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Are Unicorns Extinct in the Modern World?: Directing Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* in 2017

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Are Unicorns Extinct in the Modern World ?:
Directing Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie* in 2017

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts in Theater

by

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Texas State University
Bachelor of Fine Arts, Acting - 2003

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This thesis is approved for recommendation to the Graduate Council.

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ABSTRACT

What follows is a description of my process directing *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams.

I've made an effort to track the journey I undertook starting from my earliest encounter with the play and the selection of the story as a thesis project. This document contains my initial script analysis, notes from design meeting collaborations, casting decisions, general research approaches, the rehearsal process, performance insights, and evaluations after completion. This document will also provide, intermittently, additional reflections on my critical attitudes towards this play and production, as well as self-assessments related to notable lessons, successes, failures, and discoveries pertinent to my field of study: the art of directing. Moreover, selected entries from my personal journal which was maintained for eight months during this creative process will provide supplemental material for further reading at the conclusion.

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I would like to give special thanks to:

My Mother, who might have considered it rather an insult to receive as a 69th Birthday gift tickets to join her son for the closing matinee performance of a play so often interpreted as an examination of the foils of oppressive parenting. Your wisdom and love didn't so much influence my decision to direct such a dramatic exposé of familial pain, but rather inspired my storytelling instincts from as far back as I can recall, and continually motivate me to explore terrains of the heart, both familiar and alien to my own experience.

My Father and Brother, who are the bedrocks of my determination to espouse my highest potential qualities of leadership, humor, grace, innovation, and imagination.

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DEDICATION

Jeremy O. Torres (1974-2016)

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I. The Production

The Glass Menagerie by Tennessee Williams was produced by the University of Arkansas's Department of Theatre and ran from Friday, September 29 through Sunday, October 8, 2017, for a total of eight performances as the opening of the Mainstage Series of the 2017-2018 academic calendar year. Rehearsals began Sunday, August 20, 2017 and concluded with a final dress rehearsal on Thursday, September 28, 2017. The daily rehearsals were structured in four-hour time blocks over the course of six days per week.

The creative team included four graduate actors playing the roles of Tom Wingfield, Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, and Jim O'Connor. Additionally, two graduate designers, three faculty designers, and an undergraduate stage manager completed the production personnel.

i. The Script

The Glass Menagerie had its world premiere in Chicago in December 1944 and was directed by Eddie Dowling who also portrayed the role of Tom Wingfield. Due to the championing of critics in Chicago, the play was able to gain momentum for a Broadway opening on March 31, 1945 at the Playhouse Theatre. The first major success for Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie* went on to win the New York Drama Critics Circle Award and subsequently has been a staple of American theatre, produced regularly over the course of the last seventy-three years, nationally and internationally.

Due to its autobiographical subject matter coupled with the multitude of forms in which he drafted the story, it is difficult to estimate precisely the length of time Tennessee Williams labored to prepare this play for its Chicago opening. Various short story versions, short play scripts, and screenplay treatments were forged that eventually were modified and developed into the final version of the script¹. “Portrait of a Girl in Glass,” “If You Breathe, It Breaks,” and “The Gentleman Caller” are just three examples of alternate titles he employed.

By the time he had settled on the title *The Glass Menagerie* just a few months before its Chicago premiere, Tennessee Williams had refined the text to a close approximation of the shape we recognize today. One notable exception was the exclusion of the exchange between Tom and Laura Wingfield at the beginning of Scene Four where Tom stumbles into the home, intoxicated. This two-hander scene between siblings was added during the rehearsal process at the urging of Eddie Dowling, who felt that the relationship between Tom and Laura Wingfield was underdeveloped. Tennessee Williams wrote the exchange between the two, allowing for an intimate bond to reveal itself by Tom Wingfield presenting Laura with the gift of a rainbow-colored scarf. Another change from the original script called for a system of images and associated text to be projected by magic lantern slides. Eddie Dowling, thinking that the power of Laurette Taylor’s performance as Amanda Wingfield sufficiently carried the story, felt that the screen devices were frivolous, and insisted that the magic lantern slides be cut. It wasn’t until Tennessee Williams published his own definitive text edition many years later that the script would have this device reincarnated.

ii. The Play Selection Process

Having first encountered the play in a high school English class, I was disconnected from the story Mrs. Taylor, my teacher, insisted we read. To me it felt stifled, at times boring, terribly depressing, burdened by too many symbols, and structurally bizarre in how it clearly delineated six scenic episodes, yet shifted in time without a coherent pattern. Nevertheless, I was intrigued by the play and would read it every few years in an effort to discover what had captivated audiences for decades. I deeply sensed, in spite of my questions about the story, that I must direct the play someday, if only to eliminate my mixed feelings towards it. The root of this compulsive need is still difficult for me to articulate except to offer that I felt disorientated by the script's navigation between its emotional substance, episodic formula, and themes about the individual passions in conflict with responsibilities to one's family. Perhaps my attraction to scripts that I can't seem to figure out often acts as the very motivation for my desire to stage what otherwise might remain torturously puzzling. *The Glass Menagerie* fell into this category with its deceptively simple layout and complex nuances of dialogue.

In my struggle to more clearly identify what about the story intrigued me as a director, I wrestled with a variety of possible entry points. Perhaps Tom Wingfield's journey reminded me of myself and my own long-distance escape from my family's home to pursue creative freedom and adventure at the age of eighteen. Perhaps I was interested in directing a 'family drama' which I had not previously explored as an artistic leader. Or was it that I was simply drawn to the shifting nature of realism and memory in the storytelling?

The test of directing well-known classics was compelling in my decision to pursue a graduate degree. In my first year of study at the University of Arkansas, I staged an early play of modern realism in Christopher Shinn's adaptation of Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler*, followed by a contemporary epic in my second year with Tony Kushner's *Angels in America: Part I: Millennium Approaches*. For my thesis production, I felt drawn to choose an American title from the post-World War II era. Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller were the most popular authors of this generation and selecting one of their major works took a bold hold in my imagination; could it be that *The Glass Menagerie's* prominent position in the history of drama in the United States kept it so significantly on my shortlist of thesis considerations? It could have been that my keen love for the poetic writing style of Tennessee Williams, with his colorfully drawn characters and tragic examination of the inner life of the individual, coupled with my aforementioned determination to explore one of his major works, inevitably forced me to consider directing his earliest commercial success.

Ultimately, it matters less *why* I chose *The Glass Menagerie* in 2017, but rather that I somehow could *not escape* doing it. To cleverly reference the language of the play itself: just as Tom describes Jim for the audience at the top of Scene Three, this memory play, “like a specter...haunted” me for years. In the fall of 2016, as my shortlist dwindled from twenty-five selections down to ten scripts, then ten scripts to five, and - so excruciatingly - from five to the final three submissions before the department's Play Selection Committee, I secretly hoped the committee would fulfill the 66.6% odds that I wouldn't direct *The Glass Menagerie* for my thesis project, thereby releasing me from its hazy allure. Yet, when I was informed that of my three title

finalists, *The Glass Menagerie* had been approved for me to creatively lead as a thesis production, I felt incredibly relieved.

iii. Preparation Process

In December 2016, I read the script for the first time with the knowledge I would be directing it as my thesis production. The reality of the project, no longer theoretical, began to excite my visual imagination as the pages turned. I kept a notepad nearby and worked slowly through the play to jot down all the thoughts, questions, images, concerns, and impressions that popped into my head. In retrospect, many of my notes from this first exercise formed the foundation of the final production. To cite one example: in reviewing these raw insights at the end of the process, I discovered a note that conceived of hazy Mickey Mouse travelogues that Tom Wingfield describes to Laura Wingfield while intoxicated. This image became a central concept for the transition between Scenes Three and Four, which inspired our projection designer, Shawn Irish, to build a devolving, hallucinatory arrangement of cinematic Walt Disney impressions. Approximately thirty seconds in length, the fluid stage picture surrounded Laura, in solitude onstage, as she picked up the pieces of her broken glass figurines. Simultaneously, the event catapulted the audience into the subjective memory of Tom's experience and foreshadowed inventively the information he revealed to Laura about his escapist activities away from their home in the following scene. As a creative team - in shorthand - we referred to this transition as '*the trippy Mickey sequence.*'

After a secondary reading of the text to identify dramatic questions and practical concerns, I marked through a handful of books that I felt would be important resources for my understanding of the play. These included two biographies on Tennessee Williams and three critical commentaries on his work in general. Over the course of the winter holidays, I began to comb through the literature for revelations into diverse ways to interpret the action of *The Glass Menagerie*. Additionally, I decided that I wanted to save my reading of the biographies on the author until just before the start of the rehearsal process in August. I thought a fresh acquaintance with the playwright as a human being could enable me to make the strongest kind of intuitive choices in the heat of the moment in the rehearsal room. Some specific takeaways from this literature will be expounded upon later in this section.

In late January and early February, I met with my mentor and Head of Directing at the University of Arkansas, Michael Landman, in a series of one-on-one meetings to work our way through the script. The meetings would often focus on a scene of the play and would include reading aloud the lines as well as probing the deepest possible questions about character needs, author intent, and structural flow. There were several critical insights I gained from this process. To share a particular example: another one of the images I had recorded in my notepad from my impressionistic reading of the text was in response to the very end (and very beginning) of the story. Tom Wingfield's closing monologue, rich in expositional and circumstantial clues to our narrator's objective, quickly became an obvious place of inspirational study. I was particularly drawn to the vulnerable poetry of his final confession to the audience and wondered how literally it might be interpreted:

TOM: "...I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from the branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise."

This description of his own experience brought to my imagination the vision of a man who is essentially homeless, haunted, and terrorized by his past: Tom Wingfield transformed by time into a true hobo. I envisioned a dark figure: a man in rags, running at full-speed, stumbling and arriving before us in the visceral grips of a powerful fear. This formed in my mind a potentially strong opening staging for the play. Stubbornly, I held tight to this impression as the introductory bit for our production because it captured, in a very physical sense, our narrator's inner dilemma (otherwise masked to the audience until his final monologue). To understand Tom's action for the opening monologue, however, I needed to reconcile a seemingly casual attitude apparent in the prologue with this contradictory underlying panic that I felt certain the character endures. Tennessee Williams' early stage directions and dialogue are as follows:

Tom enters, dressed as a merchant sailor, and strolls across to the fire escape. There he stops and lights a cigarette. He addresses the audience.

TOM: "Yes, I have tricks in my pocket, I have things up my sleeve. But I am the opposite of a stage magician. He gives you illusion that has the appearance of truth. I give you truth in the pleasant disguise of illusion. To begin with, I turn back time."

Then Tom Wingfield provides us, his audience, with a short framing of the social background of the story, followed by an introduction of the characters. The above dialogue alone provides no literal indication of Tom's torment to escape his guilt (and ultimately intense need for telling us this play). Michael Landman pointed to the initial stage direction before the

monologue begins and asked me to rationalize why Tennessee Williams might have Tom 'stroll' on stage rather than 'run,' as my instincts told me he should.

My critical insight from reevaluating Michael Landman's challenge was that Tennessee Williams was endowing his narrator with an ability to mask his own fear at the onset in order to establish himself as a reliable storyteller to the audience. The complexity of this notion could be justified by how it gave a clear objective to Tom Wingfield in relationship to the audience. Moreover, this new approach made me think deeper about how to articulate the character's need to tell the story. In Tom's final monologue he exclaims how he is 'taken by surprise,' presumably by the ghosts of his past. For our production, we identified Tom's need in his monologue to conceal from the audience his inner paranoia, in order to fulfill his greater objective of telling the story one last time as honestly as possible, including all necessary plot points and omitting no shameful references of his own misjudgments. His tactic, to maintain composure and build trust, became a dry revelation of essential expositional facts, as the script suggests, before pulling us into a proto-typical dinner with his family circa 1937. In this way, our analysis pointed to Tom's effort in the opening speech to gain a basic trust from his spectators, while simultaneously resisting surrendering to the pain of paranoid guilt, as he inevitably does at the play's finale. The arc, or the narrator's journey from beginning to end, thereby had valid justification.

Script discussions with Michael Landman helped me frame an initial analysis paper that included my personal feelings about the play. I also included in the paper my thoughts about staging ideas, character metaphors, visual and aural research, a concise list of what the characters

do in the story, and a comprehensive account of design instructions from the script. This inventory of props, lighting, costume, sound, and other technical stage directions included an explanation of what each element expressed about the storytelling. Finally, I noted the structural qualities of the play and how they informed an approach to understanding its mechanical workings and their effect on the audience's imagination. The above analysis may be found in *Appendix 1: Thesis Preparation (Research and Analysis)* on Page 56.

Using this analysis, I compressed and crystallized my message in preparation for the first design meeting. My preparation included two mock sessions with Landman and the other graduate directing candidate, Jeremiah Albers. These meetings were useful in that they gave me a way to articulate my ideas aloud and receive feedback on communication strategies. Ultimately, the first design meeting included a memory imagination exercise, a discussion about the themes and spine of the play, character metaphors, and design approaches for scenery, lighting, video, costuming, and sound. I shared a few images with the team to help them get a sense of the visual world.



2 images shared at the initial designer meeting, Feb 2017²

In tandem with inspirational photographs, I also provided a couple of musical samples to help the designers get a sense of my connection with the story. I shared the piano music of Philip Glass and the harmonies of Carl Orff. The fragile qualities of sound from both musicians, expressed in fantastical yet sorrowful resonances, reminded me of the story we were setting out to tell and appropriately fit into *Tennessee Williams'* instructions, by way of published production notes, that the melody should be circus-like: evocative of both sadness and magic.

Following two early design meetings in February, my preparation process continued into March with auditions and casting. The callback process included carefully chosen sides and actor pairings. The casting and design meeting processes are elaborated upon in *Chapter II: Process: Section i. Auditions and Casting* on Page 20.

In March of 2017, having completed my analysis and casting and feeling confident about the design approach, I travelled to New York City. I attended the Broadway production of *The Glass Menagerie*, directed by Sam Gold, with Joe Mantello and Sally Field as Tom and Amanda Wingfield, respectively. I also had the opportunity to visit the New York Public Library's *Library for the Performing Arts*, where I viewed the acclaimed John Lindsay 2013 Broadway production featuring Zachary Quinto and Cherry Jones. These dual viewings marked the first time I had ever seen productions of *The Glass Menagerie*. I'm typically averse to seeing productions of plays I will eventually stage, and only felt comfortable viewing these *The Glass Menagerie* versions because of the confidence I had gained analyzing, conceptualizing, and in design discussions. I trusted the viewings to allow me an opportunity to witness two very different interpretations and take note of theft-worthy stagecraft and moment-to-moment acting

work. In particular, I mostly learned some comedic possibilities from Sam Gold's production, though I took issue with his stripped-bare, minimal design concept, and gleaned some dramatic storytelling ideas from John Lindsay's, particularly in Tom's and Amanda's relationship dynamics.

At the Department of Theatre's season preview party, I was asked to stage a four-minute scene from the play. This preview gave me an opportunity to work with three of the previously-cast actors on a scene fragment. Identifying a selection that would yield the most anticipation-building intrigue for our attendees, I selected an excerpt from Scene Three. I loved how the scene began: a violent argument between mother and son igniting the dialogue, giving the audience the sense that they are thrown into a high stakes event mid-sentence, and propelling Tom Wingfield into his accidental breaking of Laura Wingfield's glass figurines by the ripping and throwing off his winter coat. Within the play and story as a whole, this scene provides a much-welcomed hot conflict necessary to fuel our understanding of the dramatic tension. Michael Landman offered a recommendation to include Tom Wingfield's opening monologue from the first scene as a splice-and-cut introduction to this high-octane scene. Having not previously imagined the liberty one could have with connecting two out-of-sequence sections of material into a four-minute preview, I found Michael Landman's suggestion an excitingly perfect framing of our presentation. The experience was ultimately an extremely valuable exercise for our small group in how it allowed us to get acquainted with each other and the material.

During the summer of 2017, I travelled for a variety of out-of-state projects. While on the road, I read through most of Tennessee Williams' short plays with the goal of sensitizing my ear

to his writing style, and to absorb the complexity of his dialogue. I then read all his major plays and took notes about any parallels in themes, characterization, and language that I found with respect to *The Glass Menagerie*. Beyond his lyrical dialogue, humanistic themes and trademark settings (the author was obsessively drawn to place his characters in cheap motel rooms of the American South), I was most struck by the consistently powerful sense of character Tennessee Williams was able to illustrate. I came to appreciate the pervasive understanding the author has of his own characters as exhibited by their language of charm, seduction, cunning, pain and fantasy. Also, I was impressed by the colorful contradictions inherent in the character relationships to one another, shifting and weaving between melancholy, desire, and joy.

It was particularly fascinating to recognize from my own sense of the characters versions of *The Glass Menagerie's* Amanda Wingfield, Tom Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, and Jim O'Connor elsewhere in Williams' writings. For instance, in his short plays, *Hello from Bertha* and *Lord Byron's Love Letters*, I imagined the female spinsters and prostitutes as possible future versions of Amanda and Laura. *Auto-da-Fé*, on the other hand, explored an adult son living with his rigidly moralistic mother. Tracking their unique relationship, in addition to intuiting the repressed sexuality of the son, I immediately felt as if I was reading Tom and Amanda Wingfield expressed in another, yet not-too-dissimilar dimension. Serving as interpretive doubles of Tom and Amanda, the mother and son in *Auto-da-Fé* exist as if in an alternate universe (though specifically, New Orleans) where Tom never leaves the family, but instead, years later and in despair, burns down the home by which he feels imprisoned.

From a more contemporary collection of short works³ came *The Pretty Trap*, which Tennessee Williams wrote as a retreatment of *The Gentleman Caller*, both early draft versions of what would eventually become *The Glass Menagerie*. Of all the short plays, *The Pretty Trap* most eerily resembled the subject of my thesis. It is, in essence, Scenes Six and Seven of *The Glass Menagerie*, though dialogue is also riffed-on and directly relocated in other portions of the play. Jim O'Connor's last name is Delaney (Jim's middle name in *The Glass Menagerie*), and at the end, Jim decides not to deny his romantic opportunity with Laura, but instead fulfills the hopeful possibility that the final version so tragically sabotages. In *The Pretty Trap*, the couple is discovered flirting in the living room from the portieres by Amanda Wingfield, and in the finale, they decide to go for a walk in the park for privacy. The ending, though happy in the attainment of romance for Laura Wingfield, feels somewhat creepy in the vicarious fantasy come to fruition for Amanda. Tom Wingfield inquires as to where his sister and the young man have run off to, and Amanda giggles in her response to let him know they've gone to the park. He calls her a 'witch,' though significantly less viciously than Tom does in Scene Three of *The Glass Menagerie*.

The full-length plays of Tennessee Williams provided an even broader sense of his imaginary scope and reading them in the order in which he original published or produced the works gave me a way to track the development of the storyteller's style and technique. I intentionally avoided taking notes on specific reflections from these readings, as I preferred to let the stories simply 'soak in,' allowing his tales to live within me rather than approaching them from an analytical perspective. *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* resonated with me in how it further articulated the sense of confinement, domestically and symbolically in the form of his injury, that

the central male character endures, while also drawing tightly-pressured relational models of the maternal and paternal. For example, Maggie's treatment of Brick can be read as an enhancement of Amanda Wingfield's manipulations of Tom Wingfield, particularly its addition of overt sexual tension to a maternal instinct. Additionally, in Big Daddy's onstage presence we seem to get Tennessee Williams' release of fury over the distance and expectations he had with his own father, Cornelius. Another play, *Suddenly Last Summer*, particularly interested me in how it imagined a world where Thomas Lanier Williams' vision of himself (in this case, fictionalized in a character named Sebastian) had been removed from the family by death, and could only be remembered in conflicting accounts by his sister and mother. This thematic use of memory, combined with such circumstantially similar dramatic devices, made *Suddenly Last Summer* perhaps the most closely aligned major work to his *The Glass Menagerie*.

Later in the summer I read through critical analyses and interpretations of the work. "Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays"⁴ was helpful to me in articulating interpretative possibilities. Donald P. Costello's essay in the collection introduced me further to the concept of "The Fugitive Kind," a recurring figure and motif that Williams employed to express a condition evident in all of his writing: the sensitive individual trying to escape a corrupt Earth. Also of interest in the collection was Roger B. Stein's "*The Glass Menagerie: Revisited: Catastrophe*" wherein he distinguishes the play as one without violence (unlike Tennessee Williams' later writings and most of his plays) and notes the lonely isolation of each character, abandoned in their unique cages of illusion. Stein goes on to critique the play as evading a social commentary, while praising it for its delicate balance of religious and individual capacities. Other readings included Esther Merle Jackson's "The Broken World of Tennessee

Williams;”⁵ “Bloom’s Guide of *The Glass Menagerie*”⁶ which was so helpful, personally, in its assorted ways of reading scene-by-scene, that I would pick it up frequently for a refresher on scenes through the rehearsal process; “York Notes: *The Glass Menagerie*”⁷ was another guide I’d refer back to often for scene study. “Bloom’s Modern Critical Interpretations: Tennessee Williams’s *The Glass Menagerie*”⁸ shed light on a variety of directorial choices made through production histories. Two comprehensive studies on his writing overall, “A Student Handbook to The Plays of Tennessee Williams”⁹ and “The Theatre of Tennessee Williams,”¹⁰ though both excellent, were less intensive examinations of *The Glass Menagerie*. My online research, combined with the above critical points-of-view, formed a comprehensive understanding of notable production histories.

In addition to the aforementioned 1945 Broadway debut of *The Glass Menagerie*, in which Laurette Taylor's monumental performance as Amanda led the director to cut Tennessee Williams' 'magic lantern slides,' in learning about subsequent productions I was most surprised by their casting variations. For instance, just two years following its Broadway debut, the first all-Black cast production was presented at Howard University¹¹. In its cumulative and popular seventy-three years of showcases, I had expected numerous examples of diversity in racial casting schemes, however none so soon following the actual premiere. Other productions included mixed-race casting of the family in multiple variations, with consequently differing interpretations and ranges of audience responses¹². Without going down the rabbit-hole of the illuminating and perplexing takeaways such a multiracial configuration would open up to contemporary audiences, I found some measure of confidence in the critical receptions bestowed upon productions that had made this personnel decision. My own interest in this exploration

however was cut short by the employment of our two most skilled Black M.F.A. actors into other professional and departmental projects that conflicted with my production of *The Glass Menagerie*, and so I was forced to abandon this potentially exciting thread of social commentary for our show.

Reviews of nine Broadway revivals from the 1960's to the present¹³ were educational not only in the ways they aided my perception of the story as a vehicle for great actors, but also in how they made me aware of potential pitfalls inherent in the storytelling, such as lacking awareness of the possibilities for humor, as well as the danger of overplaying an oppressively melancholy tone. I regret not having found the opportunity to listen to four radio productions of *The Glass Menagerie* produced in the 1950's and 1960's¹⁴. In hindsight, it would have been a terrific way to close my eyes and just listen to the language to better comprehend its range of potential inflections, rhythms, and resonances. I consciously avoided exposing myself to the various film adaptations due to my fear of losing a theatrical aesthetic in a cinematic impression of the adapted material. In hindsight, this may have been a foolish self-restriction, considering that going to the cinema is Tom Wingfield's means of escape, and the play's visual world embraces the cinematic technique of a 'magic lantern slides' concept that Tennessee Williams describes in the preface to the play; in addition, it might have provided inspirational fodder to share with our projection designer. I also regret that I did not seek out two contemporary foreign film adaptations because of how they critically departed from what I had imagined as a crucial context in interpreting the story: its setting.

The summer of 2017 concluded with my reading biographical material including John Lahr's *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of The Flesh*¹⁵ and Lyle Leverich's *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams*¹⁶. Leverich's book was remarkably useful in that it focused entirely on the first thirty-three years of Tennessee Williams's life, until the premiere of *The Glass Menagerie*. The comprehensive details of his upbringing, teenage, and young adult years were helpful in their autobiographical parallels to the characters of Tom, Amanda, and Laura Wingfield. The background chapters on Edwina Williams' (Williams's mother) personality and childhood were so detailed, I decided to loan it to the actress playing Amanda at our first rehearsal and insisted that she read it to better acquaint herself with Amanda Wingfield's inspirational model.

