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FILM AND TELEVISION ADAPTATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *A  
STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* ADAPTATIONS FOR CINEMA AND TELEVISION.

por

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## ABSTRACT

FILM AND TELEVISION ADAPTATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE* ADAPTATIONS FOR CINEMA AND TELEVISION.

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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
2004

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The main purpose of this research is to investigate the process of film and television adaptations based on literary texts in relation to the historical and social contexts in which they were produced. The study presents a comparative analysis of two different film adaptations based on Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* produced in distinct historical moments, Elia Kazan's film version (1951) and Glenn Jordan's television version (1995). A systematic discussion on the process of film adaptation, which is elucidated in the analysis of both films, also requires a theoretical discussion on the concept of adaptation, which will be mainly grounded upon the work of George Bluestone, Brian MacFarlane, Robert Scholes, Martin Esslin, and Robert Stam. Through an exploration of cinematic devices such as extra-scenes, camera movement, editing, lighting, setting, and soundtrack, both film analyses will focus on the intertextual process in which films transform, elaborate and expand their literary sources.

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## RESUMO

### ADAPTATAÇÃO PARA FILME E TELEVISÃO: UM ANÁLISE COMPARATIVA DE ADAPTAÇÕES PARA FILME E TELEVISÃO DE *A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*.

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A presente pesquisa tem como objetivo principal investigar o processo de adaptação de filmes baseados em textos literários em relação ao contexto histórico e social em que eles foram produzidos. Desta forma, a pesquisa apresenta uma análise comparativa de duas versões cinematográficas da peça do dramaturgo Tennessee Williams *A Streetcar Named Desire* produzidas em momentos históricos distintos, a primeira para o cinema, dirigida por Elia Kazan (1951) e a outra feita para a televisão, dirigida por Glenn Jordan (1995). Uma discussão sistemática sobre o processo de adaptação de filmes, que é também elucidada na análise dos filmes, requer uma discussão teórica em relação ao conceito de adaptação, que será baseado principalmente no trabalho de George Bluestone, Brian MacFarlane, Robert Scholes, Martin Esslin, e Robert Stam. Através de uma exploração de recursos cinematográficos como cenas adicionais, movimento de câmera, edição, iluminação, cenário e sonoplastia, as análises dos dois filmes concentram-se na relação intertextual na qual filmes transformam, elaboram e expandem as suas fontes literárias.

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### **Introduction**

Since the beginning of film production, in the late nineteenth century, a considerable number of literary texts such as novels, plays, and short-stories, has been adapted into films. According to Brian McFarlane, “the idea of using the novel--that already established repository of narrative fiction--for source material got underway, and the process has continued more or less unabated for ninety years” (27). It is not surprising that, when compared with the approximately five hundred-year history of printing-press culture, the hundred-year history of film seems remarkably brief. However, despite the relative novelty of its technology, the process of development and maturity of cinema has occurred in a short time span that quickly elevated it to a privileged position as one of the central conveyors of narrative in contemporary society.

The relationship between literature and film is not as simple as it may first appear, and it has been the subject matter of important discussions in film and literature studies. In order to understand an adapted film, then, it is also necessary to understand the way literary expression in particular has informed, extended, shaped, and limited the way films are made. Likewise, twentieth-century literature reveals the prominent influence of filmic narrative on its structures, styles, themes, and philosophical concerns.

Thus, despite a myriad of evident distinctions between these two mediums,

critics such as George Bluestone and Brian MacFarlane agree in one point: literature and film have narrative in common, as they both recount a sequence of events. MacFarlane finds this similarity between the narrative form of the novel and the narrative form of the film very significant, and he defines, for instance, novelists such as James Conrad and Henry James as ‘cinematic’ (4). Similarly, Keith Cohen suggests that cinema, the twentieth-century newly emerging and developing narrative medium, influenced literary narrative (11). He provides instances of passages from Proust and Virginia Woolf to exemplify how the modern novel, strongly influenced by the montage of pioneer filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein’s, focuses on its encoding processes in the ways Victorian novels did not (18).

Conversely, the relation between literature and film became so intertwined that in more recent film production, as Anelise Corseuil exemplifies, literary texts were originated from films, as in “the case of *The Piano* (1993)<sup>1</sup>” (297). Thus, it is only through the study of literary works and their genres in relation to their respective film adaptations that one is able to recognize the similarities and differences between these two mediums, and discover the literary qualities inherent in most cinema production since its beginning. In fact, Robert Scholes, in his well-known book *Elements of Literature*, has introduced film as a literary genre.

In the discussion of the relationship between literature and film it is quite common to hear filmgoers debating about how faithful or unfaithful a certain film adaptation is to its literary source. However, the emphasis on the notion of fidelity in relation to film adaptation commonly addressing the literary text as original and the adapted film as copy does not encompass all the nuances of the vast field of film adaptation. Also, the idea of film fidelity to a literary source has its roots in preconceived concepts, which reinforce the alleged superiority of literature to film.

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<sup>1</sup> According to Corseuil, the script of the film has been read as a literary text itself.

Fortunately, the contemporary scope of adaptation studies does not restrain itself to a discussion of the issue of fidelity, but, as Robert Stam does, approaches it in the light of a dialogic relationship in a Bakhtinian sense, whose premises approach both literature and film as products related to one another in a floating and continuous relationship (57).

Films are essentially the result of applying the conventions of cinematography to the conventions of fiction such as novel, short story and/or drama. George Bluestone, for instance, in his seminal book *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema*, directly investigates the fundamental differences existing between the written text and the visual narrative. He postulates that, in the process of adaptation, considerable shifts are unavoidable, regardless of the fact that film and literature seemingly share much in common (26). Thus, Bluestone places his focus on the rationale behind the transformation from one medium into another. In doing so, he aims at shedding some light on the very nature of the mediums themselves in order to effectively identify where they diverge, and thus come up with a clear theory on the laws that govern the process of adaptation from novel to film. Besides Bluestone, other critics such as Wagner, Dudley Andrew and Robert Stam explore the diversity and complexity of the process of adapting a literary work into a film by proposing different categories of adaptation.

The differences between a novel or play and its respective film adaptation are undoubtedly complex. Such complexity may spring from the demands placed on the textual material by the conventions imposed by different mediums. Also, there is still a large amount of economical, cultural and historical forces, which dictate and exert a considerable influence on the work that is adapted, and these forces have also been the focus of many studies on adaptation.

Therefore, considering the variety of sources a film may be adapted from such as

novels, plays, music, television shows, and comic books, the theoretical studies on film adaptation draw from other areas such as sociology, cultural criticism, and cultural materialism, among others. Andrew, for instance, calls attention to the need for a sociological turn in this field, and he grounds his arguments on the fact that novels are the source material for more than half of all commercial films produced in the USA, whereas thirty percent are from the kind of sources such as plays, TV series, comic books, among others (29). Likewise, James Naremore provides an incredible statistic from March 1998 issue of *Variety* drawing up a list of authors from Leo Tolstoy to Stephen King whose books have been the source material for nearly twenty percent of the movies released in 1997 in USA. However, in opposition to what is commonly thought, film adaptation does not draw solely and exclusively from novels, and this sum can be even larger, as Naremore argues, considering that another twenty percent of film production takes its source material from “plays, sequels, remakes, television shows, and magazine or newspaper articles” (10).

Due to the variety of sources from which films are adapted, it is impossible to reduce the scope of adaptation studies only to those films that are derived from novels. There is a vast number of plays, for instance, right after their opening on stage, which are soon adapted to film. Indeed, countless numbers of other examples of films based on other kinds of sources can also be regarded as adaptations, varying from films such as *Twelve Monkeys* (1995), based on the French art film *La Jetée* (1962) (Naremore 1), and Walt Disney’s *Fantasy* (1940), in which some of the stories are fully inspired by classical music, to a more recent emphasis on adaptations of comic books such as *Spiderman* (2002), *X-Men* (2000, 2003), *Hulk* (2003), *The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen* (2003), based on Allan Moore’s and Kevin O’Neill’s graphic novel. Consequently, the studies on adaptation must not only recognize the complexity and variety of its sources, but also seek for a balance between studies devoted to films

adapted from novels and those films based on other types of literary genres. Thus, in the same way that the study of film adaptations based on novels provides a rich ground for the understanding of the specificities of each medium, other types of film adaptations may offer the possibility to explore the process of adaptation also from a historical, cultural and economic perspective.

Considering this context, a comparative study of two different film adaptations based on the same literary source and produced in distinct historical moments appears as a productive subject for investigation: it provides the ground to explore how earlier narratives can be recontextualized and made available for different audiences in distinct historical moments. Thus, this present research intends to analyze and compare two film adaptations of Tennessee Williams' play *A Streetcar Named Desire* in relation to the historical and social contexts in which they were produced. The first film version was directed by Elia Kazan (1951), who was also the director of the first stage performance, and credited for working directly with Tennessee Williams in many important details of both stage and film script. The other film to be analyzed is a TV film version of *Streetcar* adapted for CBS Entertainment Productions (1995), produced and directed by Glenn Jordan. This study also analyzes historical and economic issues that influenced the way both adaptations were carried out. Furthermore, by contrasting versions of the same play in two distinct types of media it is also possible to depict some distinctive features of plays adapted for films from those especially designed for a television exhibition.

Bearing these issues in mind, the objective of this research is not only to scrutinize both adaptations of Williams' play by analyzing aesthetic or technical elements, but also, in a Bakhtinian sense, to explore the dialogic relationship between the play text and both films, relating them to the historical context in which they were produced. In other words, to investigate how the television version of *A Streetcar*

*Named Desire* (1995), from now on *Streetcar*, transforms, elaborates, expands, and dialogs with Kazan's version (1951) in the same way that this latter version related with the theatrical text originally meant for the stage. The film analysis also discusses the changes made in both adapted versions concerning source text, extra-diegetic music, setting, cast and *mise-en-scene*<sup>2</sup>, which both film directors, Elia Kazan and Glenn Jordan, had to draw upon in order to achieve a level of quality that pleased both critics and audience, and at the same time fitted them into Hollywood production standards.

The first chapter of this research presents a review of recent literature on the nature of adaptation and the relationship between literature and film. The discussion firstly focuses on Bluestone and MacFarlane's contributions to the understanding of the relationship between novel and film. Then, the chapter shifts to an exploration of the relationship between the elements of drama, as a literary genre, and film devices in the light of Robert Scholes' and Martin Esslin's works. Afterwards, the discussion focuses on the specificities of the adaptation of dramatic genre for the television medium. Finally, the relationship between literature and film is discussed through the different categories of adaptation proposed by Wagner and Andrew, as well as in relation to Robert Stam's study of an intertextual approach to film studies.

Chapter II presents an analysis of Kazan's film version of *Streetcar* (1951). It starts with an overview of the historical panorama of Hollywood film production during the 1940s and 1950s, aiming at a better understanding of the historical and social context in which Kazan adapted Williams' play. This discussion is elucidated by an analysis of the main thematic and structural aspects of Williams' *Streetcar* that facilitate its adaptation to film. Also, the chapter analyzes the play's thematic aspects and formal structure in relation to the historical context of Hollywood film production

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<sup>2</sup> According to David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson, *mise-en-scene*, from the French "staging and action", includes "those aspects of film that overlap with the art of the theater: setting, lighting, costume and the behavior of figures" (Film Art 169).

during that time. Henceforth, the analysis focuses on Kazan's film by describing and investigating the way in which he made use of cinematic features such as cast selection, extra-scenes, camera movement, editing, lighting, setting, and soundtrack. Also, the analysis discusses the ways in which Kazan attempted to escape the censorship and the studio demands regarding the film's most scandalous sequences.

Chapter III analyzes Jordan's television version of *Streetcar* (1995) by investigating the relationship between this film adaptation and the television genre, teledrama. Similar to the chapter on the analysis of Kazan's film, this chapter presents a description and analysis of the main scenes regarding technical elements such as cast selection, camera movement, editing, lighting, setting, dialog and soundtrack. Finally, it establishes the relations between some elements in Jordans's version, which resemble and diverge from Kazan's film adaptation.

Finally, in the conclusion most of the relevant issues discussed throughout the thesis are briefly recalled again for the sake of summarizing and outlining the most significant contributions of the present study, at the same time pointing other issues that might need further investigation.

## **Chapter I**

### **Review of Literature: The Realm of Adaptation**

The relationship between literature and cinema is so intrinsic that film adaptation as a phenomenon began as soon as cinema started to establish itself as a new narrative entertainment. As Andrew affirms, "the production of a film out of a previous written text is virtually as old as the machinery of cinema itself" (29). However, due to the complexity and variety of literature and film, several film scholars have devoted time to elaborate theoretical discussions on the nature of the relationship between literature and film by defining their boundaries and their specificities. Thus, by having specified the features belonging to literature and film, the relationship between both mediums can be

understood from a more thorough perspective.

Considering such relationship, the study of film adaptation requires some distinctions about the art forms that are being adapted. Thus, this chapter firstly accounts for the major aspects involved in the process of adaptation, concerning especially the relationship between novels and films. Secondly, it discusses the main features of the relationship between play texts, understood here as a literary genre with its distinctive features, and films. Afterwards, the discussion focuses on the specificities of the adaptation of dramatic genre for the television medium. Finally, the relationship between literature and film is discussed through the different categories of adaptation proposed by Wagner and Andrew, as well as in relation to Robert Stam's study of an intertextual approach to film studies.

## **1.1** Adaptation and Literary Genres: Novels

One of the first successful studies attempting to scrutinize the relations between written words and visual images was made by George Bluestone in his book *Novels into Film: The Metamorphosis of Fiction into Cinema*. Bluestone's study is mainly concerned with defining the boundaries as well as the distinctiveness of each medium. In the chapter entitled "Limits of the Novel and Limits of the Film", for instance, he theorizes on the forces that shape the cinematic adaptation from a novel. He asserts that "regardless of the fact that film and literature appear to share so much in common, as they both are narrative modes, significant shifts are necessary in the process of adaptation" (11). In that sense, by discussing the nature of each medium, Bluestone

argues that the divergence between the two mediums can be effectively identified, and, thus, a clear theory on the features that encompass the process of adaptation from novel to film can be developed.

Therefore, in order to elaborate his exploration more systematically, Bluestone organizes his discussion under five sections contrasting the main distinctions between the mediums of literature and film. Firstly, he argues that, whereas the novel is predominantly a linguistic medium, films have images as a main feature. Secondly, novels are consumed by a small, literary audience, whilst film can count on a large mass audience. Thirdly, the process of a novel's production is a result of one single individual, a writer, whereas the production of films is a much more complex process, for it involves a large group of people working cooperatively under industrial conditions in different aspects of the same product. The fourth distinction Bluestone formulates accounts for the relative freedom from censorship a writer may have, whereas film production is constrained by the self-imposed Production Code. Bluestone's last distinction between novel and film concerns the conceptual and discursive form that constitutes the novel, in contrast with the perceptual and representational form of the film (15-20).

Moreover, Bluestone deepens his exploration of the relationship between novel and film by differentiating the concept of "mental image" from the notion of "visual image".. According to him, the way viewers construct a story through their physical sight when watching a film is different from the way images are created in their minds as part of their imagination when reading a literary narrative (49). Thus, each medium forces a different mode of perception, and inevitably requires different skills to *read* them. The assertion that we process and connect to these different mediums in different ways effectively illustrates Bluestone's main claim, that images provoke different associations compared to words. Likewise, in his exploration of "The Trope in

Language” (20-24), it is the words of Robert Burns that best convey this disparity. In Bluestone’s discussion of Burns’ poem “my love’s like a red, red rose, that’s newly sprung in June” (qtd. in Bluestone 21), he evokes numerous associations with the image in a sensory and metaphoric way.

The study of how narrative operates in novels and films is also discussed by Brian MacFarlane in his book *Novels To Films: An Introduction to the Theory of Adaptation*. MacFarlane draws from Barthes’ studies on the essence of narrative functions in order to establish relations between both mediums in the process of adaptation. However, McFarlane’s main concern is to establish distinctions between what can be transferred in the process of adaptation and what cannot. First of all, he points out a difference between *transference* and *adaptation: transference*, he argues, is a relatively easy process by which elements from a novel can be taken and placed within a film; *adaptation*, on the other hand, is a more complicated process by which those elements of a novel that cannot be transferred must be somehow worked out into the film text (13).

MacFarlane’s study of the function of narrative in the adaptation process of novels to film draws especially from Barthes’ distinctions of two main groups of narrative functions: distributional and integrational. Firstly, as distributional functions, Barthes defines “functions proper” (MacFarlane 26) that operate horizontally in the text. Namely, they are associated with what we conventionally call story and operate in a linear way throughout the text. They have to do with operations, or, in other words, with the *functionality of doing*.

