



Interview with André Garolli¹

Entrevista com André Garolli

Luis Marcio Arnaut²

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Interviewee:

André Garolli is an actor, director, stage director, and theater teacher at Escola Wolf Maya in São Paulo.

Recent works as a director:

2022: *Travessia Brasil – Um caminho para Pedreira* (*Crossing Brazil – A path to Quarry*), an adaptation of *Pedreira das almas* (*Quarry of souls*) by Jorge Andrade;

2021: *Pedreira das almas* by Jorge Andrade;

2020: *Sede on-line* (*Thirst on-line*) by Eugene O’Neill: Nominated for the APCA Theater Award – Best Online Performance;

2019: *Inferno – Um interlúdio expressionista* (*Inferno – An expressionist interlude*), adapted from *Not about nightingales* by Tennessee Williams;

Nominated for the Shell Theater Award – Direction;

Won 9 Cenyn Theater Awards;

Received 2 Applause Brazil Awards and 2 additional nominations;

2018: *Abre a janela e deixe o ar puro e o sol da manhã entrar* (*Open the window and let the fresh air and morning sun in*) by Antônio Bivar;

2017: *Memórias [não] inventadas* (*[Un]Invented memories*), based on the works of Tennessee Williams, from *Hello from Bertha*.

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² Actor, translator, and Tennessee Williams independent scholar. He translated Williams’ plays for Brazilian productions *Anjo de pedra* (*Stone angel*) (2022-23, directed by Nelson Baskerville) and *Por que Desdêmona amava o Mouro?* (*Why did Desdemona love the Moor?*) (2024, directed by Noemi Marinho), with David Medeiros. Dramaturgist and consultant on Williams’ plays for Cia. Triptal [*Inferno – Um interlúdio expressionista* (*Inferno – An expressionist interlude*), 2019-20] and Cia. Filhos do Doutor Alfredo [*Tennessee Williams deve morrer* (*Tennessee Williams must die*), 2024]. Email: lmarcio@usp.br.

Recent works as an actor:

2023: *O outro Borges (The other Borges)* by Samir Yazbek – Dir.: Marcelo Lazzarato;

2022-23: *Os credores (Creditors)* by August Strindberg – Grupo TAPA;

2021-22: *Tectônicas (Tectonics)* by Samir Yazbek – Dir.: Marcelo Lazzarato – Nominated for Best Actor at the Shell Award;

2020: *A brasiliense (The Brasiliense)* by Henry Becke and *Cecé* by Pirandello – Grupo TAPA (online);

2018: *Master class com Stalin (Master class with Stalin)* by David Pownall – Dir.: William Pereira;

2017: *Num lago dourado (On golden pond)* by Ernest Thompson – Dir.: Elias Andreato;

2016: *Gata em telhado de zinco quente (Cat on a hot tin roof)* by Tennessee Williams – Dir.: Eduardo Tolentino – Grupo TAPA.

Interviewer:

Luis Marcio Arnaut de Toledo holds a PhD in Arts from the School of Communication and Arts at the University of São Paulo (ECA-USP) and completed a postdoctoral research in Performing Arts at the State University of Campinas (IA-UNICAMP).

He has published the following books on Tennessee Williams:

2023: *Tennessee Williams – O mestre do teatro moderno nos EUA (Tennessee Williams – The master of modern theater in the USA)*, Giostri Editora;

2022: *Nem loucas, nem reprimidas – O confronto contracultural da mulher com o mainstream nas late plays de Tennessee Williams (Neither crazy nor repressed – The countercultural confrontation of women with the mainstream in the late plays of Tennessee Williams)*, Alameda Editorial;

2017: *Tennessee Williams: Algo não dito (Tennessee Williams: Something unspoken)*, Giostri Editora.

Productions:

2020: Won the Cenyn Award for Best Adaptation with André Garolli for the play *Inferno – Um interlúdio expressionista (Inferno – An expressionist interlude)*, based on *Not about nightingales* by Tennessee Williams;

2022-2023: Translator and adapter of the play *Anjo de pedra (Stone angel)*, directed by Nelson Baskerville, based on *Summer and smoke* by Tennessee Williams;

2022: Historical, social, and political context consultant for the play *Mary Stuart*, directed by Nelson Baskerville, adapted from Friedrich Schiller's by Robert Icke;

2023: Dramaturge and research advisor for the play *A grande obra (The great work)*, directed by Fernanda Stefansky, conceived from *Moony's kid don't cry* by Tennessee Williams.

