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A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE (1951): ADAPTATION THAT MADE A DIFFERENCE

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The aim of the paper is to show the transformations of Tennessee Williams's play *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the transposition to the "big screen." In this paper we rely on the recent adaptation theory in which film adaptation is primarily perceived as an autonomous *film* work of equal status as the original. New adaptation theory rejects fidelity to the original as a criterion for evaluation since the adaptation process involves the transposition from one sign system to another (single-track verbal media to a multi-track media which uses words, sound and moving photographic images) and different material and practical contingencies (film shooting is a collaborative project subjected to the influence of studio and censorship, complexities of the shooting process, material infrastructure, budgetary constraints, etc.). In light of theory of adaptation as a product and a process conditioned by the context of creation and reception, the analysis of the film *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1951) has shown that this film, although "mutilated" by the changes imposed by the censorship, grew into a unique, author's work shaped by the vision of the film director Elia Kazan and as such cannot be reduced to the replica of the original.

Key words: adaptation theory, film, author, censorship

1. Reforming Adaptation Theory

The reforms in the studies of adaptation came through an interdisciplinary approach of cultural studies. Dudley Andrew (1984) advocates that the study of adaptation become more sociological and historical. Andrew (1984: 96-97) maintains that the important feature of the discourse on adaptation, "the matching of the cinematic sign system to prior achievement in some other system" is typical not only for the film adaptation but for any representational cinema. In his view, adaptation "can put into play the intricate mechanisms of its signifiers only in response to a general understanding of the signified it aspires to have constructed at the end of the process." In other words, all representational films adapt a prior idea: they are

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interpretations of an event, situation, person, etc., and adaptation in the narrow sense refers to the films that are versions of a standard whole that can only be a text.

The original literary work is a sign of the given shape and value. Adaptation will include the original sign as its signified, in which case we speak about faithful adaptation or its referent, when the film adaptation was only inspired by the original. In this regard, Andrew (1984: 98-99) established the following classification of adaptations: "borrowing" when the artist "employs, more or less extensively, the material, idea or form of a generally successful text", "intersecting" when "the uniqueness of the original text is preserved to such an extent that it is intentionally left unassimilated" and "fidelity and transformation" which implies "reproduction in cinema of something essential about an original text". Comparing the ways in which visual details are presented by novels and films, Seymour Chatman states that films use a visual medium to *depict* rather than *assert* a reality: even though a character or a voice-over commentator in a film can assert a reality, "film does not describe at all but merely presents; or better, it *depicts*, in the original etymological sense of that word: renders in pictorial form" (Chatman, 1992:408). In this sense, adaptation would be reduced to "searching two systems of communication for elements of equal position in the systems capable of eliciting a signified at a given level of pertinence" (Andrew, 1984:102). Adaptation study would imply the study of both art forms in their respective historical context.

For Thomas Leitch (2007:16), adaptation process is a practical demonstration of the need for rewriting, "incessant process of rewriting as critical reading [...] informed by the conflict [...] between heteroglossia, whose protean, internally persuasive meanings are irreducibly dependent on the contexts generated by particular readers and reading situations, and canonization, which seeks to standardize authoritative meanings for all readers." This approach means that both adaptations and original texts are heteroglot texts rather than the canonical works and that every text seeks to be rewritten. Each text is an intertext, which "incorporates, refracts, refutes, and alludes to many other texts whether literary, cinematic or more broadly cultural" (Leitch, 2007:17). Therefore, adaptation should be treated as an intertext that depends on the original text, but cannot be reduced to replicating its details. Highlighting fidelity as the main criteria in the evaluation of adaptation means that adaptation is equivalent to the original text and does not go beyond its limits. Also, by emphasizing fidelity, we overlook the problematic nature of the original by emphasizing the privileged status of literature over the ability to engage us as readers.