Secondly, the integrational functions, which Barthes also calls *indices*, operate vertically within the text and are associated with what we commonly call discourse. It is through the integrational functions, then, that authors convey, for instance, psychological information on characters, data on identity, notations of atmosphere,

representations of place, etc. These are functions of *being*, as opposed to those of *doing* (13). Finally, in line with Bluestone's study, MacFarlane asserts that, whereas novels draw entirely on a verbal sign system, films draw variously and sometimes simultaneously on visual, aural, and verbal signifiers (26). Consequently, whereas verbal signs operate on a conceptual level, cinematic signs are distinguished for being perceptual (27). Thus, he concludes that, due to this differentiation, in the process of adaptation only the narrative-plot can be transferred, and not enunciation.

Besides the formal aspects regarding the distinctions between novels and films such as the transferability of the narrative, as concluded by MacFarlane, critics such as Dudley Andrew prefer to focus attention on how the meaning of a literary text is caught and transformed within the film's text. He points out that the studies on the relationship between literature and film have "much more in common with the theory of interpretation, for, in a strong sense, adaptation is the appropriation of a meaning from a prior text" (29). Andrew relates the act of adapting a film from a novel to an act of personal interpretation, which may differ from reader to reader. Thus, any given film adaptation may reflect and reproduce the filmmaker's particular reading of the source text, and, consequently, every adaptation may favor certain aesthetic possibilities and foreclose others, which may eventually match the viewers' reading of the same text. Independently of the deep structure of the narrative, what really matters in this approach is how particularities of a text will be adapted into a film. However, Andrew concludes that the fact that the appropriation of meaning rarely occurs may account for the reason why films based on novels are frequently criticized for failing to accurately adapt literary texts.

From this brief overview of the main points that constitute the scope of the studies on the relationship between novels and films, we can conclude that, setting the boundaries to clarify their similarities and differences must be the first concern of any

study aiming to analyze films based on novels.

## **1.2** Adaptation and Literary Genres: Drama

The relationship between literature and film does not only take place in the realm of the novel, but also in the realm of drama. The range of instances varies from large budget and word-by-word text film productions such as *Hamlet* by Kenneth Branagh (1996) to the humble and loose *Uncle Vanya on 42nd Street* (1994), loosely adapted by Louis Malle from Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* to film adaptation of David Mamet's play *Oleanna* (1994). Thus, akin to the film adaptation studies, which investigate the nature of the specific elements that constitute novels and films as distinct mediums, the elements of a play text<sup>3</sup> also yield fruitful ground for broadening the discussion on the field of film adaptation.

An essential element in establishing the connections between drama and film is to accept that drama also encompasses the realm of literature and, therefore, is not only a representational, but also a fictional art. As Robert Scholes explains in his chapter "The Elements of Drama", although most plays are written to be performed, the art of drama has been producing numerous *closet dramas*, that is, plays that are only written to be read rather than acted out, as Pablo Picasso's *Desire Caught by the Tail* (1773-4). Additionally, for many readers, the experience of drama is generally limited to plays in print form instead of in performance. Indeed, plays that were initially meant for stage, film or television performances are extensively read either for pleasure or for academic purposes. Tennessee Williams' play analysed in this study, for instance, as many other plays by dramatists such as Chekhov, Ibsen, Wilde, Shaw, O'Neill, Beckett and Albee, among others, have become compulsory part of any academic syllabus devoted to

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<sup>3</sup> Drama is regarded here as a fictional rather than a representational art.

understanding the art of drama more thoroughly. Scholes points out that the reason why all these plays have been approached as a text-to-be-read accounts for the fact that, above all, they are all “a form of literature—and art made out of words—and should be understood in relation not only to the theatre, but also to other literary forms: short-story, poem, and essay” (779).

Despite sharing similarities with other literary forms in aspects of narration, plot, characters, as well as the construction of time and space, the basic unity of the dramatic mode also encompasses a certain number of elements that, in their essence, constitute its singularity. Based on the Aristotelian<sup>4</sup> elements of drama both Scholes and Esslin, for instance, highlight the specificities of the drama elements such as action, exposition, character, and dialog. Esslin points out that most critics agree that the action of drama consists of eight parts: exposition, problem, point of attack, foreshadowing, complications, crises, climax, and denouement (45-7). In Esslin’s definitions, he argues that exposition establishes time and place, characters and their relationships, and the prevailing status quo or equilibrium. The problem, for instance, is the event that disrupts the status quo, or shakes the equilibrium and triggers the plot in motion. It usually consists of something simple in most kinds of plots such as in *Streetcar*, when Blanche tells her sister Stella that she has lost Belle Reve and has nowhere else to go.

Due to the fact that drama texts are structured in a dialog format, one can easily be misled to believe that plot in drama is much simpler to be understood than in a novel. Scholes highlights that plot is an extremely complicated element in the dramatic mode, and in order to identify it one has to distinguish it from the scenario. He posits:

We can understand this distinction if we realize that in a plot all events are necessarily arranged *chronologically*, whereas in a scenario events are arranged *dramatically*—that is, in an order that will create the greatest impact on the audience. (797)

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<sup>4</sup> According to Esslin, the current use of Aristotle’s ideas is generally called neo-Aristotelian, because they have been clarified and expanded from ‘neo’ studies of drama.

Thus, the understanding of the plot in a play requires an identification of all the events that occur within the plot and the chronological order in which they take place. This identification can be achieved by a thorough and close examination of the scenario focusing on scenario details and their implications to plot development. Once setting details and the sequence of events have been established, Scholes argues, one can examine how the plot is presented by the scenario (799). Scholes' attention on the distinction and relation between plot and setting for the study of drama is very significant in understanding film adaptations based on plays. As the film analysis of *Streetcar* in the next chapter will show, certain changes in the way the scenario is presented may cause considerably different effects on the discourse of the adapted film.

By observing these elements that constitute drama, there seems to be no disagreement on the possibilities of approaching it as a text to be read in the same way a novel or a poem are read. Likewise, due to its representational potentiality, the relationship between drama and the mediums of cinema and television has grown so strong that there is little question concerning the fact that the basic unity of dramatic mode can be adapted to the visual mediums almost effortlessly if compared to a novel adaptation. As Esslin argues, though plays can suitably be adapted to films, they are not modified in "the essence of their mode of expression" (77). Conversely, in the same way that twentieth-century fiction reveals its influence on film, the visual mediums have also been constantly influencing the literary mode. Esslin provides several instances of plays like *A Little Night Music*, which was made out of the scenarios from a Bergman's film, or Pinter's television play *The Lover*, which was later adapted to the stage (77).

The dramatic mode may thus be highly regarded due to its propensity for being easily adapted into the visual mediums of film and television. However, the recognition of the aesthetic and technical potentialities of drama and film may facilitate a comprehension of the changes that frequently occur when a play is adapted from one

medium to another. Thus, with regard to the plot of a play, for instance, film devices like montage and editing can provide the director with limitless possibilities of structuring the play's sequence of action. Esslin points out that the construction of settings can gain a considerable degree of realism through the photographic devices film and television mediums have to offer (78). The exploration of film devices and techniques can create a thoroughly new view of a dramatic text, as the director can set the camera to roam freely through the setting, showing the action from different perspectives..

The use of other film techniques such as long-shots and close-ups, or cutting from one location to another, also allows the viewer to feel movement, something which is very particular to film discourse. In addition to that, the characters' lines may gain totally different nuances when the actors' faces are shown in close-ups or highlighted by the film's lighting, photography, and soundtrack. In that sense, the adaptation of a play text is as complex a process as a film adaptation of a novel, for it also requires a skillful and accurate orchestration of different film devices and techniques applied to a text which is already constituted by its own distinct features.

Equally noteworthy, the issue of textual temporality appears as another aspect that generally operates and influences the process of adapting a dramatic text to the film medium. Namely, film adaptation of classic plays usually poses the dilemma whether the director should respect the historical time period and language of the source text or update it. In this sense, recent film adaptations of Shakespeare's plays have shown a variety of updates regarding time and space. In Baz Luhrmann's version of *Romeo + Juliet* (1996), despite its entire reliance on the source text, the film takes place at the present time on Verona beach (US); in Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000), the action also takes place in present-time New York. These two films are examples of how contemporary films have been creatively approaching elements such as time and space

when adapting plays to visual mediums even though, at the same time, these films still draw entirely from the source play text.

Conversely, the advent of cinema and later of television seems to have exerted considerable influence on the aesthetics and techniques of the dramatic mode so that, in some cases, the differences between these two mediums are entirely blurred. Esslin explains that the influence visual mediums had on contemporary drama accounts for the fact that dramatists like Brecht, Beckett, Pinter, and Williams wrote stage plays and radio plays, as well as television and film scripts (83). Besides being a playwright, Williams himself also had experience in writing film scripts such as *Baby Doll* (1956), which became a film also directed by Elia Kazan. Thus, like *Streetcar*, most of Williams' plays incorporated the rhythm and dynamics of film discourse.

In short, this brief account of the specificities of drama as a literary genre and its straightforward relation with films reinforces my initial assertion that any study of film adaptation must primarily seek to understand the features of each medium, literary and visual, in order to thoroughly explore their relations. The next topic will focus on the particularities of the relationship between plays and the television medium.

### **1.3** Adaptation and Television Films: Teledrama

Since Chapter 3 deals with a film adaptation of *Streetcar* made especially for television in 1995, it is important to raise some considerations regarding the specificities involving the process of adapting drama for the television medium. More than any other literary genre, the adaptation and production of dramas for television played an unquestionable and major role in the development of early North American television from the late 1940s to 1960s, creating, then, a rather particular and singular television genre: teledrama. Thus, in order to understand the way dramas have recently been

adapted to television, it is rather pertinent to draw back and see how this genre has been related to television since its beginnings.

In the article “Boxed in? The Aesthetics of Film and Television,” Martin MacLoone explains that the proliferation of both original and classic dramas adapted and produced for live television exhibition during America’s postwar years was so fundamental for the early days of television that this period is seen as the “golden age” of American television (84). Additionally, with regards to this golden age, John Caughie’s article “The Making of the Golden Age” also provides an enlightening contribution to the study of the development of early American television. Caughie states that, in the 1950s, there was an increasing interest in live drama, especially in plays adapted or written for television (72). Such interest in television drama can be accounted for the fact that, during the 1950s and 1960s, these live dramas became the fitting programmatic complement along other television attractions. According to MacLoone, insofar as television became popular, TV executives drew heavily on teledramas as a programming strategy aiming at elevating TV status, and consequently at attracting family audiences (85).

In its early days, the structure of teledramas was rather simple, consisting basically of two cameras located in a TV studio. Regarding its form, MacLoone asserts that these “programs lasted approximately thirty minutes to an hour, and relied solely on video technology” (84). Compared to the enormous technical apparatus used to make a film, this type of production was regarded as highly amateur. However, as time went by, these newly constructed television dramas began to incorporate elements from other mediums such as radio, theatrical stage, and Hollywood films. For instance, from radio, MacLoone explains, these teledramas absorbed the CBS network distribution system, sound effects, music, theme songs and the omniscient narrator (85).

Also discussing the mediums television drew upon, Helena Sheehan explains

that, in the field of drama, “theatre has certainly been a prominent source and influence for television” (38). Theater provided acting techniques<sup>5</sup> which gave a sense of immediacy and reality to small-screen performances, set designs mainly inspired on Broadway productions, and most importantly a large range of playwrights with experience from working in all kinds of different dramatic mediums such as stage, radio, and film (40). Caughie lists a series of playwrights such as Chayevsky and Arthur Miller, whose work, akin to Tennessee Williams’, inherited a lot of features from the theater of Ibsen and Chekhov. These playwrights were writing dramas intensively or having their stage plays adapted for television (72). Finally, from Hollywood, Sheehan argues, teledramas borrowed a number of technical elements such as camera stylistics, lighting, mobility and flexibility, as well as actors and actresses who starred in Hollywood productions.

The adaptation of drama for television was not a simple matter of rewriting the play text. Caughie points out that, due to the fact that these dramas were initially transmitted live, drama adaptation for television had to capture “something of the nature of the theater performance” (44). Indeed, as Caughie explains, the concept of immediacy became so determinant in the aesthetic of television dramas that the studio where they were produced and broadcasted was a performance space “full of technologies and techniques at the service of an ideology of immediacy” (44).

Thus, due to technical constraints and the need for an immediate performance, the construction of time and space in teledramas differed quite a lot from the way Hollywood films used to construct time and space. In *The Classical Hollywood Cinema* Bordwell explains that space and time in film are ruled by a premise of economy of narrative causality, and by the spectators’ capacity to fill the gaps of narrative causality

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<sup>5</sup> Concerning these acting techniques, Susan Spector asserts that, at that time, stage performance was achieving a remarkable state of realism due to directors’ use of Stanislavski’s method to rehearse actors and actresses (549).

through a system of conventions that s/he is already familiar with (42-60). Since live teledramas were constrained by its immediate performance in real time, the construction of time and space, as Caughie argues, relied heavily on performance to give this sense of time passage (44). Moreover, he points out that this specific feature of early television drama was based on the relationship between time, space and performance, which “made it off from cinema and aligned it with theater” (45).

By the end of the 1950s the “golden age” dramas had proven so popular with television audiences that they became an indispensable element in the network television schedule. According to MacLoone, with advances in technology, some teledramas started being recorded, but they struggled to maintain the aesthetic and psychological premises of the live productions that guided their creators and attracted audiences. Thus, the audience could then choose their favorite teledrama within a large variety of different teledrama genres. MacLoone lists a series of several types of dramatic genres varying from suspense; *Kraft Television Theater* (ABC 1953-55), mystery: *Mr. Arsenic* (ABC 1952) and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents* (CBS/NBC 1955-65), psychological: *Theater of the Mind* (NBC 1949), legal: *They Stand Accused* (DuMont 1949-54), science fiction: *Twilight Zone* (CBS 1959-64), to military: *Citizen Soldier* (Syndicated 1956) (86-7).

As these various titles suggest, teledramas were certainly diverse in their content, if not in their form. Caughie considers these programs’ content to be the major inherited problem in adapting plays for the commercial television medium. That is, the adaptation and production of plays whose theme tackled certain polemic and forbidden issues were not welcomed by sponsors. Regarding these teledramas, Caughie explains:

The plays were a small-scale, mainly one-hour ‘situation dramas’ in which character and psychology were the focus of the interest rather than narrative action, the ‘habitus’ was lower middle class or working class, and the characteristic inhabitants were damaged and confused, the walking wounded of the American dream (72).

Additionally, many of these “serious” teledramas were sponsored by large companies such as Colgate and Goodyear, among others, which had a strong power over these teledramas’ content. Obviously such “seriousness” was not the ingredient, as Caughie explains, because sponsors wished to inflame the fire of consumerism (72). In other words, most sponsored teledramas were obliged to avoid socially and politically controversial themes. Thus, teleplays dealing with problems at the social level such as racial discrimination, structural poverty, and other social illnesses were systematically disregarded. Therefore, as Caughie concludes, the role of early American television was to yield “happy consumers” rather than “sober citizens” (72).

During the following decades, teledramas underwent a series of transformations. Regarding their aesthetics, Caughie argues that the creation of the apparatus for recording teledramas not only gave something new to television, but also altered its nature (52). Specifically, the aesthetic of immediacy that featured live drama was gradually changed into an aesthetic of aims produced by the recording apparatus. Also, teledramas became a less frequent type of program on the television schedule from the 1960s onwards and, according to MacLoone, progressively transmuted into other types of genre<sup>6</sup> throughout the following decades (88-9).

Regarding the shifts television drama gradually underwent, Sheehan accounts for the fact that, since its beginning, television dramas have intensively incorporated a great deal of film techniques and devices in order to develop their own aesthetics (47). The use of film in shooting television drama, for instance, and the technological development of videotape to an electronic approximation of the sensitivity and

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<sup>6</sup> MacLoone points out that one instance of the transformation of teledrama was the emergence of the Western genre, which apparently came to replace teledrama, but indeed teledramas aided to increase the development of film and television aesthetics and, therefore, later its advances were incorporated in the teledrama aesthetics of the 1980s and 1990s (90).

flexibility of film celluloid have certainly stiffened the tendency of recent television drama to incorporate the cinematic techniques and styles. Namely, Sheehan explains that, as editing facilities improved, teledrama production began to draw more upon film techniques such as shooting out of sequence, in shorter scenes and in multiple takes. These effects can be seen in Jack O'Brien's television adaptation of Arthur Miller's play *All My Sons* (1986) and Michael Attenborough's TV version of Oscar Wilde's play *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1985).