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Throughout the activities of my postdoctoral internship, three meetings were held with André Garolli, aimed at an enlightening dialectic about the intricate process of the play titled *Inferno – Um interlúdio expressionista (Inferno – An expressionist interlude)*, adapted from *Not about nightingales* (1938) by the renowned playwright Tennessee Williams. This production, presented in 2019-2020 in São Paulo-Brasil, stands as the central object of my academic investigation. However, the intriguing convergence between us revealed itself to be more than a mere dialogue between friends, transcending the conventional boundaries between researcher and director. The interaction unfolded as a profound testimony about theatrical experiences, a remarkable lesson in theatrical direction, dramaturgy reading, and sharing of experiences of a unique nature.

From this rich dialogue, meticulously recorded and subsequently transcribed, excerpts were selected in which Garolli confided his reflections on the work of Tennessee Williams. His perspective, singular and surprisingly delineated, emerged for me as a valuable contribution to the understanding of the dramaturgy in question and my research, delineating the unique contours of its influence on the director's professional trajectory and aesthetic choices within the realm of theatrical productions.

This inquisitive comparison, built upon these three meetings, unfolded between the months of February and April in 2023, at my residence in São Paulo. Following the present contribution to the dossier of *Dramaturgia em Foco*, the unveiling of the experienced encounters underwent a fair thematic selection, in line with the centrality of the playwright in scope, combined with the incorporation of elucidations provided by the interviewee, finely polished for this final presentation.

LMA: The first thing I'd like to know from you is what led you to Tennessee Williams, what paths you took to reach him, or how he came to you.

AG: It was, of course, through the movies. The films adapted from the plays. I have no doubt that the movie *A streetcar named Desire*³ caught my attention. I don't have a background in Performing Arts; my background is in Mechanical Engineering. I got into theater, started directing, joined Grupo Tapa, and through them, I began to explore the world of theater. I remember that in the early years, we had classes with Marco Antônio Guerra and Mariângela Alves de Lima on theater criticism. So, they talked about all these authors, and I had to catch up because I was clueless about everything that was being discussed...

Of course, regarding Tennessee... I had the videos... so, [Eduardo] Tolentino would lend me the tapes of the films adapted from the plays. Tennessee was the author I saw the most on film, not on stage. Tennessee was the first playwright for me, this great author, and the character of Kowalski [from *A streetcar named Desire*], watching Marlon Brando portray him, was a character I thought I could perform. I didn't have, in the 90s, the physique he had in 1950. And I remember that, starting in theater, I was in the play *The taming of the shrew*,⁴ and Tolentino talked about an issue of mine, saying that my energy didn't pass through the affective region, that it was too cerebral. That the sexuality chakra didn't exist: "You don't have eroticization on stage. Look at Marlon Brando's picture in *A streetcar named Desire*, and notice where you'll look at." And it's crazy, you look at his crotch, the way he's sitting, you can't help but look, so it's very provocative. It was the first time I understood what Eduardo was saying about how he [Brando] circulated that energy, so I watched it six or seven times [the film], even though I liked more *The fugitive kind*.⁵ There, in that film, I saw the actor Marlon Brando; before [this film], I thought he was just a sex symbol.

Tennessee started in my life in a non-didactic, non-academic way. Then I started reading some plays; I remember Tolentino asked me to read *Cat on a hot tin roof*.⁶ He even had an

³ Written in 1947. The first staging of this play in Brazil was titled *Uma rua chamada Pecado* [literally *A street called Sin*], which also named the famous film adaptation from 1951, directed by Elia Kazan.

⁴ Written by William Shakespeare between 1590 and 1594.

⁵ *The fugitive kind* [In Brazil, *Vidas em fuga* [literally *Fugitive lives*], 1960, directed by Sidney Lumet, adapted from the play *Orpheus descending*, 1957, also starring actor Marlon Brando. Do not confuse the title of this film with the play *Fugitive kind* (1937).