In order to evaluate adaptation fairly, we have to evaluate the literary originals, which the traditional theory of adaptation refused. Leitch (2007:17-18) suggests incorporating *literature* and *literacy* in textual studies that examine "how texts are produced, consumed, canonized, transformed, resisted, and denied" and explains that individual adaptations are studied not in terms of what you choose, highlight and transform from the original, but what you leave out, because communication starts when the audience starts to complement the things that are omitted.

Robert Stam advocates an intertextual-dialogue approach to adaptation studies (2005). Stam (2005:3) criticizes the moralistic language of film adaptation scholars (terms such as "infidelity", "betrayal", "deformation", "violation", "bastardization", "vulgarization" and "desecration") that implied that the cinema allegedly betrayed literature.

Stam (2005) highlights the contribution of structuralism, post-structuralism, cultural studies, narratology, reception theory, performative theory, multiculturalism and the theory of intertextuality in the reform of adaptation studies. Bakhtin's concept of *dialogism* and the notion of *intertextuality* transcend the source/adaptation model that neglects all supplementary texts and dialogical reaction of the reader/viewer. Stam (2005:27) also mentions Genette's concept of *transtextuality* that refers to "all that which puts one text in relation, whether manifest or secret, with other texts" and five types of transtextual relations, the fifth of which is the "hypertextuality", which is most relevant to the theory of adaptation. It refers to the relation between "hypertext" to an anterior text or "hypotext" which the "hypertext" transforms. In this sense, film adaptation is a "hypertext derived from the pre-existing hypotexts which have been transformed by operations of selection, amplification, concretization, and actualization" (2005:31). Thus, not only different *screen* adaptations, but also the adaptations of the original in different mediums and genres are all different hypertextual readings of the same hypotext. Stam (2005) believes that narratology is good for analyzing the formal aspects of adaptation. However, a purely formal approach does not take into account historical analysis or the context that is a very important element of adaptation. Although fidelity as a moralistic criterion in assessing adaptations should be rejected, Stam believes that the discourse on fidelity raises important questions about the film recreation of the place, time, plot, character, theme and style of literary sources. Stam (2005) opposes essentialist arguments underlying the discourse on fidelity. Denying the existence of a "transferrable core" of the source that adaptation needs to transfer, Stam (2005:15) explains that the text is "an open

structure, constantly reworked and reinterpreted by a boundless context [and it] feeds on and is fed into an infinitely permutating intertext, seen through ever-shifting grids of interpretation". Secondly, the discourse on fidelity does not answer the question whether the adaptor should be faithful to the plot, the physical description or the author's intention (Stam, 2005).

Despite the fact that adaptation can repeat the outlines of the story from the source, the real equivalence between the source and adaptation does not exist. Literature is based on language, not on representing and enacting, and the resulting texts in their "densely signifying materiality will be in many ways incommensurable". Stam suggest new tropes that will emphasize the ability of adaptation to change shape through the media and highlight changes and recombination that adaptation brings: "reading, re-rewriting, critique, translation, transmutation, metamorphosis, recreation, transvocalization, resuscitation, transfiguration, actualization, transmodalization, signifying, performance, dialogization, cannibalization, reinvisioning, incarnation, or reaccentuation" (2005:25).

David Krantz (2007) criticizes the reductionist approach of "fidelity criticism" although he believes that the poststructuralists have simplified the criticism in some segments. While it is true that the comparative methodology of "fidelity criticism" does not consider those complex factors concerning the creation of the film: "its collective authorship, its sometimes numerous citations of past films and referents to the cultural and political givens at its creation, its economic infrastructure, its reception and the complicated nature of its particular visual and aural medium", Krantz (2007:85) believes that this methodology should not be entirely negated but reviewed. This author offers a comprehensive approach in which a film adaptation is the legacy of a literary source, a film and the result of other influences. So, in addition to *literary and dramatic elements* which are the most important parts of feature films, we should take into account the significant *film* elements such as *mise-en-scène*, photography and editing, significant *intertextual relations* such as famous prior films, scripts, history, media reports and relevant *contextual information* such as studio contracts, innovation of film technology, interviews with directors and actors, distribution statistics, political, economic and cultural events. Krantz (2007) comes to the conclusion that the comparative method must include only those film, intertextual and contextual elements that are relevant to the arguments concerning the interpretation arising from the analysis of narrative and other similar data. The key to the reform of adaptation

studies is the middle between two extremes, the essentialism of "fidelity criticism" and the relativism of post-structuralism.

