hat diese Ursachen.

**CK:** Welche Bedeutung hatte die amerikanische Herkunft des Stückes auf Ihre Interpretation? Haben Sie versucht, das Stück amerikanisch darzustellen?

**P. Josch:** Nein. Also speziell bei der *Glasmengerie* nicht. Denn das ist ein Stück das natürlich in Amerika spielt, das kann man auch nicht umwienern, das ist finde ich überhaupt schlecht, einen Spielplatz zu verlegen, eine Zeit zu verlegen. Man kann's ins Zeitlose geben, ich finde, *Die Glasmengerie* ist ein – es heißt ja ein Spiel der Erinnerung im Untertitel- und ist - das haben wir eigentlich schon alles gesagt- ein zeitloses Stück. Aber dass man jetzt sagt das muss man amerikanisch spielen - es sind natürlich manche Dinge, die drinnen sind in all diesen Stücken, wo man sagt „Naja das würde man bei uns nicht so machen“. Das ist klar. Aber dann macht man es einfach so wie es drinnen steht. Im Zweifelsfall ist der Dichter wichtig. Aber dass man jetzt von vorneherein sagt man muss einen amerikanischen Stil machen – Nein das nicht. Das könnte schlecht werden. Weil dann ist es ja eigentlich Theater auf dem Theater. Dann ist der Schauspieler, der einen amerikanischen Schauspieler mimt und ein amerikanisches Stück spielt.

**CK:** Also das heißt, Sie sind schon dafür, dass man den Schauplatz beibehält, weil man ihn ja nicht transponieren kann, aber das Stück dann doch als zeitlos darstellt, damit die Österreicher es verstehen?

**P. Josch:** Nein, also das glaub ich gar nicht, weil das wäre ja dann auch wieder eine Vereinfachung. Man soll es so spielen wie es ist. Aus. Diese Frage hat sich für mich nie gestellt.

**CK:** Das heißt, Sie haben das Stück in den 30er Jahren belassen?

**P. Josch:** Naja, wir haben es eigentlich zeitlos gespielt, gar nicht von den 30er Jahren gesprochen. Wir haben es einfach nicht modernisiert.

**CK:** Welche Übersetzung haben Sie für Ihre Inszenierung herangezogen?

**P. Josch:** Das weiß ich nicht mehr.

**CK:** Die von Berthold Viertel? Viele Aufführungen haben diese Übersetzung nämlich hergenommen.

**P. Josch:** Das weiß ich nicht mehr. Das steht vermutlich im Programmheft. Haben Sie ein Programmheft?

**CK:** Nein, habe ich nicht. Es steht auch nicht – ich hab jetzt bisher nur von der *Wiener Zeitung* die Rezension –

**P. Josch:** Und da steht nichts drinnen?

**CK:** Nein, da steht von der Übersetzung nichts drinnen.

**P. Josch:** Ich werde nachher den Dr. Janisch anrufen, das ist der Direktor [...], der weiß das sicher.

**CK:** Hat es irgendwelche Probleme bei der Übersetzung gegeben? Ausdrücke, soziale Gegebenheiten, ...?

**P. Josch:** Das weiß ich nicht mehr. Ich kann mir nur vorstellen, dass es bei der Übersetzung – es gibt ja Übersetzungen, die sehr Piefchinesisch sind, die Germanismen nimmt man weg.[...] Es gibt so Ausdrücke, die man eigentlich in Deutschland verwendet, es gibt Ausdrücke, die man in Amerika verwendet, z.B. jedes zweite Wort ist „hey man“. Wenn die sagen „hey man, was machst du da“ und so weiter. Solche Dinge lässt man. Allerdings nicht wenn sie ins Deutsche übersetzt sind: „Hey Mann, was machst du da“ das sagt kein Mensch hier. Das sind die Dinge, die man wahrscheinlich weggelassen hat, wenn solche drin waren.

**CK:** Jetzt noch mal kurz zu den Schauspielern. Sie haben gesagt, Sie haben sie selber ausgesucht haben. Nach welchen Kriterien sind Sie bei Ihrer Auswahl vorgegangen?

