

Shannon Chen

Mr. Murphy

American Literature

May 24, 2016

A Streetcar Named Desire Essay

Play and film are like siblings, as they have a lot of similarities but have different representations of the original work. *A Streetcar Named Desire*, written by Tennessee William, is a good example, since it is later adapted to film by Elia Kazan with the same characters and the same story. There are pros and cons to the play and the film. For instance, in the play, the panoramic view of scenes allows audiences to better understand the interaction between the actors, while the film elucidates the themes more clearly as lighting can be better controlled.

In films, in order to emphasize facial expressions of the actors, some directors use the technique “close-up” to present the emotion of an actor. However, zooming in only place emphasizes on the specific actor, instead of the overview of the scene, resulting in a decreased understanding of audiences regarding the interaction and emotional exchange of the characters in the scene. For instance, when Stanley is shouting at Stella in the play, the stage direction clearly states “Her[Stella’s] eyes are glistening with tears and her hair loose about her throat and shoulders. They stare at each other. Then they come together with low, animal moans”; while watching the play, audiences can understand that there is strong emotion between Stella and Staley (Scene 3). On the other hand, the film splits the scene into different shots, switching back and forth, and only focusing on single characters. In this representation, it is harder for the audience to know whether they are both staring at each other or Stella is facing Stanley backwards because she is afraid of Stanley.

Although watching plays allows audience to comprehend the overall interaction between the actors by viewing the overview scene, in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, the film provides more insight into theme of this play. Lightning is an important element throughout the play, as it represents Blanche's behavior of occluding the truth. Therefore, the film does a better job on revealing the theme to the audience, as it is in black and white, emphasizing lighting, which better demonstrates Blanche's fear of light. For example, light cannot be completely turned off to show how scared Blanche is, since the audience won't be able to see Blanche. Therefore, strong lighting is necessary. In contrast, only a dim light is required to show the expression of actors, thus allowing the audience to witness Blanche's fear of light, and how "the dark is comforting to her [Blanche]" (Scene 9).

Both the play and the film have pros and cons; consequently, watching both the film and the play allows us to gain a deeper insight into the relationship between the characters and to better understand what message Tennessee Williams wished to tell the society. As a result, directors must manipulate these factors in order to reveal the most significant ideas to the audience.