2. Critical Evaluation of A Streetcar Named Desire (Kazan, 1951)

The scholars who studied Williams's work adapted for the screen (G. Phillips, M. Yacowar, R. B. Palmer, W. R. Bray, D. R. Jones) usually rank the film adaptations in two categories: the adaptations that are considered faithful and those considered unfaithful to the original. *A Streetcar Named Desire* directed by Elia Kazan in 1951 has been rated as both unfaithful and faithful film adaptation. According to the first group of critics, this film is a heroic failed attempt at transferring Williams's play untransformed to the screen. Other critics agree that despite the censorship, *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a faithful film adaptation. There are many reasons that support the opinion that the film is a faithful adaptation. The film is in many ways an atypical film adaptation which could not sustain many transformations: firstly, Tennessee Williams wrote both the play and the film script; secondly, the director directed both the stage and film version of the play; thirdly, the director was guided by the principles of fidelity – to transfer the author's vision both on stage and in the film; fourthly, the temporal context of the stage version and the screen version is the same (the New York premiere was in 1947, and the film was released in 1951). To support this view, Yacowar (1977:21) claims that the film is a model of a "sensitive, faithful adaptation," and that, despite the revised end, which is apparently opposite to that in the play, irony and ambiguity reveal the same dark vision. Palmer and Bray (2009: 71-72) believe that the film is an innovative achievement that has absolutely kept all the modernist elements of the play and passed a difficult path to reach the mass film audience unchanged. Williams agreed that it was a brilliant film adaptation whose only fault was the ending (Phillips, 1980:85).

Both ratings are based on the traditional approach to adaptation studies which implies that the literary work is taken as a prototype in relation to which adaptation is more or less faithful. Contextual elements (censorship that imposes changes of the film content) are taken into account only to determine the extent to which they hinder the achievement of the primary objective – fidelity to Williams's play. The director's vision (in accordance with which Williams' text was transformed into a unique film) which reveals different layers and meanings of Williams's text, special film techniques and procedures which were used to shape the director's vision, and the artistic mark

of other film workers, especially lead actors (Marlon Brando, Vivien Leigh), who contributed to a different reading of Williams's text in the film medium, have not been taken into account in terms of their contribution to the meaning of the film as a separate artifact.

3. A Streetcar Named Desire (1951): Film Production

Work on the production of the stage play *A Streetcar Named Desire*³ marked the beginning of a fruitful cooperation between Williams and the director Elia Kazan, both in theater and film⁴.

Williams summed up the instructions for directing the stage play in a letter to Kazan (Kazan, 1988). In his words, the highest quality of the play is its "authenticity or fidelity to life", a true picture of the complexity of human beings confronted not so much because of malice but because of mutual misunderstanding. The only theme of the play is human understanding. In this sense, Stanley should be presented as a person who can see Blanche only as a "calculated bitch", not a desperate being. Williams primarily wanted the audience to sympathize with Blanche. At the same time, he insisted, this must not be achieved at the expense of Stanley, who should not be portrayed as a "black-eyed villain". The aim of the play is to show that Blanche was not killed by Stanley but by misunderstanding. In further suggestions, Williams states that this can be achieved with realistic, and sometimes expressionist methods.