My final step in the preparation process before rehearsals began included working with my stage manager, Mallory Heins, to determine how to structure the rehearsal timeline most effectively. To do so, I examined the amount of time allotted by the production manager, Joe Millett, in combination with 'French Scene' charts of the play I had outlined, with the intent of figuring out the way best to divide up the work and personnel. Due to our small cast size and seven-scene structure this planning was relatively easy. Mallory Heins' organizational skills here and throughout the rehearsal process were of great assistance.

iv. Choosing the Edition

Rather than use the more often produced "Acting Edition,"¹⁷ I decided to use the New Directions publication of *Williams's Reader's Edition of The Glass Menagerie*¹⁸ for production. Subtitled as *'The Definitive Text,'* the New Directions version included production notes written by Williams and his essay, "The Catastrophe of Success." In addition to these supplements, Williams re-published his stage directions with the system of screen devices he had originally intended for the 1945 production, which I was excited to explore with our creative team. The tension between the playwright's initial ideas and how to make the production feel relevant in 2017 was an inspiring challenge, and so I committed to using this edition as our production script.

v. Directorial Approach

I was aware at the beginning of the preparation process that I wanted to forge a marriage between my strengths in visual spectacle and solid, strong work by the actors in their moment-to-moment pursuits of objectives and understandings of given circumstances and relationships. A rigorous analysis of these given circumstances as well as a solid understanding of character needs and motivations helped me to walk into the rehearsal room as an open collaborator. If there was a choice they wanted to play that was different from anything I had considered, I could endorse their exploration while also defending, with textual evidence, my own reading of the events. My confidence in my own preparation permitted me to be open-minded to each individual actor's interpretation so long as they were in bounds of what I knew to be true about

the scene from my analysis. This openness in turn led to an atmosphere of trust, discovery and critical questioning that I felt enabled our cast to connect to the script.

A key to my approach was also a consistent policy of *affirmation*. The painful and delicate nature of the story itself led me to want to approach it with a firm vision but gentle hand in the rehearsal room. If an actor had a doubt, I would encourage the discussion of that doubt. If an actor proposed an unconventional idea to play, I would encourage that instinct rather than critically dismiss it out of fear or time management. If a scene fell flat due to a redundancy of playing prescribed actions, I would *affirm* the value of running the scene, taking note of its positive insights and opportunities for new action choices, rather than identify to the actors any obvious failure to be as spontaneous as they once were. As intuitive artists, I realized, the actors often knew when a repetition of scene work went stale and needed rather to be positively focused on the discoveries of new potential avenues that were offered by a given run.

Similarly, this mantra of *affirmation* was the intention behind my approach with the designers. I tried to look for their natural impulses inherent in the offerings along the way (sketches, drafts, models, etc.), and did my best to consciously encourage a bold exploration of choices that evoked their strongest relationship to the story. I also felt it was important to be specific about what I wanted while allowing freedom for each artist to do their work without micro-management. Finally, my approach as the leader of a creative team was to be open, curious, easy to approach, and inspiring of each artist involved in the storytelling. I had a sense that a play so tenuous and fragile as *The Glass Menagerie* needed at its helm a confident point of view, yet a delicate directorial style.

II. The Process

i. Auditions and Casting

Two weeks prior to the scheduled auditions, I invited four actors to read aloud the script in a private setting. The actors, whom I didn't plan to consider casting due to their status as non-acting students, had worked with me previously in other capacities: Kate Frank and Steven Marzolf (both acting professors with intimate experience with *The Glass Menagerie*), Meghan McEnergy (M.F.A. playwriting candidate from St. Louis), and Jason Engstrom (an M.F.A. acting alumnus). Along with their collective feedback on the play, I wanted to give myself the chance to hear the script read aloud for the first time, to better understand nuances in tone, rhythm, and acting intentions that could serve me in the pressurized crunch of casting callbacks. There were some key takeaways from this reading event that critically influenced my casting intuition at the auditions.

First, hearing it aloud crystallized my understanding that there are two core relationship dynamics within the play and that these pairings must be rock solid: Amanda and Tom Wingfield, and Laura Wingfield and Jim O'Connor. Listening to the lengthy middle-section of the script (Scenes Four and Five), it became clear how essential the chemistry between the two actors playing Tom and Amanda must be to carry the story along without a lag in attention. Fortunately, both actors were skilled and it provided an exceptional standard. Likewise, the reading of Scene Seven between Laura and Jim, with a budding romance and the crushing

devastation of hope, was tremendously important in my realizing the absolute necessity of trust between the two actors playing those roles.

My second takeaway from this event was that Meghan McEnery, a 2nd year graduate playwright, was eerily perfect for the role of Laura Wingfield. I kept studying her fragile hand gestures, eye contact with scene partners, and micro-vocal pitch changes with a powerful sense of recognition of her connection to the character. I felt inspired to invite her to join us during the callbacks to further explore how she might read with top acting candidates for the other roles. Hesitant if she'd even consider a departure from her main area of study in the program, I consulted her mentor and Head of Playwriting, John Walch, who endorsed my pursuit of the casting possibility. When I inquired with Meghan McEnery herself about her interest in reading for the role, I was further encouraged by an immediate and enthusiastic, "Oh, Yes!"

At the first round of callbacks, I had settled on two clear finalists for the role of Amanda Wingfield: Mollie Armour and Mischa Hutchings, both M.F.A. actors in our graduate program. Armour, prior to auditions and only in the abstract, had been my first choice for quite some time, sensing she had the appropriate combination of dramatic and comedic skills to pull off such a mercurial character. Mischa Hutchings had rather struck me as a terrific option for Laura Wingfield. With the addition of Meghan McEnery as a contender for Laura, however, it became clearer to me that the playwright/actress had that truly exceptional quality of authenticity, too alluring to discard for the role. Then, through reading short fragments of the mother and daughter interaction from Scene Two, all the while pairing Meghan McEnery with both Mollie Armour and Mischa Hutchings in the role of Amanda Wingfield, I struggled to sense the right chemistry

between Mollie Armour and Meghan McEnery. Naturally, I figured this could work in my favor, considering the stark value differences between Amanda and Laura are a lynchpin to the tragic circumstances of *The Glass Menagerie*. Nevertheless, Meghan McEnery's readings with Mischa Hutchings in the same fragment produced an intense sense of recognition. The pair also simply exuded a stronger 'suspension of disbelief' as it applied to a genetic relationship. I believed these two women could be a mother and daughter. Furthermore, I understood Meghan McEnery and Mischa Hutchings had a real friendship that had developed outside of the department, and so the determination was made to cast them both.

Having chosen the play the previous fall, I had somewhat consciously imagined only two actors playing the role of Tom Wingfield: Chris Tennison or Austin Ashford, both in the M.F.A. graduate acting program. Chris Tennison, as Tom, had lived most predominantly in my imagination. I liked that Chris Tennison was an older actor, in his early 40s, and having concluded that the narrator should not be viewed as a young man, his age fit into my concept. Austin Ashford also provided an exciting casting option. He had the moodiness, escape fantasies, and electrifying passion I sensed in the character, while also allowing for an exciting opportunity for our audiences to view a Black actor in the key role. This potentiality played so strongly in my pre-audition preparation, that I further researched Black productions of *The Glass Menagerie*. NaTosha DeVon, another M.F.A. graduate actor in the program, who had professed to love the play (and had designed a set for it in her undergraduate studies), began to kindle in my thoughts as a potentially fantastic Laura Wingfield. The possibility of seeing two of our graduate actors of color onstage as brother and sister in a classic Tennessee Williams play at the University of Arkansas was indeed an exciting possibility. Coupled with how it might be affected by the

casting of white actors in the roles of Amanda Wingfield and Jim O'Connor, I felt certain this was a route I would pursue in the auditions.

Unfortunately, due to casting needs with the local regional theatre, TheatreSquared, as well as a particular role in the fall musical, *Avenue Q*, I was informed that both Austin Ashford and NaTosha DeVon would be unavailable for casting consideration for *The Glass Menagerie*. The otherwise lack of diversity in the acting student demographics of the department made it impossible to consider this multiracial dynamic further, to my disappointment. At the same time, however, these practical obstacles further positioned Chris Tennison and Meghan McEnergy as my top preferences for the brother and sister roles of Tom and Laura Wingfield.

Finally, I turned to the casting of Jim O'Connor, our gentleman caller. Though appearing late in the play, I knew Jim was as an important casting decision in how the anticipation of his arrival by the other characters, as well as for us in the audience, drives the final act's energy and tone. There were only two actors I seriously considered for the role, both also in the MFA Graduate Acting program: Grant Hockenbrough and Cody Shelton.

The choice between the two, as callbacks progressed, became all the more difficult. Both Cody Shelton and Grant Hockenbrough were exceptionally strong in the role and had positive relationships with the other three actors that I was likely to cast. It became a neck-and-neck race between Cody Shelton and Grant Hockenbrough, so much so that I had to start considering elements of what they could bring to the production outside of their outstanding scene readings. I began weighing a variety of considerations based on factors beyond their reading of the scenes

alone. Between the two, one actor had made what I interpreted to be a conscious decision to dress more appropriately to the character in the callbacks. I looked additionally at the range of opportunities each student had previously enjoyed: this same actor, the year prior, had been featured in a supporting role on the mainstage, whereas his competitor had been in a lead role. In addition, the actor I chose for the role was one with whom I had worked a bit more in various scene presentations during my three years in the program. For all the above reasons, I ultimately cast Cody Shelton as Jim O'Connor.

With these decisions made, I officially cast Mischa Hutchings, Meghan McEenery, Cody Shelton, and Chris Tennison in the roles of Amanda Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, Jim O'Connor, and Tom Wingfield, respectively.

ii. Design Team Process

My own preparation aside, the creative process for the team began in earnest with our first design meeting for *The Glass Menagerie* in February 2017. At the onset, I felt it was important for me to most closely collaborate with our scenic designer, Michael Riha, since the scenic world would help clarify the other design areas. Michael Riha provided a handful of quick sketches over the course of the next month that began a conversation between us of the best direction to go with the environment. During this time Michael Riha was often travelling to design conferences and our creative engagement occurred mostly by email. Viewing some of his preliminary ground plan ideas, I began to notice the protean form of a triangular shape consistent in his spatial explorations. Having discussed with him a sort of 'three-point' dynamic of the

family, personified by Tom, Laura, and Amanda Wingfield, these drawings excited my symbolic sense of the play and how the story could essentially be expressed in a geometrically spatial dynamic. I encouraged Michael Riha to exploit this instinct even more in his design, which gave way to a triangular space in an architectural framing seen in early sketches found in pages 96 -98 of the Appendix. Having read *Tennessee Williams'* production notes¹⁸, I thought that such a bold geometric choice might aid in his goal for a 'non-realistic' ethos of the play while further enhancing the story's more expressionistic and symbolic qualities.

The next noteworthy breakthrough from our scenic discussions occurred face-to-face as Riha and I envisioned surfaces for the 'magic lantern slide' projections that Tennessee Williams describes in the script. I had asked Michael Riha to imagine a scenic model where the screens might be the source of inspiration for the entire design. After a few days, he excitedly invited me to his office, promptly pulled out a book from his shelf¹⁹, and opened it to a page. He asked me if the production image was something that I could connect to as a model for our *The Glass Menagerie* scenic landscape. The image gave me the impression of a greenhouse (suggesting Laura Wingfield's escape destination of the zoo she describes in Scene Two), and a barred cage (falling into alignment with the spine of *escape* that I had embraced).

As his design progressed, the basic structure Michael Riha settled on relied on two primary walls with twenty-two framed windows made of thick beams, reminiscent of dense metal that intersected at vertical and horizontal points. The surface material filling in this skeleton was a thin, black matte screen for high-angled rear video projections. This material was opaque enough that, sans rear lighting, it could conceal movement or figures behind it from the

audience's view. With backlighting or projections illuminating it, however, the screens allowed not only for large - yet clear - video projection, but also opportunities for shadow-play, which I knew I wanted to explore as it related to Tennessee Williams's obsession with the 'inner life' of the characters.

In addition to the wall surfaces, Michael Riha had an idea of installing a top projector screen, also in a triangular shape, to further accentuate his scenic vision. This piece was suspended in air above the remainder of the set, and at a downward angle from our patron's line-of-sight, to allow for visibility of content. The top piece also assisted in implying a geometrically-consistent ceiling to the structured, cage-like environment.

Within the structure, Michael Riha and I had virtually the same instincts regarding placement of areas for the Wingfield home: upstage center we agreed would hold the dining area and exit to the kitchen (Amanda's power zone); downstage left would be the entrance, fire escape landing, and typewriter table (Tom's escape zone); downstage right would anchor the couch and what-not for Laura's glass menagerie (Laura's comfort zone). According to an early design rule I had suggested Michael Riha employ, to "Be strict about what is expressed scenically according to only what Tom remembers about the home," it seemed unnecessary to fill the Wingfield apartment with anything outside of what was specifically mentioned by the characters in the dialogue or by the stage directions. For this reason, Tom's bedroom was non-existent. The Victrola was placed on an upper landing, which separated the dining area from the living room, and was stage right of the dining room table. A coat rack, used often in the story, was positioned stage left of the table, and just off the landing near the steps leading to the exit.

These pieces worked together in a symmetry of household objects that was further balanced by the addition of a standing lamp placed far stage right during the intermission between Acts 1 and 2. While an intermission is absent from the text, and sometimes not used in production, we chose an interval between Scenes Five and Six. Based on my research, this was typical in productions that observed a break in the story's action, and correctly so in my opinion, as that's the placement of a cliffhanger: Amanda with Laura on the fire escape, as Amanda shares her optimism about the prospects of the imminent arrival of their gentleman caller.

Scenically, the only major revisions that were later made regarding furniture was the repositioning of the couch so that it could have an actor cross behind it, thus enabling more creative blocking choices, and the movement of the what-not table to a position considerably downstage and off-right-center, inches from an open pit that was chosen to allow for footlights to support Scene Seven's candle-lit atmosphere.

Working in tandem with Shawn Irish, our projection designer, and Weston Wilkerson, our technical director, a game plan was enacted to order three high-end video projection units and accompanying software that would allow for high-resolution content along with the capability of layering video content, as desired. The possibilities this would open up for the location and placement of visual images was essential for the ultimate success of the dynamic world we were creating.

In my conversations with Shawn Irish, which began spring 2017 and culminated in a midsummer meeting in his office, we focused on the function of the video content in the story in

relation to the illusions and dreams held by the characters. Although Tennessee Williams, in his production notes, described the projections as helping to provide additional narrative context to the audience, we interpreted this precisely as “allowing us to look at the mental images of the characters' minds.” Our goal was to establish a system of design that supported the story by providing still and motion-pictures associated with the inner longings of the characters, while being cautious not to distract from the strength of the actors’ moment-to-moment portrayals in any given scene. The video projections, we finally determined, should serve as a visual window for the audience to better grasp and anchor the innermost fantasies of the characters.



Figures 5 and 6. 2 Still images shared with Shawn Irish to inspire projection design, April 2017.

Moreover, the relationship between video projection and scenic detail would be further entwined by allowing the projection design to control the overall décor of the Wingfield home. I thought this scenic projection should have an amorphous quality to it: dimming out or fading in various colors (of the wallpaper look as desired, a ceiling-mounted light fixture (presented in various scenes on the top triangular screen), and the absent father’s portrait (referred to often in the play and one of its most important scenic elements). The invigorating option of using video

projection to express the father's "*larger than life-sized portrait*," as it is described in the text, was further enhanced by our ability to change the expression of the father's face based on the emotional attitude of the characters' relationships to it at any given moment of the play. Irish digitally-altered a classic black and white portrait of a 1920's gentleman by using a photograph of a clean-shaven Chris Tennison, creating a striking resemblance between Tom Wingfield and his father.



Figures 7 and 8. Two digitally-altered images of Tennison by Shawn Irish

The mounted photograph Tennessee Williams uses as a storytelling device was something I had imagined investigating in production, and this design concept now allowed us to view the absent father with shifting complexity and ambiguity, just as the Wingfields themselves do throughout the play. Having video control allowed us to remove the portrait from the wall altogether at times, which was helpful for the moments in the dramatic action that didn't want to be overshadowed by the looming figure of abandonment.

Shortly before the summer break, Shawn Irish and Weston Wilkerson acquired miniature video projectors to serve as samples in conjunction with a 3-dimensional scenic model Michael Riha had created. Pulling up a handful of sample slides, including a glass unicorn image, blue roses, and others, I joined Shawn Irish in his office to view in small-scale form what the relationship between video projection and scenic structure would look like. We turned off the lights and, with Michael Riha present, experimented briefly with the angle of projection. Based on this early opportunity to view the model in tandem with sample projections, I felt confident in the direction we were headed scenically.

After stating in the initial design meeting my desire to explore a non-realistic and psychic-space of memory scenically, I expressed the idea that the closer we visually engaged with the characters themselves, the closer to reality our approach would need to be. This desire was rooted in providing verisimilitude for our audiences, based on time-period and locale. For this reason, not only would furniture and properties be encouraged to embrace the reality of the 1937 Wingfield home, but also the costumes.

The auditions for our production had been moved earlier in the spring to allow our costume designer, Tanner McAlpin, to have the opportunity to begin his design process based on the unique casting decisions I had made. By the third design meeting, Tanner McAlpin presented a portrait gallery and early costume sketches. Initially, I provided Tanner McAlpin with four-character metaphors to help inspire his understanding of the characters as well as the basic facts regarding given circumstances. This helped inform his choices by limiting them to the setting of St. Louis, Missouri during the Great Depression of the mid-1930's.

Other early conversations with Tanner McAlpin revolved around key choices to be made, notably for Laura and Tom Wingfield. Following the advice that Tennessee Williams outlined in his character description of Laura, we concluded that she should not have a brace on her leg. The point of Laura's limp, as suggested by the author and supported by Jim O'Connor's testimony that it was "hardly noticeable even," was that it would be best presented in the subtle physical work of the actor. While other productions have gone so far as to even put Laura Wingfield into a wheelchair, Tanner McAlpin and I agreed that the more tragic nature of Laura's inability to move beyond her crippling self-image had less to do with a real physical handicap and more to do with a pervasive internal inhibition. Interestingly, our vocal consultant and faculty professor, Mavourneen Dwyer, upon seeing a dress rehearsal, complained to me about the incorrectness of our choice to un-brace the character physically. I merely responded to her in polite defense, "We're doing it how Tennessee Williams intended."



Figures 9 and 10. Final renderings of Laura Wingfield by Tanner McAlpin, Oct 2017.

Tom Wingfield's costume design, though not practically complex, had the greatest need for conceptual discussions based on the doubling of the character as narrator and dramatic actor. I encouraged Tanner McAlpin to consider that our narrator is somehow more conscious of his re-enactment up until that scene, participating as an actor himself in his own retelling, and thus should maintain the same attire of his present-day 'hobo' self in the first four scenes. As evident not only from his five monologues directed to us through the course of the storytelling, but also theatrically in Scene One when Tom gestures to control the lighting and sound during Amanda Wingfield's nostalgic remembrance of her own gentleman callers, Tom is a challenging character because of his shifting role as narrator and character within his narration. This is also the defining power, and point, to his personality. Tom Wingfield is, after all, a character with a fractured identity.

With this in mind, Tanner McAlpin and I discussed how Tom Wingfield's change into trousers in Scene Five could be interpreted as both helping to advance the passage of time while also portraying Tom's further commitment into the active reliving of his memories.

I shared that my most fascinating desire for exploration regarding Tom Wingfield's costume revolved around the bulky coat he accidentally tears in Scene Three before he haphazardly throws it and breaks Laura Wingfield's glass figurines. To clarify the contrast of our narrator with his former self, I wanted to explore Tom Wingfield's hobo coat worn in the opening monologue as a future version of the same coat he wore decades prior. I encouraged stitching, patching, and fading to suggest an item of warmth for our homeless stranger that, after being worn offstage at the end of Scene One, there would be a second, cleaner and unpatched

version of itself, on the coat rack to be ripped in the fury of Scene Three. In the play's closing monologue, Tom would somehow be reunited with the ragged old coat he had taken off with him in the play's beginning and we would grasp the arc of his character in the symbolic representation of these doubled costume items. This symbolism was not fully realized in the production design however to my disappointment.

The final note regarding Tom Wingfield's costume decisions that is worth mentioning is a conversation we had regarding Tom's clothing for the arrival of the gentleman caller. Tom's expectations about the potential success of the evening's dinner are a difficult topic to sort out, and essential to understanding how he is clothed. On the one hand, I thought Tom must surely know that Jim O'Connor's courtship of Laura Wingfield will be a failure, at least in the eyes of Amanda Wingfield, and so his intention for the invitation is merely to prove to his mother the impossibility of marriage for Laura. That is, if she sees this interaction first-hand, she'll finally know the truth about her daughter. The trouble with this interpretation is that it renders Tom not just inconsiderate, but possibly outright malicious in his understanding of how humiliating the evening would be for his sister. At best, Tom might be viewed as thoughtless from this perspective, perhaps so wrapped-up in his own need for escape that he fails to imagine Laura's feelings. At worst, Tom may be understood to be sadistically devoted to his own freedom if this choice were to have wings. It is worth reading his opening monologue during Scene Six to better understand Tom's motives on this matter:

TOM: "I knew that Jim and Laura had known each other at Soldan, and I had heard Laura speak admiringly of his voice. I didn't know if Jim remembered her or not. In high school Laura had been as

unobtrusive as Jim had been astonishing. If he did remember Laura, it was not as my sister.”

This explanation, though helpful factually for the audience to understand the dramatic tension underlying a romantic possibility in the remaining two scenes, lands upon a possible half-hearted justification from our narrator of his actions. The question loomed for me, “Why does Tom Wingfield mention this fact to us, so succinctly and without further elaboration to his awareness of the pain that the evening’s events would likely cause Laura Wingfield?” It is certainly plausible that Tom, in his awareness as narrator storyteller, wants to conceal from us his guilt by propping up his aloofness to Laura’s obsession for Jim O’Connor. Ultimately, our actor playing Tom, Chris Tennison would deliver the above lines as a defensive excuse to the audience in an effort to assuage his guilt over his imminent decision to flee, insinuating as best he could with the text, “I had heard Laura speak admiringly of his voice,” that his memory was a genuine one. Such a reading enabled me to view Tom Wingfield’s intentions less cruel in scope. Joining Tanner McAlpin and me in the discussion on this topic was Patricia Martin, Head of Design and Tanner McAlpin’s costume design mentor, who encouraged us to consider the most positive choice for Tom in his decision to invite O’Connor to dinner. Studying the script more, it is obvious that O’Connor may well be Tom’s only friend (and not an intimately close one at that) and therefore the *only* potential suitor he could have possibly invited to meet Amanda Wingfield’s near-impossible demand at the conclusion of Scene Five.

This point of view allows us to view Tom Wingfield as a man put into a corner, grasping at any solution to help assuage his mother and guarantee his freedom, irrespective of the odds. If he is indeed playing the only card he must play, Tom would go into the evening with low

expectations, but full of hope, and therefore dress accordingly. Tanner McAlpin and I concluded that Tom would dress up for the evening's dinner in his best clothes, as would be customary of the day, when inviting an acquaintance to dinner.



Figures 11 and 12. Final renderings of Tom and Amanda Wingfield by McAlpin.

Amanda Wingfield's attire was simplified by a decision to limit her changes to four looks. This meant that once she dons her robe in Scene Three, it would be maintained as her look for the remainder of the play until she disappears offstage to change into the Scene Six dress. We imagined her wearing a man's robe, to indicate that it may have been the abandoning father's smoking coat which she still clings to and wears sixteen years after his absence. The text is chock-full of Amanda's mono-obsession with her absent husband, referenced virtually in every scene that she occupies, and so this costuming choice felt like a justified elaboration of that inherent trait of her psychology. Additionally, we felt that the dramatic contrast between her robe and the duration she wears it, into the dress she finally adorns would have more comedic

punch than if we strictly adhered to the stage directions, which suggested a Scene Five costume change.

Based on Tennessee Williams' production notes¹⁸ as well as his stage directions, I knew that an original music composition would be important to the play. Based on my previous working relationship with Ryan Dorin, including a collaboration here on the *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* production, I persuaded the faculty to let me bring him onto the design team. Ryan Dorin is based in Santa Monica, California, and we talked on the phone about the project in late April. These early phone conversations gave me the opportunity to establish the major musical ideas with Ryan Dorin as well as get an early sense of what direction he might take, which further guided my own responses.

One of Ryan Dorin's earliest questions honed-in on how to express the main theme, defined as 'The Glass Menagerie music' in the script¹⁸. Tennessee Williams's production notes provide guidance for this musical expression, suggesting, "a distant circus-like quality" and "the saddest and most beautiful music in the world." To frame his approach, Ryan Dorin asked whether the original composition should predominantly lean into a melodic sound or an atmospheric quality. This was a critical early choice to be made about the compositional direction. Due to the sentimental nature of the story, I felt it was best to encourage him to explore a simple, yet melodic tune. After providing downloadable audio links to four short sample themes, he requested further feedback on his melodic explorations.