Additionally, Sheehan argues that the quality of television drama has considerably been improved with the use of multiple camera techniques, color, cuts, fades, flashbacks, flash-forwards, slow motion, fast motion, montage, and voice-over commentaries, among other film techniques (51). These cinematic devices are fully explored in numerous drama adaptations for TV exhibition during the 1980s and the 1990s. Anthony Page, for instance, employs extensive use of voice-over to convey the characters' psychological state in his TV version of George Bernard Shaw's play *Heartbreak House* (1986). In Alan Cooke's version of Shaw's *Pygmalion* (1983), Eliza's gradual transformation into a well-refined lady is evidently reflected through similar changes in the color of her costumes. In Nicolas Roeg's TV version of Williams' play *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1989), Alexandra's and Chance's recalling of past memories is highlighted by a number of flashbacks. In Peter Hall's TV adaptation of Williams' play *Orpheus Descending* (1990), several cuts and multiple takes create a sense of confusion in the scene where Jabe Torrance kills his adulterous wife, Lady Torrance. In short, there is no doubt that, in these last decades, television drama has changed substantially if compared to early television drama of the 1950s and 1960s. Nevertheless, despite their strong reliance on film techniques, these television dramas still struggle to maintain the dramatic elements of their originary genre.

Thus, by having this overview of the very nature of television drama in the US

and its interrelation with different mediums, we can briefly trace its development since its beginning in the 1950s up to its convergence into film television in the 1990s. In chapter 3, the film analysis aims at exploring the aesthetics of a recent drama adaptation for television regarding its relation to film techniques and early teledrama.

#### **1.4** Adaptation Categories and Intertextuality

So far it has been argued that films establish a very complex relationship with literary texts of all genres, varying from a straightforward transposition of a literary piece to the visual medium up to a film adaptation barely resembling its source text. Thus, due to the variety of forms in which a literary text can be adapted into film or television mediums, researchers in the field of film studies have proposed some strategies aiming at more sustained and systematized forms of approaching film adaptation. Wagner, for instance, proposes three possible categories, which can be used both by the filmmaker and the critic who intend to assess film adaptations: *transposition*, *commentary*, and *analogy* (222-3). Firstly, as *transposition*, he categorizes those adapted films in which a literary piece is transported directly onto the screen with a minimum of apparent interference, as in Mike Nichols' *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* (1966), a film adaptation of Edward Albee's homonymous play. Secondly, *commentary* is the category in which a source text is taken and either deliberately or even unconsciously modified to the extent that the film focuses more on the aspects that the filmmaker decided to favor to the detriment of other aspects. In other words, it has to do with the intentions on the part of the filmmaker. Franco Zeffirelli's version of *Romeo and Juliet* (1968) appears as an interesting instance of a film adaptation, which shows overtly those aspects of the play the director wished to emphasize. Finally, *analogy*, Wagner's last category, accounts for all film adaptations

that take a literary work as a merely starting point for the creation of another work of art totally independent from its originary source. Azerêdo in her study of irony in Jane Austen's recent film adaptations exemplifies *Clueless* (1995) as an instance of *analogy* (175).

Broadening Wagner's propositions, Andrew engenders more fluid categories for approaching film adaptations, such as *borrowing*, *intersection*, and *transforming sources*. According to Andrew, *borrowing* basically consists of a type of film adaptation in which the structure, or the idea of a previous text, is taken and used by the filmmaker (30). He also regards it as a broad and airy mode of adaptation, for the borrowing may vary in several degrees. For example, in some films only the title of the source text is used. That is the case of Michael Almereyda's *Hamlet* (2000); in this modern adaptation of Shakespeare's play Hamlet appears as a specter in the guise of the newly-dead CEO of Denmark Corporation. In other cases, the filmmaker may only borrow the subject of the source text, as in Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979), based on Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Andrew argues that, due to the variety of sources a film can be stemmed from, such as all literature, music, opera, ballet and painting, *borrowing* is certainly the most frequent type of film adaptation found in film productions (30).

The mode of adaptation Andrew conceives as *intersection* regards those types of films that, within the process of adaptation, strive to retain and capture the singularities of the source text (31). In other words, despite the specificities of each medium, in the intersection process the source text is adapted in a way that it is still possible to identify its specificities within the filmic discourse. Pasolini's *Decameron* (1970) is an interesting instance of film intersection – although Pasolini adapted only eight out of the one hundred tales of Boccaccio's book, the viewer can still perceive the story's narrative specificities within the film's structure.

Andrew's third category is called *fidelity of transformation*, and here he argues

that being faithful to the structure of a source text is not a difficult task, “for most literary works usually render a large ground of information of the fiction’s context, and the basic narrational aspects that shape the narrator’s point of view” (32). Thus, by making use of these pieces of information contained in the source text, the filmmaker can certainly keep its structure, which eventually becomes the structure of the adapted film. Conversely, the task that seems quite hard to accomplish, he points out, is “to keep fidelity to the spirit of the source text, to its tone, values, imagery, and rhythm, since finding stylistic equivalents in films for these intangible aspects is the opposite of a mechanical process” (32). Interesting instances of how fidelity of transformation can occur in a film adaptation will be provided in the analysis of Kazan’s adaptation of *Streetcar* (refer to Chapter 2), as in the discussion of how Kazan found and handled cinematic elements to keep Williams’ symbolism and convey it through images, creating, thus, cinematic metaphors.

Due to films’ capacity to incorporate and interrelate elements of all art expressions, film scholars, such as Robert Stam, prefer to approach the study of film adaptation from an intertextual perspective, in which “the text feeds and is fed into an infinitely permutation intertext” (57). Stam’s discussions of intertextuality, which apply to approach film adaptations, draw significantly from Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism in which every text is interrelated to other texts in an “intersection of textual surfaces” (64). Bakhtin’s ideas have been utilized across a large range of disciplines--linguistics, philosophy, literary theory, and film. Stam, for instance, has certainly been one of the most successful critics to accomplish the use of the Bakhtinian concept of dialogism to the cinematic text in order to better understand the kind of “language” that narrative film constructs.

Stam explains that novels and films are types of mediums that have constantly *cannibalized* other genres and mediums (61). Novels, he argues, started by orchestrating

a polyphonic variety of textual materials, from courtly fictions to jestbooks, resulting, then, in countless types of novels such as poetic novels, journalistic novels, cinematic novels, and more recently cyber-novels. Indeed, considering the variety of other genres a literary text such as a novel can encompass, Bakhtin criticizes the literary analysis' tendency to isolate one level or a specific aspect of a work--whether compositional, thematic or linguistic--and study it without resorting to other components, as if the whole meaning of the text was contained within one level of it. Instead, he suggests, "it is only possible to achieve stylistic unity through diverse elements in 'dialogic interaction'" (Bakhtin 120-8). Based on Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, Stam establishes the parallelism between literature and films by asserting that:

The cinema became a receptacle open to all kinds of literary and pictorial symbolism, to all types of collective representation, to all ideologies, to all aesthetics, and to the infinite play of influences within cinema, within the other arts, and within culture generally. (61)

Thus, considering the capacity of both literature and films to be in constant interrelation not only with each other, but also with all sorts of arts, intertextual dialogism appears as a very effective approach for studying film adaptations focusing on how historical, economical and social contexts interrelate and influence the relationship between the source text and its film version.

Furthermore, the studies on film adaptation from an intertextual perspective have received a substantial contribution from Gérard Genette's concept of *hypertextuality*. In his book *Palimpsestes* Genette explores the interrelations between literary works and explains literary devices such as parody, antinovels, pastiches, caricatures, commentary, allusion, and imitation. Genette's major accomplishment lies in his development of the concept of *hypertextuality*, which accounts for the relationship between one text, called hypertext, to a previous text, hypotext, in which the former transforms, elaborates and expands the latter (11-17). In literature there are countless instances of hypertextuality.

Chico Buarque's hypertext *A Ópera do Malandro* includes Brecht's hypotext *The Threepenny Opera*, recreating the bohemian atmosphere of the 1940s in a district called Lapa in Rio de Janeiro. Music in Buarque's play is also a rather interesting element of hypertextuality, for it assembles Brazilian popular and folk music along with pieces of famous operas such as *Carmen* and *Aida*. According to Stam, Genette's concept of hypertextuality can be rather useful to the study of film adaptations as they are hypertexts stemmed from "preexisting hypotexts that have been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization and actualization" (66). Thus, the notion of hypertextuality permits a considerable understanding of the fluidity and complexity of film adaptation process and may account for why a play such as Shakespeare's *Richard III*, for instance, can generate so many different film versions.

Hypertextuality, then, may occur not only in film adaptations in a relationship between written text and film, but also from film to film. Indeed, the influence of one film upon another may occur in relation to technical aspects such as sound, photography, and montage, among others. As Bordwell explains:

The sense of distortion, for instance, created by the long terrifying shadows in the set design of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1920) was rapidly absorbed and modified by Hollywood film production in the following decade, like many other devices such as avant-garde music, German Expressionist cinema, Soviet montage cinema (73).

These technical effects and film devices contributed significantly to the construction of the film's narrative sense, and they are just as influential for the construction of film adaptation as any literary device.

Besides operating in the realm of narrative structure or film aesthetics as shown above, intertextual relationship can also encompass other aspects such as actors' and actresses' performances. Stam points out that, in films, "the performer also brings along a kind of baggage, a thespian intertext formed by the totality of antecedent roles" (60). This relation between actors' performance will be shown in the analysis of Jordan's film

version of *Streetcar* (refer to Chapter 3), by analyzing and comparing the way Jessica Lange draws a lot of features from Vivien Leigh's portrayal of Blanche.

Indeed, the relations between film adaptations and their sources are a never-ending process of transforming, expanding, and interrelating constantly with other kinds of texts and within films themselves. Thus, as Stam explains, it is a process in which "texts generate other texts with no clear point of origin" (66). Such is the case of *Dial M for Murder*, which was originally written as a television play and then adapted from television to stage, but which only gained popularity through Hitchcock's famous film version (1954). On top of it, film adaptations also interrelate with their historical and social moment, and references to these contexts are frequently reflected in the film's discourse. One interesting instance of this relationship between film adaptations and their social and historical milieu is studied by Raymond Williams in his book *Drama in Performance*, a survey of the conditions under which the same plays have been put on over the years, and how changes in staging practice parallel and reflect developments and changes in society.

Thus, the theoretical notions of intertextuality between film and literary text, more precisely drama, presented in this chapter will ground the film analysis of the two versions of *Streetcar* in chapters 2 and 3 respectively. Correlated issues above discussed such as historical and social context influences upon a film adaptation will provide a view of the historical moment in the way both films were produced. Furthermore, Stam's notion of the interrelations between actors' performances and technical influences of one film upon another will also help develop a sustained analysis of how these elements contribute and play an important role in the process of film adaptation.

## **Chapter II**

### ***A Streetcar Named Desire: The Play and the Film***

Since its first release, in 1951, Elia Kazan's film adaptation of *A Streetcar Named Desire*, based on the homonymous play by Tennessee Williams (1947), has been regarded as a subversive, steamy and daring film. Despite accomplishing on stage a remarkable success among theatergoers and critics, the adaptation of *Streetcar* into a film version, as Phillips argues, required from its writer and director a careful work to assure that "the play would achieve an equal success through the narrow straits of film industry's production code and consequently reach the screen still keeping its artistic integrity" (225). Obviously, it is not surprising that a play whose central theme deals with polemic issues such as moral disintegration and the urge to seek refuge from unhappiness through the pursuit of sexual pleasure would not pass smoothly through the eyes of the ultra-conservative American society of the 1950s.. However, as the present analysis will show, in adapting Williams' play text to the medium of cinema, not only did Kazan manage to wisely get away with some of censorship's demands concerning the most scandalous scenes, but also found ways to retain the play's highly symbolic language and convey it through cinematic devices.

Thus, this chapter aims at scrutinizing Kazan's film adaptation of *Streetcar* in relation to Williams' play text by focusing on the following issues. Firstly, to present an analysis of the play's central themes relating it to the Hollywood context of film production at the time. Such relationship aims at highlighting certain elements in the content and form of the play that eventually allowed its easy adaptation into the medium of film. Secondly, to present an analysis of Kazan's film adaptation covering issues such as cast selection, the additional scenes only mentioned in the play but shot in the film, and Kazan's employment of cinematic technical elements such as camera movement, montage, setting, and lighting to construct the film's discourse. Finally, this chapter discusses the ways in which Kazan got away with the demands of censorship and handled the play's most daring issues, such as Allan's homosexuality, Blanche's rape,

and the lustful jazz score.

## 2.1 *Streetcar*'s Central Themes and the American Film Context

In the article “The Shape of Film History” James Monaco analyzes the historical context of Hollywood film production right after World War II (1939-45) by accounting for several changes the war produced in American life and how these reflected on Hollywood film production (212-16). Monaco points out that the war accelerated the mobility of the population, raised living standards, and profoundly altered race relations and women’s roles. To a certain extent, these war effects triggered in Hollywood audiences an interest in films dealing with social problems (213). During the postwar period Hollywood produced a growing number of films addressing problems such as ethnic and racial prejudice, such as *Show Boat* (1936), anti-Semitism, such as *Crossfire* (1947), sufferings of badly treated mental patients, such as *Spellbound* (1945), and the consequences of alcohol and drug addiction, such as *The Lost Weekend* (1945), *The Man with the Golden Arm* (1955), and *Smash-up* (1947).

Indeed, although the period is frequently regarded as the golden age of the American family, several popular Hollywood melodramas produced in the early postwar period reveal a pattern of deeply troubled family relationships, as in *It’s a Wonderful Life* (1946). Also, numerous films of the time frequently depicted themes such as sexual frustration, as in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1958), cold and domineering mothers, as in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1959), insensitive fathers and defiant adolescents, as in *Splendor in the Grass* (1961), and loveless marriages, as in *Double Indemnity* (1944). In part, this obsession of portraying the theme of marriage and family life as a kind of hell reflected a popularized form of psychoanalytic thought which attempted to explain human behavior. Stuart Heisler’s film *Smash-up* (1947), for instance, portrays the story

of a fast-rising nightclub singer, Angie Evans, who interrupts her career to marry a struggling songwriter, Ken Conway. As Ken succeeds in his career as a chart-topping radio crooner, their marriage downfalls and his solitary wife turns into an alcoholic as a way to escape marriage and sexual frustration. Thus, several films of the early postwar period constantly suggest that marriage and sexual frustration inevitably lead to neurosis.

Tennessee Williams' plays were written and produced within this context of postwar Hollywood film production. His early plays were successful in the 1940s and 1950s as they rendered violence and romance in American settings, which to a certain extent was exactly what American audiences were eager to see in film theaters. In this panorama, *Streetcar* can be regarded as the first and most effective of all Williams' series of plays that deal with sexual frustration. A compelling portrait of personal disintegration, this drama, like *The Glass Menagerie* (1943) and most of Williams' subsequent plays, has a cast of naturalistic characters whose personalities are illuminated by imaginative staging<sup>7</sup>. Nonetheless, it is definitely through Blanche DuBois' story, as Phillips points out, that "Williams managed to capture the audience's imagination turning her into one of the most legendary figures of twentieth-century dramatic fiction" (224).

Williams places his characters in a poor district of New Orleans named Elysian Fields. The play starts at the moment Blanche DuBois, a delicate and refined woman, has arrived to visit her sister Stella, who is married to the muscular and uncouth Stanley Kowalski. Both sisters descend from an old aristocratic French family and were brought up on a large plantation named *Belle Reve* in Laurel, Mississippi. Despite Blanche's being rather surprised by the poverty of her sister's neighborhood and the dinginess of

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<sup>7</sup> Williams studied the problems of solitary women in two more plays: *Summer and Smoke* (1948), a melodrama in which a Southern spinster attempts to ignore the sensual side of her nature, and *The Rose Tattoo* (1951; film, 1955), a lusty comedy in which a mature widow, after a long inner struggle, rediscovers love.

her cramped flat, she announces that she will be staying with the Kowalskis for a while. Although Stanley seems less tolerant of Blanche's quirks and insincerity, Stella, who is much quieter and less nervous than her sister, is willing to allow her to stay.

As the story unfolds, Blanche starts a relationship with one of Stanley's friends, Mitch, who is charmed by Blanche's fine manners and feels grateful for her attention. During the time that Blanche is living in Stanley's and Stella's apartment, she manages to disrupt the couple's relationship because she believes that Stella, who is pregnant, is too refined for a man like Stanley. The tension grows and leads to the moment Blanche, after witnessing Stanley beating Stella, tries to persuade her to leave him, but Stella refuses to divorce her husband on the grounds that their sexual relationship is so satisfying that she is willing to overlook Stanley's flaws. Blanche struggles to flee their household by desperately trying to contact a wealthy old boyfriend of hers. On one night, after returning from a local ball, Blanche admits to Mitch that she had once been hurt by her young husband, who had shot and killed himself when she discovered him having sex with a male friend of his. Blanche seems never to have recovered from the isolation, depression, and hurt that have resulted from this betrayal.