⁶ Written in 1955 and staged for the first time in 1956 in Brasil at the Teatro Brasileiro de Comédia, directed by Maurice Vaneau and starring Cacilda Becker and Walmor Chagas. The play had premiered the previous year on Broadway, directed by Elia Kazan and featuring Barbara Bel Geddes and Ben Gazzara, when Williams won his second Pulitzer Prize [the first was with *Streetcar*].

idea of doing *Sweet bird of youth*⁷ with me and Denise Weinberg. We started reading, and I went crazy. But I was too young, too inexperienced to play that role. Eduardo let it go, but we did some readings.

And about *Cat on a hot tin roof* [Figure 1], a bit about the character Big Daddy, I saw my father, the structure of my father's thought within Big Daddy's structure.

So these three plays were important to me for my approach to Tennessee Williams. The movie *The fugitive kind*, based on the play *Orpheus descending*. And then, as a movie, that one stuck with me a lot.

I traveled a lot and ended up watching plays outside Brazil – whenever I could see a Tennessee play, I did.

Figure 1 – The cast of *Gata em telhado de zinco quente* [*Cat on a hot tin roof*], directed by Eduardo Tolentino in 2016, from left to right: André Garolli, Fernanda Viacava, Augusto Zacchi, Bárbara Paz, Noemi Marinho, Zecarlos Machado. The photo authorship is not identified.



Source: Rodrigues, 2016.

⁷ Written in 1959.

AG (cont.): When Eduardo introduced me to Eugene O’Neill, I started to get into him, but at the same time, I went to learn more about O’Neill, delved deeper into Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller, and Albee. That’s when I met Professor Maria Sílvia Betti [from University of São Paulo] and I entered this world of American authors. But I was very focused on Eugene O’Neill, until Tapa occupied the Arena Theater⁸ and had translations of some of Tennessee’s plays by Tapa⁹ – we did some staged readings. Then I directed *This property is condemned*¹⁰ for a performance at this theater. I really liked the play. Then I fell in love with *Talk to me sweetly...*,¹¹ although it has nothing sweet. After that *The rose tattoo*, *The fat man’s wife*, and *Hello from Bertha*.¹² Then Tolentino put together three short plays. I followed from afar, Conrado had been my student, there was also Isabela [Lemos], Rita Giovanna.¹³ The plays were *Summer at the lake*, *The lady of the Larkspur lotion*, and *The dark room*.¹⁴ I followed, thought it was great, and, parallel to that, Anely Alvarez called me to do a reading of *The pelican*.

LMA: *Gnädiges Fräulein*.¹⁵

AG: Is that the original name?

LMA: It’s a German title, a play from 1966, in an aesthetic reminiscent of the so-called theater of the absurd. The birds keep pecking pieces off the woman on the beach.

AG: Exactly.

LMA: Tennessee brings the universe of Hitchcock’s movie *The birds*.¹⁶

AG: I remember I was quite scared, thought something like: what kind of Tennessee is this? But did he write this? I didn’t know this other phase, which you later introduced me to a good portion of the texts. I remember doing this reading of *The pelican*.

LMA: Anely staged this play in the 80s, I think in the 80s, with Sônia Guedes,¹⁷ didn’t she?

⁸ Between 2010 and 2011.

⁹ Reference to the collection of Williams’ plays that Grupo Tapa proficiently translated, under the supervision of Prof. Maria Silvia Betti, from University of São Paulo, resulting in two books of collections of one-act plays and two more of full-length plays. After these publications, the apocryphal translations [plays translated but not published, especially those in one act], and the others already well-known, received more suitable titles, not adapted, which revealed greater fidelity and connection to the main subject of the play. These publications began to make Williams’ work better known [in Brazil], a process that continues to these days. The new titles then began to become more popular.

¹⁰ A 1946 one-act play.

¹¹ Reference to the play *Talk to me like the rain and let me listen...* [1953]. Garolli refers to an old translation that had the title altered to: *Talk to me sweetly like the rain*.

¹² *The pink bedroom* [1943], *The fat man’s wife* [1938] e *Hello from Bertha* [1946], all on-act plays.

¹³ The cast: Conrado Sardinha, Isabela Lemos e Rita Giovana.