One sample captured my attention due to its fascinating experimentation with rhythm and its duration. Although only approximately forty seconds in length, Ryan Dorin had laid out a basic key sequence with piano that was broken apart by held beats and elongated resonances. These pauses were interrupted by a rapid crescendo of notes at times, making the listener unable to anticipate when the next note would occur, while simultaneously drawing out a tonal sense of sorrow and longing. I excitedly pointed Ryan Dorin towards an elaboration on this sample for our primary thematic statement. In addition to narrowing in on decisions about instrumentation, such as determining to make Laura Wingfield's theme a piano-based sound, while letting strings tell the story of Amanda Wingfield's inner nostalgia for the antebellum American South, Ryan Dorin and I found a terrific foundational vocabulary for the sonic storytelling as we moved into the summer recess.

iii. Rehearsal Process

The Glass Menagerie rehearsals began on Sunday, August 20th and concluded Thursday, September 28th, 2017 giving us a total of six weeks to stage the production. The initial meeting took place at my parents' home in Fayetteville where we read-through and had an overview discussion about the play. This discussion included the sharing of our personal histories, feelings, fears, and goals related to the play and production. We discussed the expectations for rehearsals, the acting performances in conjunction with the projection design, and the use of dialects in the play. We decided to only consider a dialect for Amanda Wingfield, thinking it would highlight generational differences in attitude as well as establish Tom and Laura Wingfield as products of urban St. Louis, rather than Amanda's upbringing in Mississippi.

Notably, to kick off our first cast meeting, my mother prepared pork chops, beans, and potatoes in an effort to present what we perceived as a typical 1937 St. Louis dinner. Before reading the script, we all shared a meal together and I asked the actors to observe themselves as they socialized and ate. Then, as our very first exercise together, I had the actors mime the actions they had previously performed to impress upon their memory visual, physical, and sensory content to be used in the pantomime dinner scene that Tennessee Williams wrote for Scene One.



Figure 13. Screenshot from a video of the actors eating a 1937 meal

At the second rehearsal, we invited the designers to present their research and ideas for the cast; this became a crucial moment in the early part of the rehearsals. Indeed, as the first occasion where we had the entire creative team (cast and designers) in the room together to discuss the project, I knew that it was an opportunity to build excitement and cement an understanding amongst the group that would help us through the technical rehearsal phase weeks later. To kick off the round of presentations, and in our sound designer's absence, I dimmed the lights and played about fifteen minutes of music that Ryan Dorin had either composed (thematic

scores) or found (archival Victrola music) to evoke a sense of time, place, mood, and tone for our story.

Understanding that music has a powerful effect on artists, helping them tap into their inner lives, I thought leading with these sound samples was a very successful way to begin our designer presentation in that it focused our team's inner hearts to the material we had set out to investigate. Michael Riha displayed his scenic model, Tanner McAlpin presented his costume renderings, Catie Blencowe talked about her lighting inspiration and influences, and finally, Shawn Irish shared his projection design ideas. Following the design presentations, I invited the designers to stay and hear a read-through of the script. Unfortunately, none decided to join. This highlighted my confusion as to the somewhat siloed designer involvement from early rehearsal processes that I've found unique to the academic environment.



Figure 14. Four stills from design presentation, provided by Shawn Irish, August 2017

Our first week of rehearsals centered around table-talks. Meeting in Studio 404 at Kimpel Hall on the university campus, our team read through the seven scenes and discussed character values, relationships, objectives, obstacles, and other given circumstances necessary to come to a team consensus about our approach. To provoke full transparency, I encouraged the actors to share their own reservations, fears, and doubts about the project as it related to their graduate acting tracks (i.e. not merely as human beings, but as individual student-artists in the context of this specific institution).

At the end of table talks, and at the beginning of week two, I surprised the actors by having them act and move through the entire play without scripts, just relying on their memory of the major events that had been clarified through our previous discussions at the table. This presented a wonderfully fresh and grounded telling of the story (consider that we were still ten days away from an official 'Off book' date) that revealed that we had an exceptionally appropriate cast for this production.

Rehearsal weeks three and four consisted of giving the actors basic blocking to help anchor their physical sense of space. The blocking of scenes would be reinforced by run-throughs of larger sections of the play during these two weeks so to help the actors memorize their basic movements. I wanted to be sure to allow enough time for character development that could only occur once the actors felt comfortable with their basic lines and blocking. During this time, I was also able to assess early signs of how each actor might respond to my approach, as well as observe strengths and weaknesses to better guide me how to work individually with each performer. For example, I learned that Mischa Hutchings had a great knack for spontaneous

exploration, and so my framing scene work with phrasing such as, “Let’s try a version of the scene this way...?”, or “What if we experiment a bit here...?”, allowed her a sense of freedom that would lead to positive results in the rehearsal. Alternatively, this same actor might get flustered by repetitive scene work or moment-to-moment side coaching, and so I learned to resist working redundantly with her, as it seemed to inhibit her creative energies and clarity. Discussions at the top of scene work to gain consensus, followed by broad explorations of the scenes, then followed by a run-through with a critique and notes, inevitably most suited her creative style.

Rehearsal weeks four and five became the most important period of rehearsals where the actors could be released to explore the best possible choices after having mastered the preliminary blocking and their lines. It was also during this two-week timeframe that I felt more comfortable pushing the actors to take risks, based on their more complex understandings of their roles. Cody Shelton, portraying Jim O’Connor, particularly reacted well to exercises that allowed him to put dialogue into his own words and improvise personal impulses connected to scripted beats. I began to discover an interesting dichotomy related to my approach with the pairs of actors I was working with. Cody Shelton and Meghan McEnery (as Laura Wingfield), had an outstanding capacity for inner life but needed coaxing on physical clarity (how adjustments in gaze, gesture, breath, etc., could align themselves with their characters' desires, while landing effectively on the audience), while Mischa Hutchings and Chris Tennison (as Tom Wingfield), exhibited a strong proficiency in outer clarity but needed more direction toward inner complexity (subtle tonal shifts and attitudes that helped trigger their motivations). Witnessing these tendencies in the actors helped me to focus work with them. Fortunately, the pairs were divided

in such a way that the actors with similar tendencies had the most scenes to work on together so it made my path easier to navigate.

As a result, I spent the majority of rehearsal time on Scene Seven with Jim O'Connor and Laura Wingfield, for instance, identifying physical clarity and places where the inner life triggered exterior manifestations that supported the story for the actors. Conversely, Scene Five with Tom and Amanda Wingfield became about discussing the inner motives and conflicts that fueled the clear physicality that the actors otherwise were so skillful at tapping into.

Early in the rehearsal phase, I found that giving long lists of verbal notes following the runs of scenes wasn't as helpful as sharing actor-specific critical feedback by personalized emails before the next day's rehearsal. This added considerably more time to my night (sometimes up to two hours of isolating notes and typing them into an email draft for each particular actor), but I discovered the actors appreciated the individualized focus of the notes. I often included notes that I felt pertained to other characters in each email, and this method additionally allowed me to suggest tactics that would create more dramatic conflict between character choices, unbeknownst to their respective performers at the next rehearsal.

Also during this time, and as mentioned above, I practiced a diligent *affirmative* style in my communication with the actors, constantly reminding each of them of the many ways I was valuing and enjoying witnessing their process. The philosophy of routinely extending praise to my creative team was based in a desire to see how the positive reinforcement might lay the

groundwork for a stable sense of confidence for each actor, thus allowing for an environment where problems arising from performance-based insecurities would not be necessary to address.

By September 4th (the beginning of week three), we were able to move into the mainstage space and do an early test of using microphones on each of the actors, which had been an early design/production instinct of mine, to capture the subtlety and naturalism of moments between the family members. I had received pushback on the idea of amplifying the actors' voices in this way from some associates outside of the Department of Theatre but felt confident in the merits of trying it. The amplification, by happenstance of casting, also aided the actor playing Laura Wingfield, Meghan McEnery, who despite being authentically well-suited for the role, had a noticeable lack of vocal training as it pertained to projection/release. More so, the amplification had been an impression I had jotted down in my December 2016 reading of Scene Four (the early morning coffee talk between Tom and Amanda Wingfield), which felt so secretively quiet-yet-tense, and subtly powerful in how its intimacy places the audience in a voyeuristic point of view, that I wondered if it might help the production to have hidden microphones to allow a more vivid and closer proximity to its truth. Sound Engineer Tyler Micheel aided greatly in live microphone tests. The rehearsals were recorded and assisted me as I listened for certain vocal choices the actors were making that I had missed during rehearsals on microphone-testing nights.

It was also exciting to be in the actual performance space and have considerable time for the actors to become comfortable with the architecture of the scenic world. Susan Crabtree, the properties designer and a strong collaborator whom I met with consistently throughout the

process, provided cardboard cut-outs of table top shapes, permitting our actors to play with the objects before making final properties decisions; we ended up with a trapezoidal shape, whose angularity played upon the patterns occurring elsewhere in the scenic geometry. Having this sort of time and buy-in from the actors with the evolving scenic construction was a boon for the project. It made the entire experience flow in a way that was less anxiety driven as many previous projects I've encountered as a director, where access to the performance venue is limited.

There were a handful of memory exercises that I threaded into the six-week rehearsal period, beginning the first week and then devoting fifteen minutes during rehearsals every ten days or so. The memory exercises had to do with sensory (non-emotional) recalls of the day before, the week before, and working backward exponentially, toward the psychic inhabitation of a childhood home. With their eyes closed, I would talk the actors through various sensory investigations of their homes before returning slowly to the conditions of the rehearsal room. The point of these exercises was to connect the actors to an important theme of the play (the nature of memory), but even more crucially, to engage their imaginations with the power of their own character's memories. An important faculty of Tom, Laura, Amanda, and Jim are their own relationships to their former selves and how that perspective drives their decisions and motives throughout the story. I wanted the actors to be active in their relationships to memory as a tool for them to better fuse their inner lives with the fictional human beings they sought to portray.

Significantly, as we approached tech rehearsals, my final memory exercise for them was a 'forward thinking' iteration. This exercise encouraged them to visualize and experience 'future

memories' related to moments in the dressing room following the curtain call on opening night. It further engaged them to imagine the strike of the set after our closing matinee performance, the Thanksgiving holiday that would follow in some forty-five days, and five years and ten years into the future. Through imaginatively living as future versions of themselves, retrospectively looking back on this experience, the exercise was aimed at morale boosting for our creative team prior to slogging through the tedium of technical rehearsals rather than having a crucial role in character development.

iv. Technical Rehearsals and Dress Rehearsals

The technical rehearsals began Friday, September 22nd. Beforehand, we had paper tech meetings which included myself, Mallory Heins, Catie Blencowe, Shawn Irish, and Michael Riha. Meeting twice as a small team within two weeks of our official tech process allowed us to discuss the timing and look of the seven scenes of the play. Through the staging with the actors, numerous decisions had been made previously about how Tom Wingfield's opening monologue would function in relationship to precise lighting, sound, and video cues. The opportunity to hash out these minute details in advance of the technical rehearsals provided us all the benefit of preparation and understanding that otherwise would have felt rushed and tedious.

Due to the team's preparation, in addition to the time management of stage manager Mallory Heins and the professionalism of our design team, our technical rehearsal phase was without stress, though long. I had reminded the actors about the tedium that typically goes with

two-to-three days of technical rehearsals, and so when the time came, they were in good spirits throughout this phase of the process.

As dress rehearsals were implemented, a few adjustments were needed to address the wig for Amanda Wingfield. In the opening scene, both Wingfield women were dressed in white dresses with blonde wigs. I realized quickly that, while this formed a terrific portrait of a mother and daughter, it didn't reveal the contrast between the characters in important ways. Fortunately, Tanner McAlpin was able to make the smart decision to cut Laura Wingfield's wig, letting the actress Meghan McEnergy use her natural, straight brunette hair. This change made a world of difference in allowing the audience to immediately assess the character differences between the elder and younger Wingfield women.

Another costume change was made in the final dress rehearsal to have Tom Wingfield wear a more neutral colored shirt, which surprised me as I had not been consulted previously by Tanner McAlpin about this change. In the prior dress rehearsals, the actor had been dressed in a flannel shirt for Scene Four, and I had liked the strong feature it brought to the aesthetic world. Apparently, Tanner McAlpin had felt it was too strong a statement and so had decided to pull back. Since it was our final dress rehearsal, I felt it was unfair to the actor to push for a return to the flannel shirt choice, but I was confused about where the failure in communication between Tanner McAlpin and myself had occurred in this decision. I realized that at our end-of-rehearsal design meetings I perhaps had not allowed room to allow Tanner McAlpin to voice openly his reservations or thought processes about changes he might be interested in pursuing. Following the production, Michael Landman suggested I have a conversation with Tanner McAlpin

regarding this communication breakdown. I agreed to do so, under terms as it may be productive to my future collaboration with the designer. As time went by however, I felt that Michael Landman's agenda on the topic was related more to the growth of the design student rather than focused *a priori* on my thesis, particularly as his suggestions aimed at a timeframe for the conversation that I felt was inappropriate. For this reason, I tabled the conversation until the following Spring when I was able to mention it in a subtler way with the designer as we began work on *Rise*, a new play by Paul McInnis, a graduate playwriting student. The conversation went well.

With the addition of so many elements including the seamless interaction between projection, lighting, and sound, my focus on these technical and dress rehearsals became centered on the overall visual and aural elements and I found it challenging to give acting notes. Ultimately, I was blessed to have strong, well-suited actors in each of the roles and despite some blandness evident in the acting of these rehearsals, I reminded them that it was only inevitable that they would feel self-conscious as they absorbed the new design stimuli, before accepting it into their world of make-believe. I trusted that they would be ready by opening night and limiting acting notes in these final rehearsals further reinforced their ownership of the roles.

v. Performances

I made the conscious decision to attend every performance during the run of *The Glass Menagerie*. I wanted to see if I could reach a level of personal objectivity about the effectiveness of our choices through the lens of different audiences and their reactions to the storytelling. It was especially interesting to see the moments of humor we had worked on come alive with

patrons. There were two free student performances that especially revealed numerous moments of unexpected laughter in Scene Seven between Jim O'Connor and Laura Wingfield. It became obvious that the respective ages of the characters, and their awkward reflections on being young adults, landed quite powerfully on our college-aged crowd.

As the run progressed, two regrets surfaced that I had been unable to foresee in the production. First, I began to sense that our scenic world was of a slightly too-large scale. The framed beam architecture, though grandiose in a way that appropriately captured the world of memory I sought to portray, ultimately felt about 10-15% too large. I wished I had caught this scale issue sooner but, in final form, it was not a critical problem for the production, as irksome as it may have grown in my awareness through witnessing performances.

Second, it became clear in the final three viewings that I had missed an important circumstantial issue regarding the character of Amanda Wingfield. I had purposefully cast the actress, Mischa Hutchings, as younger than the mother (and, being in a university setting, had no other option). In my estimation, Edwina Williams (Tennessee Williams' mother, who directly inspired the role), would have been in her early forties when Tennessee was twenty-one, the age of Tom Wingfield. Although some productions might aim to cast Amanda Wingfield as a woman older than fifty, the real-life model, as was typically the case in 1930's America, would average fifteen to twenty-five years older than their children. Mischa Hutchings, in her late thirties, was appropriately close to this character concept, and her vivaciousness matched the character's attributes revealed in the text. Moreover, Mischa Hutchings, a naturally beautiful woman, was enhanced in her physical appeal by Tanner McAlpin's costume design in the opening two scenes

of the play. Though Wingfield would dress in her most elegant attire to make her way to the Daughters of the American Revolution meeting, as she does in Scene Two, Tanner McAlpin attired her in a strikingly rose-red fur coat. This choice, coupled with her bright blonde wig and Mischa Hutchings's own personality, ultimately gave the impression of a woman who would be quite desirable for an older bachelor in 1937 St. Louis. It was well known that Edwina Williams was puritan in her sexual views, and a potentially legitimate production choice to exploit this quality, by enhancing her physical appeal and attraction (implying that not remarrying has more to do with her own values rather than a lack of aesthetic beauty), was never fully discussed nor intended. As I viewed the final performances, however, this contradictory notion took root in my imagination. In the crucial establishment of character unveiled in the first portion of the play, I kept asking myself, "How has this woman not found some old, rich, demure, Christian chap to woo and provide for her family sixteen years after the abandonment of the Wingfield patriarch?"

In conclusion, it was not a failing of Tanner McAlpin's costume choice (indeed, the red fur coat in Scene Two provided a fantastically bold color symbol that worked well with the scenic components, as the character discards it in disappointment upon her entrance center stage), nor a failing of Mischa Hutchings who could not perceive the impression her vital attractiveness but rather a missed opportunity on my part as director to precisely engage Tanner McAlpin and Mischa Hutchings in their mutual creative choices that would have given a coherent answer to this question. In hindsight, I should have realized the possible threat to suspension of disbelief this caused and worked with Mischa Hutchings to highlight the repressed sexuality of her character in order to emphasize the irony of her spinsterhood.

The penultimate performances on Friday and Saturday night showed an evolution of impeccable stage timing in the beats lived in by our actors and cue-calling by our capable stage manager, assisted by the board operators. Indeed, in my departure from the theatre both nights, I began to question if the show had become too precise and automatic in its sharpness, thus in danger of being technically proficient yet somehow lacking organic space for spontaneity in its execution. This reflection then morphed in my mind as an example of the dilemma of live theatre: just as a show refines itself during a run to a point of repetitive consistency, is just when it may need to relax itself with new explorations of timing and moment-to-moment discoveries.

Understanding this, I became satisfied with the arc of the process and noted it as a realization of the temporal nature of theatre art, specifically as it relates to repeatable events. No two performances, regardless of the creative team involved and subject matter explored, will ever be the same. Indeed, this is the very quality that continues to hold my obsession with the art form as there seems to be no ability to truly master it due to its ethereal and immediate nature. A live performance is like riding a bronco - no matter the number of times you've ridden the beast, it always will buck and swoon in different moments. It is as unpredictable as it is predictable.

In the final matinee performance, which coincided with my mother's birthday, I took her to see the production. Unfortunately, as I have found in my experience is karmically often the case, the final show was the worst of the run. It was compounded perhaps by an illness made apparent by the very scratchy vocal quality of the actor playing Tom Wingfield. I was informed following the performance, as it was obvious, that the actor was suffering from a sore throat.

This factor, perhaps combined with others, led to what felt like a slightly ‘off’ performance, indicative of awkward timing and more than usual line mishaps.

vi. Feedback from Faculty Mentors, Cast, and Students.

I was personally quite proud of the virtues, though astutely aware of the vices regarding my own work on the production. As mentioned in the above section, I came to certain realizations in observing performances regarding places for improvement in detailed artistic choices. In final assessment, there is very little I would change in retrospect about my own work. Likewise, I am humble enough to acknowledge that my choices were as much guided by the work of an excellent team at the Department of Theatre, which much might have derailed if it were not for such strong stagecraft all-around.

I’m aware now that I’d love to direct the play again, perhaps in ten years, doing it in an intimate site-specific way. Having embraced the wonders of proscenium in its storytelling, I think it might be enjoyable to find a historical tenement apartment, much like what the Wingfields would have lived in, and produce *The Glass Menagerie* for a small audience sitting around the periphery of the action. The naturalism would be juxtaposed by rigged magic tricks in the house (e.g., the hovering of objects by string, or other clever affects), in order to insinuate a sort of magical-realism which can be interpreted in the play, by way of its memory theme. I also think such an approach would complement my experience having directed this production, which embraced a non-realistic scenic conceit. By contrast, it would be exciting to exploit a hyper-

realistic setting, using a found-space, so that the more psychic elements could be revealed by more subtle forces throughout the arc of the story.

From faculty, I received comments on confusion related to the scenic world. Feedback suggested that the spatial arrangement might have been too geometrically precise, thus not allowing a more organic flow of movement for the actors. Though a valid critique, I ultimately absorbed this note as a matter of taste, which failed to perhaps appreciate a more symbolic statement that we aimed to express, as appropriate to the storytelling. Also mentioned was a casting concern, particularly as it mattered to acting opportunities, in my employment of Meghan McEnery for the role of Laura Wingfield. Practically, there were several actresses (graduate and undergraduate) in the department whom the role would have suited, and, from a faculty-perspective, this caused a new approach to policy about casting, due in part to complaints about lack of opportunities from acting students.

The cast and stage manager provided my mentor, Michael Landman, with a survey of feedback based on my directing and it was quite positive. Indeed, Michael Landman informed me it was one of the most optimistic assessments he had received in his years of surveys from actors regarding his directing students. I found the responses very encouraging and realized that perhaps I don't give myself enough credit at times for being 'an actor's director,' one that hopefully actors will want to work with again and again. I can think of no higher compliment and value to my work, and so I found these responses both humbling and confidence-building.

As a grading assistant for Introduction to Fine Arts courses, I further had the chance to grade nearly one-hundred-and-fifty theatrical review papers on our production of *The Glass Menagerie*. It was of great benefit to peruse these two-to-three-page assessments from our undergraduate non-majors. Overall, I noted mixed reviews, and a substantial number noted that they found portions of the play boring. I must confess this greatly disappointed me, and the volume of these impressions has led me to believe that I did fail in some respect to appropriately maintain the attention of certain audience members. This realization further inspires me to tackle classics whenever possible to extend my exploration of stories that once held audiences' imaginations so grippingly, and to see how, by shaking off their dust, I might shed light on their relevance to modern audiences.

To share a variety of specific feedback from various faculty and designers: Steven Marzolf, a faculty director, commented on how he was impressed by the employment of the Gentleman Caller's 'shadow figure' play throughout the staging, and that he planned to steal this choice in any future explorations he might undertake as a director of *The Glass Menagerie*. Amy Herzberg, Head of Acting, commented on the overall strength of the production, and how she was pleased with the work with the actors. The post-mortem with the design and production faculty was mostly positive, though I received comments on certain areas for improvement in the execution of clear transitions, particularly from Michael Landman and Michael Riha.

In my most personal reflections in the weeks following the production, I have come to view my thesis as a successful failure. It succeeded, I believe in the overall quality of the storytelling: concept, pacing, work with actors and designers, connection to authorial intent, and

clarity of focus. Nevertheless, I view it as a personal failure in its offering as relevant dramatic material for a 2017 audience. In a climate where national politics are shifting so manically due to the election of Donald Trump, and issues of highly social import are being debated rigorously, I believe our production of *The Glass Menagerie* held little value for current audiences. Moreover, I feel my selection was limited in scope by its placement on the proscenium stage. I feel I might have come closer to extracting the power of the personal meditations the play allows if I had fought to stage it in a ‘found’ space where the proximity between audience and actors were not so great as they are in the University Theatre. In summation, I am proud technically of the project, and do believe it advanced my overall craftsmanship. I learned, however, that I must think more deeply and seriously about what stories I have the opportunity to choose to direct in the future, and how they may be critically relevant for audiences who attend.

Plays like *The Glass Menagerie* might not have a place in the modern theatre for some patrons’ sensibilities. With attention paid to Tennessee Williams’ intent, combined with an effort to boldly articulate the author’s imagination with unique casting, new technology, and rigorous application of training that I have received as a graduate directing student at the University of Arkansas Department of Theatre, I honestly believe that my work as a director successfully refreshed this canonical family drama for the benefit of the majority of our audiences in a way that allowed experiencing its unique machinations vividly and anew, despite a failure to convert every patron to such a thrilling perspective. O’Connor asks Laura in Scene Seven of *The Glass Menagerie*, “Unicorns - aren’t they extinct in the modern world?” and I think that our production answered, with only little equivocation, “They are not if only you have the patience to view and fully understand the rarity of their natural symbolism.”

III. Works Cited

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IV. Appendices

i. Appendix 1: Thesis Prep (Research & Analysis)

What follows is a list of questions and answers provided from a template for play analysis by Head of Directing, Michael Landman. The formatting and content of this appendix is related to the guidance of that document. This analysis was completed in February 2017 in preparation for my first design meeting.

The ideas (themes) of the play that are most important include:

- *the conflict between obligation to one's family versus obligation to oneself**
- *how the past haunts us (whether it is our own actions or others actions upon us)**
- *natural impulses (animal instincts) entrapped / suppressed by habit, culture, society**
- *the duality (perspectives) of abandonment & escape**
- *the unrelenting power of memory and how events in our past continue to affect us**
- *illusion and the difficulty in accepting reality**
- *Hope and hopelessness | The shattering of dreams | The boundary of mythic change**

Motifs of value and importance include:

- *abandonment of women by men (Mr. Wingfield, Jim, and Tom)**
- *cinema (words and images on screens)**
- *music (phonograph, Laura's circus music, fiddler in the wings)**

Tennessee Williams' perspective on these issues include:

*his own feelings of guilt and anger regarding his sister Rose's (from whom Laura Wingfield is a model) bilateral prefrontal lobotomy surgery at the instructions of his mother, Edwina, which rendered her incapacitated for the remainder of her life

*the difficulty he experienced growing up in St Louis with Rose and Edwina - relocating from Columbus, Mississippi to St Louis as a child, working for 2 years in a shoe factory which he recalled as a miserable time in his life; being estranged for long periods from his own father.