**P. Josch:** Man hat als Regisseur eine Vorstellung von einer Figur. Dann denkt man sich, welcher Schauspieler, den man kennt oder der auch zu haben ist, bzw. wer zu haben ist weiß man ja vorher nicht, sondern wer wäre da für diese Rolle gut. Von wem kann man sich vorstellen, dass er das spielt? Und so geht man dann zu Werk. Da kommt eventuell der Vorschlag des Direktors, der sagt, „Du, da hätte ich die oder die Schauspielerin, ich glaube, die wäre gut für die Rolle“. Dann schaut man sich das an. Also ich habe das immer so gemacht. Und ich habe immer im Laufe der Jahre – ich habe ja über vierzig Inszenierungen gemacht – und ich habe immer viele junge Leute genommen. Wenn sich Leute beworben haben – ich habe ja selber ein Theater geleitet über zwanzig Jahre in Deutschland, ich war Intendant an drei verschiedenen Sommertheatern bis letztes Jahr eigentlich, nur heuer hat es nicht mehr gefunkt aus finanziellen Gründen [...] – habe ich immer wieder zwei, drei genommen. Und es sind einige dieser Leute, die, wie man so schön sagt, bei mir angefangen haben, wie auch der Johannes, der eine tolle Karriere gemacht hat, da gibt es ein paar, die ihre erste Rolle bei mir gespielt haben. Die Susanne Michl hat ihre erste Rolle bei mir gespielt, die auch ganz groß im Winzerkönig spielt. Die Christina Sprenger hat ihre erste Rolle bei mir gespielt oder zweite oder dritte und dann war sie engagiert bei mir für *Lumpazivagabundus* und dann hat sie mich angerufen und hat gesagt „Ich habe da eine Riesenchance gekriegt in einer Fernsehserie. Würdest du mich aus dem Vertrag lassen?“ Und seither ist sie bei *Soko Kitzbühel*.

**CK:** Aufgrund der internationalen Vernetzung wurden Grenzen relativiert und Kulturen homogenisiert. Inwiefern ist der amerikanische Schauplatz im Stück in unserer globalisierten Welt noch relevant?

[...]

**P. Josch:** Man soll das Stück dort belassen. Es gibt natürlich auch Stücke, die in Amerika spielen, weil sie dort geschrieben worden sind, die *genau* so gut hier spielen könnten. Es gibt ganz wenige Stücke, wo man den Schauplatz umändern kann, ohne am Stück etwas zu tun. Das sind ganz wenige. Ich bin ein Gegner von ganz modernen Inszenierungen. [...] „Modern“ ist schlecht, „heutig“, sagen wir so. Da habe ich eine Inszenierung gesehen in Zürich vom Maskenball – *Ein Maskenball*, die Oper, von Jürgen Flip die Inszenierung und die war grandios, und die war aus dem Schweden, ich glaube 16. Jahrhundert spielt das im Original oder 17. Jahrhundert, war versetzt nach Amerika mit dem Kennedy-Mord. Und das war so nahtlos und so geglückt [...], dass man geglaubt hat, der Verdi hätte das so komponiert. Es war spannendstes Musiktheater.

[...]

Man muss die Grenzen ausloten. Aber es darf gerade ein großes Haus nicht *nur* [„heutige“] Inszenierungen aneinanderreihen. Es muss eine gewisse Werktreue da sein, denn wenn man die Stücke, so wie es jetzt passiert ist in Salzburg mit dieser vielbejubelten *Onegin*- Aufführung. Die war sehr schön, optisch und so sehr schön. Aber es hat so vieles nicht gestimmt. Man hat in einer Zeit damals, in der das Original gespielt hat, gewisse Dinge nicht gehabt, gewisse Requisiten nicht gehabt und so weiter. Also, das muss schon stimmen. Es gibt bewusste Verfremdungen – es hat Inszenierungen vom Peymann gegeben, wo er einfach dann – ich kann mich erinnern, das war eine köstliche Komödie von Goldoni, *Der Impresario von Smyrna*, wo er einfach den Theaterdirektor mit dem Billa – Sackerl durch das Bild gehen lässt. Das spielt in klassischen Kostümen. Das sind so Gags, die ich sehr lustig finde. Ich habe auch so Sachen gemacht, zum Beispiel ich habe wenn Sie das interessiert, ich habe inszeniert von Marivaux, eines meiner Lieblingsstücke von Marivaux, *Das Spiel von Liebe und Zufall*, in der Übersetzung von H. C. Artmann und ich habe dann eine eigene Fassung gemacht daraus. Verkürzt und so weiter. Da habe ich auch zum Beispiel – da kommt der Diener herein und sagt „Draußen ist der Diener des Herrn Orgon, und bittet vorgelassen zu werden“, und da habe ich zum Beispiel ein Handy läuten lassen – aber ganz in klassischen Kostümen. Ein Handy läuten lassen. Und das hat schon einmal im Publikum so eine Unruhe erzeugt, und dann nimmt der junge Mann auf der Bühne das Handy heraus und sagt: „Entschuldigen Sie, Moment. Vater, draußen ist der Diener des Herrn Orgon.“ Das sind Gags, ich finde die wunderbar, und gerade in einer Komödie. Die Leute haben auch Wochen darüber gesprochen, haben gesagt „Also das war das Beste. Jeder hat geschaut, ob sein Handy läutet.“ Also ich meine nur. Und das sind schon zulässige Dinge. Aber ich bin ein Gegner, wenn man an einem Stück alles umpflanzt und umtut. Da muss man halt ein eigenes Stück schreiben. Das ist meine Meinung.