¹⁴ *Summer at the lake* [1935], *The lady of Larkspur lotion* [1941], and *The dark room* [1939].

¹⁵ Written in 1966.

¹⁶ 1963.

¹⁷ The show was directed by Steplan Yarian in 1987, with the mentioned actresses and also Rosaly

AG: Yes, with Sônia Guedes.

LMA: I have a photocopy of the flyer for this production, it's from the library of Escola Célia Helena.

AG: It's in Célia Helena and there's a poster at Maria Della Costa Theater for this play. If you want, we can go there and look.

LMA: Wow, I'd love to.

AG: So there was this coincidence of all these Tennessee plays in my life. I wasn't participating in Tapa's project, I was just invited to direct. And then, at Wolf Maya School, I proposed to do short scenes with the students. And then there was Mateus Monteiro and Lara Hassum, they were students. I gave them *Talk to me like the rain* and *This property is condemned*. And various short texts by Nelson Rodrigues. And then Mateus said, "We want *Talk to me like the rain...*". Then another student took *This property is condemned*. Mateus and Lara did a great job. Did I never show you? I'll send it to you.

LMA: Do you have it recorded? Show me, yes, I want to see.

AG: Yes. So, we went for some bold choices, I even want your opinion, quite contrary to what I saw in the productions here [in São Paulo], like Camila dos Anjos' ones,¹⁸ the production of *Talk to me like the rain* by Leonardo Medeiros.¹⁹ We took a different path...

LMA: In my research on the internet, I found over 15 productions of *Talk to me like the rain and let me listen...* in Brazil. One of the most staged [Tennessee's] plays in the country.

AG: Then they graduated, but we kept a good relationship. After a year or so, Mateus called me; Mateus is a great guy, he self-produces and everything... He called me and said, "Are you interested in directing this play?" I said, "We can think about it." And he said, "...Because we already have a structure..." And I said, "Let's do it!" And we started meeting. But then it's crazy. One thing is to do it for the video at school, you have limited time. When you really start working on the play, you see that the issue lies elsewhere. One of them, for example, is that this play would have to be performed by older actors, as if this marriage, this union, had already wear and tear. They're already worn out. It couldn't

Papadopol. The first and the only staging of this play known in Brazil.

¹⁸ Reference to the show *A catástrofe do sucesso* [*The catastrophe of success*], in 2018, directed by Marco Antônio Pâmio, which encompassed the plays *Talk to me like the rain and let me listen...* and *Mr. Paradise* [1939], along with excerpts from Williams' essay that gave the name to the show. Also, the play *Propriedades condenadas* [literally *Condemned properties*] [2016], directed by Pâmio, featuring the plays *This property is condemned* and *Why do you smoke so much, Lily?* [1935].

¹⁹ Reference to *As palavras da chuva, Chuva G e Chuva L* [literally *Words of rain, Rain G, and Rain L*], from 2016, where director Leonardo Medeiros stages the play with a heterosexual couple, two men in the G version, and two women in the L version.

be two young people, who are just starting out... "It's over, it's over, my son. Let's go. I'm going to dive into the bathtub with beer, damn it. And the next day I'm brand new." I started to see a lot of difficulty in finding a weight for this play, it was becoming too soap opera-like, which didn't seem like that in the video.²⁰ But for the theater, yes. Then we started to have a deadlock: they were upset; I'm a director who can't sugarcoat things with the actor, if I'm directing, I'll be clear about it, so I thought it wasn't good. So we started doing *This property is condemned*. But then they were too old to do it, it looked weird. So I called Fernanda Viacava, who was my wife at that time, and she was studying Tennessee, following Tapa's project, based on *The lady of the Larkspur lotion* or *The woman of the grapefruit*...²¹

LMA: *The woman of the grapefruit* is the old translation [in Brazil].

AG: Oh! It was the old one! She performed it at Tapa, and they loved it. So, I went to watch their rehearsal. And I liked what I saw. So I said, "Fe, do you want to do a Tennessee trilogy with me? Or something of his together with me? Let's do three plays...". And she agreed. She said, "Let's try." So we picked *Hello from Bertha*. Well, but then there's the role of the woman who owns the boarding house, Lara was too young, so I started to see that I had made a mess: "I don't know how to get out of this!" But to buy time, I said: instead of picking a Tennessee play, why don't we compile one? I had read some short stories... Well, Mateus, Lara, and Fe got so involved... because Tennessee is very captivating. They got into that world.