*his homosexuality, effeminate mannerisms, poetic attraction to adventure, and need for escape from all the relationships in his life connects to the struggle he experienced with his own natural impulses and how they felt restricted / suppressed by his world

My perspective on these issues include:

*I personally identify more with Tom in that I allow my obligation to myself to take precedence over that of my family, if they fall in conflict. I'm fortunate to have not encountered a crisis decision in this regard, but have suffered a slight estrangement from my family due to my value for freedom and independence that has ultimately left me more liberated, yet more lonely.

*Amanda reminds me of my own mother at times: her dramatic shift in emotional ranges, her intelligence and independence, her tender and cruel manifestations of manipulation and love. In this way, I also can relate to Tom and Laura - being children to such a dominating force at home.

*as an identical twin, I always felt viewed by family and communities in which I was raised as a part of a pair, therefore less valuable as a unique individual and primarily understood socially as part of a dual unit. This drove a strong urge for independence as I grew of age - and I relate to the theme of inner impulses / animalistic instincts in this regard. Society, culture and my community told me that I was something on the surface, but didn't seem as interested or aware of the individual qualities that formed my spirit.

The central dramatic question that I will use to focus the action of my version of 'The Glass Menagerie' is:

Will a Gentleman Caller work out for Laura? ...and...

How long will Tom be able to tolerate living in the home with Amanda?

It can also be framed as: **Is Laura destined to have a man in her life (Tom, Jim or None?)**

The following are the questions I most strongly asked myself at the end of each scene:
(again, these questions are based upon a template provided for analysis by by mentor)

End of sc. 1: Is Laura destined to be an Old Maid as she says Amanda fears?

End of sc. 2: Will Amanda's project to suffuse Laura with charm be successful?

End of sc. 3: Will Laura's broken glass menagerie affect her confidence to marry?

Will Tom be able to tolerate staying in the home with Amanda?

End of sc. 4: Will Tom find a Gentleman Caller for Laura at Amanda's insistence?

Will Tom be able to tolerate staying in the home with Amanda?

End of sc. 5: Will Happiness and fortune come for Laura in Jim O'Connor tomorrow?

How long will Tom be able to keep up living in the home with Amanda?

End of sc. 6: Will Laura confront her embarrassment and come out from hiding?

How long will Tom be able to stay in this home-life situation?

End of sc. 7: Laura never finds a gentleman caller.

The major obstacles challenging the resolution of these dramatic questions include:

*Laura's debilitating shyness / perception of herself as 'crippled', desire to be alone

*Amanda's smothering expectations and dominating personality

The Glass Menagerie's genre is: Tragedy / Family drama

The Glass Menagerie's style is: a fusion of Expressionism and Abstract Realism

-William's coined, "Plastic" translucent / transparent

The Glass Menagerie's spine is: Escape

Tom's super objective: Seeking to Escape (boredom, obligation, oppression, creative death)

Amanda's super objective: Seeking to Secure (escape the present - impoverished, hopeless)

Laura's super objective: Seeking to Resist Change (escape reality, responsibility, shame)

Narrator's super objective: Seeking to Forget (escape the haunting guilt and memory of Laura)

The Glass Menagerie's key events include:

1. The Narrator introduces us to the play, characters, settings, etc.
2. Amanda calls Tom to dinner
3. Tom goes to dinner
4. Amanda chastises Tom's eating habits
5. Tom leaves the table to smoke
6. Laura offers to bring in desert
7. Amanda insists Laura sit to maintain her look for gentlemen callers
8. Laura resists Amanda's expectation
9. Amanda reminisces about her past as a young woman
10. Tom helps theatricalize Amanda's memory-play
11. Amanda further memorializes the gentlemen callers in her youth
12. Laura denies the reality of Amanda's comparison to herself, assuages Tom
13. Laura polishes her glass menagerie
14. Amanda arrives at the Fire escape
15. Laura hides her glass ornaments and pretends to be studying the typewriter
16. Amanda tries to determine the best way to engage Laura about her lies
17. Laura asks Amanda to be transparent with her
18. Amanda tells her how she found out that Laura is not going to school
19. Laura winds up the Victrola
20. Amanda asks Laura where she's been going instead.
21. Laura tells Amanda that she goes for walks and to the Zoo
22. Amanda tries to inquire about Laura's romantic interests
23. Laura tells Amanda about Jim O'Connor via the Yearbook.

24. Amanda insists that Laura will find a nice man to marry.
25. Laura implies that as a cripple that that is not possible
26. Amanda encourages Laura to develop vivacity and charm.
27. The Narrator tells us that Amanda becomes determined to get a gentleman caller and starts selling subscriptions on the phone to gain money to help secure one for Laura
28. Amanda tries to sell a subscription to Ida Scott; fails.
29. Tom confronts Amanda about her returning Tom's D.H. Lawrence book to the library
30. Amanda chastises Tom about having 'filth' in the home
31. Tom tries to leave to house
32. Amanda insists Tom is jeopardizing the security of the home by spending it on dope
33. Tom tells Amanda how much he hates his job and tries to leave again.
34. Amanda insinuates Tom lies about where he goes.
35. Tom makes up a wild over-the-top story, calls Amanda 'witch' and knocks the glass
36. Laura is a feared by Tom's violent accidental destruction of *The Glass Menagerie*
37. Amanda says she will no longer speak to Tom until he apologizes by his name-calling
38. Tom tries to pick up the shattered glass
39. Laura holds tight to the mantel
40. Tom returns home drunk, drops his keys through a crack in the fire escape
41. Laura asks Tom where he has been
42. Tom tells Laura about the movies and a magic show he witnesses.
43. Laura tries to get Tom to keep from waking up Amanda
44. Amanda awakes
45. Laura tries to get Tom to wake up and speak with Amanda
46. Amanda tries to get Laura to go to the store so she can connect with Tom
47. Laura worries about being frowned on for the credit
48. Amanda insists that she go.
49. Laura leaves, falling and screaming for a moment on the fire escape
50. Tom and Amanda look after her worried
51. Laura seems to be fine and exits
52. Tom and Amanda are alone in silence until Tom apologizes
53. Amanda breaks down with self-reproach and self-pity.
54. Tom reassures her.
55. Amanda encourages Tom that she needs him to succeed and not drink.
56. Tom resists her insinuates and offerings of cream, biscuit, etc.
57. Amanda tells Tom they need to discuss Laura's situation.
58. Tom inquires what about Laura.
59. Amanda tries to get to the bottom of Tom's drinking and movie-going
60. Tom explains his need for adventure and escape.
61. Amanda and Tom discuss Man's inherent nature: Animal vs Adventurer
62. Tom says he is running late

63. Amanda tells Tom she knows he is interested in Merchant Marines.
64. Tom inquires what she means by 'somebody to take his place'.
65. Amanda asks Tom to find a gentleman caller from his work for Laura
66. Tom says "Yes" as he exits for work
67. Amanda tries to sell a subscription on the phone to Ella Cartwright.
68. Amanda, after dinner advises Tom on his appearance and saving cigarette \$\$
69. The Narrator tells us about the fantasy escape of the dance hall couples
70. Amanda joins Tom on the fire escape
71. Tom tells Amanda that he found a gentleman caller
72. Amanda is excited.
73. Tom tells Amanda that he is coming for dinner tomorrow
74. Amanda gets anxious at the precipitousness of the engagement
75. Tom tries to tell Amanda not to make a big fuss over it
76. Amanda inquires more about the gentleman caller
77. Tom tells Amanda his name is Jim O'Connor and his position and salary
78. Amanda imagines the match working
79. Tom tells Amanda about Laura's true nature and not to expect too much
80. Amanda tries to resist Tom's facts
81. Tom leaves for the movies
82. Amanda calls Laura to the fire escape to make a wish for Happiness and Fortune
83. The Narrator tells us about Jim O'Connor - at the warehouse and in high school
84. Amanda has prepared the home and Laura for the arrival of Jim O'Connor
85. Laura is nervous by Amanda's extreme preparations
86. Amanda tells Laura to accept the ritual
87. Laura looks in the mirror while Amanda gets herself ready
88. Amanda appears dressed up herself and mentions the name, "O'Connor"
89. Laura realizes it may be the "Jim O'Connor" and reminds Amanda of the yearbook
90. Amanda is amused by Laura's concern
91. Laura insists if it is the same boy, she won't come to dinner
92. Amanda tells Laura to compose herself and await their arrival
93. Tom and Jim arrive
94. Amanda and Laura tensely argue about who will answer the door
95. Laura answers the door and meets Jim, then nervously exits
96. Jim and Tom talk about work
97. Amanda interjects to tell them to make themselves comfortable
98. Jim and Tom talk about the movies and Tom's plans to move
99. Amanda enters the terrace and sort of flirts / puts on airs for Jim
100. Tom tries to get them along to supper
101. Amanda talks about Laura and plays off her being 'ill' because of the stove
102. Tom, Amanda and Jim sit at the table; Tom says grace

103. Dinner is wrapping up and the lights go out.
104. Amanda jokes and lights candles
105. Jim helps Amanda look at the fuses and determines they are fine
106. Amanda questions Tom about paying the bill.
107. Tom realizes he forgot - or didn't. Jim jokes. Amanda makes Tom help with dishes
108. Jim follows Amanda's instructions to keep Laura company and joins Laura.
109. Laura shyly engages with Jim
110. Jim offers them to sit on the floor and makes Laura feel comfortable
111. Laura mentions Jim's singing voice
112. Jim realizes that he knows Laura from high school days
113. Laura talks with Jim about high school and her shyness, disability
114. Jim tells Laura she shouldn't have let her shyness be an issue
115. Laura reveals that she liked Jim and wanted his autograph
116. Jim autographs Laura's choir program.
117. Laura inquires about Emily Meisenbach - Jim's supposed fiancé.
118. Jim reveals their relationship didn't work out.
119. Laura is nervous and excited as Jim lights a cigarette.
120. Laura tells Jim about her life after high school after he asks her
121. Jim gives Laura an assessment with her 'trouble' = inferiority.
122. Laura becomes more eclipsed in wonder at Jim
123. Jim talks about his dreams with television and public speaking
124. Laura shows Jim her glass menagerie, lets him hold one
125. Jim talks with Laura about the unicorn and sets him on the table
126. Music begins, and Laura says it is from the Paradise Dance Hall
127. Jim invites Laura to dance. Laura resists dancing. Jim finally gets Laura to dance.
129. In their excitement, he bumps into and breaks the unicorn off the table
130. Jim apologizes for the accident
131. Laura goes far to assuage his guilt and make him feel better about it.
132. Jim tells Laura that she is pretty
133. Laura asks in what respect, while blushing
134. Jim tells her romantically that he wants to kiss her, then does.
135. The kiss dazes Laura in a way that turns off Jim
136. Jim offers Laura a mint and tells her he isn't right for her.
137. Laura slowly comes out of her gaze, "You- won't -call again?"
138. Jim tells Laura he is engaged to a girl named Betty
139. Laura gives Jim the broken glass unicorn as a souvenir
140. Amanda enters the room with fruit punch and sings a song about lemonade
141. Jim tells Amanda he must be going - reveals the fact of Betty to Amanda
142. Amanda plays it off without showing her dismay and despair.
143. Jim abruptly leaves.

- 144. Amanda calls Tom in the room.
- 145. Tom enters and is accused by Amanda of being delusional about Jim's situation
- 146. Tom starts to escape to the movies
- 147. Amanda accuses Tom of selfishness
- 148. Tom exits to the fire escape. Amanda comforts Laura. Laura smiles at Amanda.
- 149. The Narrator tells us he left but was haunted by Laura's memory.
- 150. The Narrator tells Laura to blow out her candles and says, "Goodbye".

What is the significance of its title?

The Glass Menagerie - previously titled, "Portrait of a Girl in Glass", and "The Gentleman Caller" - In short-story form, motion picture screenplay draft, by Tennessee Williams - has its title to embrace the symbolic metaphor that the magical objects of Laura's obsession do for the play's poetic point. Williams probably settled on the title for its metaphoric power which mirrors more closely (and less literally that 'The Gentleman Caller' would have allowed) his overall aims with the play: namely, symbolic representation, a sense of magical realism, and poetic truth. *The Glass Menagerie* as a symbol of the play - also helps make Laura the primary figure of interest - even though it is Tom's play, *The Glass Menagerie* best represents Laura as a character. Nevertheless, *The Glass Menagerie* collection also can be argued to represent each of the character's fragile, internal natures.

Timeline of *The Glass Menagerie*

Scene 1A: a point in Tom's future decades after events that follow

Scene 1B: every night at dinner in fall - winter 1936-1937

Scene 2: Mid-February, 1937

Scene 3A: Mid-March 1937 (Still cold!)

Scene 3B: Later that night / 2AM

Scene 4A: 5AM

Scene 4B: 6AM - 7AM

Scene 5: Evening of March 25th (Feast of Annunciation, Spring/Mild break)

Scene 6: Evening of Friday, March 26th 1937. Pre-supper.

Scene 7A: ½ hour later, post-supper, rainy

Scene 7B: a point in Tom's future decades after events

Amanda timeline:

*1890-92 Born in Mississippi

*Blue Mountain / called upon by gentlemen callers

*Won the cake walk twice at Sunset Hill

*Went to the Governor's Ball in Jackson

*Sunday afternoon when she received 17 gentleman callers

- *Had malaria fever all spring long before meeting Wingfield
- *May 1912 - meets Mr. Wingfield
- *Summer 1912 - Wingfield proposes (Amanda accepts, marries a telephone man)
- *Gives birth to Laura (1913)
- *Gives birth to Tom (1915)
- *Mr. Wingfield off to World War I (1915-1918)
- *Wingfield returns to Mississippi - has changed, drinks a lot, gets in trouble bootlegger
- *1920 - Wingfield moves family to St Louis, Mr. Wingfield escaping Mississippi. Finds shoe work
- *Mr. Wingfield finds job with telephone co. / left (16 years prior to 1937, Spring/Summer 1921)
- *1929 - Great depression sets in.
- *Begins to take out credit at Garfunkel's
- *Goes to check on Laura's school process
- *Takes Laura over to Young People's League of the church / another fiasco
- *Starts selling subscriptions to magazine over the phone
- *Cleans out Tom's filthy books / returns them
- *Tells Tom to pay the light bill
- *March 26th, 1937 -morning and day frantically goes shopping and spends to prep for Jim

Laura timeline:

- *Age 23 in March '37 (Born, June) Director's choice: Late June (Cancer sign). Born late June 13.
- *Age 7 moves to St Louis with her family
- *Age 8 - abandoned by her father
- *Develops pleurosis / has attack - age 17
- *Was in Choir Class with Jim
- *Watched Jim in 3 performances of Pirates of Penzance
- *Got poor examination grades
- *Dropped out for school
- *Becomes obsessed with glass collection (age 20?)
- *Took business course for Rubicon / dropped out
- *Began going to the zoo to fill her days
- *Gets ill with a cold / Amanda discovers her secret creating the "fiasco" inciting incident
- *Amanda takes her to the Young People's League of the church; another 'fiasco'

Tom timeline:

- *Born March, 26, 1915?
- *age 5 moves to St Louis with family
- *age 6 abandoned by his father
- *graduates high school

- *1935 (2 miserable years prior) gets job in Shoe Warehouse - age 19)
- *begins drinking more
- *checks out books by D.H. Lawrence
- *begins to understand his sexuality / drinks out more / movies
- *receives a letter to join Merchant Marines
- *breaks Amanda's glass menagerie
- *is told to pay for the light bill by Amanda
- *invites Jim O'Connor over for dinner to appease Amanda
- *age 22 in Spring 1937 (Tom's birthday! - March 26th - Aries sign.)

Jim timeline:

- *same age as Laura, age 23.
- *was in Choir class with Laura
- *started calling Laura, "blue roses"
- *Gave 3 performances of Pirates of Penzance
- *Had a review in 'The Torch'
- *briefly dated Emily Meisenback
- *graduated from high school
- *low-rated himself
- *Gets engaged to 'Betty' (?)
- *took up public speaking, developed his voice
- *learned he had an aptitude for science
- *Starts going to night school for radio engineering (or is it public speaking?)
- *Betty's aunt took sick
- *Betty got a wire and went to Centralia
- *Betty is on her way back to St Louis Wabash depot (Late Fri night?)

The Historical Relevance of 'The Glass Menagerie' includes:

The context of this section is to speak on the historical relevance of the Glass Menagerie, following a template, as previously noted, provided by mentorship for play analysis.

In Its own time, 'The Glass Menagerie' received acclaim (initially in a 10 week-long Chicago run followed by a 1945 Broadway premiere) initially for the showcase it provided for theatrical legend Laurette Taylor. The reviews and testimonials - still to this day - abound of her performance as one of the most remarkable in 20th century stage actresses. Perhaps because of - or in addition to- this late-career star-turn, the play was further critically lauded as, "a tough little play" in Chicago and, by today's context, might be best comparable to some remarkable

independent film that features a prominent aging actor, and goes to new depths of emotional - yet abstract at times - realism unlike more commercial or mainstream features.

'*The Glass Menagerie*' was notable for being the play that put Tennessee Williams 'on the map' critically and among the theatre-going public. It was his first commercial success, and if one is to consider the career he went on to have (writing, in particular, classics such as 'Cat on a Hot Tin Roof' and 'A Streetcar Named Desire', to name only a pair), '*The Glass Menagerie*' has considerable relevance as being the credible jump-start to such an important voice in American theatre history. Moreover, the culmination of the body of Williams' work can be considered an era-forming and genre-game changer, that, like Arthur Miller and Eugene O'Neill reshaped and impacted a generation of new American playwrights.

As an introduction of the World to Williams and to Williams' world, '*The Glass Menagerie*' also is significant in its break from more realistic dramas (and comedies) that were the staples of commercial theatre of the 1930s and early 40s. The abstract realism described in his stage directions, the symbolism in his imagery, the ambiguous structure of his plot, and poetry of his dialogue all together formed a cohesive new type of successful theatre for the Broadway stage of 1945.

Subsequently, '*The Glass Menagerie*' is thought of as a modern-day classic - both legendary in its deceptive simplicity and its mirror-like complexity; it continues to inspire directors, designers, actors, and audiences around the world to grapple with its challenges, and ultimately find poignancy in its precise exploration of family love and sorrow. It has been staged into innumerable interpretations of staging, parodies, and scene studies in the 70 years since its initial debut.

There are many important aspects of the language of '*The Glass Menagerie*'

The poetic quality of '*The Glass Menagerie*' is achieved through his clever use of figurative language and sensitive symbolism. Southern manners, as mostly embodied in the character of Amanda, is essential in understanding the basic lilt, fluidity, heightening potential and, of course, what sources of pain such colorfulness of language hides. As the matriarchal figure (in a fatherless home), it is helpful to imagine the extent of impact Amanda's 'Southernness' has programmed and influenced her children and how Tom and Laura both act in accordance to (habitually) and in contradiction against (rebelliously), this southern language they were raised and taught by.

Amanda's lyrical dialogue - as a vestige of the gentility and refinement of Southern aristocracy - operates in dramatic irony with the dismal world of the Wingfields in 1937 and (as Tennessee writes in his beginning stage directions), thus in contrast with "*the hive-like conglomeration of cellular living units....one interfused mass of automatism*" we find ourselves

in when introduced to *'The Glass Menagerie'*. Amanda's oratory is not just stylistic (in its flourishes and ramblings, relishing its own sense of storytelling), it is philosophic for her. Indeed, she tries to motivate Laura by mentioning that a young woman deserving of a gentleman caller must develop her wit, her charm, and her art of conversation. Laura's inability to learn this natural cultural heritage of Amanda's could be argued as the essential conflict of difference between the two characters (i.e. - can it be argued that Laura's shyness is more debilitating than her limp, if one could be isolated from the other?).

If Laura's silence provides a contrasting tension to Amanda's flourishing tongue; Tom straddles all lines. Hovering between silent, tight-lipped, blunt, matter-of-fact statements to outbursts of wild loquaciousness (the opium den/ *el diablo* speech) and, sometimes intermittently, middle-grounds of poetic ease where his dialogue seems to be most true to his heart, we understand Tom as being able to control and change his own language depending on his needs scene by scene. We also recognize Tom seeks refuge in his many different ways of engaging with language -- so as not to trap himself too long into a fixed mode of expression. Tom, after all, most desires escape - and, loving language - can best find fluidity and freedom in flexibly alternating between these three main styles. It is Tom's less sophisticated moments of dialogue that most strike conflict with Amanda's genteel predilections.

Amanda's obsession with her past and upbringing comes in harsh contrast verbally with Tom's desire for freedom from convention and restraint. This linguistic tension is constantly at play in *'The Glass Menagerie'* (much like Blanche and Stanley's dynamic, actually); and Tom will shift between an air of sophistication only to rope his Mother into the fulfillment of his own objectives as a manipulative tactic.

Amanda, being the dominant personality of the story, has language most comprehensive to unwrap and view from a multitude of angles. The language Amanda uses in her reminiscing of 'The Old South' seems to both celebrate and elevate, while simultaneously disguise and demean. As an audience, we - like Laura and Tom - are left to grapple with the pathetic and exacerbating nature of Amanda, all the while as we admire and are awe-struck by her colorful coping mechanisms and dogged resilience.

Amanda's speech takes on distinctly excitable rhythms when Jim O'Connor arrives. Her chatter (part salesmanship and charm, part desperation and anxiety) makes one think that she is in fact the object of desire for the 'gentleman caller', not Laura. Tennessee's stage directions at one point describes her as 'rhapsodic' in her attempt to impress with a fantastical southern hospitality and grace that she recalls from her youth. It is in this scene that we fully understand the painful limits of Amanda's own ability to do right by her own children. The thing she accuses Tom of, "selfishness", manifests itself in her ironic disposition as she cannot help but relive her

own emotional connection to a potential suitor in lieu of playing a more balanced role in the staging of her own devising.

In other ways, Amanda is able to veer linguistically into more profound territory. Earlier in *The Glass Menagerie*, her ‘‘crust of humility’’ speech is both eloquent and grounded in its expression. In this light, we view Amanda not so much as the frivolous girl anxiously expecting a gentleman for her daughter (and/or for herself), but as a stable, sensible mother all too conscious of the plights of being a single woman in the Great Depression.

Laura’s language is the most muted of our triumvirate; the least forceful and most contained. Some psychological research of Rose Williams (the sister of our author for whom Laura is certainly based on) suggests that her initial diagnosis, pre-binary frontal lobotomy, was most likely a mild form of autism or Asperger’s syndrome. Understanding some basic components of these conditions, Laura could be argued as a highly emotionally functioning autistic. Her language (or lack thereof) indicates a shyness or withdrawn personality; yet, when she does speak, she seems highly intuitive (perhaps more so than any other character) about how her speech may affect those whom she loves. Laura’s language tells us that although she may suffer from an inferiority complex (as Jim insists), it is as likely that Laura is the most disillusioned of our 4 characters (and thus painfully aware and irrationally accepting of her own limitations). Laura’s language is always seeking to accommodate as much as possible the needs of others and, when drawn necessarily back to herself, is simple and to-the-point.

The key scene where we sense distinct developments in Laura’s relationship to language is when she is with Jim O’Connor in Scene 7. Tennessee’s stage directions mention that her voice starts low and breathless in nervousness. We might imagine a vocal choice to lighten and heighten in tone the release of Laura’s voice throughout her gaining comfort and trust with her scene with Jim. Here we witness a transformation in attitude and energy from inhibited nervousness to released bursts of joy / excitement. It is also worth mentioning Laura’s relationship to exclamations, ‘‘Oh’’, ‘‘Yes!’’ throughout the scene as well as stop/starts written into dialogue by Tennessee Williams in the form of dashes (‘‘--’’). The predominance of these dashes scattered throughout Laura’s exchange in the scene can be an indicator for the actor / director to Laura’s inner shifting excitement mixed with hesitation. It is a truly thrilling and anxious relationship to language in written form, and a wise theatre-maker would be sure to let them inform the playing of the scene.

