



FOUR TRACES OF THE STREETCAR

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Four “physical traces” of *A Streetcar Named Desire* are currently available on tape or on DVD to enrich our reading of Kazan’s play of 1947. The 1984 remake is a little difficult to find, but Jessica Lange’s *Blanche* of 1995, or André Previn’s opera of 1998 are easily bought. I’ll start with the latter, premiered in San Francisco half a century after the first Broadway production, since it is both a radical example of a “filmed opera” and the most different reading to be compared with Kazan’s film. Extracts from the opera will suggest a few questions for further analysis.

After the credits written on a staircase background and a short orchestral prelude based on a dissonant chord suggesting the tramway hoot and brutal desire itself, *Blanche* emerges from a mist, singing—apparently to the audience:

They told me to take a streetcar named Desire; then transfer to the one called Cemeteries. Then to ride it for six blocks to Elysian Fields.

This abrupt beginning and its minimal use of words is only possible because the San Francisco audience is already familiar with a play which has become an American landmark of theatrical culture. The setting itself is supposed to conjure up the “raffish” New Orleans atmosphere, but it is above all a reminder of most nineteenth-century operas such as Puccini’s *La Bohème*.

Yet, as one goes on viewing the DVD, it becomes obvious that *Blanche* was not actually addressing the audience but *Eunice*, who was sitting on the staircase, on the left, but who remained invisible because of the limiting frame of the camera: this “filmed opera” is not—and cannot be—an “objective photograph” of the prestigious premiere performance given in 1998, as the spectators saw *Eunice* and they realized *Blanche* was addressing her.

If one goes on looking for provocative hints, I would suggest scene four (chapter 19 on the DVD), when *Stella* wakes up after her “colored” night in *Stanley*’s arms. Whereas the whole opera is typically built around *Blanche*—the traditional *Diva*—this scene revolves around a voluptuously humming *Stella* whose only words answer *Blanche*’s comment on *Stanley*’s being common: “Yes, I suppose he is.” But she keeps obviously indifferent to this minor reproach. *Blanche*’s text itself is reduced to a few lines:

Blanche: *Stella*, your husband... Forgive me to speak plainly but he’s common.

Stella: Yes, I suppose he is.

Blanche [*she does realise Stanley’s presence*]: Suppose! You can’t have forgotten that much of your bringing up—that you just suppose that any part of a gentleman’s in his nature! Bestial! He’s subhuman... He’s

an animal. He's an ape! It's just like thousands of years have passed right by, and there he is! Stanley Kowalski! King of the jungle! And you! You here! You living like this! Waiting for him! His poker night! A party of apes! God! Stella, there are other kinds people, other kinds! Other kinds.

When Stanley appears in the kitchen, he remains silent like a very tall statue waiting ironically for his woman to see him. At this point, the camera is so near her face that her reaction seems overacted and when Blanche realizes he is listening she also starts in a somewhat laughable way: since the play was meant for a very large and remote audience, filming this real theatrical performance results in a damaging over emphasis of expression. Another sign of the status of the DVD is given after the fade out: applause is soon heard and the black screen is followed by a general view of the illuminated theatre during the intermission.

These short examples taken from a *Streetcar* revisited half a century after its creation suggest four central *tools* for a further reading of the 1951 original:

a - The theatre (the seats, the orchestra, the conductor, etc.) is repeatedly visible on the DVD, and the audience's reaction (frequent laughter) constantly reminds the viewer of its specific status as a "trace" of the real thing. In this particular case, no spectator is actually to be seen in the audience, but we know the Mayor of New Orleans was there, and we can imagine or "feel" the presence of the San Francisco intelligentsia of the moment. This suggests a more systematic analysis of the "theatrical" status of each performance, the nature and the role of the audience or, more precisely, the sort of spectator *generated* by each performance—play or film.

b - Previn's opera implies a sophisticated audience, well aware of the play and of a long operatic tradition. A second tool might be to question the relationship between each version of *Streetcar* and its literary, theatrical, filmic or mythical predecessors in order to understand its meaning when it was produced and what remains later: in other words, what are the "hypoperformances" implied by each version? In 1984, the main point seemed to restore what the 1951 censors had cut, in 1995 Jessica Lange tried to amend on film a controversial beginning on the Broadway stage, etc.