When you really get into his world, he's poetic, he's tragic, he's dramatic, he's cheesy, sometimes he's tacky, sometimes he's novelistic, sometimes he's melodramatic. He can go through a universe of aesthetics.

And then they started playing around and selecting excerpts from the short stories and other plays. It was at this opportunity that we read all of Tennessee's work published in Brazil. And then we started to take the structure of *Hello from Bertha*, with Fernanda as Bertha, and then I started to play with the idea of Mateus doubling up a character. Playing both the landlady and the sailor. But then there was Lara. My God, am I going to fire Lara? Then one day I said, "Read the stage directions as if you were the doll." And then she sat down and started reading. "Wow," I said. "Let's take the script: let's do this collage of

²⁰ Garolli teaches acting for film and TV at the Wolf Maya School.

²¹ *The lady of the grapefruit* is an old translation of *The lady of Larkspur lotion*, alluding to an oil that was used to kill lice.

texts now as if it were her delirium. Bertha is on her deathbed, she's probably a character with syphilis, it's not defined, but she's on the brink of death, the woman wants to kick her out of that room, put her on the street, because she's confused between reality and delirium; economically, as a prostitute, she's no longer viable. And she's delirious. Not only seeing her boyfriend, saying she'll write to him, asking him to come save her, to send money... She also talks to the doll." For the doll, we had excerpts from Tennessee's most poetic texts. For Bertha, we had the more concrete texts, from the play *Hello from Bertha* itself and from other excerpts of plays where Tennessee brings out the cruelty of the capitalist system, how it operates on these characters.

LMA: The woman as a pariah of society...

AG: Exactly. And, at the same time, Mateus played the boyfriend/Sailor, who is the other side of the relationship. Tennessee also shows in a harsh way the issue of relationships, the issue of age, of lack of love or excess of love, so we managed to get to a very interesting place. The play, when we did a reading at Teatro Sergio Cardoso, in São Paulo, was almost two and a half hours long, because we didn't want to cut anything. It would have been a huge play! In this reading, we could see that it wasn't sustainable. So, with a lot of heartache, we started cutting. We called it *Memórias [não] inventadas* [literally *[Un] Invented memories*].²² So we got to a very interesting place. Then Mateus was replaced by Eucir de Souza and Lara was replaced by Camila dos Anjos [Figure 2]. We had a good journey with this play in small theatres. And in this approach, Tolentino, like a guru, said, "Look, I never thought Tennessee would cross your mind." He thinks I'm very O'Neillian.

But there's a Tennessee's play that approaches O'Neill's universe: *Not about nightingales*.²³ Tolentino brought me the play. He watched it in the United States with Michael Redgrave and brought the play to me. And I was enamored with this text, we had several readings of a translation by Ivany Shewchenko. I spent seven years submitting projects to São Paulo's grants to try to win some funding for the production. Seven years. It wasn't for staging *Hairy ape*, it was for *Not about...* And so, since 2011, I had been trying... Until we got the Support from the São Paulo City Hall²⁴ and the project *Homens à deriva* [literally *Men*

²² Showing in São Paulo in 2017 and 2018.

²³ Written in 1938. One possible translation into Portuguese would be *Não será sobre rouxinóis* [literally *It will be not about nightingales*], considering the content and the passages where the phrase is mentioned in the dialogues [and giving more understanding to Brazilians about the title].

²⁴ "Established by Law 13.279/02, the Municipal Theater Promotion Program for the City of São Paulo aims to support the maintenance and creation of ongoing theatrical research and production projects aimed at the development of theater and better access to it for the population, through professional theater groups that are directly funded by this program. Two calls for proposals are made each year, one per semester,

adrift] happened.

Figure 2 – From left to right: Eucir de Souza, Fernanda Viacava, and Camila dos Anjos in the play *Un] Invented Memories*, based on *Hello from Bertha*, directed by André Garolli in 2017. Photo by Paulo Fischer.



Source: Mellone, 2017.