On Blanche's birthday, Stanley reveals that he has been digging up her past and has discovered that she has had countless affairs with men in Laurel. After Blanche lost Belle Reve, she had resided in a seedy hotel named the Flamingo, becoming the town whore, welcoming any man who offered her comfort. In addition to that, she had been dismissed from her job as a high school English teacher due to a scandalous relationship with a seventeen-year-old student. Stanley reveals his discoveries to Mitch, who breaks up with Blanche. This rupture leads her to increase her drinking and to descend more quickly into a state of mental depression.

By the end of the play, Stella goes into labor, leaving Stanley and Blanche completely alone in the apartment. After arguing, Stanley rapes Blanche, who is

physically and emotionally powerless and cannot fight him off. When she tells Stella what Stanley has done to her, Stella decides that she cannot believe her sister and, with Stanley's support, chooses to send Blanche away to a mental institution. When a doctor and a matron arrive at the Kowalski's apartment to take Blanche to the institution, Stella sobs and regrets her decision to betray her sister, but Stanley soothes her by taking her to the bedroom and easing her emotional pain with his seductive power.

According to Patricia Hern, *Streetcar's* relationship with Hollywood film context can be explained by the fact that this play addresses at least two aspects of American traditions that had also been projected effectively during the 1930s and 1940s by the Hollywood film production (18). She firstly points out a nostalgic interest in America's past, particularly in the romance of the years before and during the Civil War. The film *Gone with the Wind* (1939) is a clear example of this. In a sense, mid-twentieth century urban Americans were intrigued and fascinated by the ideas of the South, that is, they were "charmed by the picturesque elegance of the landed elite who flaunted their inherited wealth and their studied gentility and high education" (19). Blanche DuBois and Belle Reve belong to that tradition of privileged brilliance, which was doomed to be defeated in the Civil War and would then represent an image of decorative decay.

Secondly, Hern argues that the folklore of the Wild West was another aspect of America's past that certainly found wide appeal in the cinema during the 1930s and 1940s, as the cases of *West of Divide* (1934), *Stagecoach* (1939), *Dakota* (1945), and *Fort Apache* (1948) illustrate. The recurrent thematic of these films was to show heroes proving their worth in combat against savages and thieves by sticking to their friends, just as Stanley feels bound to protect Mitch because they were together in war. In addition to that, these films helped depict some very stereotyped ideas of women either as the good and obedient housewife and child-bearers or as good-hearted whores. Nevertheless, despite the fact that, at first sight, film audiences were likely to compare

Williams' female characters to those common stereotypes of women portrayed in Western films, in *Streetcar*, like in many of his other plays, the characters assumed a level of psychological complexity rarely shown in Hollywood productions of the time. Such complexity was so endemic in the play's main characters that, in the case of Kazan's *Streetcar*, it did not allow the censors to tell apart the "good" from the "bad" characters.

## 2.2 The Cinematic Structure of *Streetcar*

Regarding the particular structure of Williams plays, critics such as Gene Phillips, Forster Hirsch, Patricia Hern, and Susan Spector point out several evidences of the structure of his plays that prove their similarities with filmic devices not only in terms of content, but also regarding their form. Hirsh, for instance, defends that "a movie based on a Tennessee Williams play is a Tennessee Williams film" (qtd. in Phillips 223). Thus, considering that Williams was also responsible for adapting some of his plays to film, the adaptation of his plays certainly captured the spirit of the play text. In the case of *Streetcar* it is still possible to perceive that the play's tone dominates the film, regardless of a few changes in the story plot.

In relation to its form, *Streetcar* is rather innovative and does not follow the traditional pattern of dramatic texts, generally divided into two acts. Hern calls attention to the unusual manner in which Williams structured *Streetcar*<sup>8</sup>, and this structure turns out to be one of the major elements in the play that facilitates its adaptability into the film medium (30). As Hern argues, one possible account for such peculiar way of

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<sup>8</sup> Hern explains that *Streetcar* is a three-act play. According to her, this is a rarity in the contemporary world of one-act and two-act plays. Although the play could have been broken into two acts to satisfy the needs of audiences (who were used to an intermission in between acts) Williams wrote the play in three acts with the specific purpose of suggesting the passage of time. Act One opens in late spring, Act Two takes place in the summer, and Act Three occurs in the early fall. These references to time seemingly pose a question as to whether Blanche has overstayed her welcome (as she states later in the play) (30).

structuring his plays, which brings it closer to a screenplay, could be the result and influence of Williams' experience as a screenwriter in Hollywood (31). Namely, writing for the cinema rather than for the theater most often requires the playwright to concentrate on sustained sequences of relatively short episodes. As Hern explains, this feature in Williams' text "capitalized on the effects made possible by crisp cutting from one image or event to be the next" (31). Furthermore, Phillips posits that Williams' struggle for a continuous flow of action in plays like *Streetcar* resulted in an employment of film techniques into play (226). Certainly, this fact accounts for the easy way in which Williams' plays have been adapted to films.

As Hern points out, Williams always regarded both his plays and movies as highly personal affairs, and he insisted on the right of getting involved in his work when his plays were being adapted to films in order to assure that the adaptation would keep its language (35). In response to criticism that complained that the themes of his plays were too personal Williams once replied, "all true work of an artist must be personal, whether directly or obliquely, it must and it does reflect the emotional climates of its creator" (Memoirs 188). Thus, like in most film adaptations of his plays, Williams himself was in charge of rewriting the script of *Streetcar's* film version. Despite the appearance of Oscar Saul's name in the credits of the film for the adaptation of the play to the screen, Saul was given the task to rewrite only a few lines of dialog. As the analysis of Kazan's film will show, the rewriting of the words that were essential to the story, but which had to be changed due to censorship demands, was left to Williams himself, even though the play's whole plot was left in its entirety.

### 2.3 Kazan's Film Adaptation of *Streetcar*: The Issue of Cast

Certainly the first aspect to look at Kazan's adaptation of *Streetcar* lies on his

choice of the film's cast to play the main characters. According to Spector, for the first stage production of *Streetcar*, Kazan drew his interpretation of the play from a letter Williams wrote to him explaining his dramatic design for the play's characters, in which he explained that "there were no 'good' or 'bad' people, some are little better or little worse, but all activated more by misunderstanding than malice" (546). Moreover, Williams instructed Kazan that the audience should feel pity for Blanche (played on stage by Jessica Tandy), and this pity should be accomplished through Stanley's (played by Marlon Brando on stage) misunderstanding of Blanche, eventually leading the audience to feel sympathy for her in the end of the play.

Surprisingly enough, in opposition to Williams' intentions, in Kazan's stage production it was Brando's performance as Stanley that captured the audience's sympathy and identification. According to Spector, Kazan hoped that Tandy would play Blanche as "a heroine easy to pity, but such difficult negotiation of sympathy between Tandy and the audience did not occur, and Brando brilliantly and engagingly unbalanced the equilibrium that both Williams and Kazan had hoped for" (549). Thus, after Tandy's failure in fulfilling both Kazan's and Williams' expectations concerning her Blanche's performance, for the film version of *Streetcar* the role of Blanche was given to Vivien Leigh. She had performed Blanche in a London stage production directed by her husband, Laurence Olivier. The choice of Leigh to perform Blanche cannot only be accounted by the fact that she had already played the role, but especially due to the tremendous success she had obtained years before in her performance as Scarlet O'Hara in *Gone with the Wind* (1939). Undoubtedly, Leigh's name was not only highly regarded but also represented a guarantee of great box office success, a guarantee not given by Tandy's name. Thus, with the exception of Tandy's replacement, the rest of the cast remained the same from the stage version to the film, with Brando playing Stanley, Kim Hunter playing Stella, and Karl Malden playing Mitch.

Regarding the cast's previous stage experience with Williams' play, Phillips points out:

This combination of talents, all of whom had been associated with *Streetcar* on the stage, was assembled to ensure that the movie version would be as close to the genuine article as possible, and so, for the most part, did it turn out (225).

Since the actors and actresses carried with them experience from their countless stage performances, the movie was shot in a relatively short period of time. Kazan, on the other hand, was the only one who did not get much excitement from filming it as he claimed "It was difficult to get involved in it again, to generate the kind of excitement which I had had for it the first time around. The actors were fine--but for me [...] there won't be any surprises this time" (qtd. in Phillips 229).

#### 2.4 Kazan's Film Adaptation of *Streetcar*: The Extension Scenes

Even though Kazan strove to change any aspect of the play in its film version as little as possible, the first striking feature of his film lies in the way he sticks to Williams' play text without giving it a monotonous tone of a photographed play. Kazan achieves such accomplishment by adding to the film scenes only mentioned in the play, which consequently keep the play's action moving through different settings. Also, he draws upon several filmic devices such as camera movement, montage, set, light effects and *mise-en-scene* that effectively capture and convey much of the symbolism of the play.

Regarding the extension scenes, Phillips points out, Kazan even considered

opening up the movie differently from the play, showing Blanche leaving Belle Reve and moving into the city, an idea he quickly turned down after rehearsing the scenes outside New Orleans (226). Then, he decided to add only those scenes that allowed him to stick to Williams' original text. Kazan said:

I filmed the play as it was because there was nothing to change. I have no general theory about opening out a play for the screen; it depends on the subject matter. *Streetcar* is a perfect play. I did consider opening out the play for the screen initially, but ultimately decided to go back to the original play script. It was a polished script that had played in the theater for a year and a half (qtd. in Phillips 225).

What seems implied in Kazan's statement is a certain concern in keeping the play's spirit. However, it is through his skillful exploration of all cinematic devices that he managed to retain much of this spirit. Such film features can be seen right in the beginning of the film as it opens with the arrival of a train in which Blanche DuBois (Vivien Leigh) is on. Right before her first appearance out of a cloud of steam springing from the train's engine, a flock of a joyous wedding party guests rolls through the station. The wedding party does not appear here by chance, and it can be related to Blanche's desires and frustrated past experiences regarding marriage and male relationship, which are revealed later on in the story. She leaves the train station on a streetcar (named Desire after Desire Street) with the help of a young sailor. A shot showing the streetcar (displaying Desire in large letters) is Blanche's last image at the train station.

The next scene begins with a whole panorama of the section of Elysian Fields. The large setting, full of lights and two-story houses located in a dirty and wet street in which Blanche passes through follows exactly Williams' initial stage directions regarding setting. Despite the scenario grandiosity and dinginess, it reminds us clearly of the directions given right on the first lines of the play as it also enhances Blanche's sense of loss. She crosses the set carrying her battered suitcase, looking fragile and lost, almost in a neurotic emotional state.

Kazan's choice to start the film by inverting the order of the characters' appearance apparently does not alter much of the play's general plot. However, it is interesting to point out that by showing Blanche first, he aims at establishing the sympathy between her and the audience that Williams initially had in mind. Namely, whereas the film's opening sequences focus on Blanche's ethereal arrival, the play begins with Stanley's arrival at home throwing a package containing raw meat at Stella--an act of him marking his territory. Thus, this inversion softens the harshness of the play's initial sequence for, in the film, the audience first gets acquainted with Blanche as a fragile creature before descending into Stanley's hell-like world.

The next sequence appears as another example of how Kazan explored other possibilities by shooting extra locations only mentioned in the play. When Blanche arrives at Elysian Fields she finds her sister, Stella, at the bowling alley where Stanley is bowling with his friends. In this scene, Blanche is shown arriving at the bowling alley still looking uneasy, for her face can only be seen from a mirror she glances at. Showing Blanche's face through the mirror is another device Kazan draws upon several times throughout the film, and its use has two functions: firstly, it highlights Blanche's concerns about her fading beauty; secondly, it also functions as a symbolic device to evince Blanche's sense of illusion in relation to the world.

After having an overview of the bowling, Blanche listens to Stella yelling her

name, and they barely hug each other when Blanche expresses her shock about the place her sister is living in. After a short exchange, Stella points at Stanley, who is first shown amongst a group of wild men all *grunting*, *gnawing*, and *hulking* at each other as if they were *ape-like*, as Blanche will later describe Stanley (40-1). The next shot moves to a more private place, still in the bowling alley, where the sisters' dialog, originally performed in Stella's shabby kitchen, takes place in shot-reverse-shot sequence creating an atmosphere of intimacy between both sisters, which is reinforced by their dialog. Also, Blanche's attempt to move away from the lamp bulb, placed between them, highlights her fear and avoidance of too much light on her face.

Henceforth, with the exception of three more extension scenes, one at the casino ball, another at Stanley's work and another when Mitch breaks up with Blanche, the following film sequences take place in the Kowalskis' flat and present just a few small and subtle differences in relation to Williams' play text.

The extension scene which takes place at the pier of a dance casino shows a long conversation between Mitch and Blanche, in which he learns about her young husband's tragic death. In the play, this conversation happens at the flat porch right after their arrival from the ball. In the film, the scene starts with a medium shot of a jazz band (composed of black and white men) playing joyously at the ball whilst people dance through the room. After that, the camera moves from the jazz band straight to Mitch and Blanche who, after the end of music, look at each other seeming a bit awkward, and they leave the room towards the pier where the rest of their conversation takes place.

It is not by chance that Kazan chose to place this scene at the dance casino, as the audience learns from Blanche that her late husband killed himself at a dance casino too. Kazan creates a dreamlike atmosphere whilst Blanche tearfully recalls the details about her tumultuous and frustrated marriage, which culminated in Allan's death. In this scene, she is at the pier surrounded by a thin and whitish coat of mist spawning from the

lake right behind her. As the sequence goes on, her memories become a painful reminder and she struggles to talk about how she judgmentally failed to love him. The scene's dream-like atmosphere serves, then, as a perfect upholder for her husband's suicide, and it also shifts the focus to the real cause of his suicide, which is rarely suggested in the dialog. Also, this scene enhances Blanche's female fragility and defenselessness as the last shot ends in a close-up with Mitch holding her in his arms in a highly stereotyped Hollywood scene.

It seems that Kazan deliberately closes the previous scene in a very romantic mood aiming at contrasting its delicacy and romanticism with the aggressiveness that sets the tone of the following sequence. Similarly to all the locations only referred to in the play, Kazan recreates the factory sequence in which Mitch, astonished after learning from Stanley about Blanche's scandalous and promiscuous recent past, fights against the words Stanley has uttered. The sense of fighting in this scene is enhanced by the very particular way in which the characters are displayed in the set. They stand facing each other, just like those cowboys before a duel in typical Western films. Additionally, the noises of the machinery in the background work well as a *mise-en-scene* element that helps to emphasize the jolt that Mitch has just received.

Despite being a short sequence, the factory scene establishes an important link between the previous sequence (Blanche and Mitch at the ball) and the following one (Stanley's report about Blanche's past). Especially, in the following sequence, right after Stanley's and Mitch's row at the factory, when Stanley comes home willing to inform Stella about her sister's past, the audience already knows what is about to happen. The audience's loss of surprise is replaced by the scene's tension and uncertainty--a mood that has begun previously in the factory scene.

The film's last additional scene reinforces Blanche's state of madness suggested right from the initial sequences of the film, and which inevitably increases towards the

end of the story. The scene takes place immediately after Blanche's hysterical breakdown resulting from Mitch's dismissal when an inquisitive crowd gathers around the tenement to check what has just happened. With tense background music, she retreats into the house searching for shelter in the same way she has been retreating into the past throughout the story. She closes all the shutters of the windows as if the darkness of the house could prevent her from being exposed to the crudeness of the real world, as if she could keep the shattered pieces of her fantasy world. Whilst Blanche struggles to lock herself into the house, a policeman knocks on the door in order to investigate what is going on, but, once again, she assures him that everything is fine.

Phillips argues that this scene seems superfluous to the material added to the play and serves only "to slow down the tempo of the action temporality" (227). However, it functions as a final summary of Blanche's recurrent traits, and it also reinforces her state of madness for the last time, before her final defeat in the end of the story. Equally noteworthy, due to the subtle way Kazan had to deal with the play's scandalous themes such as homosexuality and promiscuity, the film's overemphasis on Blanche's insanity seems quite appropriate to overshadow these polemic themes, and, eventually, to escape the demands from censorship.

## 2.5 The Cinematic Devices in *Streetcar*

As the analysis of the extension scenes suggests, by adapting Williams' play into the medium of film, Kazan could apply and explore several different film devices, producing considerable impressive effects that a stage production would certainly not allow. Regarding camera movement, for instance, Kazan kept the camera roaming all

over the setting and shot the actors from different angles, resulting in a broadening of the area the audience can see. This camera mobility associated with the use of editing renders the film a dynamic rhythm and prevents it from acquiring the static atmosphere of a stage setting.