Kazan's goal was to fulfil Williams' vision and make the final work as "complex, subtle [and] contradictory" as possible (Kazan, 1988). In Kazan's opinion, Blanche is not so much mentally disturbed as she was the wrong person in the wrong place. Also, Stanley is not only a simple brute. It is clear that Blanche would have destroyed his home. Despite the intention to achieve maximum fidelity to the original, Kazan was

³ *Streetcar Named Desire* is a drama about the plight of Blanche, a middle-aged southern belle. After the loss of the family plantation Belle Reve (Beautiful Dream) as a result of debauchery of the male members of the family, her failed marriage with a homosexual who, after Blanche's rejection, committed suicide and numerous sexual relationships in which she embarked to escape from death (antithesis of desire is death), Blanche is kicked out of the city where, while working as a teacher, she was accused of the relationship with one of her students. In desperation, she seeks salvation from her sister Stella who lives in New Orleans with her husband Stanley. Blanche is disgusted by the open sexuality that characterizes Stella and Stanley's relationship but not because of her own sophistication as she claims, but because of the sensuality that characterized her previous relationships. Her only hope to escape into the marriage to Mitch, a mummy's boy, is destroyed by Stanley when he rapes her in revenge for her determination to destroy his family. After the rape, an act which she partly provoked, Blanche has a nerves breakdown, and is, trapped in a world of illusions, taken to an asylum. Accepting Stanley's lies, Stella continues to live with Stanley and their new-born child.

⁴ Williams insisted that Kazan do stage play because he felt that only he can revive the play as it happens in real life. The stage play had the following cast: Jessica Tandy as Blanche, Marlon Brando as Stanley, Kim Stanley as Stella and Karl Malden as Mitch.

aware of the fact that Williams' play was to undergo a metamorphosis after the text is transformed into a stage play where it becomes a living thing (Kazan, 1988).

Although the literary elements are the key elements in the analysis of adaptation, a film adaptation is an autonomous work that is transformed through the medium of film by means of film elements such as mise en scene, photography and editing. According to Robert Stam (2005:16-18), the main question in the discussion of adaptation is the question regarding the specificity of the media, i.e. what a movie can do that a literary work cannot. Each film adaptation is automatically different because of the changes in the media. A literal fidelity of adaptation is impossible and undesirable because of semiotic difference (transfer from a single-track, verbal medium to the multi-track media which uses words, sound and moving photographic images) but also because of the financial and practical factors (literature is individual and cinema a collaborative project, the complexity of the process of filming, material infrastructure during filming, budgetary constraints, the availability of the actors, the pressure of studios, censorship, etc.). Even if we have a lot of faithful adaptations of a literary work created by the directors of similar aesthetic *choices*, each adaptation will be different because filmmaking, adaptation in particular, is the result of many *choices* that a director must make (actors, props, format, location, etc.) and implies a "synergistic interactions between tracks", i.e. our *simultaneous* exposure to *specific* music, lighting, cameras, etc. (Stam, 2005:18).

Even though Kazan wanted to be faithful to the author's vision, he had a view of the director as the ultimate author of the film, who at his disposal has his own, film language (Kazan, 1988):

The director tells the movie story more than the man who writes the dialogue. The director is the final author, which is the reason so many writers now want to become directors. It's all one piece. Many of the best films ever made can be seen without dialogue and be perfectly understood. The director tells the essential story with pictures. Dialogue, in most cases, is the gravy on the meat. It can be a tremendous "plus," but it rarely is. Acting, the art, helps; that too is the director's work. He finds the experience within the actor that makes his or her face and body come alive and so creates the photographs he needs. Pictures, shots, angles, images, "cuts," poetic long shots—these are his vocabulary. Not talk. What speaks to the eye is the director's vocabulary, his "tools," just as words are the author's.