LMA: I was going to ask exactly that: how did you get *Nightingales...*, it led you to stage *Inferno – An expressionist interlude* [Figure 3], an adaptation – you’ve already said how you got to it! But I found it impressive, I didn’t know you had been trying for seven years...

AG: Seven years.

LMA: So, when did you do *Men adrift*?

AG: I started with *Homens ao mar* [literally *Men at the sea*] in 2004. It had the plays: *Bound east for Cardiff* in 2004; *In the zone* in 2006; *Moon of the Caribbees* in 2007; and *A long voyage home* in 2008.²⁵ In 2008, we won the City Hall Support to do all these O’Neill plays within

where interested groups present their projects, which are evaluated by Evaluation Committees composed of members with recognized expertise in theater, meeting the evaluation criteria provided for in the law. The Theater Promotion program is developed in various public spaces, playing the important role of revitalizing degraded areas, inaugurating new theatrical spaces, and taking theater to the streets of the city. Its activities take place in all regions of the city, with a major goal of bringing theatrical activity from the center to the peripheral regions of the capital [of São Paulo State]” (Cidade de São Paulo, 2011).

²⁵ All written by Eugene O Neill between 1914 and 1917.

the *Men at the Sea Project*. Four plays. And then we went to Chicago to present them, in 2009. In 2010, we won the City Hall Support to produce the *Homens à margem* [literally *Men on the margins*] project, we presented *The hairy ape*²⁶ and Plínio Marcos' plays: *Two lost in a dirty night* and *Purple lamp*.²⁷ And from 2011, I wanted to stage *Not about...* Since then, I've been trying to get the City Hall Support to stage Tennessee's play. From 2011 to 2018. It was in 2018 that I won the Support to do *Not about...* [Figure 3].

Figure 3 – Camila dos Anjos and the ensemble cast of the play *Inferno – An Expressionist Interlude*, a free adaptation of *Not about Nightingales*, directed by André Garolli in 2019-2020. Photo: Alexandre Inserra.



Source: Balsanelli, 2023.

LMA: This information is essential to understand your career, your work. The issue of City Hall Support, state support for theater, was crucial in determining your career.

AG: Yes. It would only be possible to carry out the trilogy *Men at sea*, *Men on the margins*, and *Men adrift* and our latest project, which deals with the Historiography of the Brazilian State,²⁸ involving, in total, almost 220 professionals from all areas. Everything was possible

²⁶ Written by Eugene O'Neill in 1922.

²⁷ *Dois perdidos numa noite suja* (1966) and *Abajur lilás* (1969), respectively.

²⁸ The director's artistic project that took place from the social isolation imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic

thanks to City Hall Support. My last grant was for the staging of *Pedreira das almas*²⁹ by Jorge Andrade, in 2021, as part of the Historiography project. Look, I was talking to Ivani in 2008, there was already an idea of doing a Tennessee work.

LMA: Was it in 2008 that you first met her?

AG: I met Ivani in 2008 and she helped with the translation of *The hairy ape*. Then we did it to *Not about...* And then I was in limbo. During this period, I directed other plays, was called for a project here and there, but couldn't really develop my research.

LMA: I would like you to talk about Tennessee Williams's dramaturgy. I'm not sure how to ask this. Can I ask you like this: what do you think of Tennessee Williams's dramaturgy? But you've already commented on several aspects. I want you to speak as a director who sees in this work a potential to the stage. You take a text on paper... Are you already thinking about it on stage, you and these characters? Do you see reality in these characters? Do they touch you? How does Tennessee's dramaturgy touch you? How do you see it? I'm asking this way because I don't want to close it into one question; I want your opinion on it.

AG: I understand what you mean. I'll speak as a director, a theater man. Maybe what I'm going to say about Tennessee is very personal. When I read his books, I see very cool notes: his political issue, to look at all these characters who today begin to have a voice, the woman, gay people, the marginalized ones. So, in this sense, Tennessee is a cutting-edge playwright. I can't talk about Tennessee without going through a personal issue. I identify myself with the oppressive characters [*laughs*]. It's my identification as a man. He touches me a lot, his dramaturgy... his poetry... except for one thing or another... often I laugh at the things he puts [in lines]. They seem like truck bumper stickers. Kind of cheesy, kind of corny, but highly human. He's not trying to romanticize; he tries to be what he is. For example, I identify with Kowalski, with Mr. Whalen,³⁰ I identify with Big Daddy, I identify with Chance from *Sweet bird of youth*. He was a son of a bitch.