Jim’s language is a refreshingly optimistic, pragmatic, yet enigmatically elusive addition to the play. Like a breath of fresh air, the sheer confidence of his verbosity is what initially makes a first impression. Here, we sense - at least at first - less of a character in any despair, but one - whom like the new spring air and coming rain - is full of ease and free of self-loathing. The way Jim engages with Tom and Amanda gives the audience a sense of what an ideal ‘man’s man

/ buddy - buddy / son-in-law / good old boy' he can be. Indeed, his scene with Laura seems at times to be a pitch perfect portrayal of the savior to Laura's proverbial 'damsel-in-distress' situation. There are hints he gives ("Oh, I was spoiled back then"), so cleverly in a self-effacing expression of how his opinion of himself has changed since high school, that Jim is not so happy as he appears. Jim's voice, according to Tennessee becomes low and husky when he makes his boldest action on Laura, telling her she's pretty. In this moment, we either witness Jim in his most extreme honesty or manipulation (it is perhaps an actor or directorial choice ultimately: whether Jim's romantic / sexual feelings towards Laura are indeed sincere, a moment he loses himself in; or whether it is the ultimate act of deception Jim plays in order to boost his own insecure self-image). Jim's recovery after assessing Laura's dazed response to his kiss, is (as Tennessee instructs) gingerly and slow indicating a new tactical change on his audience/ subject (Laura). Has Jim gotten in over his head in his game with Laura? Or is he merely satisfied himself enough with the fantasy before introducing the reality of his engagement to Laura? Nevertheless, we are left with a linguistic gymnast - particularly in attitude - who convinces us that despite his own delusions or acceptance of mediocrity (Betty) that he has an altogether better outlook long term than our 3 main protagonists (though Jim O'Connor may fail to fool this, his theatrical audience).

Tom, as narrator, is our most literally poetic engine of the play - particularly in his epilogue summation which is filled with symbolic poetry - as he describes "the city like dead leaves" and his inescapable condition from the memory of Laura.

In addition to the overall dialogue, Tennessee Williams' highly vivid stage directions are in themselves worth mentioning as they relate to the language of the play. For what reason would Williams employ throughout such imaginative metaphors to describe his scenic and emotional landscape? It's obvious that the answer lies in his intended effect on the director, designers and actors producing his play (the audience will not have the opportunity or use for stage directions), and so Williams seeks to poetically impact his collaborators (the theatre-makers) imaginations through his stage notes. In this way, Williams is saying as instructions to the producers of *'The Glass Menagerie'*, "Immerse yourself in this universe - dream deep and in detail - go for the poetic truth behind things."

The rhythm of *'The Glass Menagerie'* in its 7 scene structure seems to operate more like a thriller, with slow (at times unrelenting) building tension that then erupts (most often in the form of either rapid fire dialogue exchanges between characters or tangent monologues themselves) where a character releases a barrage of inner feelings / emotions that had therefore been bottled up (silence-explosion technique). In addition to this overall rhythmic style (slow tension followed by eruptions of emotion followed again by slow tension), the ebb and flow of time can be elaborated on by its transitions (between official scenes and within scenes themselves). These transitions, often unmentioned and unexplained in script form, could be

assumed as non-events in author intent. Although this may be true of most *within scene* transitions, since the changes are often only signaled with a new screen legend or spotlight in the stage directions, it is also worth arguing that Tennessee Williams invites the theatremakers to use their imaginations to execute them in accordance with rhythmic intentions (Williams states the screen device can be used in multiple ways by an especially talented theatre director).

Music plays a huge role in *'The Glass Menagerie'* both literally and thematically. A listing of music-related references and unique cue by cue directions (marked an *) follows:

In his production notes, Tennessee Williams discusses the singular theme that repeats throughout the play - according to his staged directions - as "*The Glass Menagerie*", hereto referred to as "GM Tune" as *useful for emotional emphasis to suitable passages*. To paraphrase his notes: "*Like circus music at some distance - as if one is thinking about something else. Lightest and most delicate music in the world and perhaps the saddest. Surface Vivacity and underlying strain of inexpressible sorrow. Beautiful and Breakable. Carried on the wind / weaving in and out. Nostalgic quality = the first condition of the play. Laura's music. The Glass' music.*"

The following is a list of music cues.

SC 1:

*Following "social background of the play" music is cued and Tom references "the fiddle in the wings".

*Tom motions for music on Amanda during the "Snows of Yesteryear" legend and her monologue of 17 gentleman callers.

*GM Tune faintly through transition into SC 2

SC 2:

*a whisper of strings.

*transition out / into SC 3, Tom again motions to the fiddle in the wings

SC 3:

*transition out / into SC 4, GM tune is employed

SC 4:

*"Ave Maria" song during Tom and Amanda's scene

*GM tune returns

SC 5:

*A note "fade in with music" - what music? Carry over from GM tune?

- *Dance music: “All the World is Waiting for the Sunrise” - music came ‘outdoors’ (Tom’s mono)
- *The Annunciation is celebrated with music (unspecified)
- *Dance Hall music changes to tango with Minor and ominous tone
- *Violin rises / out at end of scene

SC 6:

- ** “This is my sister: celebrate her with strings!” - music instructed (string music?!)
- *Ominous music
- *Low drums
- *Faraway scratchy rendition of “Dardanella”
- ** “Theme Three music” (is he referring to GM tune?)

SC 7:

- *Singing voice offstage “O Blow Ye Winds” - baritone lead operetta as Jim mentions singing?
- *GM theme
- *Waltz music: La Golondrina
- *Blue Roses / Music changes....then swells tumultuously a few moments later (same track)
- *Band at Paradise Dance Hall goes to tender waltz
- *Ominous cracking sound in sky (thunder!) before “Sky Falls” legend
- *Dance Hall Music up
- *Tom’s reference to ‘a familiar bit of music’ in final monologue (GM tune?)

What follows is a list of **sound-related cues, effects and impressions** (some specifically mentioned and a few imagined in ‘*The Glass Menagerie*’, scene by scene. Unique sound directions marked with an ‘*’. Sound cues are different from music cues in that they encompass sounds not related to a compositional quality, but rather related to effects mentioned in the text

SC 1:

- *Intro: Violin / violent (director choice?)
- *Hive (bees?) - initial staged directions
- *Guernica bombardments (Tom’s opening monologue)

SC 2:

- *swarm of typewriters in correspondence with screen image
- *winding of Victrola (important tension sound used throughout?)
- *whisper of strings
- *Pirates of Penzance (consider for music allusion?)

SC 3:

- *outraged groan
- *tinkle of shattering glass

SC 4:

- *Garbo picture, Mickey Mouse travelogue, Organ solo, fight btwn fat lady and usher - trans?
- *Deep voiced church bell tolling. Solemn boom.
- *little noisemaker or rattle (tiny spasm of man against power and dignity of the almighty)
- *Amanda's alarm clock

SC 5:

- *screen door slam
- *orchestra played waltz/tango or slow sensual rhythm
- *hot swing music
- *Waiting for bombardments (for ending?)

SC 6:

- *Humming gaily (Amanda)
- *Wind blows curtains / faint sorrowful sighing
- *low moan
- *doorbell
- *Jim whistles
- *summer storm coming abruptly
- *sorrowful murmur
- *clasp of thunder

SC 7:

- *steady murmur or rain, slackening then stops
- *Getting up: Voices recede a little to kitchenette
- *Amanda's tone = rhapsodic
- *Clearing throat
- *Clumping all the way up in class - Laura's memory
- *Girlish laughter / peal of laughter (Amanda in kitchen / interrupts)
- *Breathlessness
- *Cough decorously (Jim)
- *" Her storm" / "Storm abates"
- *Time clocks / punch
- *Winding Victrola"
- *Smashing glass on floor"
- *Slamming screen door"

*Blowing out of candles - Laura's exhalation"

(By "Analysis of the playwright", I mean, a biographical understanding of the writer as it relates to helpful information to better understand the play)

Analysis of the playwright: Tennessee Williams, born March 26th, 1911 is considered one of the great American playwrights of the 20th century. Since *'The Glass Menagerie'* was his first big hit -- and thought to be his most autobiographical work - analysis of Williams as a person is essential in a full understanding of not only the character of Tom (certainly strongly based on himself; Tennessee's first name was 'Thomas', but for the play story as a whole). Indeed, the understanding of Tennessee's complex personality, biographical history, psychological and emotional life are so insightful to fully grasping *'The Glass Menagerie'* - a comprehensive discussion will undoubtedly fall short in this initial document.

That being said, we can make note of the undeniable parallels to the three central characters of the play to Tom's own upbringing. Amanda is based on his mother, Edwina - similarly uprooted from Mississippi to St Louis by her husband (C.C. Williams). Laura is inspired by his sister Rose - who suffered from either autism or mild schizophrenia and was subjected to a bilateral prefrontal lobotomy by her parents which rendered her incompetent for the remainder of her life (the source of guilt that inspires Williams to write the play - indeed he was angered over his parents decision and always felt that had he not left the home, he may have prevented the permanent injury to Rose), and of course, Tom is based on himself (a poet, working at a warehouse, struggling with his own sexuality and need for escape). Unlike Mr. Wingfield, C.C. Williams was not entirely absent - but was often not present, a volatile and unpredictable cruel man. The other similarities in this quite autobiographical play are interesting to consider when the amount of drafts are taken into account that Tennessee wrote of *'The Glass Menagerie'*. Beginning at least by 1941, one can find trace manuscripts of the core story that Williams was exploring under various other titles, most notably, "The Gentleman Caller" and "Portrait of a Girl in Glass". They wavered in extremes between screenplays, one act plays, short stories - often comedies or ending with happy conclusions, unlike the final play script we study today. It might be interpreted that Tennessee Williams finally needed to settle on the truth of the pain of his own abandonment of Rose in his thinly- veiled fiction. Perhaps he had wanted to give her the fictionalized happiness he was unable in real life to provide, but he ultimately realized was itself a deception. For the world's benefit, he finalized his choice on an honest assessment of his own inability to escape his actions, just as Tom's. Indeed, in Tom's beginning lines of the play he states poignantly that he will give us 'truth disguised as illusion'. And so, Tennessee ends *'The Glass Menagerie'* with the truth of his own feelings in relation to his sister, Rose.

A prolific writer who felt as if a story was never truly complete (he was making minor changes to *'The Glass Menagerie'* based on productions he viewed or participated in for many years), a full listing of his many short stories, poems, short plays, screenplays, teleplays,

and full plays would be beyond the scope of this analysis, however his major works worth mentioning in addition to *'The Glass Menagerie'* include: *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947), *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other short Plays* (1946 and 1953), *Summer and Smoke* (1948), *The Rose Tattoo* (1951), *Camino Real* (1953), *Hard Candy: A Book of Short Stories* (1954), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), *Orpheus Descending* (1957), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), *The Fugitive Kind* (1959), *Sweet Bird of Youth* (1959), *Night of the Iguana* (1961), *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* (1963), *Androgyne, Mon Amour* (1977). Alleane Hale's Book, "Memoirs" is a terrific resource for research on Tennessee Williams' own commentary regarding his plays. More research will follow regarding his feelings on *'The Glass Menagerie'*, however it can be noted that Williams stated it was the most difficult play he had written up to that point in his career.

Considering Williams was only 33 at the time of *'The Glass Menagerie'* premiere in Chicago December 26, 1944, this may not have much long-term merit, yet accounting for the autobiographical closeness of the story, coupled with his youthful age and years of drafts, it can be understood that Tennessee Williams struggled immensely with the balance of tone, narrative, symbolism and effect of his story. Moreover, he went on to comment that *'The Glass Menagerie'* would be the final play he'd write where his human characters would be kind to one another. He said - to paraphrase - that 'from here on I will write plays about how people really are: ugly and cruel'.

Discussion of reviews and choices of the original production: The original headline by the Chicago Tribune to the 1944 world premiere read, "Fragile Drama Holds Theater in Tight Spell." Being the very first review (written by Claudette Cassidy) it is of special interest in its objective impression. Here's the review excerpt in full:

"Too many theatrical bubbles burst in the blowing, but 'The Glass Menagerie' holds in its shadowed fragility the stamina of success. This brand-new play, which turned the Civic theater into a place of steadily increasing enchantment last night, is still fluid with change, but it is vividly written, and in the main superbly acted. Paradoxically, it is a dream in the dust and a tough little play that knows people and how they tick. Etched in the shadows of a man's memory, it comes alive in theater terms of words, motion, lighting, and music. If it is your play, as it is mine, it reaches out tentacles, first tentative, then gripping and you are caught in its spell.

Tennessee Williams, who wrote it, has been unbelievably lucky. His play, which might have been smashed by the insensitive or botched by the fatuous, has fallen into expert hands. He found Eddie Dowling, who liked it enough to fight for it, Jo Mielziner, who devoted his first time out of army service to lighting it

magnificently, and Laurette Taylor, who chose it for her return to the stage. He found other people, too, but ah, that Laurette Taylor!

"I never saw Miss Taylor as Peg, but if that was the role of her youth, this is the role of her maturity. As a draggled southern belle who married the wrong man, living in a near-tenement, alienating her children by her nagging fight to shove them up to her pathetically remembered gentility, she gives a magnificent performance. The crest of her career in the delta was the simultaneous arrival of 17 gentlemen callers, and her pitiful quest in the play-as often funny as sad-is the acquisition of just one gentleman caller for her neurotically shy daughter, the crippled girl played by Julie Haydon. Her preparations for that creature, once she has heckled her son into inviting him, his arrival in the hilarious extrovert played by Anthony Ross, and the aftermath of frustration-these are not things quickly told in their true terms. They are theater, and they take seeing."

“Acidy” Cassidy was known to readers for her acerbic reviews - so coupled with reviewer Aston Stevens’ glowing praise, Tennessee Williams said later in his career that these two Chicago journalists should be credited with assisting in his success.

The Broadway premiere the following year (1945) was reviewed with praise by the New York Times’ Lewis Nichols, *“rich. The advance notes [Chicago reviews] were not in error...simple play forms the framework for some of the finest acting to be seen in many a day. “Memorable” is the only [way] to describe Laurette Taylor’s performance. Perfect.”* Nichols goes on to comment on the revelatory performance of Taylor (like many critics and audiences, it was a stand-out performance of their lives to witness) but takes a bit of aim at Tennessee Williams’ writing. Nichols criticizes it for being good, though imperfect with loose ends of psychology, discussion of war with little to do with the plot, unconnected dots. Nichols does proceed to compliment Williams’ ear for *‘faintly sardonic dialogue’*.

Due in part to the co-director Eddie Dowling (who also played Tom/Narrator) in the premieres who insisted on adding bits of humor to lighten Tom’s character, and Laurette Taylor’s tremendously believable naturalistic masterpiece of acting - some mentioned it was as if a woman off the street had walked onto the stage and would mumble, but, *“those mumbles could be heard in the balcony”*, the screen devices as written in the text by Tennessee Williams for imagistic symbols and legends to provide textual counterpoints to the action were discarded. This choice has led many scholars and practitioners to believe this scripted theatricality to be ultimately unnecessary to the successful narrative of *‘The Glass Menagerie’*.

Indeed, in lieu of the specificity and thoroughness of Williams' all-encompassing 'total theatre' stage directions where he threads music, lighting, character descriptions, and scenic notes - it is rare to find a production that follows every unique point of direction to its literal fidelity. Due to the overwhelming success of the play (having won the Drama Critic's Circle Award for New Play in NYC in 1945), *The Glass Menagerie* has been produced worldwide in the last 72 years in various forms (radio plays, television productions, feature film adaptations, and thousands of staged productions and revivals). The three most notable film adaptations include Irving Rapper's 1950 adaptation with Gertrude Lawrence as Amanda, Jane Wyman as Laura, Arthur Kennedy as Tom, and Kirk Douglas as Jim. Williams despised the happy alternate ending of the film and the NY Times described Lawrence's portrayal of Amanda as incomparable to the power of Taylor. Paul Newman in 1987 directed a second film with John Malkovich as Tom, Joanne Woodward as Amanda, Karen Allen as Laura, and James Naughton as Jim. Although over 30 years after the previous major film adaptation, Newman's movie received even worse overall reviews. There is, however, a critically acclaimed Indian adaptation of the play into film format. Titled, 'Akale' (meaning, "At a Distance"), it was directed by Shyamaprasad and released in 2004 and won acting awards for 2 of its 4 actors. In 2011, an Iranian film adaptation titled 'Here Without Me' was released exploring the story in a contemporary Iranian setting.

In 1951 the first radio play, starring Montgomery Clift and Helen Hayes, as Tom and Amanda respectively, was performed. Karl Malden played Jim O'Connor. It followed other radio plays in the early 50s and up until 1964 with star-studded casts including Geraldine Page, Jessica Tandy, Julie Harris playing parts in various incarnations. In 1966, the initial major television teleplay version was broadcast by CBS starring Shirley Booth as Amanda (for which she won an Emmy award) and Hal Holbrook as Tom. For fifty years it was thought the original videotape was lost until in 2016 when TCM broadcast a re-assembled version of the production. In 1973, ABC aired another television adaptation featuring as Amanda, Katherine Hepburn; as Tom, Sam Waterston; and directed by Anthony Harvey. It is notable for cutting Tom's opening monologue. Michael Moriarty (who played Jim) and Joanna Miles (who played Laura) won Emmy Awards for their performances.

Regarding Broadway revivals of *The Glass Menagerie*, major ones include one in 1965, 1975, 1983, 1989, 1994, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2013, and 2017. Actresses for Amanda for these respective revivals included: Maureen Stapleton, Jessica Tandy, Julie Harris, Jessica Lange, Brenda Blethyn, Judith Ivey, Cherry Jones, and Sally Field. Actors in the role of Tom have included: Rip Torn, Bruce Davison, Linus Roache, Christian Slater, Mark Arends, Patch Darragh, Zachary Quinto, and Joe Mantello.

Multi-racial and diverse cast productions of *The Glass Menagerie* have been a part of the play's history since 1947 -two years after its premiere, the first all-black production at

Howard University. Not changing a line of Tennessee Williams' text, it was praised as being worthy of comparison to the Broadway version. It was also commented on being more humorous in certain respects, even though the all-black cast's version of Tom came across as even more socially conscious and angry. Its only main criticism was an 'unnecessarily over-experimental nature' - but this was perhaps because the director chose, ironically to adhere to strict fidelity to the screen devices in the script which had previously not been used or made aware to critics. Following productions three years later in St Louis and in Nashville were further justified by the Directors due to the circumstantial 'closeness' to the Southern black experience explored in Williams' story (ex. the financial hardship, migration to cities from the southern agrarian way of life, single-family homes, struggle as outcasts to society, etc.). The Karamu Theatre in Cleveland Ohio in 1965 staged "*The Glass Menagerie*" with an all-black family, but a white gentleman caller. Similarly, in 1967, a Los Angeles production made the same aggregate choice to positive reviews, with one exception: the actor playing Jim O'Connor was - like the remainder of the cast - black however, disguised in 'white face' with an upturned nose and freckles and orange wig. Reviewers praised his performance, but interestingly seemed not to mention the fact that his Jim O'Connor was portrayed thereby as a 'disguise'. A 1987 Spelman College in Atlanta production of an All-Black 'Menagerie' was highly politicized. It focused on the 1960s as the revolutionary time in which the play could be newly understood within an African American context. The Director, Thomas A. Brown describe his choice, "*The 60's industrial St. Louis with Cassius Clay and Martin Luther King as dominant figures in our culture provide a prism to understand America on the brink of / poised for revolution. Many 'dreams' were being created, while 'myths' were being broken. The intersection of myth and dream form the conflict of 'The Glass Menagerie'.*" A Spring 1995 paper by Philip C. Kolin titled, "Black and Multiracial Productions of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*" is the source for these references and will be expounded upon in future drafts of this analysis*.

A highly-praised Chicago production by The Hypocrites, directed by Hans Fleischmann, reimagines Tom as homeless - where the scenic imperative was Tom's current place - back alleys and gritty streets. Here, his memory play was produced on found-street items, allowing the character costumes of Laura and Amanda to be the departure point for realistic memory.

John Tiffany's current production playing in London's West End (with Cherry Jones reprising her role as Amanda, though with a different actor than Quinto as Tom; Michael Esper), has been hailed by critics as a tone-perfect minimalist production with "an Amanda for the ages" in the form of actress Cherry Jones. Scenically, the production is notable for its choice to use the fire escape as a point of realistic departure as it descends - seemingly infinitely upwards in audience view - like an existential extension of some M.C. Escher painting. Also, its hive-like pattern floor platforms and simplicity have been lauded.

Having attended a theatrical design conference for 3 years in NYC where graduating M.F.A. student designers from Yale, California Institute of the Arts, and Carnegie Mellon set up models and photographic samples of their designs, I've had the opportunity to view more than a handful of scenic designs of *'The Glass Menagerie'*. When I have inquired of students and professors why the particular play keeps showing up year by year in certain showcases, the reply I've received has always been the same. In a sense, *'The Glass Menagerie'* provides one of the best design challenges for academic studies because of its wide variety of interpretational choices, production histories to draw comparison and contrasts to, complexity of directions and hints from the text, and mercurial essence to its story possibilities (memory, naturalism, expressionism, etc.)

Interesting parody productions include 'The Plexiglass Menagerie' set in a FEMA trailer in New Orleans after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2006 (also, performed by an all-male cast), and Christopher Durang's One Act Play, "For Whom the Southern Bell Tolls" in which gender and exaggeration were explored in a darkly humorous way (i.e. Laura becomes Lawrence who collects glass cocktail stirrers). An addition, Off-Off Broadway parody 'Bouffon Glass Menajoree' was presented in 2007 at the Brick Theatre in Brooklyn that was known for its *'grotesque and outrageous obliteration of any semblance of whatever decency or moral restraint the play once had'*, according to a review from Brooklyn Paper. The Indy-theatre Brooklyn production took 'bouffon' - type of clowning from the Renaissance French social outcasts - and used it as a stylistic launching pad to reimagine the play as an ugly, audience-interactive (the gentleman caller character, Jim was drawn from the audience each performance), over-the-top clown acts about outcasts, awkward interactions, and farcically bizarre escape strategies.

Further discussion and examples of notable and influential productions will be expanded on in future drafts of this initial analysis*.

The World of the Play: Tom sets up for us the social background in his opening monologue as corresponding with the Spanish Civil War, the bombing of Guernica by Nationalist Forces (led by Franco - also alluded to in a newspaper headline later in the play), and by labor strikes in America in 1937. We're in the Great Depression - and if we take the point of view of our protagonists - we are unaware of the impending economic boom that American entry into WWII will provide. Will this stasis of suffering and struggling last forever? Is this indeed the new and permanent reality? Tom and Laura, being children of a single mother, most likely don't have a strong memory for much of an alternative lifestyle. From their points of view - it's always been tough. Amanda, on the other hand, has a distinctly painful understanding of what it means to live a better life - and this roots her mono-obsession with her more affluent past / upbringing. Unemployment rates in the Depression for St. Louis, MO stood at around 35%. Since it was a time when culturally, men were considered to be the primary breadwinners and

women were more often relegated to home duties, a single-mother home with a daughter and one son, it would have been especially trying for the Wingfield family to get by.

Amanda demonstrates bras at a local department store to help make ends meet. For a woman of her upbringing and southern formality, this must be a humiliating ordeal, but she does it out of necessity. In addition to gathering a strong sense of America / St Louis during the Great Depression, it is worth further analysis and research to grasp life in Blue Mountain & Mississippi during the turn of the century to expand on Amanda's world view. To gather a global sense, it is also important to understand the key events of the Spanish Civil War and other world conflict patterns in the late 1930s. Dramaturgical research and understanding are essential to fully comprehend the conditions of this world: The Great Depression, Post WWI ("The War to End All Wars"), The Roosevelt Era, the Radio boom era, the transition of Silent Films into Talkies, The rise of Nazism and Spanish Civil War in Europe, the recent end of Prohibition and new emergence of bar culture - all are important in grasping the life of our main characters. The span of the play primarily is February - April 1937 and bridges between a cold winter into a mild Spring (albeit rainstorm present). Architecturally, a preliminary study of structures around Grand Street near downtown and northeast of the park in St Louis where Tennessee Williams lived as a teenager (and where the Wingfields are most assuredly set), reveals miniature tenement-like structures similar to what may be found in bigger cities like New York's lower east side (whereas these, being 2-3 story examples). With their brick exteriors, fire escape back entrances and alleyways involving a more natural world, we seem to be at crossroads where industrial, urbanity meets a sense of rural, unneutered environments. More classic structures referred to in the play (the Zoo, Senton High School) are yet to be fully researched but will be architecturally discussed in future drafts of this analysis*.

ii. Appendix 2: Sample Memory Exercise from Rehearsal

What follows is a guided exercise used in Early rehearsal with cast (August 2017).

*Close your eyes.

*Focus on breathing.

*Go back in time to your childhood.

*Enter into your childhood home (if you had more than one, choose the first that seems strongest to attract your memory's imagination.

*Be in the room alone. Breathe in and out and take in the whole room.

*What smells, or scents do you experience? Does it smell dusty or clean? Is there a sweet smell or musky smell? Try to identify what you scent in the room. Move about the room in your home.

*Approach a piece of furniture. Examine its shape. Examine its texture. Examine its color. Examine its size. Keep breathing. Touch the piece of furniture. What's the feeling like.

*Move about the room to another area. What's the lighting like in this room - is it morning, noon, afternoon, or night?