Thus, Kazan explores camera movements by moving it throughout the whole building in a way that the viewer is allowed to intrude places that could never be shown on stage. The poker scene, for instance, intermingles shots cutting back and forth between Stanley's and Eunice's (his neighbor's) flat. Whereas the men play their game in Stanley's flat, in Eunice's flat she threatens to pour boiling water through the floorboards to break up the bustle. The viewer can follow this scene aware of what is happening in both places. Regarding camera mobility in Kazan's film, Phillips comments:

He [Kazan] moved the action fluidly throughout the whole tenement building without, at the same time, sacrificing the stifling feeling of restriction that is so endemic to the play, since Blanche sees the entire tenement, not just in the Kowalski flat, as a jungle in which she has become trapped (228).

Another interesting example of Kazan's skilled use of editing to increase tension occurs in the scene in which Blanche determinately persuades Stella to run away from Stanley. At the same time that the two sisters' dialog takes place inside the flat, this scene is intermingled with brief shots showing Stanley arriving home. As Blanche insists on the idea of leaving that place, the camera approaches even more the characters' faces, increasing the scene's tension and revealing the emotional state of the three characters.

The film's constant close-ups of the actors' and actresses' faces, for instance, not only enhance the characters' emotional state, but also increase the dramatic power of the action. Thus, the audience of the film can see what readers and theatergoers never had the opportunity to see: a close look at Blanche's face showing a tear dropping when she

reads her dead husband's love letter. Kazan's obsession with this detail was so intense that he shot this scene several times just to assure Leigh would drop the tear exactly in the moment she said "intimate nature" (Kazan 309). The scene's dramatic power results in the realistic portrait of Blanche's anguish as her face conveys her struggle to repress her troubled inner state.

Furthermore, several physical and psychological characteristics of Stanley are also conveyed through many close-ups throughout the film. The camera explores Stanley's physical and sensual masculine beauty aiming at seducing both Blanche and the audience. Right in the first scene in which Stanley talks to Blanche, while he takes off his sweaty T-shirt, the camera is positioned in a way as to sensually show his bare muscled chest and arms. Moreover, when he pleads Stella to come back home after beating her, once again Stanley's chest is shown barely covered by a torn tight wet T-shirt.

Equally remarkable is Kazan's singular employment of lighting effects. In the poker scene, for instance, the table where the men play is illuminated by a single spotlight confined to the table's edge, and, as the scene goes on, the smoke from their cigarettes mixes with light creating an atmosphere of confusion and confinement as if they were animals locked in a cramped cage. Another interesting example of light effect is created by the shadows of a fan spinning over Blanche's drunken body lying on the sofa. The spinning shadows over her body recreate for the audience the sensation of dizziness and confusion that she is feeling caused by her addiction to alcohol. Moreover, in the same sequence, the lighting effect plays an important role when Mitch tears the paper lantern off the light bulb revealing all signs of Blanche's age. Kazan's use of the light right from the light bulb creates an effect that allows Blanche's every wrinkle to be observed in broad spotlight.

In adapting Williams' play to the medium of film, Kazan's main concern was to

employ every cinematic device in a way that it would convey the play's sense of confinement. The use of close-ups and deep shadows, described above, certainly creates the sense of restriction that works well to express Blanche's imprisonment of body and soul, which eventually drives her crazy. Thus, Kazan also had the setting built in a way that it could become smaller as the story progressed. Like many other film devices, according to Phillips, by having the setting become smaller Kazan wished that the whole scenery in the film suppressed Blanche in the same way the characters around her did (227-8). Thus, like in any naturalistic story, where the setting plays an important determinant role for the characters' traits, in the film the shadows, the walls and even the furniture seem to endanger Blanche in the trap of the apartment, leaving her no other way out but madness.

## 2.6 Censorship and *Streetcar*: Cuts in Plot and Language

According to Murray Schumach, even though there was no official censorship operating in order to supervise any released movie at the time *Streetcar* was released in movie theaters, in December 1951, "the film producers had to submit this film to an investigation by both the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA)<sup>9</sup> and the Catholic Legion of Decency (CLD)<sup>10</sup>" (72). As these institutions were the two powerful "guardians" of American decency, any motion picture showing clear sexual and violent actions or even using foul language of any kind, such as *damn*, *hell*, and even *God*, was strictly forbidden.

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9 According to Schumach the MPAA, founded in 1922, had been known as the *Hays Office* for a long time, being named after its first president, Will Hays. However, it was only in 1930 that a *Production Code* for motion pictures was released and four years later Joseph Breen became president and began to enforce the demands (72).

10 Naturally as strongly powerful as the MPAA, the CLD, created in 1934, had its grounds solidly based on principles, which would dictate what the good and respectable American citizens were allowed to see on the screen. Schumach points out that this institution was obviously "guided by a biased and loose notion of what was decent and indecent, as well as watching over for the sake of quality of maintenance what they called family films" (73).

Thus, considering that the CLD and the MPAA had strong influence on film audiences throughout America, obtaining a good rating from those censorship organs was certainly indispensable. Not surprisingly, as Phillips explains, despite the reputation of *Streetcar* as a distinguished, prize-winning play, the industry censor of the time, Joseph Breen, did not consider its adaptation appropriate for the medium of movies due to its overt references to scandalous issues (229). Consequently, as Phillips points out, if the film was released in its first version, “the Legion of Decency had advised Warner that *Streetcar* was going to receive a ‘C’ (condemned) rating, meaning that Catholics would be discouraged from seeing the film” (232). Thus, in order to gain a more positive rating, Warner asked the CLD to review the movie, resulting in several cuts.

Furthermore, as Schumach points out, the film was also submitted to MPAA and Breen himself carefully scanned it thoroughly from beginning to end (74). Thus, Breen forced Williams and Kazan to make several changes in the script to suit the standards of the MPAA’s code production. The two major requirements for the film’s changes basically regarded the references to Blanche’s late husband’s homosexuality and Stanley’s rape of Blanche. However, as Phillips asserts, in all, “twelve cuts were made in the movie at [Breen’s] behest, amounting to about four minutes of screen time” (233).

Regarding the scenes’ minor cuts, the first striking cut occurs in scene II when Blanche deliberately flirts with Stanley by playfully spraying perfume on him with her atomizer. Stanley’s line “If I didn’t know that you was my wife’s sister I’d get ideas about you!” (21) was entirely removed for it was considered a clear hint of a potential and eventual sexual interest between Stanley and Blanche. In scene IV, two long close-ups of Stella lying naked on the bed only wrapped up in a satin sheet were also cut. Moreover, still in the same scene, the following very suggestive and symbolic lines from Blanche’s and Stella’s dialog were omitted:

Stella: But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that

sort of make everything else seem—unimportant. [*Pause*]

Blanche: What you are talking about is brutal desire—just—Desire!—the name of that rattle-trap street-car that bangs through the Quarter, up one old narrow street and down another...

Stella: Haven't you ever ridden on that street-car?

Blanche: It brought me here. (39-40)

Regardless of their shortness, the omitted lines above convey significant hints of the characters' traits, and they also establish important relations with the play's central issue, that is, the urge to seek refuge from unhappiness in the pursuit of sexual pleasure. Nevertheless, this scene was so abruptly and carelessly removed during the editing of the film that its ban does not pass unnoticed, even to a less attentive viewer.

Due to Williams' reliance on a highly symbolic language, there were some interesting passages in which censors were apparently unable to perceive the effects produced by Williams' word-game. A remarkable example of an unnoticed ambiguity within the characters' dialog takes place towards the end of scene IX, right after Mitch has learned the truth about Blanche. He comes to the Kowalskis' apartment and accuses her of not being "straight," to which she replies that "a line can be straight or a street. But the heart of a human being" (72). The ambiguous meaning of the word *straight* can lead to two interpretations of this dialog. Firstly, *straight* in a sense of correctness ("linear," just as Blanche uses the expression) can be applied to things such as a line or a street, not to the feelings of human beings. Or, naturally as interesting as the previous interpretation, taking *straight* as a colloquial term meaning heterosexual, Williams' playful word-choice evinces Blanche's late husband's homosexuality, omitted in the movie.

The reedited scenes above described account for those film sequences that were indeed shot, but not incorporated in the film's final version in order to suit the censorship demands. However, in 1993, Warner Bros. Studios released the Director's Cut version of *Streetcar* presenting the film exactly the way it was meant by Kazan

and Williams.

According to Phillips, the censorship demands upon *Streetcar* were so strict that Breen, not satisfied with the cuts already made, forced Kazan and Williams to entirely rewrite the sequence in which Blanche's late husband's homosexuality is mentioned (230). This sequence's symbolic lines are full of word-games, especially when Blanche flirts with Mitch by asking him "*Voulez-vous couchez avec moi ce soir? Vous ne comprenez pas? Ah, quel dommage!*"<sup>11</sup> (52) Williams' original dialog was replaced by a recounting of her frustrated marriage with few direct references to the play's text.

Indeed, in the play Blanche tearfully reports to Mitch her disastrous marriage when she unexpectedly found her husband having sex with another man. Although, she tried to act as if it had never happened, one night, on the dance floor, she blurted out to him what she saw, and Allan, desperate to hear that his secret had been discovered by his wife, ran away and killed himself.

Following the censor's demands, Williams began the delicate task of rewriting this scene for the film version maintaining loose and subtle references to Allan's odd manners, thus enabling the audience to draw considerations about his possible homosexuality. Hence, in the film version, Blanche tells Mitch that one night she woke up and discovered Allan crying with apparently no reason. Moreover, in another night at the casino's dance floor she, out of a sudden, told him that he was weak and that she had "lost respect for him," and vaguely suggested he was sexually impotent. Therefore, Allan's suicide is accounted by the fact that he was unable to fulfill his wife's desires.

Despite the film's absence of an overt reference to Allan's having a male lover as in the play, Williams skillfully worked out the film's dialog by filling Blanche's description of him with some clues that, for an attentive viewer, it is still possible to conclude so. Especially by the ambiguous way in which Blanches describes Allan by

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<sup>11</sup> Would you like to go to bed with me this evening? Don't you understand? What a pity!

saying:

But I was unlucky, deluded. There was something about that boy, the nervousness, the tenderness and that uncertainty. I didn't understand. I didn't understand why the boy wrote poetry. He didn't seem able to do anything else. He came to for help. I didn't know it. (Streetcar Film 1951)

These lines above give clear hints about Allan's peculiar manners. Although Williams does not overtly mention anything about his homosexuality, he provides to the viewer a dubious description about Allan, which easily allows the viewer to draw considerations about his sexuality. According to Phillips, both Kazan and Vivien Leigh agreed that Williams' replaced speech was so wisely rewritten that it kept underneath the suggestion of Allan's homosexuality (203).

Naturally as controversial and troublesome as the issue of Allan's homosexuality, the rape sequence involved both Kazan and Williams in massive arguments with the censorship in order to preserve it in the film. According to Phillips, Williams patiently agreed with all the cuts and rewritings on his script, but found it unacceptable to entirely eliminate this scene from the story (231). Schumach reproduces a letter Williams wrote to Breen arguing that the rape scene was, indeed, a "pivotal and integral truth to the play, without it the play loses its meaning" (75). Finally, Breen agreed in keeping the rape, acknowledging that this taboo issue had been previously tackled tastefully in another Hollywood film<sup>12</sup>. However, he requested that Stanley should not escape being punished in the end of the story.

Furthermore, in adapting this scene to the film Kazan could explore, through the use of cinematic devices, the psychological aspects of the rape that a reading of the play text may not always allow. Namely, in the text Blanche's and Stanley's sexual intentions can only be accessed through their words. Thus, since explicit references are barely uttered, the readers can hardly find textual evidence of Blanche's showing sexual

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<sup>12</sup> The film was *Johnny Belinda* (1948), for which Jane Wyman won an Oscar for her performance of a deaf mute who is the victim of a rapist.

interest for him. In the film, on the other hand, through the numerous close-ups of both Blanche and Stanley, the viewer can have a closer grasp of Blanche's face and the way she progressively flirts with him. Such evidence occurs since the first time they meet, in the way Blanche furtively grabs Stanley's muscular biceps. Also, in the same sequence, Stanley's undressing is enhanced by the flirting and seductive glance Blanche throws him.

Since the rape could not be explicitly developed, Kazan profited from these hints above described, along with Blanche's growing state of emotional instability, to set the mood for Stanley's and Blanche's final battle. Thus, the rape scene is meticulously constructed in a way that every single detail serves to suggest their inevitable sexual intercourse, and Kazan deliberately uses several phallic symbols, such as Stanley's opening the bottle of beer and joyfully throwing its foam right up to the ceiling, as if it were an orgasm. This image clearly informs Blanche and the audience of Stanley's lustful intentions.

On the other hand, the use of close-ups of an entirely defenseless Blanche being cornered by Stanley enhance the sequence's tension and dramatic power without making any scandalous reference to the rape itself--a reference that would certainly displease the censors. The scene ends with Blanche's image, totally defeated in Stanley's arms, reflected in a smashed looking-glass. Phillips interprets the broken glass reflecting Blanche's face as a symbol of how Stanley ultimately shatters "Blanche's illusions about her own refinement and moral character" (231).

Right after this scene, Kazan once again draws upon a phallic symbol, similar to the foam from the bottle of beer, in order to reinforce the accomplished rape. The previous sequence, which ends with Blanche's image in the smashed mirror, is followed by a view of a street cleaner's hose gushing a blast of water in the gutter outside the flat, once again resembling a male orgasm. Regarding this scene Kazan comments that,

although he considered these symbols appropriate at the time he shot the film, eventually he ended up finding them quite obvious. To this comment, he adds the following remark:

It was certainly a forceful cut, and enabled me to underline the rape implicitly by using the phallic symbolism of the hose, because in those days we had to be very indirect in depicting material of that kind. (144)

Nevertheless, according to Phillips, Kazan's efforts to construct the scene in a way that would satisfy the censor were not enough to please Breen who, after watching it, still demanded Stanley's punishment (232). Thus, Williams added the lines in which Stella says to Stanley "We're not going back in there. Not this time. We're never going back." as a way of stating that Stanley was losing his wife as punishment for Blanche's rape. Surprisingly enough, Williams' skilled way of dealing with language produced another ambiguity apparently not perceived by the censors. Namely, considering that Stella always returns to Stanley after his pleading, as the story shows, it is very likely she might do that again.

Williams has been praised for his particular ability to portray highly complex characters whose personalities refuse either oversimplifications or resemble those stereotyped characters of mainstream films. According to Phillips, these characters' complexity significantly disturbed the censors from both MPAA and CLD as they found difficulties in distinguishing the "good" from the "bad" characters in the film (233). In this sense, since *Streetcar*'s main issues as well as its characters' traits are deluded into the play, requiring from its readers or viewers an intensive digging, much of these subtle elements fortunately passed unnoticed in the eyes of censorship.

## 2.7 *Streetcar* and Censorship: Music in the Play and Film

Besides Williams' symbolic language, in *Streetcar* a number of external diegetic sounds also work as a means to convey the play's symbolism. The approaching locomotive, for instance, representing the turmoil in Blanche's mind; the Mexican woman selling "flores para los muertos" recalling all the deaths Blanche had to undergo; the music from the radio in Stella's cramped bedroom as a glimpse of the glamorous past Blanche and Stella had in Belle Reve--existing now only as fading memory--are all instances of Williams' ability to convey meaning through other elements rather than language. Naturally, as powerfully symbolic as language or external diegetic sounds<sup>13</sup>, music also plays a significant role in *Streetcar* as an element that enhances the characters' traits and sets the tone of their relationship.

In *Streetcar*, according to Hern, Williams' poetic language is reinforced by the symbolic use of nondiegetic<sup>14</sup> music, which stands for the three main characters and their traits respectively (53). Namely, Hern asserts that the blue piano stands for Stella, the so-called "hot" trumpet for Blanche, and the drums for Stanley. As Williams' stage directions explain right in the play's first lines, the blue piano poses the tone and atmosphere in the opening scene. This Blue Piano, Williams points out, "expresses the spirit of the life which goes on here" (3). Further, as the story unfolds, the blue piano depicts Stella's inner state. As in scene I, for instance, when she learns from Blanche Belle Reve is lost, "the blue piano grows louder" (12); in scene II "Stanley enters the kitchen [Stella's territory] from outside, leaving the door open to the perpetual 'blue piano' around the corner"; still in scene II, when Blanche is told about Stella's pregnancy, the blue piano music grows louder (23).

Although in the play the tension is concentrated within the conflict between Blanche and Stanley, Stella seems to be the crucial battleground over which Stanley and

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13 Bordwell defines as an external diegetic sound the kind of sound that viewers clearly identify as a physical source in the scene (273).

14 Bordwell regards as nondiegetic all those sounds that come outside the story space. Also, if the sound comes from inside a character's mind, then it is internally diegetic (273).

Blanche fight. Stella functions as a key figure, as her changing attitudes throughout the play signal the movement of the action. Likewise, the blue piano follows Stella's changes. It appears in several instances of the action either to highlight Stella's presence or to bring about her balanced power over Stanley and Blanche's relationship even when she is absent.