**CK:** Welche Reaktionen haben Sie persönlich von den Theaterbesuchern bekommen? Wie haben sie das Stück aufgefasst?

**P. Josch:** Naja das kann ich nur sehr beschränkt sagen, weil ich ja nur einen Teil der Leute kennengelernt habe. Man steht ja nicht dort und fragt jeden, wie es war. Ich glaube, die Reaktion war eine sehr gute, weil das, soweit ich mich erinnere, sehr sehr gut besucht war. Und Leute, die von mir drin waren, waren sehr angetan. Aber das sind ja meistens die Leute, die von einem rein gehen. Obwohl, es sind schon Leute, wo ich auch genau weiß, da krieg ich eine korrekte, ehrliche Kritik. Wo ich sie auch annehme. Man muss immer wissen wer etwas sagt und wer es wie sagt. Das weiß man auch.

**CK:** Und diese Leute, von denen Sie Feedback bekommen haben, haben das Stück auch als allgemeingültig und zeitlos empfunden?

**P. Josch:** Also ich habe über das Stück selber, so wie man oft sagt „das ist ja schon verstaubt“– Sie dürfen nicht vergessen, das war ja auch schon fast vor 30 Jahren, nein 20 Jahren [...] –

**CK:** - 1989.

**P. Josch:** Ja, 20 Jahre kann man sagen. Das war auch eine andere Zeit. Es war ganz eine andere, [...] wie man sagt *Ära* des Theaters, die ist nicht immer 50 Jahre zurück oder 100 Jahre zurück. Denn man hat vor 20 Jahren noch ganz anders Theater gespielt, und doch mit einer gewissen Reinheit Theater gespielt. Ich habe nichts gegen Nacktheit auf der Bühne zum Beispiel, dort wo es hin gehört. Ich habe sogar ein Foto gefunden, ich habe die ganzen Kroetz – Aufführungen in Wien gespielt – den *Stallerhof* und diese

Sachen. Da habe ich Fotos, da habe ich auch Stücke gehabt, wo ich nackt gespielt habe. Damals war das noch anzuschauen. Da hat es hingehört, das war notwendig. Wenn einer aus der Dusche kommt, kann er nicht im Gewand herauskommen. Aber so wie heute, dass man einfach zum Beispiel Romeo und Julia nackt spielen lässt – es stört mich nicht die Nacktheit- es stört mich, wenn man die Liebesszene spielt, wo sie nackt sind- okay, aber die kriechen, ja manchmal klettern sie ja schon nackt über den Balkon [...].

**CK:** Und was muss man Ihrer Meinung nach bei der Inszenierung eines Tennessee Williams Stücks auf einer Wiener Bühne beachten? Wie geht man dabei als Regisseur am besten vor?

**P. Josch:** Also ich glaube, dass man eigentlich so 'ran geht wie an jedes Stück. Dass man sich mit dem Stück einmal eingehendst befassen muss, wissen, wie man's interpretieren will. Da gibt's ja bei manchen Stücken kaum Spielraum, nicht, wenn man sich nicht wirklich von der Aussage des Stückes entfernen will, wenn man's umpolen will und eine andere ...