*What sounds do you hear as you move and stand still in the room? Are there sounds in the room? Are there sounds from other places in the home? Are there equipment sounds -- hum an air conditioner spinning of a dryer? Are there human sounds? Is someone in the home with you?

Are there animal sounds and smells from a pet?

*Move towards a window and peer out. What do you see outside the home - if its daytime do you see anything? If its nighttime can you make out anything?

*What tastes come to mind in this home? Is there a food that strikes your tongue? Try to identify a flavor in your mouth that you associate from this place in your imagination.

*Breathe and stand still. Breathe and slowly let this memory fade away.

*Open your eyes.

iii. Appendix 3: Sample Audition Callback Schedule

What follows is an example of how I organized callbacks casting *The Glass Menagerie*.

MONDAY, MARCH 13th LOCATION STUDIO 404 KIMPEL

5PM ----- Scott Russell & Mischa Hutchins (Tom / Laura) SIDE 6
5:15PM ----Scott Russell & Meghan McEnery (Jim / Laura) SIDE 1
5:30PM ----Courtney Jensen & Mischa Hutchins (Amanda / Laura) SIDE 3
5:45PM ----Grant H & Courtney Jensen & Meghan McEnery (Jim / Amanda / Laura) SIDE 8
6:00PM ---- Mischa Hutchins & Meghan McEnery (Amanda / Laura) SIDE 3
6:15PM ----Mollie Armour & Meghan McEnery (Amanda / Laura) SIDE 3
6:30PM -----Mollie Armour & Mischa Hutchins (Amanda / Laura) SIDE 3

TUESDAY, MARCH 14th LOCATION TBA

2:30PM ----- Chris Tennison & Courtney Jensen (Tom / Amanda) SIDE 12
2:45PM ----- Charlie Rodriguez & Courtney Jensen (Tom/ Amanda) SIDE 12
3:00PM ----- Chris Tennison & Mischa Hutchins (Tom / Amanda) SIDE 2
3:15PM ----- Chris Tennison & Mischa Hutchins (Tom / Laura) SIDE 6
3:30PM ----- Charlie Rodriguez & Mischa Hutchins (Tom / Amanda) SIDE 2
3:45PM ----- Cody Shelton & Chris Tennison (Jim / Tom) SIDE 5
4:00PM -----Chris Tennison & Meghan McEnery (Tom / Laura) SIDE 6
4:15PM -----Grant Hockenbrough & Chris Tennison (Jim / Tom) SIDE 5 - with Courtney
4:30PM -----Justin Mackey & Mollie Armour (Tom / Amanda) SIDE 12
4:45PM -----Cody Shelton & Justin Mackey (Jim / Tom) SIDE 5 - with Mischa
5:00PM ----- Grant Hockenbrough & Justin Mackey (Jim / Tom) SIDE 5 - with Meghan
5:15PM -----Justin Mackey & Meghan McEnery (Jim / Laura) SIDE 1

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 15th LOCATION STUDIO 404 KIMPEL

5:00PM -----Chris Tennison & Mollie Armour & Meghan Mc (Tom/Amanda/Laura) SIDE 11
5:15PM -----Scott Russell and Grant Hockenbrough (Tom / Jim) SIDE 5
5:45PM -----Chris Tennison & Mollie . & Mischa Hutchins (Tom/Amanda/Laura) SIDE 11
6:00PM - -----James Miskimen & Ashley Nolen (Tom/Amanda) SIDE 12
6:15PM ----- Trey Smith & NaTosha DeVon (Tom/Laura) SIDE 6
6:30PM ----- Madi Watkins & Ashley Nolen (Amanda/Laura) SIDE 3
6:45PM ----- Trey Smith & Grant Hockenbrough (Tom/ Jim) SIDE 5
7:00PM ----- James Miskimen & Maggie Wood (Tom/Laura) SIDE 6
7:15PM ----- NaTosha DeVon & Cody Shelton (Laura/Jim) SIDE 1
7:30PM ----- Madi Watkins & Cody Shelton (Laura/Jim) SIDE 1
7:45PM ----- Maggie Wood & Grant Hockenbrough (Laura/Jim) SIDE 1

iv. Appendix 4: The Glass Menagerie scenic sketch response. 3/10/2017

What follows is a letter to scenic designer, Michael Riha as an example of the way we were communicating about some of his initial design sketches.

Hi Michael,

I'm excited by the sketches in the Dropbox, I like the direction so much that it helped me with some ideas to build on where it feels you are naturally going. In short order, I'll include here, or we can chat in person, time permitting this week. See the bottom of the document for the image sketches.

***Triangularity** - Floorplan (highlighted in image below) sketch: wondering if we can embrace that sense further and forego a structure of wall upstage of the table so that visible space extends (and narrows to a point far upstage). There's an illusory quality to opening up that depth of perspective (Tom in the opening says, "*I'll give you illusion disguised as truth!*"), and it seems like a terrific choice to combine two ideas we've been struggling with - 1. How does the space feel claustrophobic / like a 'trap'? while simultaneously, 2. How does the space feel theatrically expansive, in the way that our memories extend geographic boundaries?). A scrapping of a wall there can help us explore the empty space and narrowing field beyond it as a way to communicate a variety of ideas: memory selectivity in time, visual illusion, and articulating on the triangular sense in ground plan already strong in your design.

***Wingfield Portrait** - With that perspective in mind, it made me excited to explore positioning placement of the absent father's portrait on the far upstage point of your triangular ground plan, as if viewed from a great distance (it's been 16 years since Wingfield left the family after all). There's an absurdity to the necessity of Amanda to emulate, adore, be reminded by the presence of his portrait at that distance and in that depth of focus. Every time he is referenced, the characters turn to look at the distant memory - which occupies the extreme focus / perspective of our point of view, beyond the space extending from the table. I think this does mean, we'll want to consider enlarging the portrait to a size that both gives us enough clarity at that far upstage distance. It should still occupy emotional weight and a transformative quality, despite its irrational distance.

***Fire Escape Landing** - I particularly like the sketches where I sense that the landing may extend / jut out a few feet downstage of the step entrance (unless the draft is merely showing the understage entrance area?). I think it is worth exploiting, however. Might that section of the landing come even closer to the audience - directly following the line / boundary already in place in the design (see where I marked in the sketch image attached). When Tom exits the landing, is there an extension along the landing that allows him to create maximum possible distance from

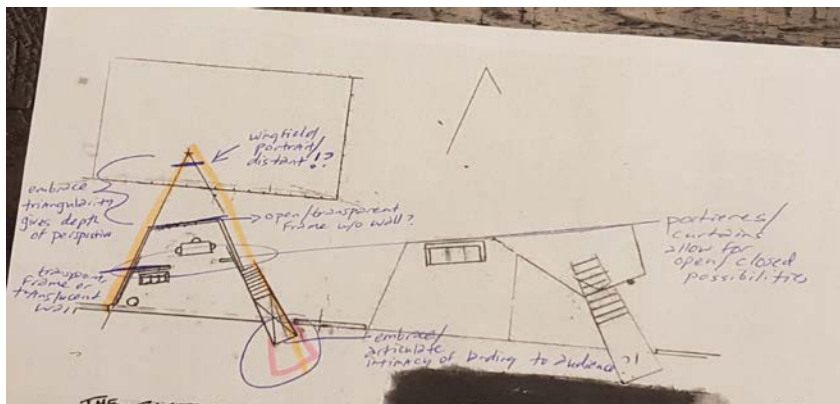
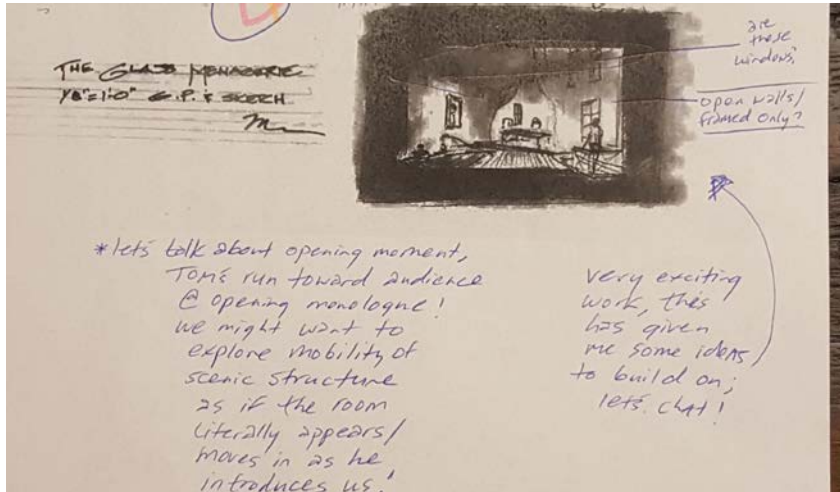
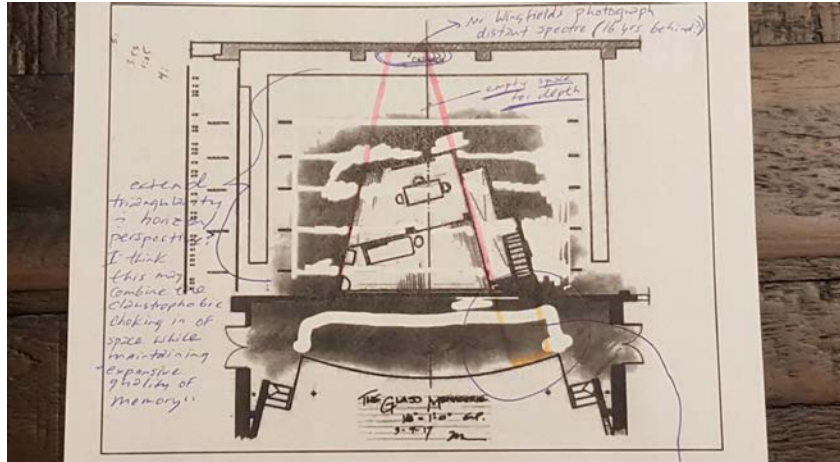
the front door? This is in alignment with his values and I think the landing extension can bring him to an extreme intimacy with the audience that can be very useful to me in his monologues (and scene with Tom / Amanda) on the landing. Moreover, I like how the extension might further articulate the triangle and sharp lines of perspective we're discussing.

***Short wall behind sofa** - It feels important to look at empty space here so if the wall can be expressed by something transparent, translucent, or open-aired (just frame of wall) so that we can fully visualize space beyond it is important. I'm also very curious if the separation between "living room" and "dining room" is merely portieres / breezy translucent curtains that can give us control on what is silhouetted behind, revealed, or concealed as we wish throughout the story?

***Space above the house (window ideas)** - I'm curious to know what your ideas are with the window objects above in one of your sketches. I do like the idea of glass, there and it made me wonder if there's a way to explore the ideas of ceiling entrapment, or symbolism in a more diluted way? The first notion that comes to mind is a ceiling also made of translucent fabric (that can be lit from above in various ways) and similarly feels like a visual extension of the portieres / curtains world?

***I'm very interested in the possibility of empty space** at the top of the place as Tom runs in towards the audience (pursued from upstage from shadow/ memory. In his opening monologue (at the landing extension downstage left), I'm curious if scenically things are revealed by appearance (floating in, materializing or swooping in / in silhouette upstage of him before our eyes?) - as if the empty alleyway he is in is being filled in by the apartment. Can you explore a design that may embrace this kind of mobility (i.e. is it constructed in a way that can be rolled in / dropped in / filled in from emptiness at the top?). Similarly, at the end of the story, I think it has a strong merit to pull structural items of the home away in his final monologue leaving Laura and Amanda with him as "ghosts" on an emptier stage.

***FYI - Jim and Laura scene** - Since most of the action takes place just above the proscenium (except for, hopefully Tom's monologues and scene with Amanda on the fire escape landing - which I think can be extended to further intimacy downstage with the audience as mentioned up), your sketches gave me an idea of allowing Jim to step far into the extreme downstage center area as he sits on the floor to talk with Laura. As the "emissary from reality", I think it may be a powerful choice to allow Jim to break the rules of our expectation of space and move that scene to an intimacy and new possibility with the audience. I'm not sure this affects any real scenic ideas in your sketches but wanted to let you know that looking at your design gave me this idea which I feel is a very strong direction I plan to make in the staging.



Figures about are sketches of collaboration between Director and Designer.

v. Appendix 5: The Glass Menagerie Summer Thesis Deadlines

What follows is a self-imposed schedule for completion of pre-production research for thesis rehearsals in the Summer of 2017.

Pre-rehearsal research and notation dates

*Property itemization / list complete with Susan	APRIL 14
*Read Early plays <i>Spring Storm / Not About Nightingales</i>	APRIL 19
*Prop and Scenic shop walkthrough with Susan / Riha	APRIL 21
*Read Tennessee Williams short plays	APRIL 26
*First read-thru with Cast and short table talk	APRIL 30
*Rehearsals for Gala performance	MAY 3 , MAY 4
*Photography session with Tennison / Irish for Wingfield portrait	MAY 3
*Gala scene fragment performance	MAY 6
*Re-read & analysis <i>Streetcar Named Desire</i>	MAY 10
*Re-read & analysis <i>The Rose Tattoo</i>	MAY 17
*Re-read & analysis <i>Cat on a Hot Tin Roof</i>	MAY 24
*Re-read & analysis <i>Orpheus Descending</i>	MAY 31
*Re-read & analysis <i>Summer and Smoke</i>	JUNE 7
*Re-read & analysis <i>Eccentricities of a Nightingale</i>	JUNE 11
*Re-read & analysis <i>Camino Real</i>	JUNE 14
*Re-read & analysis <i>Suddenly Last Summer</i>	JUNE 16
*Re-read & analysis <i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i>	JUNE 24
*Re-read & analysis <i>Night of the Iguana</i>	JUNE 26
*Re-read & analysis <i>Vieux Carre'</i>	JUNE 28
*Literary / other play takeaways	JULY 2
*Critical Commentary / Analysis takeaways	JULY 8
*ADD IN MEETING WITH RIHA/SHAWN MID-JULY	
*Production Histories and Reviews takeaways	JULY 15
*Read TOM: Lyle Leverich	JULY 22
*Read T. WILLIAMS: Mad Pilgrimage of Flesh: J.Lahr	JULY 29
*Read MEMOIRS: T Williams	AUG 5
*Autobiographical takeaways	AUG 12
* <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> table-talk preparation	AUG 19
* <i>The Glass Menagerie</i> first rehearsal (readthrough / tabletalk)	AUG 20

vi. Appendix 6: Production Casting Posting



The Glass Menagerie

CAST

Tom Wingfield
Amanda Wingfield
Laura Wingfield
Jim O'Connor

CHRIS TENNISON
MISCHA HUTCHINGS
MEGHAN McENERY
CODY SHELTON

ARTISTIC/PRODUCTION STAFF

Director
Scenic Designer
Scenic Design Assistant
Assistant Scenic Design
Lighting Designer
Costume Designer
Makeup Design
Sound Designer
Props Designer
Projections Designer
Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager
Assistant Stage Manager

COLE WIMPEE
MICHAEL RIHA
BRANDON ROYE
MARIAN WOOD
CATIE BLENCOWE
TANNER McALPIN
MONTANA McCOY
RYAN DORIN
SUSAN CRABTREE
SHAWN IRISH
MALLORY HEINS
KATIE O'REAR
HAILEY SCOTT

vii. Appendix 7: Pre-rehearsal Preparation Journal

What follows is a personal journal of reflections on the evolving process prior to rehearsals.

April 2nd.

It's a bit tricky to retroactively journal about this process. The only natural place to start, I guess is with the horse's mouth = Tennessee Williams himself. Williams has always fascinated me - his poetic qualities: lyrical dialogue, the emotional depth of his characters, and the iconic place his stories hold on the American dramatic consciousness. I read a few of his short plays about 7 years ago and was further intrigued by how much his writing reminded me of Casey's. There is this total commitment in his writing to his characters: their colorfulness, perversions, brash humanity that, combined with a flexible but authoritative sense of structure and detail, seemed to evoke that kind of work we were producing in NYC with Aztec Economy.

It was around the time of reading these short plays that I was awakened to a desire to direct a Tennessee Williams script. There was something that felt fresh in his language, a universality to his themes, an ethos and pathos that seemed naturally in tune with my own theatrical aesthetics. Since I was in the midst of prolifically putting on new works by Casey, I had to shelve this desire, but the collection I was reading planted a seed in my imagination: I wanted to direct some canonical classics, and Williams was a necessary goal in that fulfillment.

After completing the Lincoln Center Director's Lab in 2012, I receive annual invitations to a graduate salon presented by the graduating MFA candidates in lighting, scenic, costume, sound, and video design from NYU Tisch, Yale, California Institute of the Arts, and Carnegie Mellon at Fordham University. Attending the salon each year from 2012-2015, I noticed an interesting trend: "*The Glass Menagerie*" was consistently represented in costume sketches and scenic models from multiple classes and programs. In 2015, I brought this observation up to one of the graduating scenic designers and ask her opinion why such a pattern might be common. Her answer was that "*The Glass Menagerie*" is like catnip for a designer: it's immensely challenging because of its production history, common awareness, and balancing of possible interpretations.

I had never seen "*The Glass Menagerie*". In fact, it was only until recently that I was in NYC and bit the bullet and bought a ticket to see Sam Gold's production on Broadway. I had read it in high school and had only vague memories of it being a family drama about how a young man abandoned his mother and sister. After this encounter, I went and re-read the play and was immediately pulled in by its deceptive simplicity, its humor balanced with sadness, and the delicate tone it seemed to command. From this point forward, "*The Glass Menagerie*" was the forefront of my mind when thinking about a project to direct in grad school.

Each year, it was a finalist on my list of plays to direct. I think my first-year project, “*Hedda Gabler*” won out particularly due to 2 considerations: Firstly, *Hedda Gabler* felt somehow easier in tone and, without design support on a first year project, I couldn’t imagine how to accomplish the theatrical landscape that seemed necessary for *The Glass Menagerie*. Secondly, I learned that our Directing Studio first semester would focus on the work of Ibsen, which seemed a terrific training ground to prepare me for the other title. In my second year, I selected *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* due to the irresistible programming twist of doing it in tandem with Jeremiah directing “*Perestroika*” in the Spring. Also, the faculty was enthusiastic about the possibility and I was in the midst of a battle to make the Fay Jones Architecture collaboration work, so felt it was politically a good move to satiate that faculty support. “*Millennium Approaches*” moreover, served another criteria I had for a thesis project - it felt too big, too long, too political, too ‘not my story to tell’ from the onset - it intimidated the hell out of me. Through the 9-10 months of preparing for the project, I came to identify myself with the story so intimately that its difficult to imagine how I was alienated by it initially. The lesson I learned here is that the the things that make me afraid of a play might be the very reasons why I should accept the challenge to helm them.

Summer 2016.

As my final thesis decision was drawing near, I just kept finding myself through process of elimination of being unable to cross *The Glass Menagerie* off my list. It was like a dream I couldn’t bear to dismiss, and it made my final three submission list (in addition to *Fefu and her Friends* and, the wild card, *The Battlefield Where the Moon Says I Love You*) which I gave to Landman for the season selection committee. When I heard that the decision was made to accept ‘*The Glass Menagerie*’, my feeling was less like the one which I had regarding ‘*Millennium*’, which had been a sense of “Oh Shit!” fear, and more a sense of recognition-- like “that feels just right”. I think all along I was hedging my other choices to somehow ensure that the Tennessee Williams choice would be chosen. Had the U of A been a department of more adventurous programming, the other two options would’ve been riskier to submit lest they get officially chosen. It was not a conscious manipulation per se, but in hindsight I wonder if I was somehow always aware that if I put up before the U of A season committee a title like *The Glass Menagerie* next to a site specific, location-changing story such as ‘*Fefu*’ and a 26-hour poetic adaptation such as ‘*Battlefield*’, I was guaranteeing the acceptance of the title that I really, deeply wanted.

Late October.

As late October 2016 went by, on the eve of the presidential election, I was feeling quite confident in *The Glass Menagerie*, particularly after working on such a political behemoth ‘*Millennium*’, it felt like the correct kind of creative follow-up: leaving behind the overt politics,

getting closer to the heart of a family drama, grasping at more psychological issues related to memory and guilt. Trump's victory in November tilted this confidence on end. Immediately my mind raced to Shakespeare's *Richard III* (we were in Shakespeare studio that semester, so my imagination was drifting there often), Ionesco's *Rhinoceros*, the politics of Brecht, etc. "How does *The Glass Menagerie* speak to the cultural and political fallout that a Trump administration is going to reflect on its society?," I asked myself. Post-November election, I struggled for some time with the relevancy of *Glass Menagerie* in a radically changing political climate. I considered talking with Landman and faculty about a show change. I knew time was short and if I was going to suggest a title change, I needed to do it quick and with a fervor of confident vision to justify the shift. I started looking at plays, but promptly realize that I need to return - first - to *The Glass Menagerie* and see what its value might be in 2017 and to audiences at our University. *Lysistrata* by Aristophanes (a titled I had proposed and written a defense for last year) was on the docket in February to be directed by Morgan Hicks, followed by Jeremiah's, *Angels in America: Perestroika* and Amy Herzberg's directing of *Assassins* by Sondheim. All of these shows are a continuation of the political-themed season the Department had chosen in lieu of the election year. *The Glass Menagerie* would present a definable break from the direct politics of the previous titles, perhaps in a necessary way for our audiences. I studied the underlying politics of the story: Why does Williams reference Guernica and the Spanish revolution? The labor strikes in "otherwise peaceful cities" like Chicago, Cleveland, and St Louis? In his opening stage directions, he describes our world as "one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living-units of lower middle-class population...symptomatic of the impulse of this largest and fundamentally enslaved section of American society to avoid fluidity and differentiation and to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism". Why is it important that Tom works in a warehouse that, in its mundanity, makes him want his *brains battered* in? The power that *The Glass Menagerie* has, I realized for the first time very lucidly, is in its grip on our imaginations into the struggle for happiness and survival of the Wingfields, and - through this understanding - we might be drawn deeper into the socio-economic messages of the story, and then understand how the politics of our world effect the very personal relationships in our lives. Through his painfully autobiographical fiction, Tennessee Williams awakens us to the frailties of capitalism via the Great Depression, the tragic consequences of paternal development via the abandonment of the senior Wingfield, the desperate drive for security via Amanda's hustling to guarantee a better life for her somewhat incompetent children, the entrapment of desire and creativity amongst the urban lower-class due to a social structure that boxes them in, and old ways of life that are on the verge of destruction via Amanda's fantasies of her Dixie youth and references to the immanency of World War II: "All the world was waiting for bombardments!" And I considered, *The Glass Menagerie* unpolitical?!

After this soul searching and reanalysis, I decided to let my thesis be an examination of these merits. All things considered, *The Glass Menagerie*'s poignancy lies in its universality: the politics of the family, the broken home, guilt and memory in a society where individuals seek

escape from the anxieties of their lives by memorializing a more forgiving past or an illusory future.

December 2016.

In my research, I found it so compelling that Tennessee Williams' had so many drafts, fragments, versions, short stories, screenplays, and short play working versions of *The Glass Menagerie*. Other earlier titles include *Portrait of a Girl in Glass* and *The Gentleman Caller: A comedy!* In fact, I'm reading how Tennessee Williams never felt a work was truly complete and was making minor revisions throughout his life to his first successful play. The two most popular scripts are the Acting Version (most commonly produced) and The Definitive Text (or Reader's version). In comparing the two, I was drawn to the latter for a variety of reasons: its inclusion of Tennessee Williams' production notes as a prologue and essay, "The Catastrophe of Success" as an epilogue make the version a more thoroughly evocative text to understand the writer, himself. The even more compelling reason for considering The Definitive Text was its use of the magic lantern slides (expressed through projected images and text legends) throughout the action of the play by stage directions.

These slides were omitted promptly in the first production by Eddie Dowling (producer and performer of the role of Tom). I've read an argument that the removal of these slides had as much to do with the dominating influence of Dowling (stripping away a conceived superfluous idea by an unknown 33-year-old playwright) as it did with the common theory that Laurette Taylor's performance as Amanda was so genius in its portrayal that adding any production conceit to it, felt unnecessary. I have a sense that perhaps both are true, but the idea of projected images and slides would've been certainly Avant Garde to the naturalism of American drama in 1945. It is not farfetched to imagine that Tennessee Williams acquiesced the removal of the device due to these circumstances, and not necessarily due to a true belief that they weren't effective or of value to the story's vision. Indeed, his description in the production notes in the definitive text discuss the motive behind his screen device, I believe primarily because he sees value in their impulse.