LMA: In the play *Sweet bird of youth*, there's that politician who castrates Chance and the Black boy at the end. He manipulates everything. Boss Finley. There's also Jabe Torrace, from *Orpheus descending*. In Sidney Lumet's film, *The fugitive kind*, he's Anna Magnani's

until 2022. It involved an in-depth study and dramatic readings of the complete Jorge Andrade works, culminating in the staging of the play *Travessia Brasil – Um caminho para Pedreira* (performed in 2022 in São Paulo), a compilation of various works by this author starting with *Pedreira das almas*.

²⁹ First publication in 1960.

³⁰ *Not about ninghtingales'* main character.

husband. He kills them both in the end. He's bedridden, and from there, he does the evil deeds. He orders the father of the Lady to set fire to the vineyard. They are all characters with toxic masculinity, as we say today. They are the authoritarians, the villains... Very similar characters.

AG: [laughs] Yeah. I empathized with, for example, by *The glass menagerie*.³¹ I'm moved by Tom, the son. The text is beautiful. But it doesn't touch me deeply, it's not my world. But the character of his sister, I remember being moved by her. I saw a production here in São Paulo with Cássia Kiss, directed by Ulisses Cruz, and with Kiko Mascarenhas. I remember being moved, a very beautiful production. But that's not my universe. My father is very present. That's why O'Neill speaks much more to me, because O'Neill's father was very present. Tennessee's wasn't. Masculinity always passes through the issue of oppression in Tennessee's work. The macho man... So I think Tennessee can make this portrayal of masculinity. So I have this feeling... Besides this world of oppressed people who have begun to have a voice and space...

Tennessee's work will still have a positive review of these marginalized characters! Because I think he already gave voice to all these people. I think Blanche is an example of someone who goes crazy or is driven crazy or, in my view, pretends to be crazy to survive in this oppressive world. I saw a production like that, where this madness was a setup. She falls in love with Kowalski, I think, even though she is raped, violated by him.

LMA: Maybe it's not love, but lust.

AG: Yeah. And I think the great character of the play is Stella. If I ever stage this play, I would do it from Stella's point of view. So, I have the feeling that many characters of Tennessee are crafty, they play dead to attack the prey. I have strong discussions with people who think Tennessee has airy, ethereal characters, who live in another time. I can't see that, I think Tennessee is so earthy. It's concrete. I think Bertha is sick and is telling stories to survive. She doesn't go for what it is. The same thing: Blanche doesn't go for what it is with Kowalski. Kowalski knows she's hot for him. But she doesn't go into that. She goes around. That's confusing.

LMA: Confuses the whole world.

AG: The world. There's also the character of the secretary in *Not about...*, Eva. She confuses the prison director, she confuses Jim.

³¹ *The glass menagerie*, 1945. Also known in Brazil as *À margem da vida* [literally *On the fringe of life*], which had its first performance in Brazil in 1948.

LMA: Eva might be a draft of Blanche.

AG: Yeah, a draft of Blanche. I think so too. You don't understand if this woman is seducing or not, I understand Kowalski's head. I'm not defending this character, I'm putting myself in the role of an artist. Looking at the situation, I think she's creating a seduction game, creating a situation, maybe even naively. But then she puts her sister in that situation. In her head, it seems normal to be a naive girl, like those girls from the American South, raised to be coquettes, young and beautiful. She still sees herself as a coquette. And seducing is part of that game. It's not malice, it's not moral slip, it's a component of building that femininity of the South, of aristocracy. She has the illusion of being aristocratic, of being able to act like an aristocratic woman. She has no idea of reality, the male world as it is.

LMA: The Southern Belles.

AG: Exactly, the belles of the South.

LMA: So, in her head, what she has, about sex and love, would be an illusion, would it be this? She would never imagine the consequences of her game, of her illusion...

AG: Exactly that.

LMA: Don't you think there's a bit of Strindberg in this?

AG: Not declared, because Strindberg exposes it openly.