Das ist ja auch meiner Meinung nach ein Irrtum – man sagt durch diese Modernisierung und so weiter, setzt man die Fantasie des Zuschauers frei. Ich finde, man engt ihn eher ein, weil der Zuschauer dann doppelt nachdenkt und sagt „Naja“ - also wenn er überhaupt nachdenkt. [...] Man muss ja jemand nicht mit dem Schädel irgendwo draufstoßen oder mit der Nase, damit er was begreift. Denn jemand *der* begreift – eine Andeutung oder eine Assoziation, die ja – das macht ja meiner Meinung nach eine wirklich tolle Dichtung, eine Ewigkeit, ewig gültige Dichtung wie Shakespeare und so weiter, die man im Grunde nicht umbringen kann, nicht. Also, was unterscheidet, von den Dichtern her und so weiter, ist doch die Sprache und nun ist es ja so, dass das ja Übersetzungen sind. Also es ist ja schon verwässert sowieso von vornherein, nicht. Denn man kann ja viele Dinge aus dem Englischen – und ich glaube das gilt aus jede Sprache – kann man nicht wortwörtlich übersetzen.

**CK:** Stimmt, und auch gewisse Konzepte sind schwierig.

**P. Josch:** Ja, es gibt, es ist zum Beispiel, man merkt's wie ich angefangen habe Computer zum Lernen. Ich habe mich am meisten an der Computersprache gestört. Denn das sind Ausdrücke, die wortwörtlich übersetzt sind, und die bei uns eigentlich nichts bedeuten oder was Anderes bedeuten. [...] Und solche Sachen gibt's auch bei den Übersetzungen. Und drum sind ja auch, grad bei Shakespeare und so, ich habe vor ein paar Jahren inszeniert *Was ihr wollt*, und habe eine ganz neue Übersetzung damals, die war vom Kurt Wall, der damals Dramaturg war in Zürich, genommen und bin dann draufgekommen, dass über weite Passagen die alte Schlägel Dick- Übersetzung als Basis gedient hat. Und dann habe ich eine Inszenierung [...] vom Burgtheater und bin auch draufgekommen, dass auch hier weite Passagen aus der Schlägelschen... Und der einzige – Fried, aber das hat mich dann schon fast wieder ein bisschen gestört, das hat sich doch schon ziemlich entfernt, das war fast eine Nachdichtung, also keine Übersetzung, keine wortwörtliche.

**CK:** Aber was macht für Sie eine gute Übersetzung aus? Jede Übersetzung ist ja gewissermaßen eine Transformation.

**P. Josch:** Transformieren ist richtig, authentisch. Das macht eine gute Übersetzung aus. Dass die Dramatik erhalten bleibt, und das ist auch schwer bei den Dichtungen. Zum Beispiel der H.C. Artmann hat ja sehr viele Sachen übersetzt. Aus dem Französischen, aus dem Spanischen vor allem, aber der hat auch gar nicht Wert gelegt, dass es *übersetzt* ist, sondern der hat teilweise glaube ich geschrieben *übertragen*, nicht.

**CK:** Sodass es wirklich idiomatisch klingt in der Zielsprache.

**P. Josch:** So ist es. Der hat das übersetzt und zum Beispiel der Herbert Hochings, der Freund und [...] vieler ... der glaub ich Schene nach Wien gebracht hat, der hat dann die Bühnenfassung gemacht aus dieser Übersetzung. Also ist es dann schon etwas, das sind Dinge, die entfernt sind. Aber die Tennessee-Williams- Geschichten, die sind ja glaub ich sehr gut übertragen. Natürlich, vielleicht, vielleicht – ich kann nur sagen vielleicht – heute auch schon in einer Sprache, die halt vor 50 Jahren oder vor 40 Jahren, wo die Stücke übersetzt wurden, heutig waren, modern waren.

**CK:** Und das ist eben das woran sich viele Kritiker stören, die eben sagen, es ist aktualisierungsbedürftig und die Sprache ist verstaubt, man kann mit so was nichts mehr anfangen. Was würden Sie dazu sagen?