c - Renée Fleming's Blanche in Previn's opera is obviously pivotal. Each version addresses the play's ambiguities on the status of the Blanche-Stanley relationship. On the DVD, the viewer is given further information about the audience's reactions, for example when they either laugh *at* Stanley or laugh *with* him... This arouses two different questions: are there specific stage directions concerning their relative power in Tennessee Williams's text, Oscar Saul's script and Philip Littell's libretto? And what is the margin left the directors and the actors?

d - But the most challenging question lies probably in the complex relationship between realism and expressionism in all versions of *Streetcar*. Brenda Murphy transfers what she calls the "subjective realism" of *The Glass Menagerie* to "the whole group of important mid-century plays that became recognizable to the theatrical world as being in "the American Style" during the fifties." And she concludes that "Subjective realism was the aesthetic

base for Williams's collaboration with Elia Kazan and designer Jo Mielziner."¹ But there is an ambiguity in the word "subjective:" it does not only mean the world as it is seen—or projected—by the mind of a character. It also implies a difference between the *logical structure* of space, time and tragedy, as opposed to the everyday diegesis merely imposed to the character as an environment.

This is clearly exemplified by some interludes in Previn's opera. Just after Blanche's rape (chapter 55 on the DVD) which is mainly suggested by a musical piece (the camera shows the orchestra), the general setting remains a dark "logical" structure of black and blue lines emphasising a series of empty *frames*: Eunice's upstairs flat versus the Kowalkis' downstairs, beautifully linked by the wrought iron arc of the staircase; and the three horizontal frames of the kitchen, the bedroom and the "bathroom" (from left to right) themselves linked or blocked by a curtain or a door. But, as Eunice appears upstairs, the lights offer a progressive diegeticisation of this logical structure by pouring color on two localized scenes: the group of poker players in the kitchen and Stella in the bedroom. The effect of this visible surge of reality within the cold blue and grey structure comes as a reminder of the possible status of *Streetcar* as a projected vision.

This could lead to a more general investigation of the relationships between a logical space and its diegetic counterpart in filmed versions. It would probably show an increasing diegeticisation of—particularly in the 1995 TV film in which the global feeling of space is blurred by closer shots of the actors and a very mobile camera. The obvious consequence is that the spectator is more and more immersed within the setting itself, whereas he used to keep the scene *at a distance*, on the stage. Here, TV filming only exaggerates a natural tendency in film already visible in Kazan's version.

The four versions: 1951, 1984, 1995 and 1998

Except John Erman's film of 1984, all versions come after an original theatrical production in Broadway or San Francisco. But 1951 and 1995 are not mere remakes of the original since they either introduce a new actress (Vivian Leigh after Jessica Tandy) or an attempt to amend Jessica Lange's controversial appearance on the stage by using a medium she was more familiar with. All versions live in the shadow of their immediate predecessor, either to celebrate it (the opera), to open it to the general public (1951), to "modernise" it (1984) or to improve it (Lange's acting on the stage).

1984. Although it is meant for TV, this version remains a respectful (and respectable) cinematic film which does not forget it comes more than thirty years after the original. The background is still 1947, but this has to be shown by a rather long visit of New Orleans with Blanche in the streetcar. The 1995 version uses the same devices (old car models on the street) but the setting remains limited to the immediate surroundings of the Kowalski home. In 1984 color had become a must for TV audiences but the film

¹ Brenda MURPHY, *TW and Elia Kazan: a collaboration in the theater*, Cambridge, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1992, 10.

remains very shy in its use of sepia or *neutralized* colors, as if it only meant to remake Kazan's original. More interesting is the fact that John Erman used the same script as Kazan (credited to Oscar Saul and Tennessee Williams) but that he could restore many lines altered by the 1951 censors. The main feature of the film might be Ann-Margret's strong and original interpretation of Blanche.

1995. This TV film comes after the Broadway revival at the Barrymore theatre, almost half a century after its creation there, but it also looks like a vehicle for a new assessment of Jessica's Lange's acting. This time, she can make the most of the close-ups and of the extreme dynamics of microphones, now whispering, now yelling extensively in the longest film of the series. The technological bonus cannot be denied, and the text is both the longest one and the best heard, but the price to pay is a dangerous tendency to *naturalise* the play, to make it look like a sophisticated soap opera seen in a cosy home lounge and to miss the tragic *distance* which coexists with the emotional implication in Williams's writing. This general impression is confirmed by Alec Baldwin's (Stanley) and John Goodman's (Mitch) impressive performances: they tend to secularise the global tragedy and to promote the psychological drama.