With every choice Kazan made, the film (hypertext) transformed Williams's play (hypotext) adding new elements to visualise the verbal parts of the source play or highlighting the existing ones. In the notes for the final version of the script, Kazan writes about his intention to show the absurd situation in which Blanche is attracted by her own destroyer (Kazan, 2009: 72). Believing that panic and violence, as two dominant emotions in the film, can be better expressed on film than on stage, the director employed a number of film devices and techniques: subjective photography (to show Blanche's loneliness, hopelessness and confusion), jazz music typical of New Orleans (a complex composition which corresponds to the intimacy of the film and reflects the complex dynamics of the characters; close-ups (to show the subtle complexity of the characters), camera movements that contribute to the film dynamics despite the confined space, special framing achieved by the movement of the characters (not cuts) and chiaroscuro lighting effects (to capture Blanche's sense of confinement and collapse). In addition to this, Kazan makes Blanche's anxiety and uneasiness more obvious by emphasizing heat (transparent dresses, fans, people sweating and drinking, the atmosphere of living at night and sleeping during the day, children stealing ice, dogs looking for shade), and multiple sounds to which Blanche reacts emotionally because of her excessive tension and sensibility (jazz, cathedral bells, train, car horns, drunkards, a baby crying, fighting, noise at the bowling alley). Also, special attention in the film is given to the choice of costumes (Blanche's selected, sophisticated, feminine garments made up of chiffon, rayon, silk and lace) and props (fans, creams, perfumes, pins, rollers, depilatories, suitcase with carefully selected items) that are part of Blanche's identity. First Kazan's idea was to "open" the play in accordance with the film medium. However, Kazan gave up the idea because he realized that the "opening" would dissolve the world of the play. The force of the play was in the idea of suppression, in the fact that Blanche is trapped in a world reduced to two rooms where she is constantly aware that she irritates Stanley thus exposing herself to danger from which she cannot escape. So he decided to remain faithful to the stage version of the play.

The play proved to be easy to adapt because it was not written by the principles of the conventional division into three acts which are further divided into several scenes, but consists of a series of scenes that more resemble a film sequence. Also, since the film was directed in the spirit of highlighted realism that fits in the context, most of the dialogue from the play could be kept in the film version. Kazan's creativity was reflected in the following elements:

-to evoke an atmosphere of increasing suppression and threats for Blanche, Kazan built the walls of Stanley and Stella's apartment in smaller pieces that could be gradually moved

-to evoke an atmosphere of fierce panic Kazan had the dress for the rape scene sewn from the same lightweight, transparent material such as were the curtains on the walls of Stanley's room

-Kazan used an image of a moth hitting the wall (borrowed from Williams)

-to highlight the atmosphere of moisture that prevails in the apartment the stage the designer was instructed to make the walls wet

- to visualize the complexity of the characters Kazan used a close-up and deep shadows, which achieved much greater effect than in the stage version (especially in the scene in which Blanche's real face, old, gray and gaunt is seen under a bare light bulb).

-to provide "physical metaphor for Blanche's mental state" (Yacowar, 1977:17), Kazan introduced five new locations that do not exist in the play. The first location is a train depot in New Orleans, where Blanche first appears, like a ghost emerging from the smoke of the locomotives. The second is the bowling alley where upon arrival Blanche looks for Stella and where her appearance stands out from the environment (in the play Stella is waiting at home). The third is the pier fronting the dance casino where Blanche tells Mitch the story of a former husband, a fully justified choice given the fact that the husband committed suicide in a dance casino. The fourth location is the factory in which Stanley reveals to Mitch Blanche's sordid past, with the noise of machines that emphasize Mitch's shock. The fifth location is the porch of the tenement where people begin to gather and a policeman establishes order after Blanche's hysteria when Mitch leaves (Phillips, 1980:77).

Although the main action takes place in the apartment, the film is not static, as Kazan moved the action fluidly through the whole tenement without sacrificing the feeling of suffocation. This is evident in the scene with the men playing poker in which the director cuts back and forth between Stanley's apartment and the apartment above from which the neighbor's wife spills hot water on the men.

Yacowar (1977:17) highlights Kazan's art of visualising Blanche's conflict between fantasy and reality through the introduction of four main motifs in the opening scene which indicate Blanche's future suffering: the heat motif, the noise motif, the light motif and the motif of physical contact.