**P. Josch:** Naja, irgendwie versteh ich's nicht ganz. Denn ein Schauspieler, ein heutiger Schauspieler, hat ja moderne Mittel, er ist ja ein moderner Mensch. Und warum kann man nicht – z.B. ich vermisse bei vielen Shakespeare-Aufführungen einfach die Sprache. Es werden hier uns sprachliche Dinge aufgetischt, wo Silben verschluckt werden, und und und, die eben auch nicht korrektes Deutsch sind. So schloddrig und und und. Natürlich, grad bei Shakespeare, das war ja ein Volksdichter damals, ich mein, da darf man solche Sachen auch nicht auf den Tabernakel stellen, es ist ja nicht die Bibel oder was. Sondern das kann man schon interpretieren. Nur gewisse Dinge, zu sagen, „Na damals hat er halt einmal mit dem Kopf genickt und heute rennt er mit dem Schädel in die Wand“. Das mag schon stimmen. Aber dann muss man halt ein neues Stück schreiben. Ein anderes. Meiner Meinung nach. [...] Und ich mein, ich hab auch einen Shakespeare inszeniert nicht verzopft, mit verstaubten Kostümen und wir haben viele Gags gemacht. Nachher hab ich eine Inszenierung gesehen von der Shakespeare Company, die haben gastiert im Theater an der Wien, das ist natürlich ein atemberaubendes Erlebnis. Die haben gespielt mit Kostümen, hunderten Metern von Stoff, so wie's damals war. So wie jetzt die herrlichen Elisabeth-Filme mit der Cate Blanchett, das ist grandios. Und ist ganz modern. Das sind heutige Schauspieler, die haben eine heutige Sprache. Das ist nicht verstaubt, nix. Trotz der verstaubten und Kostüme.

**CK:** Aber was würden Sie sagen. Wenn die Sprache jetzt also nicht mehr heutig ist, von Tennessee Williams Stücken...

**P. Josch:** Ich weiß es nicht, ob sie nicht mehr heutig ist, ich müsst es wieder lesen muss ich ehrlich sagen. Und ich glaube, man müsste halt zwei, drei Sachen ausputzen und dann ginge es. Man darf es nicht umkrepeln weil dann ist es ja nicht mehr dem Tennessee Williams zuzuschreiben. Warum schützen viele Nachkommen von Autoren, zum Beispiel die Verlage – ich hab vor zwei Jahren - haben wir *Helden* inszeniert von Shaw, da hab ich versucht - ich wollte eine Fassung machen mit Musik dabei, nicht das Musical, das der Udo Jürgens genommen hat, sondern ich hab die Lieder vom Udo Jürgens genommen und hab sie hineingelegt in die Handlung und hab so quasi ein musikalisches Lustspiel gemacht daraus, nicht. Das bekam dem Stück irrsinnig gut, das war eine tolle Aufführung und- Aber da hat der Verlag hin und her zuerst „Naja und wie wollen Sie das machen“ – so die Behüter des Grals das ist es dann auch nicht. Oder vom Berthold Brecht – die haben sich sehr quergelegt bei vielen modernen Inszenierungen, da haben manche gar nicht stattfinden können, oder beim Hoffmannsthal, die haben sich quergelegt bei irgendeiner Richard Strauß Geschichte. Da haben sie gesagt „Also so darf das nicht gespielt werden und so darf das nicht geändert werden, das ist nicht so geschrieben.“

**CK:** Aber was macht für sie dann eine gute, heutige Aufführung aus, die trotzdem dem Autor irgendwie Respekt zollt?

**P. Josch:** Naja es muss in erster Linie das Stück stattfinden. Es muss das Stück stattfinden, wie's ein Autor gemeint hat – und da gehen die Meinungen ja schon auseinander – wer weiß, wie der Shakespeare das gemeint hat. Aber ich glaube es gibt doch Vorgaben, und wenn man sich dann mit der Hintergrundliteratur befasst oder Jahrzehnte und Jahrhunderte, was man auch tun sollte.

[...]

Es ist schon klar, dass ein Regisseur auch seine Hand anbringen will und seine Linie und sein Ding, vielleicht bin ich auch doch ein bisschen konservativ, ich weiß nicht. Aber das war ich eigentlich immer. Also diese Ansicht hab ich eigentlich immer gehabt. Ich bin schon sehr offen für alles Neue. Und, wie gesagt, das muss ja sein, weil sonst erstickt ja das im Morast und kein Mensch will es sehen.