1998. Previn's opera answered a prestigious commission by Lofti Mansouri who ran the San Francisco Opera House. The composer explained he wanted to avoid what people would expect of him: an American *musical* ("In a musical, almost nothing is developed; it's just a series of numbers"²) and a *jazz score*—although jazz music is often alluded to in the opera. The result is reminiscent of Samuel Barber and Benjamin Britten, but it goes back to the Puccini (and Richard Strauss) tradition with its "flexible way in which conversation flowers into song and returns to conversation" [Dyer, 18]. Previn insists on keeping Williams's words audible and, although only a very small proportion of the whole text is kept here, it is greatly enhanced by the voices.

The common feature among all post 1980 versions is their new freedom from censorship:

*They all restore Blanche's "in bed with your Polack" ("in *there...*" in 1951)

*The "epic fornications" came back in 1984 but relapsed into "epic *debauches*" in 1995

*In all versions an impatient Stanley shouts to Stella: "haven't fallen in?," which causes crystal laughter from Previn's Blanche

*In 1984, Treat Williams's loud belching is probably meant to show his indifference to the sisters' prim conventions and to assert a new freedom in film...

*On the other hand, bad taste remains off limits when it offends communities: the only allusion to "your whelp of a Polack" is to be heard on the phone (Eunice) in 1995.

² Previn's interview in the CD booklet, 16.

*Of course, the main censorship alterations are amended or even “compensated:” Stella always voluptuously walks down the stairs into Stanley’s arms and, in the end, all versions make a point of showing the couple united after Blanche’s departure.

Filming Streetcar.

The making of a film can be studied according to three different technical phases in the organization of previous material: the *scenographic* phase consists in the organization of objects, settings and cast; the *filming* phase organizes the spectator’s gaze within the frame of the camera; and *editing* organizes the rushes of recorded pictures. Each phase being a study in *relationships*, it has something to do with Williams’s themes and methods.

a – Scenography. Kazan himself was taken by surprise when he planned to “open up” the play to make it look like a real film.

I decided to “open up the play”—I wasn’t going to just do it as filmed theatre. I hired a screenwriter and worked with him for a long time. We showed how Blanche was thrown out of her home town, how her affairs became complicated before she arrived in New Orleans, etc. When the adaptation was all done, I liked it—thought we’d done a hell of a good job. I went for a vacation, came back a week later, read the script again and realized that we had totally messed up. Williams’s play is a contemporary classic and not to be fooled with. [...] There’s only one thing to do, I thought, take the book and just photograph the play.³

Previn’s *Streetcar* clearly offers the most theatrical staging, probably less imaginative than Kazan’s Broadway production, because it deliberately points to the tradition of nineteenth-century opera (Puccini’s *La Bohème*) whereas one easily imagines the use of back projections (as in the *Glass Menagerie*) or special sound effects.

All *Streetcars*, however, wisely respect the single narrative line with none of the flashbacks Kazan had meant to introduce at first. On the other hand, John Erman (1984) amplifies Kazan’s tendency to shoot on location in New Orleans and his film incipit shows Blanche on the tram visiting the town by daylight, then arriving in the *Vieux Carré* at night, meeting Jazz musicians walking up the street (a New Orleans funeral?), etc. The scene with Mitch is also filmed near Lake Pontchartrain, but it proves much more realistic than in 1951, with a view of a bridge, a long romantic ride in a “barouche” and sentimental vistas of the park... This apparent realism is counterbalanced by the most bourgeois #632 in the series. In 1995, the flat is easily forgotten, probably because the camera is usually more concerned with bodies and faces than the setting itself.

The increasing tendency (from 1951 to 1995) is not to put the emphasis on realism but rather on a sort of “naturalness” meant to leave room to a sociological and psychological approach. This leads to a general blurring of the firm outlines of Williams’s poetic tragedy and one feels, by contrast, that

³ Jeff YOUNG, *Kazan: The Master Director Discusses His Films*, New York: Newmarket Press, 1999, 80.

Kazan was right in his respect of the ambiguous co-existence of two different gazes on #632: he managed to keep the sordid environment as a shock for the immersed gaze within the setting *and* a certain distance in front of an abstract organisation of the narrative, its tragedy and its ever present mythical background. Something which is not unlike the effects of alcohol, or black and white photography... One might thus add two planes to Murphy's opposition between realism and subjectivity: Realism/subjectivity/a conscience of structures/the structure of the unconscious. And conclude that, between the insisting abstraction of the settings in the opera and the realistic naturalness of the 1995 TV film, Kazan may have found the proper balance.