Kazan's skill in visualizing the conflict between reality and illusion is particularly evident in the rape scene. Given that *A Streetcar Named Desire* is a tragedy, the rape scene is a climactic point in which two cultures prove to be unable to reach an understanding. In the film, the point in which Brando breaks Blanche's illusions is presented in a much more cruel way: Stanley throws Blanche on the bed; in a subjective frame, from Blanche's perspective, we see how Stanley, as a fierce beast, reveals Blanche's lies: he brings in his face, threatens and points at Blanche with his finger, pulls her dress and takes the diadem off her head. Finally, the monologue ends triumphantly with Stanley's words: "I say – HA – Ha! Do you hear me? HA – ha – ha!" In panic, Blanche collects her stuff and gets out. Shocked, Blanche stops when she sees an old woman who sells flowers for the dead. Frightened of death that has long haunted her, Blanche returns to the house. Her only salvation is Mr. Huntleigh, whom she desperately phones for help. In an attempt to defend herself from Stanley, Blanche grabs a bottle; Stanley grabs Blanche's arm and she drops the bottle. The next thing we hear are Stanley's words: "Tiger – tiger! Drop that bottle-top!" The last picture in a scene is a reflection of Blanche's slumped body in the mirror.

It is directed in such a way that it is clear to everyone what happens to Blanche in Stanley's hands. Physical and mental battle takes place off screen until the close-up shows a broken mirror, a symbolic representation of Blanche's disillusionment.

After this image, Kazan cuts the scene to show the fire hose on the street that metaphorically emphasizes the act of rape. The hose is an ambiguous phallic image, which, as Yacowari (1977:17) claims, implies different perspectives: a symbol of Blanche who is the garbage to be washed away by Stanley's clean, direct force; a symbol of Blanche's shame and shock to her self-esteem after the rape; a symbol of Stanley as a victim who, having already been pushed by the water hose and treated like garbage by the regularizing authorities enjoys a revenge and a symbol of characters washing aside the embarrassing past.

Thanks to the use of camera, especially close-up, Kazan brings the characters closer to the audience than in a theater enabling them to see the subtleties of characters' feelings and witness a subtle way in which Blanche encourages Stanley's interest in her and contributes to the act of rape. Phillips (1980: 83-84) points out two phallic images through which Kazan had prepared the audience for the rape: a scene in which Stella prepares Blanche a highball and the soda after which the foam spills on Blanche's dress and a scene in which Stanley, celebrating the birth of a son, opens a beer bottle from which the foam bubbles on the ceiling, a sign of virility and potency.

Apart from the scene where Mitch holds the naked lightbulb next to Blanche's face, Kazan's skill of using light is obvious in the scene in which Blanche is shown in her curtained-off cubicle with the the barred shadows that fall across her face implying that she is imprisoned in the world of illusions.

Marlon Brando greatly contributed to the realization of Kazan's vision of authenticity and fidelity to life. Kazan describes Brando's acting as "living on the stage" since his every word "is not something that is memorized but a spontaneous expression of inner experience" (Kazan, 1988). His performance was full of surprises and exceeded all Kazan's and Williams' expectations and presenting a challenge for all the other actors. Brando's spontaneous, instinctive method acting style and his performance as Stanley Kowalski characterized by slow gait, gestures, slurred speech and a northern accent is considered a unique interpretation of Williams's text. In accordance with Kazan's instructions, Brando emphasized sensual and physical part of the role. Although Brando felt antagonism towards the violent and insensitive character of Stanley, some critics suggest that the blend of Brando's similarities with the character, and the differences in relation to him made a tremendous impact both in the stage play and in the film. (D. R. Jones, 1986: 150)

The ability of Vivien Leigh, a well-known actress of the classic "stylized acting style" remembered by the role of the spoiled southern belle Scarlett O'Hara in the famous love-historical drama *Gone With the Wind*, to play the role of an actress in the classical tradition (Blanche), is something that makes this film unique. Blanche's need for theatricalizing reality is stressed by Leigh's ability to modulate the voice from masculine, to the soft, feminine, or vice versa. It is worth mentioning that Vivien Leigh already played Blanche in the London production of the play, directed by Lawrence Olivier. In Kazan's words (Kazan, 2009:72), Leigh's acting in the first part of the film was shaped by Olivier's, typically 'English' reading of Williams's play. Taking this consideration into account, as well as the fact that film carries the memory of Leigh's previous roles, it can be concluded that Vivien Leigh's acting makes the special intertextual element of Kazan's film. In the analysis of the film *A Streetcar Named Desire* relevant contextual information should be taken into account. Censorship that affected the transformation of the stage play is the result of the need to meet the taste of the audience used to the family entertainment. Williams' texts were due to "the destruction of conventional presentation of sexuality and gender" shocking even for the Broadway audience, which was an "educated, culturally liberal, northeastern clientele" (Palmer, Bray, 2009:63), let alone for the conservative Hollywood mass