**CK:** Haben Sie bei den Proben die Schauspieler um die Interpretation gefragt?

**P. Josch:** Naja man diskutiert halt drüber, nur ich muss halt dazu sagen, ich hab ein großes Glück als Regisseur immer gehabt, was auch eine gewisse Belastung ist. Die Schauspieler, die alle bei mir gespielt haben, ich habe nie große Diskussionen gehabt, wenn ich etwas wollte. Ich konnte es auch erklären, ich sag' auch, wenn jemand was einbringen will, dann soll er das sagen, und dann können wir das machen oder nicht. Aber ich hab eigentlich nie jemanden gehabt der sich geweigert hat, irgendwas zu tun, oder [...] das ist auch, das muss ich sagen, ich glaub man muss eine ganz feste Vorstellung haben von dem, was man machen will, das ist ganz klar, und man muss einfach sattelfest sein, und man muss auch manche Hintergründe – man darf sich nicht in Verlegenheit bringen lassen, wenn irgendwann einmal ein Ausdruck drin ist. Als Beispiel eine Diskussion einmal bei *Lumpazivagabundus*, das hab ich vier, fünf Mal gespielt [...] und inszeniert hab ich's auch und da kam einmal die Frage, Gulden, Heller, Pfennig und so weiter vor, nicht, und da hat einmal ein Schauspieler gesagt „Sag einmal wieso ist das eigentlich so?“ Und ich habe mich, informiert darüber und habe ihm genau erklärt „Ein Heller sind zehn Pfennig“ oder ich weiß es heute nicht mehr – hab das genau aufgeschrieben gehabt. Und da hab ich – ich geh ja da auch zu Regisseuren, zu älteren, die ich kenne, die Theaterdirektoren waren und so weiter und frage über gewisse Dinge und informier mich einfach.

**CK:** Inwiefern haben frühere Aufführungen der *Glasmengerie* auf Ihre Aufführung Einfluss gehabt?

**P. Josch:** Ich muss sagen, ich hab zu dem Zeitpunkt, zu dem ich's inszeniert hab, die *Glasmengerie* einmal gesehen, das war mit der Helen Hayes. Und da konnte ich mich natürlich – es ist ja so – es verklärt sich ja im Laufe der Zeit, man sagt, es ist alles früher schöner gewesen, was ja natürlich nicht stimmt. Es sind gewisse Dinge, es ist hier auch eine gewisse Jungfräulichkeit, wo man's erste Mal ein Erlebnis hat. Und *Die Glasmengerie*, obwohl ich ja des Englischen nicht so ganz kundig bin, und es war für mich so faszinierend diese Aufführung, es ist, wir waren [...] Also das waren Erlebnisse, aber auch unsere Erlebnisse. Der ganze Shakespeare-Zyklus, den es damals gab, vom Häussermann, dem Balzar, [...]

**CK:** Ich finde es interessant, dass Sie die Aufführung mit der Helen Hayes gesehen haben.

**P. Josch:** Ja, ja.

**CK:** Inwiefern war diese Aufführung anders als Ihre Aufführung, abgesehen davon, dass sie Englisch war?

**P. Josch:** Das kann ich jetzt nicht mehr sagen. Eines muss ich sagen, eines macht man sicher nicht – also ich zumindest nicht- man hat ja natürlich Dinge, zum Beispiel *Was Ihr Wollt* hab ich schon hundertmal gesehen, man versucht halt schon, einen eigenen Weg zu gehen, oder diesen Weg, den man gesehen hat, unter Anführungszeichen zu „verbessern“. Für sich zu „verbessern“. Man sitzt ja oft in einem Stück drinnen, und es gefällt einem irrsinnig gut, aber man denkt sich „Ja, aber das hätte ich anders gemacht“. Was aber dem nicht Abbruch tut, dass es sehr gut ist. Es gibt ja zehn Möglichkeiten, gut zu sein. [...] Aber da gibt es schon sehr viele von den großen Regisseuren, die eigentlich sehr simpel arbeiten. Ganz simpel. Und so soll es ja sein. Handwerklich simpel. Und grad diese Ära, [...] - ich hab viele Aufführung von [Peyman] gesehen, die wirklich ungeheure Kraft hatten, sehr fantasievoll und toll, also da gibt's nichts zu sagen. Es waren natürlich auch ein paar dabei, die fad waren, aber das ist ganz klar [...] Früher war das so, da hat man erkannt eigentlich wenn man eine Aufführung gesehen hat, „Ah, das ist Wien, das ist Berlin, das ist Hamburg“ hat man irgendwo am Stil erkannt und an den Leuten, die dort waren. Heute mischt sich das alles. Und wenn heute ein Regisseur, ich mein Zadek, Stein und so, die sind ja eh schon alle sehr alt und nicht mehr ganz „in“. Aber die Leute, auch der Filma hat das gemacht, der hat dann, wenn er in Wien was inszeniert hat, hat er sich von seiner deutschen Inszenierung seine vier Darsteller engagiert für Wien. Und dann hat er das natürlich weiterentwickelt. Weil er gesehen hat, ich hab ja auch schon Stücke mehrmals inszeniert – wenige, aber grad bei Nestroy hab ich wiederholt den *Talisman* hab ich glaub ich dreimal gespielt und davor *Mädl aus der Vorstadt* dreimal in anderen Inszenierungen gespielt und da nimmt man natürlich was mit, das ist ja ganz klar, nicht. Und das ist, wie der Ausdruck beim Komponist, wenn ein junger Komponist was vorspielt und der sagt dann drauf, „Das klingt aber ein bisschen nach Mozart.“ Und der schaut ihn an und sagt: „Na wissen Sie jemand besseren?“ Also so ist das. [...]