LMA: Everything Tennessee liked was a source of relative enlightenment, he didn't leave it as the origin, he manipulated it, he did it in his own way. Then, when you read it, you say, "here's a bit of a Strindberg touch, here's a bit of a Chekhov touch, here's D. H. Lawrence, here's a bit of Charles Chaplin." He sought references in everything. But I think with all this also that you're talking about, about aesthetic transgression with imagination, memory, and dream... We confuse what's happening. And, suddenly, it turns against us, it turns against the character himself. I find this so Strindbergian!

AG: Of course, a good comparison. It has the scent of Strindberg. Clearly, when you read *Creditors*³² [Figure 4], to pick a one-act play I'm working on... What world is that? It's almost a dialogue with oneself. Those two men... It's the older man talking to himself, the younger. It's crazy how he does it. He positions the woman as the imbalance of the man's axis, almost like the siren's song. That's how I see Tennessee. We don't know how to handle it, us men. We don't know how to deal with this shift in axis.

³² *Fordringsägare*, written in 1888.

Figure 4 – André Garolli and Sandra Corveloni in a scene from the play *Os credores* [*Creditors*] by August Strindberg, directed by Eduardo Tolentino, in 2023.
Photo: Ronaldo Gutierrez.



Source: Infoteatro, 2023.

AG (cont.): And that's what disorients the characters in *Creditors*; it's what breaks that structure established in *Streetcar*... with the poker game, the gathering of friends; she comes in and disrupts all of that. Whether this is conscious or not depends on the perspective. Perhaps I would attribute a certain awareness to her. To not make her seem so saintly, so subject to that world, but I'm not sure if I would be betraying Tennessee by doing so.

LMA: I don't think so. Tennessee writes possibilities. There's nothing definitively set, all these lines of thought are possible.

AG: I see that. You brought up the question about Strindberg; I think there's a lot of that in him, circling around. O'Neill goes straight to Strindberg. He tries to be a slightly more bourgeois Strindberg. Not Tennessee, Tennessee has the real smell of Strindberg, of that structure that permeates his later plays, more about delirium, dreams... In *Dream play*,³³ a goddess comes to earth to observe humans and is shocked by what she sees. Tennessee

³³ *Ett drömspel*, written in 1901.

could write that. This woman who falls into this world and says: “It doesn’t have to be like this.”

LMA: Let’s compare it with *Streetcar*, that Strindbergian place: she comes from a rich, aristocratic family, lost everything, and now she’s going to a tenement, in the suburbs. And she looks at all of that horrified because her world, the one she imagines and wants, is different. This goddess is Blanche. The same character. And she, deep down, when she’s drinking and maybe going mad, is a way of saying: “it doesn’t have to be like this.”

AG: Perfect. As a director, dealing with Tennessee can bring so many aspects, so many contexts and contents. I need to police myself a lot in terms of not having a prejudiced view of him. In relation to his writing, his characters, because I suspect of those characters. I remember that, in a debate we had at Teatro de Arena, they said about my view of Blanche: “You’re being prejudiced, you’re being sexist, you’re putting the woman in another place, you’re thinking she’s doing this out of malice, you’re destroying her.” But I feel that Tennessee doesn’t look with much compassion on women, in this case, the oppressed ones.

LMA: What you said brings me to a conclusion. It seems like you are dealing with a Tennessee frozen in time, in the 1940s and 1950s.

AG: For sure. I don’t know what he wrote afterward.

LMA: After Tennessee wrote these plays that we know, he wrote other works, with the same social-critical content, but the world was changing, society, culture. He was changing, he was getting older, there were other aesthetics. And, in Brazil, we only have, at most, 40 translated and published plays. And if we look at his entire *corpus* of his work, we’ll get the conclusion that Tennessee was parodying, a kind of comedy, he was laughing at society. He was laughing at the place he lived, at his world, at the characters from his real life. Looking only at a very small period of his career, between 1945 and 1961, he has only 15 plays that became extremely famous. But there are the ones he wrote outside of this period, and there are more than 100 plays. We’re talking about that.

AG: I think we’re at a moment when these plays will start to reach everyone, I don’t know, I think worldwide...

LMA: Thank you, André, for sharing your thoughts.

AG: I thank you for the conversation, Marcinho.

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