The use of *colors*—or should I say the denial of colors?—contrasts with Williams's insistence in the stage directions and the careful strategy opposing the "primary colors"⁴ of brutal desire, the "colored lights" of Stanley's sexual feats and the pastels, the refined Italian "Della Robbia blue" or the moth like colorless world of Blanche when she is compared to Eurydice⁵. John Erman's film of 1984 may simply try to reproduce a sort of "colored equivalent" for Kazan's black and white film, thus avoiding a difficult study in *Streetcar* colors as a meaningful *system*. The opera clearly enjoys its beautiful harmonies of greys and blues or its funny play on similar golden bowling jackets worn by three men of very different sizes. Glen Jordan's film (1995) even uses harsh green and red for the poker table, or gaudy red pyjamas, but one feels a little frustrated by comparison with what the play suggested and the explicit reference to Van Gogh's paintings. The billiard room of the *Café de nuit* in Arles (orange, brown, green) suggests a vision of the place in relation to alcohol, whereas a second painting shows the "terrace" at night, using the "primary colors" (blue, yellow and white) that can be seen in Benton's picture on the Penguin edition. There is still room for another remake that would actually organise a system of colors in *Streetcar* as one "sees" them in the book.

The use of *objects* is one of the important differences between a play and a film. They embody the subtle way in which Williams associates their physical presence with their abstract implications as simple "tokens" (or metonymies) of a complex environment, or metaphors of larger themes in the play—the best example here being probably the *piece of meat* Stanley throws to Stella at the beginning of the original *Streetcar*, only to be found later in the 1995 version. Filmic pictures fill the whole tapestry in which they drown the specific object mentioned in the stage directions. The significant object on stage becomes a mere *detail* in the general picture and the director will have to single it out among the jumble of secondary objects. A rapid comparison between the versions would show different uses of objects: for example, the 1984 insistence on connotative objects such as the omnipresent electric fans and the almost permanent rain is completed by its specific use of mirrors—large and rectangular—to insist on Blanche's double personality and the way she is progressively "framed" by her own image.

⁴ "Well, life is too full of evasions and ambiguities, I think. I like an artist who paints in strong bold colors, primary colors. I don't like pinks and creams and I never cared for wishy-washy people," Penguin edition, 137.

⁵ In Oscar Saul's script.

But, beyond individual objects, the question is to know whether the filmic image and its richer tapestry entail more realism than the abstract setting on the stage. The fact that the whole street is to be seen (its “realism”) is counterbalanced by the mobility of the camera which is able to “embody” a character’s gaze. In other words, POV (point of view) shots easily become subjective shots and even the most realistic view of Lake Pontchartrain (1984) can then be seen as Blanche’s own subjective vision. Which means that the realism of a filmic picture results from a previous tuning of the spectator by the text—the words—or the director’s filming.

b – Filming. Film directors thus add a new “character” to the narrative: the I of the camera simply goes beyond Williams’s stage directions by selecting fragments of what seemed to be a more global vision. It can be misleading when the DVD suggests Blanche is addressing us instead of Eunice (incipit). But, most of the time, it is part of a new freedom for the director: Kazan and Erman (1984) share the same scene at the bowling as it had been scripted by Oscar Saul. Erman’s camera first shows the group of male players from a distance, then Blanche points at them and asks which one is Stanley. Stella answers he is the one “who is making all the rhubarb” and the camera shows both sisters, Blanche facing us as if we were among the bowling players and Stella watching her and measuring her confusion.