Ich träume davon, aber das wird sich wahrscheinlich nicht mehr machen, ich bin jetzt in Pension und mache nicht mehr viel, einmal eine Inszenierung zu machen, mit einer fast leeren Bühne, mit wunderschönen Kostümen und viel Licht. Das genügt. Das ist meine... Man darf die Leute nicht mit irgendwelchen Symbolismen, die man auf den Bühne hinlegt, irritieren und so. Ich war Regieassistent vom Ernst Häussermann bei „Der Traum mein Leben“ von Grillparzer, mit Klaus Maria Brandauer als Rustan und Senta Berger als Mirza und so ganz unbekannte Leute.

**CK:** Ah die kennen Sie alle persönlich?

**P. Josch:**.. und dann sagt der Häussermann bei einer der letzten Proben – der war Direktor in der Josefstadt, ich weiß nicht ob Sie wissen wer der Häussermann war. War Josefstadt-Direktor, war Burgtheater-Direktor und hat initiiert den ganzen Shakespeare-Zyklus, war selber ein Regisseur, der aber nicht viel gemacht. Der hat nur so gemacht, so gemacht und aus. Und waren Aufführungen, teilweise, die grandios waren. Und auf einmal sagt er: „Geh Joscherl, wir haben ja jetzt *Berggasse 9* gemacht, mit Curd Jürgens in der Josefstadt, da müsste ja dieser Wandteppich von Freud sein. [...] Da legen wir den doch über Rustan[s] Bett. So. Hat es hingelegt und in den Kritiken stand dann: Also diese Symbolik war toll, obwohl er hat sich überhaupt nichts gedacht dabei. Ich meine nur. So kommen solche Legenden zustande. Naja.

**CK:** Na super. Vielen Dank einmal.

## 8. Zusammenfassung

Meine Diplomarbeit beschäftigt sich mit dem Thema Kulturtransfer sowie mit den kulturellen Konsequenzen, die derartige Transferprozesse bedingen können. Anhand von Tennessee Williams' *Glasmengerie* untersuche ich die (variiende) Rezeptionsbereitschaft bzw. -verweigerung der Österreicher im Hinblick auf „typisch Amerikanisches“, wie es sich aus den Theaterkritiken aus nahezu sechs Jahrzehnten ableiten lässt.

Der erste Teil meiner Arbeit diskutiert die Aufführungstradition des Stückes am Broadway, während der zweite Teil eine Untersuchung der österreichischen Rezeption auf den Wiener Bühnen darstellt. Im abschließenden dritten Teil werden die Resultate aus den beiden vorangegangenen Teilen zusammengeführt und miteinander verglichen.

Das theoretische Rahmengerüst bilden Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrinks Theorie über Kulturtransfer sowie Joseph Roachs Prämisse über die Korrelation von Performanz und kollektivem Gedächtnis. Von zentralem Interesse ist daher nicht nur das Übermitteln der andersartigen Kultur, d.h. der Kulturtransfer, sondern auch die Selektivität, die den Rezeptionsprozess auszeichnet.