An interesting instance in which the *blue piano* plays a symbolic role in representing Stella occurs in scene X, before the rape. That is, whilst the tension grows by Blanche's attempt to ward off Stanley's sexual advances, Stella, who is in hospital, is personified in the scene by the sound of the blue piano. Insofar as the rape becomes inevitable, Stella's presence vanishes as Williams' stage directions indicate "the barely audible 'blue piano' entirely vanishes. The sound of it turns into the roar of an approaching locomotive" (80). In a sense, the blue piano fades softly until it totally disappears, indicating that the rape can only be accomplished if all traces of Stella's presence are removed. Williams constructs the end of the rape scene by a sequence of actions in which Blanche moans and lets the bottle-top fall whilst Stanley picks up her inert figure and carries her to the bed. Finally, Williams reinforces the rape by ending the scene with the hot trumpet (Blanche), and the drums (Stanley), sounding loud (81).

Music is also very representative in the play's last scene, when Blanche is taken to a mental hospital. Williams' stage directions indicating music for this scene express the desolate tone in which the play ends--while Blanche is being taken to a mental hospital, Stella resents her sister's fate. The play's last lines explain that "the luxurious sobbing, the sensual murmur fade away under the swelling music of the 'blue piano' [Stella] and the muted trumped [Blanche]" (90). Williams' choice of using a mute trumpet can be soon related to Blanche's state, for a mute trumpet is produced by attaching a certain device to a normal trumpet, in order to block the air that passes through, therefore, this device disrupts the sound and makes it sound muffled. Thus, the

association of the mute trumpet with Blanche's final condition is quite evident, for this is exactly what happens to her in the end of the play; she ends up being completely suppressed and suffocated, therefore, the mute trumpet merely reinforces her oppressed condition.

Like Stella and Blanche, Stanley also has his maleness and aggressiveness associated with the harsh and brute sound of the drums. Although Stanley's drums sound does not appear as frequently as Stella's blue piano, the two most prominent moments in which Stanley ultimately reaches his height of male dominance are followed by the sound of drums. Firstly, in scene III, when he is seething with anger at Stella's retreat upstairs, his violent gesture of hurling the telephone to the floor is accompanied by "dissonant brass sounds" (32). Additionally, the transition from his first howl of 'Stellahhhh!' to the intense sensuality of Stella's and Stanley's reunion is followed by the moaning of a low-tone trumpet, showing Blanche's defeat in her quarrel against Stanley. As the examples above suggest, Williams' stage directions regarding the play's music provide solid evidence of the music's function as a symbolic device that enhances the characters' traits and represents their relationship.

Regarding the film adaptation, Kazan explains that the studio soon noticed that the effects of Williams' highly symbolic music would also displease the censors, and it advised him to change this score, at least in the more problematic scenes, to a more conventional music (151). Accordingly, Kazan attempted to suit the studio's instructions without losing the play's Southern atmosphere. He even shows a jazz band playing at the beginning of the ball's scene in which Mitch and Blanche are in, but concerning the film's central musical theme, he had to use a more conventional Hollywood score. Thus, the film's original music, composed by Alex North, subtly encompasses jazz instruments such as the trumpet and piano, but its central melody follows traditional music patterns.

This music, for instance, is first played when the screen opens, showing the film title and its credits upon the image of the Kowalski's shabby and cramped flat. After that the music fades away, and from the train station until Blanche's arrival at her sister's flat, Kazan enhances Blanche's sense of distress and loss through external diegetic sounds such as cars' horns, people's screaming, and music coming from the radio at the local bowling alley. All these external diegetic sounds overlap to reinforce Blanche's confusion and loss.

Henceforth, the film's music highlights very particular moments of the action. In scene II, for instance, the same initial music is played when Stella learns that Belle Reve is lost. It is also in this scene that the train's sound first appears and, like in the play, there is no clear evidence whether the train's sound is externally or internally diegetic; that is, if it actually comes from a real train or if it exists only in Blanche's mind. Moreover, while Blanche and Stanley talk, sensual music turns to a sensual and seductive tone suggesting their potential sexual attraction.

Moreover, Kazan skillfully employs film sound techniques to explore Blanche's psychological state, especially regarding the death issue. In scene I, for instance, when Stanley questions Blanche about her former marriage his question echoes three times and, for each time she hears Stanley's voice, the camera approaches her face, ending the sequence in a tight close-up. After that, the *Varsouviana*<sup>15</sup>, a clearly internal diegetic sound, is played until a harsh gunshot sound puts an end to it. This sound pattern of the *Varsouviana* ending with gunshot sound is also repeated in scene VI, during the ball's scene while Blanche recalls her husband's death. Also, due to the psychological effect of the *Varsouviana*, Kazan kept it in the film exactly as it is in the play.

At times, the film's soundtrack poses the tone of instability surrounding the characters' action and inner state. In scene III, for instance, whilst Blanche and Stanley

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<sup>15</sup> The polka tune that haunts Blanche in connection with her husband's death (Williams 109).

talk, the music plays sensually, suggesting Blanche's flirting with Stanley, then it abruptly changes into the Varsouviana as she picks up her dead husband's love letters spread all over the floor. At other times, very conventional romantic music is employed to soften the scene's sensuality, as in scene III in which Stella descends a flight of stairs to fling into Stanley's arms after their violent row. Indeed, Kazan edited this scene with a rather sensual jazz score, but he was strongly advised to change it to more conventional music (309). Also, according to Phillips, the CLD adviser still considered the scene "too carnal," and demanded it to be reedited by substituting a long shot of Stella for a sequence of close and medium shots (233).

The ball scene allowed Kazan to explore thoroughly and creatively diverse musical possibilities. Namely, the scene starts with a jazz band playing joyously while the camera moves through the dancing hall, showing Mitch and Blanche leaving the hall as the music finishes. Then, when they walk along the pier and, as the topic of their conversation changes from a light talk about Mitch's athletic body to the issue of Blanche's husband's death, the background music also shifts from a soft polka to more dramatic background music. Moreover, the music is interrupted by the gunshot sound, and then it turns back again to a romantic score as Mitch hugs and protects Blanche. The sequence ends with a very classic frame of the couple hugging each other and about to kiss, surrounded by romantic music on the background.

Likewise, in other scenes music follows a very conventional pattern, sometimes highlighting the tension between the characters or creating a melodramatic mood. In scene VII, for instance, when Blanche tells the parrot joke music grows tense, indicating Stanley's outbreak of anger, and it goes on while Blanche tries to discover why Mitch did not turn up at her party.

In the next sequence, when Mitch comes to break up with Blanche, the polka music is playing even more intensively until the gunshot sound stops it again.

Afterwards, Blanche's confession of her staying at the Tarantula Arms hotel is followed by a tense music until she hears the Mexican woman selling flowers for the dead, and from this point on the music becomes unbearably shriek. Finally, the music becomes even more frightening and tense when Blanche expels Mitch from the flat and she attempts to hide from the crowd outside.

In the rape sequence, on the other hand, the dialog between Blanche and Stanley develops with no music at all. That is, Kazan wisely enhances the sequence's tension by avoiding the use of background music, whereas Williams' stage directions suggest at a first moment the blue piano, and finishes the rape with the hot trumpet and drums. Thus, music is played in this scene only in the end, little before Blanche is grabbed by Stanley and the mirror breaks into pieces, suggesting the rape.

In the last scene, Blanche's mental collapse is enhanced by the film's music being played in a distorted tone. Moreover, as the doctor attempts to fool Blanche, before taking her to the mental hospital, music changes into a very enchanting melody until the moment she realizes she has been fooled. Then it grows tense again as she turns back to the bedroom. Finally, a melodramatic music tone underscores the film's end as Blanche says the last line, "Whoever you are—I have always depended on the kindness of strangers" (89), holding the doctor's arm before she leaves the house.

In short, regardless of the constraints concerning the use of *Streetcar* music directions, Kazan once again wisely managed to find a balance between Williams' always singular and symbolic way of using the play's music as a conveyor of characters' traits and, at the same time, suiting it to the demands of the studio and the censorship.

### **Chapter III**

#### **Television Drama: Glenn Jordan's Television Adaptation of *A Streetcar Named***

#### ***Desire***

Elia Kazan's film version of *Streetcar* has definitely become the cornerstone of all subsequent adaptations of Williams' play. Indeed, after Kazan's film, all film adaptations of *Streetcar* were surprisingly designed for television exhibition, as the following adaptations illustrate: (1956) directed by Luis Mottura; (1984) directed by John Erman; (1995) directed by Glenn Jordan, and (1998) directed by Kirk Browning. Nonetheless, it is Jordan's television adaptation of *Streetcar* (1995) that strikingly distinguishes itself from other television versions of Williams' play, for it singularly intermingles the theatricality of the television drama with technical elements incorporated from cinema. In other words, Jordan's version of *Streetcar* establishes a straight relationship with Kazan's film regarding the use of cinematic elements such as camera movement and position, lighting, editing, and actors' and actresses' performance. However, at the same time, Jordan's film strives to capture the spirit of the play commonly found in television dramas.

Thus this chapter aims at discussing Glenn Jordan's television adaptation of *Streetcar*, focusing on how the dramatic elements were adapted into the medium of television. Also, the chapter compares similarities and differences between Jordan's television version and Kazan's film.

### 3.1 *Streetcar* as Television Drama

The first striking aspect in Jordan's adaptation of *Streetcar* relates to the fact that he is the first film director to draw solely from Williams' play text. Namely, the two previous television adaptations of *Streetcar*, in 1956 and 1984, resorted to Kazan's

screenplay, credited to Oscar Saul and, thus, contained all cuts and changes imposed by the censorship demands, as described in Chapter 2. Jordan, on the other hand, uses Williams' play text initially performed on and off Broadway. Certainly, the choice to use the play text implies that much of the play's symbolism, especially those lines excluded in Kazan's film, is kept entirely in Jordan's version.

Indeed, Jordan's use of Williams' theatrical text and not the screenplay, which was especially written for the 1951 film by Williams himself, reflects the changes in perspective the play has undergone in these last fifty years. That is, in this half century of the play history, *Streetcar* has unquestionably achieved a distinct position amongst theater and literary critics as one of the best American plays of the last century. However, as Kolin explains, "whereas stage productions have extensively been redefining the play every new decade, film adaptations have not yet fully explored Williams' play text as it was originally written" (2). In this sense, Jordan's film fulfills a certain 'desire' to transpose onto screen Williams' full play text, especially the original dialog in which Allan's homosexuality is revealed.

Furthermore, insofar as Jordan sticks to Williams' theatrical text, he also confines the space action to an area that is similar to a theater stage, thus restricting the action mainly to the Kowalskis' flat. Also, unlike Kazan, Jordan does not add any extra scene as previously described in Kazan's version<sup>16</sup>. Nevertheless, as the scene analysis will show, such space restriction aims at bestowing upon Jordan's film a theater-like mood as well as profiting from the feelings of closeness and intimacy television dramas offer and, thus, bringing the viewer into closer contact with the play's characters. Additionally, Jordan also incorporates much of Kazan's accomplishments in terms of his employment of cinematic devices such as camera movement, editing, lighting and mise-en-scene, producing a continuous flow of action.

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<sup>16</sup> See Chapter 2 for more details.

Equally noteworthy, another aspect of *Streetcar*'s play text that Jordan maintains in his film concerns Williams' division of the story in well-structured eleven scenes. In other words, as the action develops, the film highlights the division into eleven scenes by separating them with a long fade out of one scene into the next one. Thus, the overt division from scene to scene strengthens the film's strong reliance on Williams' play text.

The film opens with a total black screen showing the names of the two major actors, Jessica Lange, who plays Blanche, and Alec Baldwin, who plays Stanley, followed by the names of the other two actors, John Goodman (Mitch), and Diane Lane (Stella). This opening sequence goes along with the presentation of the credits accompanied by an extra-diegetic music, resembling a prelude<sup>17</sup>, which abruptly starts at the same time the first names appear on the screen. Thus, the audience is left with a feeling of uneasiness and expectation of what is to come, for nothing is shown but a black screen with a sequence of names.

The background music score plays an important role in this initial sequence, for it works as a prelude for the story, enhancing the tension and creating a feeling of suspense. Then the blackness dissolves smoothly into the image of the street, as it gradually reveals the film's setting as if the theater's curtains were opening. Henceforth, the audience can have a thorough view of the scenario, which is shown very slowly in a sequence of several shots focusing on different sections of the street.

Equally noteworthy, when the initial blackness fades in, the camera is positioned right in front of the Mexican woman's back as if she were blocking the view of the world the audience is about to enter, or as if she had arrived on that street at the time action starts. At this moment the title of the film is shown, *Tennessee Williams' A*

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<sup>17</sup> I use here Logman's definition of prelude, understood as an introductory performance, preceding and preparing for the principal matter; a preliminary part, movement, strain, etc.; especially (Mus.), a strain introducing the theme or chief subject; a movement introductory to a fugue, yet independent (1036).

*Streetcar Named Desire*, with a kind of non-symmetric letters, some smaller or bigger than the others, suggesting the environment's lack of homogeneity as well as highlighting the discrepancies amongst the characters that the audience is soon to witness.

The music also shifts into a jazz rhythm at the same time the setting first appears. In other words, while the setting smoothly fades in, the music progressively shifts from strong and tense tones into a very melodic and lazy jazz in accordance with the rhythm of Elysian Fields as described in Williams' first stage directions (3). Thus, in the film's first sequences, the camera takes the audience for a stroll throughout the setting in which a faithful reconstruction of Williams' stage direction is carefully reproduced. The film's first image shows the street with the bowling alley appearing in the background, cutting to a black woman on a balcony throwing a hat to a man down on the street, followed then by several images of people going about in their daily routines, cars going up and down until the camera reaches the dim white building where the Kowalski family lives.

These initial sequences play an important role in reconstructing the play's first description of a naturalistic environment. More specifically, by being taken around, through the camera's eyes, the audience experiences the feeling of really diving into a world in which a peculiar tender blue, as Williams suggests, "invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay" (*Streetcar* 5). Additionally, the whole setting is constituted of a bricolage of different hot and live colors, thus tastefully bringing about the feeling of a "[. . .] warm breath of the brown river beyond the river warehouses with their faint redolences of banana and coffee" (5), as also suggested in Williams' stage directions. Thus, regarding Williams' initial setting description, Jordan's film sticks as closely as possible to the play's stage directions in order to capture and maintain its theatrical mood. Nevertheless, he accomplishes this

theatrical setting transposition to the medium of television by resorting to a number of cinematic techniques such as camera movement, editing, lighting, and sound.

After providing a whole view of the setting, the camera reaches the building in which the Kowalskis' apartment is located, where Eunice and the black woman are seated on the edge of a shabby and dingy water fountain. Then the camera turns to the building's gate where Stanley and Mitch arrive uttering the play's exact dialog while Stella appears in the yard to join Stanley and Mitch up to the bowling alley. The film's atmosphere once again becomes tense as the camera cuts to show a shot of the street in which, for the second time, the blind Mexican woman in a dark shawl passes right through carrying a bunch of gaudy flowers, as those displayed at funerals. She barely audibly says 'flowers' and disappears, leaving behind her a coat of whitish smoke that springs from the holes of a sewer's lid through which Blanche first arrives at Elysian Fields.

The effect created by Blanche's arrival in this scene resembles quite a lot what Kazan did in his film. Namely, in both films Blanche is first shown as a heavenly creature descending from above to a lower world. Indeed, the only difference concerning Blanche's arrival is that Kazan preferred to show Blanche arriving in the middle of the train's smoke at the train depot, whereas Jordan keenly engenders the same image by just positioning the camera on the street entrance a little far from where the main action of the play takes place.

Thus, the street space from where Blanche first appears up to the Kowalski's apartment is almost the size of a theater stage. Her initial feeling of disbelief and astonishment is shrunk as she enters the street bumping into a young sailor who flirts with her as she moves straight to the tenement's gate where she talks to Eunice. Henceforth, the camera does not trespass the limits of the Kowalski's building, enhancing the growing feeling of imprisonment that Blanche undergoes as the action

unfolds. Also, Jordan's use of a quite small and cramped setting both inside and outside the Kowalski's flat stresses the film's theatricality, for the audience can easily perceive that the film's setting does not differ much from the size of the theater stage setting.

### 3.2 Dialogical Relationships in Jordan's *Streetcar* and Kazan's Cinematic Features

From a dialogic point of view, Jordan's television adaptation of *Streetcar* represents an interesting example of how 1990s television drama incorporated a good deal of technical and cinematic features inherited from Hollywood films produced along the first five decades of the twentieth century. Helena Sheehan, for instance, points out that from the 1960s on "television drama has considerably improved its style by incorporating several film techniques such as editing, vision mixing effects, lighting, and color" (51). Such convergence resulted not only in the improvement of television drama style, but also meant that teleplay directors were equally able to manipulate images and time frame in new and imaginative ways as any film director could do.