Interestingly, the Chicago and Broadway premieres set into practice a tradition perhaps antithetical to the original concept of the play, so that the unconventional approach (to include a screen device) is also the original approach. It struck me that the rarity of the device in theatrical production was in itself a valid consideration for exploring its value as a thesis in 2017, and so I chose in early December to make the Definitive text our production's version to stage.

I purchased a slew of commentary and criticism of absorb (chiefly: *Theatre of Tennessee Williams* - B. Murphy, *Bloom's Guide: The Glass Menagerie* - H. Bloom, *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations on The Glass Menagerie*, *A Student Handbook to the Plays of Tennessee*

Williams - K. Weiss, *The Glass Menagerie's Teacher's Guide Grades 9-12* - G. Levine, *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* - L. Leverich, *Tennessee Williams: Mad Pilgrimage of the Flesh* - J. Lahr, and Tennessee Williams's *Memoirs*) over the Holiday break in between doing the Crystal Bridges and Artist's Lab gigs, I started to sift through critical essays on the play to prepare an initial analysis for Landman.

I'd previously chosen Les Wade to serve on my thesis committee - before I'd even decided on the title. After a meeting with him in his office in August, I felt his open mind and exposure to a variety of theatrical forms / practices made him an exciting addition when paired with someone like, say Patricia Martin, who I already had a hunch that I wanted to ask to serve as well. My sense of Patricia's approach is one of a more rigid and specific way to do theatre, and I really wanted on my committee two intelligent faculty members who might not be initial choices for the 8 other MFA candidates needing committee members next year. Luckily, Les and Patricia both agreed and so, completed by Landman, I feel I have a very strong triumvirate to challenge and support me in the ultimate evaluation of the project.

January 2017.

In early January, as some early meetings with Landman began to prepare me for design meetings (the first to occur in late February), I realized how quickly things were escalating and began to spend considerable time each week on articulating core questions the play asks and how to articulate my vision and analysis most effectively to my designers. Two weekly discussions commenced over the course of about 3 weeks with Landman over coffee in the afternoons at Arsaga's on the Depot. The meetings began with reading through the play - scene by scene. The first meeting we barely made it through the entirety of scene 1. Often times, Landman and I would switch characters reading through a scene and stop and discuss a particular moment and a line. I recall us going into a far-reaching discussion about Amanda in scene 2 and what her objective / tactic is with Laura as she motivates her to care more about her future. I had already sensed that Amanda couldn't be portrayed over-simplistically as "the annoying mother" - that she needed our empathy and respect despite her potentially aggravating qualities. I hadn't clearly defined the heart of the character until the examination of Amanda in this particularly early scene with Landman. He asked me what Amanda really wants. I said 'security'. He said 'why and what for?'. As the line of inquiry progressed, it found its voice in the conditions of The Great Depression, and a vision of a woman who had raised two "unusual" children by herself - children who were now adults, but nonetheless struggling to fly (to use the Wingfield metaphor). The purposes of the Arsaga discussions were to lay the foundation for a thorough analysis and prepare me for mock-design meetings (2 of which I would give to Jeremiah and Landman in mid-February).

Landman's questions and critical insights were very helpful in digging into places of the story I hadn't fully considered or had misinterpreted. One particularly issue I had struggled with is how masked Tom's homosexuality was - as an autobiographical reading of Tennessee Williams himself. I had read into Amanda's taking Tom's D.H. Lawrence literature as a masked motive to resell the books for money, but Landman pointed into the thematic interests of Lawrence coupled with Amanda's description of them as 'filth' as evidence that Tennessee Williams was giving a code to those in the audience that could understand Tom's similar nature. This theory is further advanced by Amanda's failure to seriously persuade Tom to marry as a means of possible security: deep down Amanda must know - albeit subliminally - that her son is a homosexual. The closest she may possibly come to such an admission of understanding is when she tells Tom, "both of my children - they're *unusual* children." This insight, was one of many from the Arsaga discussions that helped refine my understanding of what is occurring in the story. I also remember some discussions about Jim in the Arsaga's meetings - -- this is where we kind of ended as we were running out of time for the mock design meetings. The opening question I had about Jim was the level of ambivalence he had to his own actions. Is Jim even (or ever) conscious of his leading on of Amanda in an attempt to relive his glory days in the eyes of an adoring fan / admirer? Or is Jim totally aloof to his own charm and consequences of desire? I eventually came to a reading that Jim is the right 'gentleman caller' for Laura - Tom chose wisely - and that the scene between Laura and Jim is not just an illusion, but something magically *real* happening between them. Jim needs Laura to satisfy his hero complex and ultimate leadership potential, while Laura needs Jim to fulfill a dream of union to break her away from her lonelier diversions from reality. The fact that Jim cannot muster the courage to leave Betty (my reading is that he clearly does not have the connection with her that he seems to want to portray), is the ultimate irony: Jim succumbs to the very conventionality he seeks to escape from - for falling in love and marrying a 'shy and crippled' girl does not fit into the aspirational delusions of grandeur in Jim's inaccurate vision of himself.

Around late January, due to a need brought to the table by Patricia to have the play cast by the 3rd design meeting, we held a meeting with Joe, Amy, Morgan, Jason and myself to pin down dates earlier in the semester to do auditions. I had hoped to cast near the end of the semester, but it was more of a personal rather than practical need (I feel kind of strange being around and working in class projects at times with actors I'm trying to direct in a larger project. I'm not sure why this bothers me - am I afraid of the vulnerability? Do I sense there's too much familiarity if they're working with me or seeing me too often outside of those primary rehearsals? Do I think they'll find out I'm a fraud? I'm not sure the answer. I think it may have to do with my own fear of not being objective enough about their work if I'm overexposed to them as well?). At any rate, my hope to cast later in the semester was to allow some distancing before returning at the start of the next school year. It wasn't an altogether practical argument, and so I accepted Patricia's need to have ample time for design work applied and we moved auditions to early March with callbacks and casting completed by Spring Break.

February 2017.

The analysis I prepared went through a checklist that Landman had provided Jeremiah and I months before. It included the gamut: thematic observations, sensory associations, character metaphors and profiles, structural outlining, spectacle descriptions, and detailed notes regarding production history, and personal vision for the story. His initial notes on my draft were chipping away at my more academic language and encouraging my writing to go deeper into a subjective point of view (as an approach) to analysis. I found the reworking of the draft to satisfy Landman's pointers to be both frustratingly challenging but somehow necessary in coming to terms with how to articulate my ideas to designers. I've discovered that the format of my analysis (typed essay-style) combined with a pressurized exposure to critical commentary lead my writing into a rather dry, technical style that sometimes failed to see the forest for the trees. Often times my descriptive prowess would beat around the bush of a point I wanted to make rather than going for the heart - or the jugular.

After an initial analysis draft, I went back and simplified answers and tried to speak/type more from the heart on essential questions that the outline required of me. This second draft, though awkward initially, seemed to ultimately free me up a bit from my own intellectualism and objective distancing from the material.

The process was evolving quickly from the analysis paper into the first mock-design meeting with Jeremiah and Landman - which I think also justified Landman's notes on articulating things more subjectively (we were running out of time to make my case to designers), and so in the evening before - as preparation I was at Mom and Dad's new house off Maple and grabbed some poster board. I cut the poster board into roughly 10-12 topics that I knew needed a basic acknowledgement in my design meeting: THE BIG WHATS & WHYS, THE STORY AS A WHOLE, MEMORY (studies on memory) SETTING (this was quite involved as it meant I needed to talk about the choice of Tom the narrator being set in 1967), STRUCTURE, CHARACTER DISCUSSION, SCENIC IMPRESSIONS, LIGHTING IMPRESSIONS, COSTUME IMPRESSIONS, SOUND AND VIDEO IMPRESSIONS, and WILD CARD ideas. I'm not sure why I chose poster board - maybe because I felt like notecards would be a more effective way to help me get through the discussion that a typed paper (but notecards would be too small to convey all the points I needed to recall for each subject). I also thought handwriting the ideas would help me connect emotionally to the ideas as I presented them to Landman and Jeremiah.

I was up quite late finalizing the poster cards and was able to get through the mock design meeting with Jeremiah and Landman quite well. I felt really good about it -- and the notes I got from Jeremiah and Landman were positive and helpful. Jeremiah asked me to focus more at the top on why *The Glass Menagerie* is relevant and why I wanted to direct it. He also had some

great specific notes on language clarity of things I said that came off as confusing. His notes were on point because the areas he addressed, I realized in the moment were unclear because the ideas behind them were not fully refined yet for me. We ran out of time for Landman's feedback, so he emailed me responses - many that mirrored Jeremiah's in asking me for more clarity and specificity in essential areas.

In between the mocks, as I was still reworking my analysis paper and grading Jenny's Theatre Appreciation class assignments on new play treatments, I came to a pretty revelatory observation: out of the 50 new plays I was grading, a solid 40 or more of them centered around an autobiographic experience of the student leaving their hometowns / families and struggling to follow certain dreams to lead them on versus their obligations and desire to be close to those they loved. This essential question: *obligation to one's own destiny / happiness vs obligation to those one loves* was what I identified as the largest question of *The Glass Menagerie* for myself. In asking, "How is this play relevant to University audiences?", here in the form of Jenny's freshman students a stunning answer: the issue Tom is dealing with in the play is a question our students are *living with* for the very first time, very powerfully. I decided to incorporate this as an intro into my design pitch.

A few days passed, and I prepared for the 2nd mock design meeting with Jeremiah and Landman. This one, to further progress the presentation, I elaborated on their questions and typed the speech out on computer paper. Landman reiterated that time management was essential to the success of the meeting and encouraged me to either memorize or type out portions. This meeting was set up for Monday afternoon following the Tuesday morning design meeting and the mock meeting felt like a sophomore slump. Perhaps it was anxiety about the next day's official meeting or the translation of thoughts to a computer screen print-out, or a combination of factors, but I felt less connected to the pitch in the 2nd meeting and even at one or two places lost my train of thought -- or became aware of tangentially going to places I felt were unnecessary -- and it made me very self-conscious and sort of embarrassed. After the meeting, Landman seemed to imply that I was ready for the official meeting and encouraged me, "you know this play." That evening, I began to think it was helpful to have a disappointing mock meeting so to rebound strong for the official event. I discarded the paper print out and cut out another 12 poster board cards to revisit delivering the pitch in a way that helped me creatively and emotionally connect to the conversation (and thus, the team that would be joining me).

The first design meeting went over quite well - in an otherwise busy day - had a big Viewpoints presentation immediately following the meeting! Primarily I managed time effectively, going for about 45 min and allowing 15 min for wrap-up and questions / open discussion. My first instinct was to set up a meeting with Riha - who would be travelling a lot in the coming weeks to see if we could get a coherent vision of a scenic world operating. We met the following week in the University Theatre for a few minutes as strike had commenced for *Lysistrata*. The main take-

aways were positively: we see a lot of the same things in the same place - i.e. fire escape downstage left, table and Amanda's world upstage center, Laura's couch and menagerie more downstage right. Riha seems to have grabbed on to the 'cinematic quality' of the pitch - but I think he is envisioning that notion more in a 'stage framing' quality rather than through video projection. I sense in the meeting how he is, via power of suggestion, trying to talk me out of the projected imagery and titles. He also wants things a bit tighter and claustrophobic, where I imagine things more expansive. He moves to stand onstage to demonstrate the boundaries of the scenic world he imagines. I'm acquiescent, though hesitant. I want to let him sketch something before I categorically rule out an idea. It's a tricky relationship because as Chair of the Dept. he's both my executive producer and my scenic designer, and so I want to be sure I'm being fair to both roles we're playing to each other. I do understand a justification for a tighter scenic world (i.e. 'the pretty trap') and so am open to its potential. My own sense of expansive space is aesthetic (Tom deliberately acknowledges it's a play, and so the use of grander theatrical space makes sense in a sort of Brechtian way, coupled with spacial expansion in memory exercises) but also selfish (I want to use more depth of space considering this is the largest stage I've ever been able to work on in a proscenium theatre).

March 2017: Casting and Design meetings.

Since I had not seen the play ever in production, Landman encouraged me to set up readings with actors who may not be auditioning to hear the play. I decided to use the opportunity as well to pre-audition certain actors in case my auditions didn't provide actors sufficiently capable of playing the roles. I scheduled one reading with Kate Frank (Amanda), Steven Marzolf (Tom), Laura Shatkus (Laura) and Jason Engstrom (Jim). Another reading with Jenny McKnight (Amanda), Mark Landon-Smith (Tom), Meghan McEnery (Laura) and Jason Shipman (Jim) was scheduled a few days later. This scenario was changed a few times however, initially because I remembered Laura and Steven had dated and realized it might be an awkward fit. I switched out Meghan and Laura in the reading composites, but as the days approached an unforeseen event changed things: Jenny's father died in Florida. Due to Jason and Laura's rehearsal schedule with *Intimate Apparel* and T2 and Jenny's need to leave town for the week, we realized there was no good time to reschedule in sight, and so I ended up doing one reading with Kate, Steven, Meghan and Engstrom at my folks' house in early March.

The reading was very illuminating: I tape recorded and time recorded (1 hr. / 43 min) the reading. Mom made some snacks and we discussed the play for a few minutes. Steven has directed it twice and gave me some great pointers: 1. He tried to go "too big" with his initial production. 2. He made Tom always watching the action in his second production which didn't really work. 3. He reiterated that the play should feel claustrophobic. Also, Kate said the last time she acted onstage (10 years previous in a graduate production) was as Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*! This was surprising to me, because one of the reasons I was further compelled to

direct it was due to an understanding that the production had not been done at the University in 20+ years. I realized that there is no official record of the graduate / studio shows - I was merely tracking the official production history from the U of A website and framed archive in the hall of the University Theatre.

Kate had some great insights into the character we briefly discussed, then we commenced to reading. Key takeaways: Tom and Amanda as the central dynamic of the play. Their scenes together (SC 4, SC 5) in the center of the play are critical to being specific about. They play out longer in reading aloud than they seem to in text and need a sharp sense of event / moment-to-moment work to keep the audience engaged with their relationship changes. Humor! The play is funnier than it seems at times. We should embrace that as often and as far as possible. Do a thorough comedic evaluation of moments in the text that Tennessee Williams has deliberately or inadvertently included. Engstrom's reading of Jim was excellent: loveable and vain at the same time. An actor with a strong sense of vocal quality is helpful for Tom (Marzolf's vocal instrument is pretty well developed and it is hard to imagine an actor with an inferior vocal quality - regardless of his other acting virtues - being able to take us on the journey we need to sonically). Critical takeaway: Meghan McEnery could be an incredible Laura. I was really secretly auditioning Kate for a possible Amanda if needed, but the real insight was Meghan's read for Laura. She is so authentically the character (and from St Louis): she has an honesty, a restraint and fragility that just screams (in the shyest of ways of course), "Laura!". It was Landman's suggestion to ask her to read for the role as a long shot and I think his intuition was pretty spot on. I spoke with Meghan as we sat down to storyboard for *Retrograde* and asked her if she had any interest in auditioning even though she didn't do the general call. Her eyes immediately lit up and I could tell she was sincerely and confidently interested. I started scheduling the callbacks around her and Mischa Hutchinson as my 2 strongest Laura candidates. A final takeaway: I couldn't help but thinking as I listened to the tempo and rhythm about the suspense and explosion technique Williams uses to softly build and release tension throughout the play. Its a very quiet play at times with character motions restrained and specifically simple. I definitely should live-mic this production to allow for honest, quiet moments. This instinct I had early on anyway and I shared it in the design meeting, but the reading made the choice feel correct.

I'm finding difficulty in pinning Riha down somewhat (he's travelling between USITT and Vegas). Enjoyed his first design sketches -- though I am encouraging him to embolden his natural design (lengthening the field and depth of perspective, allowing for illusion and expansive space to combine with his claustrophobic world). I hope he is receptive to my encouragement to chase his initial impulses because it would solve both of our artistic struggles with the scenic world. My fear is that he will not understand the strength of his initial impulses and will thus maintain a conservative / realistic universe. His sketch designs flirt -- and I think want to go further, so perhaps it is a matter of trying to embrace the more radical desires laced in

his floorplan. We're seeing differently as it relates to screen devices (text/images) so that's still unresolved. It feels a bit wonky to have a designer so categorically ignore a core concept a director brings to an initial design meeting. I'd be more assertive with him to stick to the choice I'm leading with if it weren't for the fact that he's also my producer (chair of the department). Because of the dual role of our relationships, I need to take it choice-by-choice and encourage his key artistic strengths in the meantime before I can persuade him of the aesthetic we're chasing.

Callback scheduling was a bit stressful. A combination of other University priorities (Angels in America: Perestroika performances, Assassins rehearsals, Avenue Q callbacks) slightly truncated my time slots and I had to completely re-think them to schedule as afternoon callbacks - Landman cancelled a Viewpoints class to accommodate. Landman asked me to limit sides to 2 pages as it can be helpful for actor preparation, so my hope is that the callbacks themselves will go smoothly and I can get a good enough read on what I need in little time. Key lesson learned in hindsight: Keep sides short in callbacks - they always read longer to the ear than they do on paper and it gives actors more preparation (and more time for in the room adjustments) if I keep sides to 1-3 pages maximum! I was excited to consider Mischa for Laura -- although in her extroversion, she is nothing at all like Laura, she has other qualities that make me think she'd be a terrific Laura and I'm always excited about casting a good actor in a type of role she wouldn't normally be considered for. Mischa herself responded in an email to me, "Never in my life did I think I'd get to read for Laura!". I thought her readings of Laura were quite strong - a bit forceful - she primarily had trouble getting the ease / grace / fragile nature of the character. Mischa has a hard edge to her that wants to fight, so I decided to see how she would read for Amanda. Being the oldest student actress in our department, I was reluctant to take this obvious choice, but I wasn't really seeing exactly what I needed in Mollie Armour (originally my top choice for Amanda, Mollie had the southern belle and vivacious energy necessary for Amanda, but there was something that felt that it would be challenging to pull her out of a caricature world. Also, despite my fascination with Mollie as an actress, I've found her a bit tricky to work with regarding our personal chemistry), so Mischa read on the Tuesday callbacks for Amanda. In between one session, as I pulled another actor into the room to substitute reading with her, Mischa was clearly emotional - tears in her eyes- and I asked her if she was Ok - or needed a break. She responded, "No, its not this. This is good for me. Let's continue". Despite the fact that she was reading strong for Amanda, this moment made me think that Mischa was connecting to her own personal history (her mom as a single mother to her) and was becoming emotionally connected to the struggles of Amanda. I later learned that the emotion in the moment was due to an earlier masterclass session with Dael Orlandersmith that had made her uncomfortably emotionally exposed. None-the-less, the sense that Mischa would from her own personal experience be able to properly understand Amanda's struggles started to make her a clear candidate for the role. I also have found Mischa easy to work with - and have a positive outside of school relationship with her (she's met my parents and we're occasional drinking buddies),

and so I was tempted to cast her if there was a clear fit anyway. Her portrayal of Amanda differed from Mollie's in that she was anti-caricature. She got the struggle - the single mother in the great depression - she plays action quite well, but at one final side reading I asked her to "put in" the southern belle dialect. I am interested in Amanda 'putting on the role' in much the way Edwina Williams did -- not being a Southerner herself, but something she attached her identity to for some reason, so long as the inconsistency of dialect is clear to the audience as a character choice rather than sloppy acting. With this in mind, I explained to Mischa that I needed to see an Amanda who could dip into her own inner 'Scarlet O'Hara' and with that adjustment, Mischa was able to give a sense of colorful caricature that Mollie was otherwise doing pretty consistently. Since Meghan was just 100% authentically Laura, I started to get a casting vision of going for the less caricatured choices - and the most 'real' choices to counterbalance a potential non-reality of aspects of the scenic spectacle. Meghan's issue was her lack of vocal power, but one certain thing Riha and I seem on the same page about is the idea of live mic-ing the actors, so the idea of casting her is in alignment with that production choice and can allow for her inability to project well to not be a fatal flaw in her portrayal. Otherwise, the nuances of her voice are just excellent for the character.

I ruled out Courtney Jensen early on. She read better for Laura than Amanda - but I knew Morgan was interested in her and felt she wasn't my strongest option for either role. Despite having played the role of Laura 10 years earlier to Bill Rogers' Tom (humorously during *Detroit* rehearsals, Bill explained that Arts Center of the Ozarks cast him surprisingly in a twist to explore Tom as an older man revisiting his memories of youth, which prompted me to wink at him and tell him that was my tactic, too), Halley Mayo was essentially claimed for *Fun Home* for T2 in September - and this solved a problem I was having anyway: I wasn't really interested in her for the role and thought she might be gunning for it. I'm not sure why but I've had problems seeing Halley play action and making clear, bold choices in her performances. Perhaps I'm not seeing her full potential as an actress in my imagination yet. Some surprising and illuminating callbacks for Amanda and Laura came in the callbacks: Ashley Nolan had a great grip of Amanda - her desperation and bipolarity became quite clear in her reading. Madi Watkins and Maggie Wood both were strong Laura's. If I didn't feel I could and *should* for thesis (and political) purposes cast within the graduate troupe, I would've considered Maggie Wood much closer for Laura. NaTosha DeVon read well, but a tad flat for Laura as well. Ultimately, when Mischa and Meghan read respectively for Amanda and Laura - they look like they could be Mother & Daughter! -- it felt right. I cast it as such.

The casting of Tom was less of a balancing act. I had a strong feeling from the get-go that Austin Ashford or Chris Tennison were the most intriguing Tom's for me: their vocal instruments and powerful stage presences particularly made me consider them my top candidates. My chief concerns with Austin were his lack of experience - but his powerful emotional connection to material might well make up for that - and this could be the project that he needs to bite his teeth

into for graduate school to deeper understand dramatic texts. It also fit into a concept of the play with NaTosha DeVon as Laura -- are these also ‘unusual’ children because they are mixed race? I studied the unemployment rate of African Americans in St Louis in the 1930s’ - it was at close to 60%. In this concept, if Amanda is white, it means that Mr. Wingfield was black - that Amanda married out of race, a bold idea for her time that, with his abandonment, set up the inevitable consequences of her life and in our production would for better or worse embrace the stereotype of black fathers leaving their homes at higher rates than white fathers. What also would it mean to keep Amanda’s discussion in scene one of, “I’ll be the darky and do the dishes” and use of the word “nigger” in front of her own mixed-race children. This would further cement Amanda’s denial of facts and might alienate her from the audience. It’s a careful but fascinating thesis-like study to imagine a production. I researched black production histories of the play (one in 1947 by Howard University, I was astonished to find so quickly after the premiere). Spoke with Landman about these histories -- one from a theatre in Los Angeles in the 80’s made a white-faced Jim played by a black actor! Despite the beginnings of these explorations, I didn’t even get the opportunity to read Austin for the role. I was told by Amy Herzberg he was going to be in *The Champion* - Amy Evan’s powerful Nina Simon play read last year at T2’s New Play Festival - where Austin originated the role - the same month I would be doing *The Glass Menagerie* at the University. This disappointed me, but I realized if I contested it, it may create unnecessary issues. Austin probably would benefit in terms of long term contacts more in the other project (and the role is not as dramatically challenging as Tom Wingfield, which I had anticipated a lot of heavy work to get Austin up to par). Ultimately, this conflict of interest solved my problem - I had been 50/50 on Tennison vs Ashford on the Tom role. I like Tennison because it was a great 3rd year thesis project - and something about the dude just screams, “cast me in a Tennessee Williams play!”. I also trust Tennison’s experience and I think he’s more equipped for the challenge of the role. As we went into auditions the only other actors who showed me a strong Tom were Justin Mackey (who was great as both Tom and Jim, but I wanted to release him to Morgan as I knew he was a top candidate for *Avenue Q*), Trey Smith (who was terrific reading as Tom and could’ve fulfilled my concept to do an mixed race Tom/Laura combo - alas, I didn’t anticipate him to read so well and read him too late in the process as more of a training/conciliatory exercise - had I read him the first day, he may have earned the role of Tom, but it would’ve created issues because Morgan and Jason insisted on having NaTosha in *Avenue Q*, essentially ruling out my racial exploration idea from multiple angles), and James Miskimen (who read overall the boldest for the role, emotionally surrendering to the full potentiality of Tom unlike any of the others). Working with James simultaneously on *Retrograde*, James needs some real training - vocally and physically - but he has the heart and instinct of a very good actor if he can get his discipline together. Tennison’s readings of the role were not all that mind-blowing, but perhaps I was imagining him to be so perfect for the role that my expectations were unduly high. He nonetheless took adjustments fairly well and underplayed / restrained his choices which I felt made it a solid groundwork to start work with him from. Tennison’s strong history and working relationship with Mischa - and my understanding of the critical dynamic of

the play being Tom and Amanda, made it a clear choice to ultimately pair them off and let their working dynamic be the foundation for the production

The final casting consideration was for Jim O'Connor and it was a tough running between Grant Hockenbrough and Cody Shelton. They both were MFA 3rd years in need of a thesis and poor singers (thus ruling them out from Morgan) - I knew from the beginning they were not fully capable to play Tom Wingfield, but both certainly terrific in different ways for Jim O'Connor. To not cast one of them in the role would not only be foolish on my part creatively, but stupid for me politically with Amy Herzberg and my fellow MFA grad-mates. Cody made the biggest impressions on me regarding playing Jim as a vain/alooof but altogether loveable in spite of his flaws type of guy. His heart felt right for the role. Cody also dressed the part -- noticeably making a professional effort to dress nice for the auditions and each callback session. There's a likeable ease and trustworthiness to Cody that makes me think our audience will love him as Jim and see why Laura does too. Grant has even a bit more charisma, but it comes off as a bit more macho and manipulative. Grant's great strength is as the 'emissary from the world of reality' that Tom describes about Jim. Grant literally feels like he could saltily ground the play in a powerfully unique way. Assessing this horse race between two talented and appropriate actors I looked at other factors -- who was on the mainstage most recently (Grant) and in a sizeable role (Grant as lead in *Metal Children*). The opportunity edged more to Cody based on these criteria. Who had I the most working relationship with (Cody - as Tesman in *Hedda Gabler*, *Long Day's Journey into Night* scenework, *Titus Andronicus* scenework)? This edged more to Cody as I hadn't really worked with Grant except for on *Hedda Gabler* where I found him a bit difficult to take my adjustments. Due to these factors and the effort to dress appropriately for the auditions, Cody Shelton was cast, completing my acting team: Mischa Hutchins (Amanda), Chris Tennison (Tom), Meghan McEnergy (Laura) and Cody Shelton (Jim). I brought the cast list into my 2nd design meeting and announced it. I feel very strongly about the decision and ultimately realized I cast the people with whom I feel I have the strongest relationships with outside of the project.