Wie sich anhand der österreichischen Reaktionen zeigt, werden besonders jene Elemente in die eigene Kultur integriert, die sich im Sinne des nationalen kollektiven Gedächtnisses interpretieren bzw. übersetzen (umformulieren) lassen. Hingegen wird Amerikanisches, das sich nicht in einen österreichischen Kontext einbinden lässt, entweder ignoriert, indem der Fokus auf die „allgemeingültigen“ Aspekte gerichtet wird, oder schlichtweg abgelehnt.

Diese Entscheidung (verallgemeinern oder ablehnen) wurde durch die Jahrzehnte hindurch hauptsächlich von der starken Wechselwirkung zwischen Kultur und Politik geprägt. Es zeigt sich, dass fremdartige (Amerikanische) Konzepte besonders dann abgelehnt wurden, wenn Österreich sich auf politischer Ebene bewusst gegen die Außenwelt (Amerika) abgrenzte und bestrebt war, seinen Nationalstolz vehement zu verteidigen. In derartigen Situationen wurde *Die Glasmengerie* zum Vehikel für latenten, aber auch offenkundigen Antiamerikanismus instrumentalisiert, und man grenzte sich bewußt ab gegen den Amerikaner Tennessee Williams, den Klischee-Amerikaner Jim O'Connor, die nervende Südstaaten-Mutter Amanda Wingfield oder das gesamte Stück.

Während in Österreich das Stück tendenziell mit starkem Bezug zum Zeitgeschehen interpretiert wurde, und die kritischen Reaktionen stark von der jeweiligen sozialen Befindlichkeit abhingen, konnte bei den Amerikanischen Produktionen nur bedingt ein Nexus mit dem Zeitgeist hergestellt werden. Anders als in Österreich wagten sich in Amerika nur wenige Rezensenten, *Die Glasmagerie* nachteilig zu kritisieren. Das Stück, durch das Tennessee Williams 1944 zu einem der bedeutendsten Amerikanischen Schriftsteller avancierte, genoss in Amerika einen unantastbaren Status. Die stetige Regelmäßigkeit, in der es am Broadway wiederaufgeführt wurde, nämlich einmal pro Dekade, gibt Aufschluß über die unverminderte Beliebtheit des Autors, selbst nach seinem Ableben. *Die Glasmagerie* bildet zweifelsohne einen essentiellen Teil des Amerikanischen Literaturbewusstseins. Die Broadway-Wiederaufführungen erfüllen daher heute eine Erinnerungsfunktion, und lassen Tennessee Williams auch nach seinem Tod gewissermaßen weiterleben, indem seine vergangene Größe immer wieder ins (Amerikanische kollektive) Gedächtnis gerufen wird.

## 9. Curriculum Vitae

- **Persönliche Daten:**

Name: Cornelia Kubinger  
 Geburtsdatum: 16/12/1983  
 Geburtsort: Ried im Innkreis  
 Staatsbürgerschaft: Österreich

- **Ausbildung:**

10/2003 – 2009 Studium der Anglistik und Amerikanistik an der Universität Wien  
 Schwerpunktmodule im 2. Abschnitt: *Cultural Studies* und *Drama*  
 09/2006 – 05/2007 Auslandsstudium an der University of Toronto, Kanada  
 10/2005 – Studium der Internationalen Betriebswirtschaftslehre an der  
 Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien; Fremdsprachen: Englisch und  
 Spanisch  
 10/2004 – 06/2005 Jazzgesangsstudium am Vienna Konservatorium  
 06/2003 Matura mit Auszeichnung  
 09/1998 – 06/2003 Adalbert Stifter Gymnasium - Oberstufengymnasium für  
 Studierende der Musik, Linz; Instrumente: Oboe, Gesang

- **Stipendien:**

12/2007 Forschungsstipendium für das Erstellen der Diplomarbeit im  
 Rahmen des universitären Forschungsprojekts „Weltbühne  
 Wien“  
 09/2006 – 05/2007 Joint Study Stipendium

- **Berufliche Tätigkeiten:**

Sommer 2002 Praktikum in Bradford, UK (Firma: Cytec Industries, Bereich:  
 Human Resources)  
 Sommer 2005 Praktikum in Stamford, Connecticut, USA (Firma: Cytec  
 Industries, Bereich: Marketing)  
 Sommer 2008 Praktikum in Barcelona (Firma: Kemira, Bereich: Logistik)