In this sense, Jordan's film reveals several film techniques incorporated from Kazan's adaptation, which are also employed to accomplish certain effects that the film adaptation of *Streetcar* required. Regarding the external setting construction, more precisely the street, Jordan's film follows Williams' stage directions as closely as possible, for right in the film's initial sequence, for instance, the exterior setting shown consists of a very narrow, short and cramped street resembling much more a theater stage setting. Kazan's film, for instance, shows a long and broad street where Vivien Leigh comes along stopping by at each section of the street in order to spot the whole external setting. In other words, Jordan enhances the atmosphere of confinement and its straight relation to the mood of the story right in the beginning of the film by presenting the street setting in a fragmented sequence of medium shots, thus increasing the feeling

of imprisonment. Indeed, Jordan's whole scenario is so small that it actually could have been built on a theater stage.

Regarding the interior setting of the Kowalskis' flat, Jordan engenders the atmosphere of confinement by limiting the action space mainly within Stella's cramped and dingy kitchen and the couple's bedroom. In the kitchen space, for instance, most of the action occurs at the kitchen table, which works as an interesting *mise-en-scene* element connecting the characters during important action moments. In scene II, for instance, while Blanche undergoes Stanley's inquiry concerning the loss of Belle Reve, Blanche is positioned at the table right in front of Stanley, reinforcing the sense of trial the scene bestows. Moreover, when Stanley reports to Stella his suspicion concerning Blanche's past, the secretiveness of Stanley and Stella's dialog is enhanced by their position in front of each other at the table, also presented in a tight close-up sequence of shot-reverse-shot.

The couple's bedroom is as cramped as the kitchen set, but it provides enough space to highlight Stanley and Stella's large bed, which is placed in a position right in the middle. Also, the bed constitutes an important *mise-en-scene* element as it is the place in which two significant sequences take place. In other words, it is to their bed that Stanley takes Stella as soon as they make up after their row, and it is also there that Stanley rapes Blanche. Thus, despite the fact that most of the sequences occur in the kitchen, the couple's bed is deliberately positioned in a way that it can be seen several times during the action, even if the characters are not indeed in the bedroom. In scene I, for instance, the first time Stanley sees Blanche, she is sensually standing in the bedroom with the image of the bed in the background. Their whole dialog occurs with the bed in that position. Moreover, still in the same scene, Stanley seductively undresses in front of Blanche still having the bed behind him.

Since the film's action space is as cramped as a theater stage, Jordan also

endured the same problem of having the camera roaming freely through a tight set. In order to overcome this constraint, Jordan resorts to an exploration of camera movement using several medium shots, tight close-ups, and shot-reverse-shots that are remarkably similar to those in Kazan's film. However, despite the limited space, Jordan also manipulates the camera by creatively moving it around the set following the characters and enhancing the dramatic action.

A remarkable instance of Jordan's creative use of camera movement occurs in scene VIII, during Blanche's birthday party. The atmosphere in this scene is quite tense because Mitch did not turn up to see Blanche and, while the characters have dinner, Jordan increases this tension with a long shot of the characters dialog without a single cut. The scene starts with Stanley, Stella and Blanche at the table, and the first image shows Stanley's sweaty shoulders and arms while he is eating. Then the camera moves slowly around the table in a clockwise movement until it reaches the opposite position showing Stanley's face. The camera moves now anticlockwise until it reaches its initial position, and, after that, it begins to move forward towards Blanche's face as she hears a noise and thinks it could be Mitch arriving. Then, the camera moves backwards again and progressively and slowly roams around the table until the sequence finishes in medium-shot, showing the three characters at the table and highlighting Mitch's plate, which is empty. This long sequence with the camera moving around forward and backward is accompanied by the scene's growing tension while Blanche tells the joke about the parrot. The audience is prepared, then, for Stanley's outburst, for as soon as this long shot finishes, he abruptly stands up and throws his plate on the wall.

Another very peculiar way in which Jordan explores camera movement in the cramped set occurs in scene X when Blanche's state of insanity becomes evident. As the scene starts Blanche appears dancing around the bedroom dressed in her glittering evening gown, and as she moves around the room her unstable psychological state is

enhanced by the use of camera on shoulders, swinging around her body. Insofar as the camera spins over her body, the bedroom walls in the background also move around until it reaches Stanley, who is in the kitchen watching Blanche's delirium. Jordan stresses the way in which Stanley's presence pulls Blanche back from that dreamy state into 'his' real world by putting the camera back in a stable position right in the following shot, when Blanche becomes aware of his presence.

Furthermore, the director had already prepared the audience for this suggestion of Blanche's unstable psychological state by using a similar camera position in a previous scene. Namely, by the end of scene IX, the suggestion of Blanche's disturbed inner state can be seen by the contrast of two different positions the camera assumes to portray her and Mitch. While Blanche walks around the room the camera slightly bends, creating an image of distortion, as the whole set behind her appears distorted. On the other hand, Mitch's inner poise state is expressed with the camera positioned steadily, thus contrasting with Blanche's unstable frames.

To a certain extent, Jordan uses the same techniques as Kazan did in his film to accomplish the sense of restriction the play carries on. Also, as Martin Esslin explains, due to the relative smallness of the television screen, small details cannot be captured by long-distance shots; therefore, for television exhibition, the most effective shots are medium-distance shots and close-ups (81). Since Jordan's film is meant for television exhibition, the director employs many of these television techniques. That is, the actors' and actresses' bodies are rarely fully shown when they are in the apartment, and most of the time a number of medium shots and tight close-ups are employed to bring the characters' inner state closer to the audience. In that sense, these frames in Jordan's film do not differ much from Kazan's. Namely, Blanche's emotional state is highlighted through a numerous use of close-ups, as in the final scene when she is on the floor being tied up by the matron. In this sequence, Blanche's desperation is fully captured by an

extreme close-up of her face.

Despite limiting the action space mostly to the Kowalskis' apartment, Jordan also restores to editing as a device to engender movement to the play's action within the set. According to Sheehan, editing techniques are another useful film device that television dramas have been constantly making use of, as it allows mobility in places the camera cannot move (52). In Jordan's film, most of the characters' dialogs occur through the use of editing, especially shot-reverse-shot. In scene I, for instance, Blanche and Stella's initial dialog about her loss of Belle Reve is presented in a shot-reverse-shot sequence in which every time one character speaks, the shot focuses on that specific character. Thus, the feeling of intimacy between the two sisters suggested by the play's dialog is enhanced by the use of close-ups in this shot-reverse-shot sequence.

Additionally, in teledramas, editing techniques may help the director to take audiences to different locations and show them actions that are happening simultaneously (Sheehan 54). An interesting example of Jordan's use of editing to show two different actions taking place at the same time, but in different places, occurs in scene III, when Stanley and his friends are playing poker in the kitchen while Stella and Blanche are giggling in the bedroom. As the scene develops, the shots keep changing from one place to another in order to show Mitch's growing interest in making further acquaintance with Blanche, while she moves around the bedroom to make herself visible to him. Moreover, the cuts from one room to another become even more intense as Stanley and Stella have an argument about the noise the women are making. Thus, the audience can easily move from one room to another due to this mobility allowed by the editing, also called cross cutting (Bordwell 63). At the same time, by filming the characters in medium shots and close-ups, Jordan also engenders the feeling of restriction constantly suggested in the play.

If in terms of camera movement and camera position and editing Jordan

constantly draws from Kazan's film to create the feeling of confinement, it is through his exploration of lighting and photography that he recreates in the medium of television the excessively hot Southern weather suggested in the play. Unlike Kazan's, Jordan's film is shot in colored footage, allowing several possibilities to explore Williams' suggestions concerning the use of colored light. Williams indicates right in the first lines of the play that "The sky that shows around the dim white building is a peculiarly tender blue, almost a turquoise, which invests the scene with a kind of lyricism and gracefully attenuates the atmosphere of decay" (3). Moreover, he also suggests that the weather remains rather hot there. Thus, Jordan's use of light throughout the film evinces the contrast between the external "tender blue light" out on the street and an excessive internal orange light inside the Kowalski's flat, which renders a sense of constant warmth to the film.

An interesting example of Jordan's use of external tender blue light occurs in scene V, as Stanley and Stella are going bowling with Steve and Eunice. While Blanche and Stella are talking inside the flat, their background is remarkably lit by a strong blue light coming from outside and intruding the apartment through the wide-open windows. Additionally, all female characters (Blanche, Stella and Eunice) are dressed in light blue costumes. As Williams suggests, when contrasted with internal excessive orange light permeating the Kowalskis' flat, the tender blue light projected in the external set slightly attenuates the atmosphere of decay surrounding the street buildings (5).

Still, it is through the excessive use of an orange light throughout the whole internal set that Jordan enhances the flat's atmosphere of decay. Besides the orange light, the apartment's pieces of old furniture are either orange or painted in a light color, resulting in a constant feeling of pervasive warmth. Also, the characters' costumes are mainly made of light colors such as white, yellow, orange and light brown which, illuminated by the set's orange light, remarkably increase the feeling of the hot

atmosphere. Blanche's costumes, for instance, are an interesting example of how the orange color highlights the almost unbearable heat the characters feel during the film. In the play, she seems the character most bothered by the excessively hot weather. Thus, in the film, this constant disturbance and feeling of uneasiness are increased by her constant use of orange costumes.

A fine example of Jordan's skilled use of lighting to increase the feeling of hot weather occurs in scene VII, in which Blanche is sunk in the bathtub while Stanley is reporting to Stella what he has just learned about her sister's past. The scene starts with a tight close-up of a little table on which Blanche's several perfumes and soaps are displayed, and, surprisingly enough, they are all orange. The camera then moves to Blanche who is drinking a sort of orange juice while submerged in a steamy bathtub. Meanwhile, Stella is in the kitchen fixing the table when Stanley arrives home. In this scene, Jordan combines an excessive orange light pervading the whole set with the actor and actresses' bodies completely wet. Additionally, there are several fans scattered in different parts of the flat, which clearly evince the excessively hot weather. Thus, considering that Stanley and Stella's dialog in this scene is rather tense, for they are discussing the truth concerning Blanche's past, Jordan stresses the characters' uneasiness in dealing with such an embarrassing issue by expressing their discomfort through the annoying weather.

In creating a warm atmosphere through the excessive use of orange light, Jordan does not give much emphasis to Blanche's fear of facing light. In the play, Blanche's constant avoidance of light appears as a clear evidence of her attempts to remain in a fantasy world and, therefore, to avoid any closer contact with reality. By putting Blanche in a fully illuminated set throughout the film, Jordan overlooks this aspect of her trait. In his film, the only moment in which darkness prevails occurs in scene X, when Mitch comes to tell her that he knows everything about her past. In this sequence, the whole

set is mainly illuminated by the external light, and the shutter shadows projected on the walls enhance Blanche's feeling of imprisonment. Moreover, as the scene progresses, Jordan draws from Kazan's same lighting effect by using a naked light bulb to show Blanche's face when Mitch tears up the lantern paper in order to see her face. However, as Blanche's aging face has been thoroughly spotted throughout the film, there seems to be no surprise element.

Furthermore, in the next scene, as Blanche's rape is about to happen, Jordan enhances her feeling of imprisonment by the number of shadows projected on the walls. Equally noteworthy, while Stanley and Blanche's dialog takes place, Blanche's rape becomes even more evident: an image of Stanley lying on the bed, covered by the shutter shadows, overtly suggests that the bed is a cage in which Blanche will soon be taken a prisoner. Moreover, as Stanley chases her through the cramped room, it is possible to see that the shutter shadows are projected all over the bedroom, reinforcing the idea of Stanley's bedroom as a trap from which Blanche cannot escape.

### 3.3 Beyond Censorship

By filming *Streetcar* nearly fifty years after it was written, Jordan certainly did not have to endure all the hazards the play's polemic issues provoked during the late 1940s. Stern argues, "*Streetcar* reaches its half-century still as challenging and provocative as it initially was, however, changes in the play's reading reflect shifts society has undergone in these last fifty years" (54). Thus, in adapting *Streetcar* in a time its polemic issues would not shock audiences and the film code production was no longer strict as it was in the 1950s, Jordan was not only able to stick to Williams' original play text, but also to explore and expand these scenes far more than Kazan did.

Regarding those polemic issues, Jordan could depict the sensuality and sexuality

underpinning Stanley and Stella's relationship. In scene III, for instance, when Stella descends a flight of stairs to fling into Stanley's arms just a little after he beats her, Jordan uses a sequence of mediums and close shots alternating Stanley and Stella's faces, who progressively approach each other, showing an intense carnal desire. Additionally, by showing both characters' faces in close-ups, Jordan also clearly shows Stella's initial anger quickly changing into forgiveness and sexual desire as she goes down to fling into Stanley. Also, this scene's sensuality is highlighted by the use of lustful jazz music, which Williams indicates in the play. Moreover, Jordan expands the scene by showing Stanley taking Stella in his arms and taking her to their flat. Then, the next sequence shows the couple inside the house while Stanley carries Stella until he gently lays her on their bed, overtly suggesting their sexual intercourse. It is important to stress that Jordan certainly constructs this scene in a very innovative way if compared to previous television versions of *Streetcar*, which obliterated the sensuality underpinning Stanley and Stella's relationship. In Erman's 1984 television version of *Streetcar*, for instance, the sequence in which Stella descends from the flight of stairs is shown in long shot sequence, so that the sensuality required for this scene is obliterated by the distance in which the two characters are positioned. Also, Erman ends the sequence right in the moment Stella flings into Stanley's arms, only very subtly suggesting what might happen between the couple after they make up.

Furthermore, the following sequence is another example of how Jordan expanded the daring scenes in comparison to both Williams' play text and Kazan's film. In scene IV, when Blanche returns home she finds out Stella lying naked in her bed only covered by a satin sheet, and overtly suggesting what had happened between her and Stanley in the previous night. Unlike Kazan, who had to eliminate any close-up of Stella indicating her nakedness, in Jordan's film Stella is shown in tight close-ups while she explains to Blanche that there is nothing unusual in the way she and her husband

behave. Moreover, Stella's nude back is shown from behind her bed while she slowly puts on her robe. Although these scenes may not appear too scandalous for the 1990s audience, it is important to highlight that they would be regarded as rather provocative and immoral for the 1950s audience. Also, while reading the play, such images may not be constructed in the reader's mind, for they are subtly suggested in Williams' play, but not overtly described.

Another example of how Jordan explores the play's references to sexual desire more overtly in his film occurs in the end of scene V, when Blanche flirts with and kisses the young man who calls to collect subscriptions for a newspaper. In the play, despite the fact that Blanche's dialog with the young man clearly evinces she is making a pass at him, Williams' stage direction indicates that she quickly approaches to kiss him. In the film, Jordan slows down the tempo of the action to explore Blanche's approach towards the young man more completely. Thus, their kiss is shown in a frame in which both characters can be seen in a long and sensual kiss, finishing with Blanche's satisfied smile as she says "Run along now! It would be nice to keep you, but I've got to be good and keep my hand off children" (*Streetcar* 49). As the young man leaves the house, Blanche goes up to the porch and softly sends a kiss with her hand saying "Adios!".

Due to the censorship demands, in Kazan's film, Blanche's desires in this scene are totally obscured and the audience is left with little evidence of the sequence's real meaning. Kazan could not show Blanche's kiss from a position that the audience could see the characters touching each other's lips, thus the camera was positioned behind the young man's back in a way that Blanche's face can be seen behind him. The suggestion of the kiss does not seem sensual for it is not shown, and as soon as Blanche draws back, her face is briefly shown in a mixture of regret and uncertainty. In the following shots, Blanche's face is entirely hidden as she dismisses the boy inside the flat.

Regarding the play's reference to Allan's homosexuality, Jordan's film seems to let Williams' words speak for themselves. Namely, the scene does not alter a single line from the play's original text and it follows exactly the directions suggested by Williams. It begins with a shot of the street in which a black woman passes by, walking very clumsily and singing whilst Mitch and Blanche enter the street coming from the ball and walk towards the tenement's porch where they stay. The whole set is illuminated by a soft and tender blue light, which creates an atmosphere of illusion to set the mood for Blanche's recollection of her memories. Also, she lights the table they are seated in with a candle. Moreover, she starts to recount her long monolog by revealing her discoveries about Allan's homosexuality. As she tells Mitch about her frustrated marriage, the camera evinces her sorrow and discontentment by slowly approaching her face in a long shot, which increases the feeling of her potential despair. Finally, the scene finishes exactly as the play indicates, with Blanche finding comfort in Mitch's arms and with a tight close-up of her face saying, "Sometimes—there's God—so quickly!" (57).