audience. On the other hand, in times of the crisis of Hollywood industry in the '50s, it was the modernist elements of the Williams drama (provocative realism) that led movie moguls to buy the rights for the film in order to offer something new to the audience and increase sales. Palmer and Bray (2009:67) maintain that the scene of conflict between Blanche and Mitch is both unconventional and Aristotelian as Williams uses poetic realism to reconstruct and deconstruct sexist gender politics of the post-war era, the idea of "double standards" and categorizing women as either easy or good.

Although the play won the Pulitzer Prize and had huge success on Broadway, Hollywood at the beginning did not show great interest in it. At the end Charles K. Feldman from Warner Bros. bought the rights to the film.

However, the final version of the script was influenced by two censor institutions: Production Code Administration and Legion of Decency.⁵

The Administration had three complaints: 1) references to "sexual perversion" in connection with Blanche's husband Allen Gray 2) assumptions about Blanche's nymphomania and 3) rape. Some other reason for the husband's suicide should have to be found, Blanche's nymphomania would have to be transformed into Blanche's quest for romance and security. The rape scene would have to remain intact but the ending would have to be different. (Blanche would sink into dementia accusing Stanley of rape and he would deny the act and prove his innocence).⁶

Kazan and Williams were not satisfied with the suggestions, as they meant transforming the film into the second-rate melodrama. Williams explained that the term "nymphomania" trivialized the complexity of Blanche's situation because she is a lonely and fragile person seeking warmth and protection. The rape scene for him was the "pivotal, integral truth of the play" (Palmer, Bray, 2009:87). Kazan agreed that the play is not a dirty naturalistic drama but a poetic tragedy based on realism that must be transferred to film.

The authorities eventually agreed to keep a scene of rape „if done by suggestion and delicacy“ (Palmer, Bray, 2009:84). The Administration required that Stanley must

⁵ The two institutions, one inside the film industry and the other outside, in the period from the 1920s to the 1950s played an important role in controlling the content of the movies: The two organizations worked together for three and a half decades (from 1930 to 1968) and their role, as quoted by Palmer and Bray, was not to allow the social reality be shown on film.

⁶ The Administration was not yet sure of the way to prove Stanley's innocence. Two possibilities were proposed: that Blanche calls Stanley Alan's name while hugging him, imagining the rape of which the audience knows. Another possibility is that Stanley tries to rape her, but gives up the act because he sees that Blanche suffers a nervous breakdown.

be punished by Stella's leaving. Kazan refused further suggestions on how to do the rape scene.

As for the end of the film, in the stage version Stella was upset about what happened in her absence of Blanche, but her anger quickly passes because the erotic relationship between her and Stanley grows even stronger after Blanche's departure. In the film version Williams came up with a solution in which Stella, Blanche having been taken to an asylum, refuses to return to the apartment whispering the following words to her baby: "We're not going back in there. Not this time. We're never going back. Never, never, never." (Phillips, 1980:84). The ending was approved by the Administration. However, it was ambiguous and thanks to Williams and Kazan's artistry, the ending conveyed the same idea as in the stage version because Stella's refusal can be interpreted as something that is only temporary (that she will soon come back to Stanley forgiving him). For the Legion of Decency⁷ the problem was not forbidden topics, but the "huge emphasis on sin and sensuality," i.e. thematizing sexual desires and distortion of the role that the body needs to have in people's lives. It is surprising that the Legion had no comment on the brutal and unethical relationship between Blanche and Stanley but on the passionate relationship between Stella and Stanley. Therefore, the film was ranked as "C".