Kazan’s camera had more to tell: it started with shots of Stella’s face looking somewhere in front of her (i.e. at the spectator), not particularly interested in what Blanche was saying, rather building up an *expectation* for her man. Then, after pointing at Stanley, it was her face, not Blanche’s, that was the main focus with a reversal of gazes: this time, Stella faces us and Blanche watches her and she realises the extent of her sister’s fascination for Stanley. Such tiny differences progressively build up an atmosphere and—in this particular case—they briefly make us share Blanche’s vision. Erman’s Blanche here was an object, whereas Kazan’s was becoming a subject.

c – Editing. The confrontation between Kazan and the other *Streetcars* confirms the gross exaggeration of his own description: it is obvious that he did not “just photograph the play.” On the level of “scenography” his incipit is beautifully choreographed (broad anticlockwise circles drawn around Blanche, from the taxis to the streetcar itself). And his cuts are more interesting than in later versions, as in the close up on Blanche’s bathtub, or the fade out after her rape, leading to a water spout and the baby. The end of the Poker Night scene should be analysed for its very smart cutting, particularly when Brando expels his friends from the bathroom. Kazan alternates very short close ups of the men with a longer scene showing Brando alone, from a distance, doing almost nothing, just realising the situation, feeling miserable.

Actors and characters

Stage directions, however, can be scrupulously respected in the four *Streetcars*. The indication that Blanche “sprays herself with her atomizer” [138] is always obeyed, even though the words cannot state the tone, the reactions of the other characters and so on... When Blanche dismisses *The*

Flamingo and the penetrating “odour of cheap perfume,” she does not see Previn’s Stanley pretending to sniff her, behind her back, which makes the audience laugh *at her* [168]. Williams’s direction: “a cat screeches near the window. Blanche springs up” [130], is equally respected, but Blanche’s reactions are quite different in each version. Vivien Leigh gives a start, then she lightly touches Brando’s bare arm; Ann-Margret sits in front of Treat Williams’s hairy wet torso and she flatly puts her hand on his stomach; Jessica Lange takes Baldwin’s arm, but she is not looking at him, they are both standing and he is wearing a shirt.

Kazan wanted to suggest Blanche’s physical attraction that the text did not explicitly mention; Erman (1984) probably thought he was having a revenge over censors and Jordan wanted to do something different by focusing the attention on Stanley, who was now making his “date” with Blanche. A short presentation of some variations around the two main characters (Stanley and Blanche) may show the margin left the directors and Kazan’s achievement.

a – Stanley. Marlon Brando imposed his image as a young handsome Stanley instead of the “30 years old [...] gaudy seed bearer” of the stage directions [116 & 128]. Treat Williams (1984) is much taller, darker and thinner than Brando, but his acting often looks like an exaggerated remake of his predecessor’s. In 1998 Previn’s Stanley is an excellent baritone singer, very tall and athletic, but the composer deliberately deprived him of *arias* in order to preserve his animal fascination (typically, he *does not sing* when he calls “Stellaah” after the poker light). The result, however, is an extremely cold Stanley who suggests a vociferating statue,⁶ rather than the object of feminine desire...

Alec Baldwin’s Stanley in 1995 proves more challenging as an interesting step beyond Brando’s. Thirty-seven years old at the time, Baldwin looks more mature and thoughtful than his predecessors and his repeated silences—this is the longest film—seem to make sense. His influence over the other men is more natural and his hostility towards Blanche grows more slowly and proves easier to understand—or even to share—as the unwelcome sister in law is a real nuisance in his well ordered territory. His thoughtful light blue eyes give the lie to his thick frame and this Stanley is less an object to be seen than a person who watches Blanche, studies her and, perhaps, understands her. The way Baldwin acts when he “clears his place” after the birthday meal is very careful indeed, as if he was actually wounded and worked himself into a legitimate ire by *quoting* somebody’s else’s anger. Huey Long’s “Every Man is a King” becomes an almost pathetic plea that brings him to throw the plate against the wall...

Baldwin thus gives the character a certain psychological and sociological density that deserves attention, but the hitch is that the play is definitely not a sociological picture and that one may argue that psychological subtlety is not its ultimate purpose. On the contrary, character building could be considered as a mere *tool* in the tragic design of what remains a poetic play. Marlon Brando, then, is better than simply credible as a character: he is a rising phantasm, both the object of the spectator’s gaze

⁶ He had already sung Don Giovanni and met The Commendatore!

and the subject of some sort of identification (for Tennessee Williams, for the spectator and probably for Blanche herself). He is a personification of ambivalence.

b – Blanche. Whereas Brando is sometimes considered as an *auteur-actor* in his films, Kazan described Vivien Leigh as if she were his *tool-actress*, always complacently accepting his suggestions as soon as she realised she was no longer “doing it with Larry (Olivier).” The ever present question here is Blanche’s position in front of Stanley: should some sort of balance be kept? According to John Gruen, Vivien Leigh thought Kazan had favoured Stanley:

I recall having had a bit of a row with Gadge over Blanche’s characterization. He didn’t really like the character—preferred Kowalski, the Brando part. He kept robbing Blanche of her poignancy and vulnerability, thus making her more and more unsympathetic.⁷

On the contrary Previn thinks that “the play is exclusively about Blanche, and not really about Stanley so much; it took Brando to make us think it was” [Interview, 14].