In a sense, despite maintaining this sequence's dialog exactly as it appears in the play's text, Jordan's employment of camera movement, planes, frames, shots and music are remarkably similar to Kazan's film. In contrasting both Kazan and Jordan's sequences, it is possible to see that the differences between the two films' sets do not alter the spectral atmosphere of the scene both directors accomplished.

In relation to the rape scene, this was certainly another polemic topic that Jordan not only was able to develop according to Williams' text, but also to explore and expand, if compared to Kazan's film. Although Williams and Kazan were finally allowed to keep this sequence, provided that they would change the ending by punishing Stanley for such act, Kazan had to carefully handle this sequence in order to avoid even more problems with censorship. The solution, though, came with a great emphasis on Stanley chasing Blanche through the cramped bedroom, ending with her defeated image

in a smashed mirror.

Naturally, as Jordan's direct reference to the rape would certainly no longer shock the 1990s audience, he also expanded it a little beyond what is indicated by Williams' play text. Namely, by leaving no doubts about Blanche's rape, the sequence's tension begins by firstly focusing on Stanley cornering Blanche until an overtly extension of what had happened after Stanley defeated Blanche with the broken bottle-top. That is, in the same way that Jordan shows Stanley and Stella in their bed as soon as they make up, this sequence shows the rape about to happen with Blanche and Stanley in bed. In a sense, Jordan repeats the very common Hollywood pattern of a sex scene, that is, after being defeated, Blanche is taken in Stanley's arms and ruthlessly thrown onto his bed. As the music grows tense, Stanley lies on top of her and quite slowly takes off his red pajamas showing his hairy and muscled chest to the audience. The camera is positioned right behind the bed's headboard, in a way that its bars reinforce Blanche's feeling of being trapped and imprisoned in a cage. Additionally, Jordan enhances Stanley's physical superiority in relation to Blanche by bending the camera to the right in the moment Stanley leans to kiss her.

Still, Jordan also elucidates much of Stella's ambivalence from Williams' play, which was obscured in Kazan's film due to the cuts he was forced to make. Namely, in the play, Stella seems always very uncertain about her feelings towards both Blanche and Stanley, although she sticks to her husband in the end. Such uncertainty is depicted in several moments in the play when, for instance, Blanche tries to persuade her to leave Stanley, but Stella cannot make up her mind whether she should leave or stay with him, or when Stanley gives Blanche the bus ticket for her to leave his house. In all these events Stella's ambivalence is evinced, and although she sticks to Stanley in the end, her tenderness and care for Blanche are openly expressed.

Thus, in the last scene, Jordan once again reinforces Stella's mixed feelings by

showing her desperation while Blanche is taken away to a mental hospital, at the same time, Stella finds comfort in Stanley's arms. The film ends by repeating exactly what happens earlier in the play; when, after being beaten by Stanley, Stella's anger towards him progressively melts into forgiveness. Furthermore, as Blanche leaves the scene for the last time, Jordan's film finishes with the image of Stanley soothing Stella by taking her to the bedroom in order to substitute her emotional pain with physical pleasure.

Another interesting aspect in Jordan's film, which is also obliterated in Kazan's film because of the censorship demands, as discussed in Chapter 2, relates to the brutal carnal desire Stella feels for her husband. In Diane Lane performance of Stella, Jordan explores more overtly such sexual desire, which is quite present in the play. Stella seems quite sexually satisfied in the beginning of scene IV, as soon as she spent the night with her husband after they had exchanged lustful glances at the end of the previous scene. In this sequence, she appears almost naked and smiling when Blanche finds her lying in her bed, showing that her relationship with Stanley is naturally based on sexual ground. Unlike Kazan, who had to cut the lines, in this sequence, Jordan emphasizes the dialog in which Stella tells Blanche that she is used to Stanley's brutality, and that on their wedding night when Stanley smashed the light bulbs with one of her sleepers, she "was—sort of—sort of thrilled by it" (36). However, it is in Stella's confession "But there are things that happen between a man and a woman in the dark—that sort of make everything else seem—unimportant", to what Blanche replies, "What you are talking about is brutal desire—just—Desire!" (36). To a certain extent, these few lines condense much of the play's spirit and were cut from Kazan's film. Thus, this sequence allows Jordan to bestow dramatic power to Williams' text through the actresses' performances.

### 3.4 Dialogical Relationship in the Actors' and Actresses' Performances

As Spector points out, actors' and actresses' interpretations have always been regarded as a very interesting subject when it comes to *Streetcar*, no matter if it relates to their performance on stage or on screen (545). In this sense, another striking feature in Jordan's film concerns the peculiar way actors' and actresses' performances relate to Kazan's film. The success obtained by these two versions can be credited to the powerful dramatic role of their actors and actresses. Also, both Kazan and Jordan were rather fortunate as they could count on a cast who had considerable stage experience with their respective roles. According to Caughie, Kim Hunter, who played Stella in Kazan's film, belonged to a generation of actors associated with Lee Strasberg's Actors Studio who eventually "came to define a particular realist moment in Hollywood cinema" (72). Leonard Maltin, analyzing the cast performances of 1995' version, says that "Lange and Baldwin repeat their passionate Blanche and Stanley roles from the lusty 1992 Broadway revival. Much closer to the Williams' play than the earlier TV version or even Kazan's Hays-office emasculated screen version of the '50s" (1346).

Despite the singularities and the potential talent each actor and actress of both versions have, it is undeniable that Vivien Leigh, Marlon Brando, Kim Hunter and Karl Malden' performances were strongly influential in determining the way actors and actresses eventually envision *A Streetcar's* characters when performing them. Jordan's version is no exception, and the performance of the cast in his film permits the establishment of some considerations concerning the dialogical relation between actors' and actresses' performances in both films. Considering the dialogical relationship in the realm of performance, Robert Stam identifies it as a very common event in films. He asserts that whenever an actor or actress is interpreting a character, s/he brings with him/her the intertextual memories of previous performances of the same character (60). In that sense, Stam's notion of intertextuality operates in the dimension of interpretation, and it can actually explain some similarities in the performance of the cast in Jordan's

film in relation to Kazan's film cast.

To start with, it is interesting to point out some aspects in Leigh's interpretation of Blanche, which strongly influences the way Jessica Lange performs the same character in Jordan's film. In this comparison, the first issue to consider is that Leigh's highly regarded interpretation of Blanche has in part to be credited to Kazan's work as a director. In his stage direction, Kazan demanded a complex process of character elaboration that went beyond a mere memorization of lines and their utterance on stage (Spector, 550). According to Spector, such technique, known as the Stanislavski method, was the device Kazan constantly drew upon, even during the period in which the play was already being performed, in order to help his actors to achieve such a realistic interpretation of Williams' characters (551). Namely, he wanted each actor and actress to dig as deep as possible into their characters and, by exploring their own inner world, to bring about pieces of the actors' and actresses' private life experiences to construct the characters. Moreover, Spector's quotes from Kazan's working notes the way he wanted his actors and actresses to construct their characters:

The only way to understand any character is through yourself. Everyone is much more alike than they willingly admit. Even as frantic and fantastic a creature as Blanche is created by things you have felt and known, if you'll dig for them and be honest about what you see. (qtd. in Spector 549)

Also, by choosing Vivien Leigh for his film version, Kazan also had to tackle the problem of dealing with an actress who had different views of Blanche's main features. As Phillips explains, both Leigh and her husband Laurence Olivier (director of the London stage production of the play) viewed Blanche as being "a soft and gentle creature, yearning for love," whereas Kazan was willing to focus more on Blanche's strong traits, "delineating her as person whose tongue was the weapon of a frustrated woman" (229). Moreover, Phillips points out that, after the first week shooting the film, both Kazan and Leigh reached an agreement that Blanche should be played according to

his view (230). Thus, despite the short time Leigh had to adjust her interpretation of Blanche and to embody in her character the qualities Kazan had first thought of, she successfully managed to portray Blanche in the way Kazan wanted.

Such considerations about Leigh's interpretation of Blanche are essentially important to understand and explain the reasons Jessica Lange accomplishes an outstanding interpretation in Jordan's film. Lange's construction of Blanche departs from Leigh's interpretation to flesh out a character even stronger than Leigh had performed. As Maltin observes, "Lange sees Blanche with a feminist bent, and is somewhat less fragile and flighty than Vivien Leigh and Ann-Margret before her" (1346). Naturally, at a first sight, both performances may be quite similar, especially if we consider the soft and delicate way Lange speaks and moves, which is also featured in Leigh's interpretation. However, Lange draws from Leigh's too fragile manners to expand, transform and create her own interpretation of Blanche, and the similarities in their performances basically rely on physical traits such as the soft way they speak, or the gracefulness and delicacy of movements taken from Leigh's interpretation.

Indeed, a careful look at both interpretations soon reveals that Lange's embodies Blanche as a tougher and more aggressive creature than Leigh's did. Also, this 'feminist bent' in Lange's performance of Blanche reveals how changes in women's role in these last decades redefine and play an prominent role in the way Blanche is viewed. Thus, whereas "Vivien Leigh gives one of those rare performances that can truly be said to evoke pity and terror" (564), as Pauline Kael states, Lange's performance makes sure that Blanche's inner strength and wild sense for survival in such a rough world would not be overshadowed by a surface of female fragility.

If Leigh's performance of Blanche has become a reference in all interpretations of Blanche since Kazan's film was released, Marlon Brando's Stanley is not different. Long before changing drastically the way film characters were interpreted on the screen

with his performance of Stanley, Brando had already achieved success with the theater audiences due to his new and realistic way of portraying a character. Spector praises Brando's performance by stating:

Brando's Stanley has an astonishing authenticity. His stilted speech and swift rages are ingeniously spontaneous, while his deep-rooted simplicity is sustained every second. He overwhelms questions of Stanley's morality with the rushing appeal of his spontaneity". (547)

Brando's interpretation of Stanley is so powerfully constructed that it is difficult for any actor to avoid any comparison with his performance. As Kolin explains, "Brando and Stanley have been fused into the same charioteer of desire" (4), and it is this feature that Alec Baldwin seems to rely his portrait of Stanley on.

With regards to Stanley's sex appeal, Baldwin seems quite comfortable in his performance as he emphasizes much of Stanley's sexual magnetism, so endemic in Brando's performance. Also, he keeps in his Stanley much of the brutality and lack of refinement described in the play such as in the sequence he throws his plate onto the wall, after arguing with Blanche and Stella. However, in the rape sequence, Baldwin portrays a character who is in some sense off-limits, reaching a level of realism which was also accomplished by Brando's portrait, one typical of a man capable of making sex seem menacing.

As this analysis has shown, Jordan's film cannot only be regarded as simple straightforward transposition of Williams' play text as the film incorporates elements of several sources. In other words, Jordan's film permits a study of how Kazan's *Streetcar* still exerts a prominent and strong influence in all productions of Williams' play, even fifty years after its release, be it related to technical aspects or cast performance. Also, this 1990s television version of the play permits us to observe how the incorporation and employment of cinematic devices on television drama were carried out.

## Conclusion

The analysis of both film and television adaptations of Tennessee Williams' *Streetcar* provides interesting instances to evince that the adaptation of a dramatic text to the visual mediums consists of a process in which the latter transforms, elaborates and expands the former (Stam 66). Indeed, the relationship between literature, film and television is not only featured and determined by the way technical and aesthetic aspects are worked out in each medium, but also by the historical and social moment in which they are produced.

In his film adaptation of *Streetcar*, Kazan departs from Williams' play text to recreate it in the medium of film by resorting to several film devices and techniques, which prevents the story from becoming too stagery. Namely, Kazan's exploration of several film devices, such as camera movement, offers the viewer different perspectives of setting and locations when compared to the reading of the play. The use of medium and tight close-ups, as well as deep shadows, also strengthens the claustrophobic atmosphere prevailing in the play, something which overtly represents Blanche's imprisonment of body and soul. Editing techniques allow Kazan to create a sense of mobility, taking the audience to different locations of the story. Also, by using several shot-reverse-shot sequences Kazan emphasizes the characters' lines by showing them exactly in the moment in which they utter their speeches. This technique not only enhances the dramatic importance of what is being said, but also allows the audience to perceive the emotional state of each character as s/he speaks. Likewise, in Kazan's film, the use of lighting also corroborates to stress the play's allusions concerning the dichotomy between fantasy and reality which the characters undergo.

Kazan's choice of expanding the play by shooting sequences only mentioned in

the story reinforces Stam's assertions that film adaptations of literary text functions as hypertexts (Genette11-17), for they not only transpose the story from a written medium to a visual one, but they also transform, elaborate and expand the former. In that sense, by adding those additional sequences only referred to in the play, the film creates new perspectives concerning the play's action. Namely, by inverting the play's beginning and showing Blanche as a fragile and heavenly creature arriving in the train depot, Kazan overtly aims at creating in the audience a sympathy towards Blanche which was not accomplished on his stage production. Following the same track, the additional sequence in the bowling alley provides one more instance of that rough and crude environment in which Blanche has just stepped into.

Moreover, the ball scene is certainly the most outstanding example of how this film captures much of the play's essence and expands it. Kazan's choice to shoot the sequence in which Blanche recalls her young husband's death in a similar place he killed himself enhances the dramatic mood that scene required. In a sense, while she tells Mitch about her dramatic experience, the whole setting takes her back to the past to live that situation over again.

Jordan's television version of *Streetcar* captures much of the theatricality of the television drama intertwined with technical elements incorporated from cinema. In other words, Jordan strives to capture the nature of theater performance by, first of all, relying solely on Williams' script for the stage and evincing every aspect of the play text such as the play's well-structured division of eleven scenes. Additionally, the construction of setting does not only follow the play's stage directions strictly, but it also recreates it in the same size of a stage theater in order to call the audience's attention to the theatricality of the story.

Jordan's film is also an interesting example of how recent television dramas have incorporated a considerable number of film techniques and devices in order to

develop their own aesthetics. In that sense, his film establishes an intertextual relationship with Kazan's film regarding cinematic elements like camera movement and position, lighting, and editing; that is, Jordan also employs most of Kazan's film techniques such as medium and tight close-ups of the actors and actresses to engender the feeling of confinement the characters undergo.

However, such reliance on film techniques incorporated from Kazan's film does not restrain Jordan from employing these film devices in a creative and innovative manner. For instance, the representation of Blanche's troubled inner state is created by placing the camera in a distorted position, whereas Mitch's inner poise state is expressed with the camera positioned steadily. Therefore, Jordan is able to capture much of the play's psychological mood and creatively adapt it to the television medium.

Still regarding film techniques, Jordan takes advantage of colored lighting to create the excessive feeling of warmth, which is so endemic in Williams' play. His skilled use of lighting techniques in the rape scene also engenders a new dimension for the battle between Stanley and Blanche. In that sequence, Jordan in fact transposes the play's suggestion of Blanche being trapped in a cage by covering all the bedroom walls with shadows projected from the shutters. Thus, the bedroom setting turns into a cage in which Blanche is about to be trapped in.

Also, the changes during the process of adaptation of a literary text to the visual mediums may not only be accounted for the demands placed on the textual material by the conventions imposed by the visual mediums, but they can as well be constrained by restrictions imposed by the historical and social moment in which the text is being adapted. In this sense, Kazan's film version of *Streetcar* is a fine example of how external forces such as censorship and code production play a prominent role in shaping and determining the way certain aspects of a literary text are adapted to a film version.

Thus, concerning *Streetcar's* most polemic issues, Kazan underwent the hard

task of satisfying the censorship demands and, at the same time, struggling to preserve the play's artistic integrity. A comparison between Williams' original play text and the film script reveals that a considerable number of important lines revealing significant traits of the characters was eliminated from the film's released version. Additionally, the censorship demands imposed a total elimination of any explicit reference to Allan's homosexuality, and the whole issue of Blanche's rape almost put the film at the risk of losing what Williams himself called "the heart of the play" (qtd. in Shumach 75). Still regarding the censorship demands, Kazan could not make use of the play's highly symbolic jazz score and had to replace it with a more conventional music track.

In Jordan's film the historical context also plays a significant role, for it allows him not only to stick entirely to Williams' play text without making any eliminations, but it also permits him to expand and explore more overtly the polemic scenes. For instance, his choice to use the play's text instead of the film script reveals the fact that Williams' play text has gained a considerable reputation amongst literary and theater critics as well as audiences worldwide. Therefore, the scandalous issues the play deals with--homosexuality, rape, and the longing for sexual pleasure in order to compensate for frustration--apparently seem no longer quite shocking and offensive for today's audience as they were for the 1940s and 1950s theater and filmgoers.

Following Stam's consideration about the intertextual relation between one film upon another also encompasses the dimension of actor performances. Jordan's film also provides an interesting example of the dialogical relationship between Jessica Lange and Vivien Leigh's performances. Namely, Lange draws from Leigh to expand, transform and create her own interpretation of Blanche, in the same way that Jordan's film as a whole departs from both Williams' play text and Kazan's film to recreate the play's uniqueness in the medium of television.

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