The studio tried to convince the Legion to agree on the cuts that could be done to make the film be ranked as "B". Legion agreed to changes (four minutes of the film) but the problem it stressed at the beginning was hardly changed, because it was still a film that dramatized sensuality. The cuts changed the artistic quality of the film, particularly regarding the motivation and atmosphere⁸.

⁷ As a reaction to the immorality of American films, the bishops of the Roman Catholic formed the "Legion of Decency" in 1934. The Legion was the strongest censorship body in the history of American film. Its task was not only to control the Production Code, but to directly affect the film companies.

⁸ The Legion was responsible for rating films in favour of the Catholic community and not for the censorship of films. As Williams and Kazan were neither informed about the problems related to the approval of the Legion nor were consulted regarding the changes, Kazan reacted violently protesting that his freedom of expression is threatened. The changes referred to the following:

- removal of the last three words of Blanche's remark to the newsboy: "I would like to kiss you softly and sweetly on the mouth"

- insertion of the long shot instead of medium and close-up in the scene where Stella slowly descends the flight of stairs before Stanley embraces her as a sign of reconciliation (for the Legion decency this scene was too "carnal". However, Stella's changes of her mood, her anger followed by the forgiveness is not visible from a greater distance so that the audience cannot see any complexity of her character)

- removal of Stanley's line uttered before the rape: "You know, you might not be bad to interfere with." Removal of the line implies that Stanley does not behave impulsively but has been plotting the rape, which makes the act more brutal than it is.

Another contextual factor that shaped the film version is the studio's influence in the choice of the lead actress. Namely, the studio authorities guided by the need to boost sales insisted that Vivien Leigh was cast in the film adaptation for her star power.

3. Conclusion

In the analysis of the film *Streetcar Named Desire*, the question of fidelity may become less relevant when the film is studied as a new, autonomous piece of art transformed exclusively by means of *film media* through which not only the author's intentions, but the director's predilections and contextual influences become obvious.

The fact is that the literary source plays an important role in the film adaptation. Krantz believes that the post-structuralist tendencies in the studies of adaptation should "be purged" of relativism, i.e. from the attack on rationality, denial of objectivity and insistence on infinite ambiguity. He suggests two principles: the application of probability to the infinite play of signifiers on which deconstruction insists and attempt at objectivity, i.e. the insistence on reducing the subjectivity. (Krantz, 2007:88).

Therefore, the qualities of Williams's play such as: authenticity, fidelity to life achieved by means of expressionistic techniques, poetic dialogues, universal themes (the lack of understanding among people), contradiction and complexity of the main characters and ambivalent ending are the values that, before the screening, were recognized by his readers, theater audience, director Kazan, producer Feldman and the others implying that the dramatic text played a more important part than another intertext. However, other factors like the director's predilections and artistry as well as censorship were as much important in shaping the final version of the film.

The adaptation was a turning point in terms of the introduction of method acting⁹ and jazz music. The film proved to be a box-office success and marked first Brando's first nomination.¹⁰

Production Code Administration and Legion of Decency largely contributed to the process of transformation of Williams's stage plays. At the same time, as Palmer and Bray state, the film contributed to the bending of the institutions' codes and principles as they tried to adapt to a new form of dramatic expression. (Palmer, Bray,

⁹ This idea was first called the 'System' by Konstantin Stanislavsky, and later, as further developed by Lee Strasberg (at the Group Theatre, the Actors Studio and then at the Institute). The Lee Strasberg Method trains actors to use their imagination, senses and emotions to conceive of characters with unique and original behaviour, creating performances grounded in the human truth of the moment.

¹⁰ The film marked the first of Marlon Brando's four consecutive [Academy Award nominations for Best Actor](#) and earned an estimated \$4,250,000 at the US and Canadian box office in 1951, making it the fifth biggest hit of the year.

2009:64). The film broke with the tradition of family entertainment and paved the way for the other, more serious adult films, changing the taste of the film audience and expanding their horizons of expectations.

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