As Zeffirelli pointed out in 1993, the idea of an opera built around a Diva had become inevitable.⁸ Such an option transforms Mitch into an overweight simpleton with a very good tenor voice and Stanley into a threatening subhuman statue. Everything revolves around Renée Fleming—aged thirty-nine—probably the best soprano at the time, whose voice transcends her somewhat unlikely healthy figure and actually makes an “enchantment” of her aria “I can smell the sea air...”

The TV Blanches are much nearer Kazan’s vision. In 1995, Jessica Lange seems ever present but she is a little overshadowed by the two men’s impressive psychological performances. Ann-Margret’s Blanche is more different from Leigh than what the rest of the film announced and she makes it quite a rewarding experience, particularly if one considers her handicaps for the role: she was obviously less famous and less “authorized” by previous theatrical performances than her two competitors, she looked less patrician than them and, above all, she cruelly lacked the ambiguous density both *personas* already had. For most people, Leigh was Scarlett O’Hara exiled from *Tara-Belle Reve* and Lange had kept something of Cora’s sexual attraction in Rafelson’s *The Postman Always Rings Twice* and of Frances’ pathetic madness.

All the same, Ann-Margret manages a different approach to Blanche’s madness, weakness and strength. A rather slim woman, dark-haired and very strong headed, there is no sign of her being defeated when she arrives at #632. With Stella, at the bowling alley, she drinks a full glass of Bourbon without flinching (no attempt here to hide shamefully) and when her sister asks her whether she “wants” Mitch, she delays the scripted laughter in

⁷ Rudy BEHLMER, *Behind the Scenes*, New York: Samuel French, 1982, 228.

⁸ Zeffirelli in Phillip KOLIN, 54: “If there was one play that cried out to be made into an opera, it was *A Streetcar Named Desire*. One marvelous mad scene from beginning to end—a perfect vehicle for a lady. *Butterfly* is nothing compared to it.”

order to show her full conscience of the derisive situation she is in: "I want to rest... Yes I want Mitch very badly!" It is this equation she finds *funny*.

Each *Streetcar* might thus be analysed according to the balance between Blanche and Stanley and, specifically, according to the various images of Blanche who can be either strong or weak, mad or sane, central or part of an alienating system. This would lead to a more general set of oppositions within the whole play:

*The Old South/Modern America

*Women/Men

*Subdued colors/Primary colors

*Puritanism/Brutal Desire

*Death/Vital forces

*To be abandoned/to abandon oneself...

This might be the core of *Streetcar's* mythical function in the United States of the 1950s. All these couples of contradictory forces bring their dynamic urge to the narrative and its tragic ending affords a magical solution since myths are expected to transcend contradictions, not only the author's personal double binds, but the universal mysteries of mankind.

One of the achievements of the 1984 *Streetcar* is its reassessment of the balance between tragedy and melodrama. When one sees it for the first time, the scene between Blanche and Mitch on Lake Pontchartrain seems unbearably sentimental and decorative. Yet, with the second viewing, a new Blanche seems to emerge—proud and able to feign dignity, then violent (because she is drunk) and promoting sentimental fantasies—and one begins to accept and admire the actress's option and her animal despair as she is thrown to the ground by the matron at the end of the film, or the way she "dreams" her departure with the Doctor, briefly imagined as a handsome Gentleman Caller: when she walks through the arch above #632, we can almost see a young married couple before she disappears into the cage of the black limousine. These short instants of magic and derision, followed by a beautiful view of the church—with its bells "the only clean thing in the Quarter"—have something poignant and tragic in them that Tennessee Williams might have approved of.

Must we now risk a last assessment of these filmic *traces*? 1984 and *melodrama* partly mastered? 1995 and the lures of psychological and sociological realism? The opera and the epiphany of words at the risk of academism? As one comes back to Kazan, one marvels at his vitality and his enduring youth.⁹

⁹ A slightly different version of this text will be published in French by the journal of RADAC (Paris IV – Sorbonne, Centre for Research in Drama) in 2004.

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