In the midst of callbacks had a sit-down meeting with Tanner for costumes with Patricia observing. Tanner talks about sepia tones that burst alive into color with light -- very nice! Tanner makes me feel very confident, he has a style and manner about him that feels easy and strong to work with simultaneously. Tanner thinks that Tom dresses casually for Jim's arrival in SC 6 / 7. Before I can interject, Pat questions the choice (I think correctly) and raises a critical issue of how to approach Tom: Does he invite Jim knowing that it will fail, but to show Amanda the futility of her drive for the gentleman caller, thus releasing him from his obligation to stay? OR Does he invite Jim as the best possible (albeit, perhaps flawed) candidate to secure his sister a husband and thus releasing him of his obligation to stay? Pat helps clarify this question about Tom's intentions with Jim (which would dictate how much he himself dressed up for the event). She seems more inclined toward the latter choice and I agree that it is more positive (the former choice would imply a cruelty in Tom's choice to humiliate Laura in such a scenario, thereby

making him harder to ultimately empathize with), but I was having trouble seeing how Tom could possibly think that Jim could work with Amanda. I told them I'd test the choices in the callbacks with actors, which I did. It became clear to me that Patricia's instinct was right. Tom, in his desperation must think Jim could work (it is his only shot of escape) and in alignment with my idea about Jim being, in actuality, a perfect romantic fit for Laura, the choice plays into my hand that Tom's instinct about Jim as a solution actually works. Then, tragically Jim's cowardice is even more so the destruction of all hope in the play.

As of March 27th, I felt like I was in a pretty good place and made a lot of headway scenically. Meetings with Riha originally were moving towards - after the initial design meeting - more realistic set than I felt (although strong in its own merits) was a bit betraying a sense of the visual world that I was more interested in: essentially a psychic space / void or blank canvas to help represent the more illusory quality of the world and memory so that we're brought into as an audience. So that sense of time and place and realism are brought into the audience's imagination the closer we get to the performers onstage i.e. furniture pieces, properties, of course costumes and ultimately emotional reality of the work of the actors. And in this way, we're in a place now through discussions with scenic designer we are more in a domain that I was initially interested in which is - taking the magic lantern screen - these iconic legends and images that T Williams originally wrote into the play and making them an essential / integral part of the design world. In fact, the idea of beginning with "what is the surface for projection" as an approach to scenic design for glass menagerie really intrigued me. Based on Riha's first sketches and the feedback that I gave him on those sketches could have moved in a direction that I would've ultimately been happy with. But I think the suggestions I was making to his sketches (i.e. exploring certain choices he was making to further articulate limits - natural line of ground plan from stage left to fire escape and pushing it all the way downstage; also opening up more depth of perspective), These notes were about opening up the space into a less stiff realism and really creating more of a psychic reality to the world. These notes didn't land on Riha - I sent an email which he was in St Louis and I mentioned Tom's opening monologue "*I GIVE you truth in the pleasant guise of Illusion. This is a memory play. Not realistic*" as an argument for a less realistic sense of spectacle. The follow-up meeting, we had in person which was very quick - he pulled out a book. A photo he showed me in black and white -- I don't remember the production -- but it had a greenhouse type of aesthetic. Two large wall surfaces with planes of window lights. He said, "Is this something you kind of see?" It immediately evoked an image I had that was close to making the final cut of the initial design images for the first design meeting. It made the final 10 - but it was a painting of a greenhouse structure. Playing on the metaphor of roses, jonquils, fragile entrapment - and maintaining T Williams production notes of translucent walls, etc. So the photograph did strike a chord with me. Within 2 days he had another set of sketches / groundplan that followed the inspiration of that photograph. He was in Vegas at another conference and Shawn Irish shared his new concept at our second design meeting. The plan had some small adjustment questions (ramping and inclined floors which I was unclear on the intent, the fire

escape entry was on the inside of the projection wall, *The Glass Menagerie* shelf was a bit too DSC and needed to be pulled back more SR).

I saw Sam Gold's production on Broadway. Minimal / "essentialist" set: one table. Victrola. Joe Mantello was a solid Tom. Sally Field was good but not mind blowing. The concept scenically was stark and realistic and so it was the opposite of where I want to go in terms of 'illusionistic'. They wanted to present a world of harsh reality / truths. I respected this choice and the commitment to it, but ultimately I think it worked counterintuitive to T Williams' vision. They really nailed the humor quite well - it succeeded particularly well with Tom/Amanda relationship.

I'll still some choices in the moment-to-moment work. The Achilles Heel of the production however, was the portrayal of Jim. Finn Wintrock was a fine actor, but his aloofness and vanity dominated the character. Although Jim has both of those qualities, its Jim's heart that we must fall in love with (with Laura) otherwise the heartbreak is not complete in the story. The Broadway portrayal made me feel Laura is lucky to get Jim. My reading of the play however, is that the ultimate tragedy is that Jim is Laura's best possible choice for happiness and vice versa. But Jim chooses conventionality and goes against his own deepest interests. This feels important to me, and it was a fatal flaw of the production to not let Jim be more 3 dimensional. We love him in spite of his vanity/aloofness and I did not love Jim in Sam Gold's production.

Had a meeting over Spring Break with Irish and Riha (they see how set I am in the desire to pursue projection so Irish is designing video). The projection interests me because its the rarer choice in production and as thesis (as well as going to the cow's mouth - Tennessee's initial impulses) its important to look at the story in this way in 2017. It feels like the most worthwhile choice for me in this way.

I shared samples with Riha and Irish some images that could work (black and white) -and we decided that the walls won't necessarily be fully projected (i.e. wallpaper) throughout the entire play. The Tyvek material for back projection and backlighting -- has a dark grey color that when not backlit or projected upon will somewhat disappear - creating a void-like atmosphere in certain scenes. So, in this way backdrop scenically is not always necessary. This excites me in the sense of memory -- its vastness and selectivity and how memory sees things at times not as a whole picture but in a fleeting / temporal way.

Riha's new sketch he left in my box moved the fire escape entrance behind the stage left wall which was what I was going to recommend so I feel we are starting to really click that we are both seeing the same choices.

Landman reiterates the value of journaling subjectively (the need for this very document), I've had trouble engaging with the format. I first need to go back and retroactively cover title decision, analysis, casting process, design meetings, etc. which will take a few hours to revisit and record.

I've now done the retroactive journaling to the best of my memory (and am satisfied with the extensiveness of the record). I still have an interest in trying to voice record over wine with my mother as one aspect of the journaling to help extract more emotional values about the process. I also think Tennessee Williams himself would endorse such a practice: his director drinking wine with his mother as a journaling method to record experiences of directing. *The Glass Menagerie*.

March 28th.

Good design meeting #3. I feel like the group is on the same concept and essential understanding of the production. Its interesting and exciting to see the faculty (designers like Riha and Irish and Weston) grapple with a new technology and new application that is perhaps a bit out of their comfort zone. I need to think about the 'mimed prop' choice and what that means / where it happens.

Mentioned with Tanner the idea of taking a picture of Tennison for Daddy Wingfield. Patricia says its only necessary to do his face. I sometimes think Patricia has issues with tone and how she addresses her collaborators in a positive way (I've felt that she confuses situations unnecessarily with not understanding how to approach team problems). She's on my thesis committee and I chose her for it with her distinct personality in mind. She does strike me as critically effective and an advocate for clarity which I hope I can further explore potential discussions with.

On Charlie Rose last night, interview with the Gold production cast - no Sam Gold though unfortunately. It would've been nice to hear from the cow's mouth some insights to his concept. Read the New York Times Magazine story, "*The Revealer*" on Gold and his production. I need to go back and watch the Rose piece online - I watched only a couple minutes and was exhausted so went to sleep rather than commit to the hour-long interview.

The process is going so well this week that I worry something is amiss. Then again, its theatre and I trust that bumps in the road will come.

April 4th.

I've got pink eye and am trying to catch up some journaling on this week. Had to postpone meeting with Shawn and Catie this morning (picking up with Shawn tomorrow afternoon)

followed by Catie at 5. I spent the weekend going through my projection and lighting ideas in the script - trying to specify when they are used in conjunction and contrast with each other. I am particularly interested to see how much Shawn thinks we can isolate each light of glass in the wall surface structures. I count 11 panels in each wall (5 underneath / 6 above) with an opening for the kitchen upstage right and an opening for the apartment entrance, downstage right. Can projection move from washes of the entire surface to hitting specific frames? If not, how does the structure of the framing for better or worse breakup the projected imagery?

The notes I've taken on projection do imagine a world where we can isolate frame by frame in the structure so there is a very distinct place - naturally framed for Wingfield's portrait. Other places I'm interested to incorporate lighting for back shadow sequences (i.e. Amanda washing dishes) and snowfall - overall wash in Scene 1.

One discovery I made over the weekend in how to solve the opening moment is putting Tom DSL just center and below the fire escape on the ground, sleeping homeless in the opening moment - so he is not running in toward the audience (now, not scenically possible) but rather violently awakening from a nightmare. The remaining imagery I visualized (leaf storm, lightning, shadow in pursuit, shattered rainbow colors from perfume store -- all pulled from Tom's final monologue which early on I imagined as a beginning of the play) will be done through backlighting -- not projection. The first projected effect I'm interested in is when Tom says, "*the pleasant disguise of illusion*": he'll gesture back, and a quick shimmering / glittering effect will wash across the screen with a tinkling sound. I hope Shawn has not invested too much in an intro video idea to satisfy my discussion of this moment (or, if he has that he presents it tomorrow in a compelling enough way to make me readily abandon this way of beginning the play). Overall, it both simplifies the projection and gives Catie more to play with which I want to be sure to do since she's interacting with video, I want her to have enough of a wide palate to play with. It also feels more appropriate to me to begin with lights and save projection for necessary effects wherever possible. I am nervous about relying on too much projection throughout and currently have about 20-25 distinct projected moments I'm interested in discussing with Shawn.

Emailed Tanner about touching base on costume changes. Because of my eye infection, it looks like we won't be able to properly meet, and I asked him if he prefers email or in person Thursday morning, he said email is fine. I elaborated on the final coat image (Tom's quick change for final monologue) which Tanner seems to be excited about symbolically. I reiterated the image I see of Laura putting on a kimono (I realized I was misreading as a robe -- it's a 'dress' of kimono material, we'll see if this is problematic to Tanner's vision) that is adorned in transition onstage between Scenes 1 and 2. This transformation, I kind of see as a magical sequence in the play that introduces us to Laura and her imaginary world - we kind of go on a 30-60 second journey with Laura as her 'theme music plays' as she adorns the ribbon and robe(?) and crosses, limped at a

slow angle downstage to her glowing glass figurines. This dream-like sequence is interrupted by the shadow and sounding footsteps coming up the fire escape of Amanda coming home to confront Laura about her lies.

I also noted in the exchange how Amanda seems to have the most quick changes and that her robe / curler look might be effective to maintain between Scenes 3-6 (how else do we dramatically and comedically get the change into her dress as she quickly leaves the room early in Scene 6-- could she also be wearing her robe even then?)

Meeting tomorrow with Landman to share some of this journal and discuss further, my eye is feeling better- still a bit sensitive to light so not much more worthwhile to share via typing tonight on computer. I will voice record a few thoughts and transcribe into this document at a later date.

April 5th.

Post- Landman meeting decide to make focus ahead being reading '*SUMMER AND SMOKE*' and perhaps '*A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE*' to start the in-depth readings of his other plays. Want to find parallels (scenes, characters, symbolism) that could be useful in rehearsal process for better understanding of moments. Biographies will be hit hard over the summer - so that the strongest and most lingering impression I have from my research at the beginning of the staging process in August, will be the personal life and memoirs of T. Williams.

Also, I need to start collecting critical reviews and commentary on the play and summarizing my takeaways from each.

Afternoon meeting with Shawn / first one-on-one sit-down meeting. Shawn's energy and openness in conversation is very positive. I was surprised to learn that he wants to go even further with video projection that I had imagined. I'm a bit nervous over-relying on projection as a scenic presence lest it feel too much of a 'video' world, but I don't want to squash Shawn's renewed optimism (he was initially skeptical himself). I'd rather have a video designer who is fully invested (even perhaps overly invested in the potentialities of its use) rather than one who is not buying in enough. I make clear to him that there may be areas once in tech rehearsals that I will ask to cut or pull back on if I feel the dominance of projection is endangering the more fragile and restraint necessary at times in the overall storytelling. His attitude seems to be that it is better to have the coverage (too much) rather than plan for too little. I agree with this approach and so I think we're in a good place. We discuss the opening moment of the play relying on Catie's lighting (backlighting) design for flash lighting / leaf storm etc. rather than projected effects. We also talk through transitions and scene x scene compositions. We seem to be on the same place regarding specific imagery noted in the Reader's Edition: The Jolly Roger recurring

motif, though fascinating, feels somewhat out-of-tone or difficult to express without being “iconically macabre”. Generally speaking, Shawn is an easy and positive collaborator and I am excited to have him on the team. Since he and Riha have a strong relationship (and he is Catie’s lighting mentor), I have trust that he’s a great candidate to be in the position of helping navigate the balance between lighting / projection / scenic walls of our world.

I have a follow-up meeting with Catie over coffee at Starbucks. She seems concerned about projection boxing her out (scenically she’s already limited by the triangular ceiling, thus taking away top-lighting potentialities) and she says that Riha has told her she can’t touch the wall (front or back lighting at all). I tell her that I’m the director and that I want to explore backlighting the wall possibilities throughout - particularly as it relates to shadow figures (Amanda or Laura in kitchen doing dishes / Tom stumbling home drunk up the fire escape / Jim with bouquet of flowers as part of the image system T. Williams writes in). I agree that front lighting the walls much could be problematic. She seems also concerned about the projector from the open orchestra pit taking away center footlighting from her and over-accentuating / reflecting onto the action. She mentions lighting the dining room platform area is her biggest challenge. We discuss the opening sequence, a few shadow moments, and putting lights in the pit to use as Grand Street “marvels” reflecting up on the faces of characters on the fire escape. I tell her to let me know how I can be an advocate for her regarding places she feels unnecessarily limited creatively.

April 6th Design meeting.

I read the E.E. Cummings poem to kick things off for the final design meeting. It may seem sappy but I decide I’d rather find moments when possible to lead the team in poetic ways inspirationally than treat them as purely business-oriented. We’re all artists, after all. The E.E. Cummings poem pulls from the quote expressed under the title of the reader’s edition, “No one, not even the rain has such small hands”. I wrap up the intro by expressing how the quote alludes to primal passions and desires not fully fulfilled as well as the overall delicacy and fragility of the play. Ultimately, I think T. Williams includes the quote to reference his feelings toward Laura, which I specifically fail to mention, but I am hoping that it makes a point to the design team (particularly projection and lighting, that restraint is also useful in our relationship to the storytelling). The focus of the meeting is covering logistical issues relating to the relationship between costume / video / lights. We identify the costume changing areas. Riha has added a typewriter table that I requested by email a few days ago. He put it further downstage than I had desired, but I think that may work for us. If, in staging, it becomes an issue, I may ask him to place it back upstage left between the dining room and entry step area. Susan requests a meeting after itemizing props to go through the shop with Riha and I to look at furniture. I recall that Amanda mentions how thankful she is that she got a new couch when she discovers Jim is arriving the next night - Riha mentions we may not have the right couch in the shop so it may be

an acquisition or build. I need to do a thorough script reading to help ascertain what props are mimed and not. Some of Catie's concerns from yesterday regarding the ceiling projection from underneath and toplighting capability have been adjusted (Riha says projector for ceiling will be mounted from above and from behind as well and that he has created gaps in the triangular ceiling border to allow for instrumentation). I hope Catie's concerns have been assuaged and have followed up with her via email to see if she feels better about things and if I can advocate for specific concerns. Riha has new scenic adjustments as well with the couch having space behind it. My initial feeling was that it was slightly too much of an adjustment -- Susan voices that she thinks it is a strong change and I trust her judgement, so I'm happy with it for the time being. A shift 1-3 feet upstage or stageright for the couch and the menagerie table may be in order as we get into staging or next semester's production meetings. I share my idea for Tom beginning the play downstage right as if waking from a dream/nightmare - or - walking onstage and 'conjuring' the effect for an opening shortened sequence. Landman brings up a fascinating point that it may be important to clarify that Tom is telling this play (orchestrating theatrical effects) rather than the sequence 'happening' to him. I agree with his sense of T. William's intent: Tom is masking the painful pursuit of the memory at the top of the play, but I'm also not quite willing to 'kill my darling' impulse to bookend the story with the lighting, leaf storm, pursuit. It is a careful consideration and I'm thinking there is an elegant solution in the middle-ground of these ideas if handled as a 20 second opening sequence with Tom and backlighting / violin. My current intuition is to have Tom slowly walk onstage as violin and sheet lighting commence - as a figure downstage left, he turns and watches the backlighting and backlit leaf storm, bows his head as if imagining it and then turns to address us, "*Yes, I have things in my pockets*" -- so that we might grasp that he is both haunted (passive) and creative (dictating the effects). Patricia brings up a helpful idea to arrange another design meeting to 'catch up' at the top of the semester (our next full team meeting isn't until August now). Joe puts one on the calendar for us. Weston seems worried about time frame with implementing scenic and projection so hopefully this earlier production meeting will bring clarity to our short schedule. Landman brings up a few good questions: namely, the importance of bringing the projection design back to the focus of Tom's subjective needs. Shawn and I agree that this is an essential 'governor' for projection design choices which I think we hadn't fully articulated for ourselves, although many choices were already going in that direction.

Mallory and I discuss setting up some rehearsals for Mischa, Meghan and Chris: Gala performance preview. I chose a 2-page excerpt from Scene 3 when Tom and Amanda are arguing over the D.H. Lawrence books, etc. I think it is a juicy, explosive scene to preview us. The gala preview makes me a bit nervous to expose my actors to playing some an emotionally charged scene sans table-work, etc. I'm hoping 2-3 rehearsals will be enough to imbue confidence but also not overly set a habit to the scene that may need to be shaken out of based on discoveries in the fall. It seems important to give it a semblance of the staging I'd already imagined, so I want to be as prepared as possible handling these limited rehearsals. I am scheduling a read-through

and short table talk before the end of the semester. Ideally, this can be scheduled prior to our rehearsals for the Gala preview (but we're hampered by *Assassins*, *New Play Festival*, *Grounded* stage reading rehearsals and general class schedule issues). Mischa says she will email me Friday her availability so we can start to look at scheduling.

75-minute phone chat with Ryan Dorin about sound design. We identify a goal of spending the next 3 weeks to come up with a 'statement' theme for Laura's theme/'*The Glass Menagerie*' as a sort of foundation for overall composition for the show. The remaining themes are in some way, perhaps a derivation, extrapolation, variation or riff on an essential 20-40 sec tune that we hear initially in the transition between Scenes 1 and 2. Ryan talks about a 'plucking of strings' sound r delicate keys on a piano. He asks about a general direction of 'classical' or 'contemporary'. I ask him to clarify what he means by these labels and he indicates whether I have an interest in a more 'ethereal' or atonal /atmospherical sound versus sentimental or melodic statement. I tell him, not to overtly hedge, but somewhere that balances both might be of interest. We plan to explore the more specific sound references (phonograph songs / Paradise Dance Hall Waltz) as well as sound effects (shattering glass, dropping of keys) at a later date once we riff more on the essential theme. I ask him the theme sound be our statement and what we want our audience kind of humming or living with in their ears still as they go to their cars and drive home. He thinks he can get us something by April 30th for our first read-through.

Run into Tennison at Kingfish Bar for Keefer's concert with Shipman. My first time to really casually and socially vibe with him since casting. He seems excited. We chat about the design a bit and I pitch him about the Wingfield father photograph. He tells me (I was not aware) that he similarly left his home: mother and sister when he was 17 never to return and has a photo of his father in the navy that could be an interesting source to Photoshop. His personal parallels are exceptionally interesting and personally connected to the character.

April 10th.

It turns out Landman and I both have been unable to locate copies of *Summer and Smoke* to discuss, so I find a deal on *Amazon* for a collection of 25 major plays by Tennessee Williams - *Used* for \$55.00 (Retail price, \$300 approx). I place the order to go ahead and get all of the plays to add to my reading and re-reading material. Tuesday update: The collection arrived but the mailman failed to leave me a key in my mailbox for the parcel locker at the apartment in which it was delivered. Have to wait until tomorrow to start reading, my intent is to begin with his early work - *i.e. Battle of Angels* so to get a clear perspective of what came before *Glass Menagerie* before working through his later works. I want to be sure to take some strong notes of the divide between before and after *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* since his own thoughts evolved throughout his career. Tennessee Williams surely had a different relationship - feelings and thoughts - about TGM later in his career than at the time of writing. In discussing author intent / fidelity /

endorsement, is it more important to be faithful to what I think Tennessee Williams would support and believe at age 33 (time of completion of TGM) or later in his life, reflecting back on his first success?

Deadline for pre-rehearsal objectives are due to Landman for our discussion on Wednesday. With the busy summer, I've given myself a busy but hopefully achievement set of dates to accomplish goals. In summary, I'm spending the remainder of this month (April) and early May before going down to do the Butcher Holler run in Austin to wrap up some prop / scenic meetings with Riha and Susan Crabtree, prepare for the Gala performance, and cover T. Williams' early plays / short plays. Once the Austin run begins and through the Toronto lab (mid May - late June), I'll read one major play a week (except during air flights when I can fit in an extra play) to cover 11 of his seminal works: *Streetcar....*, *Rose Tattoo*, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Summer and Smoke*, *Eccentricities of a Nightingale*, *Camino Real*, *Suddenly Last Summer*, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, *Night of the Iguana*, and *Vieux Carre*. July will involve doing a total compilation of critical commentary, production history, and review takeaways. Since I will have a bit more time off this month, it seems like my best opportunity to comprehensively notate all my research references and lessons learned. Once the Marfa Initiatives begin in late July - early August, I will spend those 3 weeks pushing through the 2 biographies and memoirs of Tennessee Williams. I really want the last part of my pre-rehearsal process to be dipping into the specifically personal man - so it is freshest in my mind as we start rehearsals. Early-to-mid August will be about wrapping up those readings and summaries and, finally, a full week to prepare the table-talk and other final rehearsal models before our first read-through rehearsal after the break, scheduled for August 20.

April 12th.

Morning meeting with Michael was preceded by the arrival of the collection of T. Williams plays in my mailbox from Amazon. Nice collection! Also, Riha showed me some mini projectors in his office and how they can be used in conjunction with the scenic walls - very exciting imagery. He said the illumination of the model projection is slightly brighter than they will be onstage (or that we will be able to control the intensity as needed). The projected light creates a great silhouette on the actors behind the wall surfaces. There is caging quality the framing structure helps give the back projection as well, which thematically helps articulate the play's spine for me. Meeting with Landman: we discuss needing to set a design presentation for the cast (Aug 21 or 22) which has not been previously discussed as well as the list of deadlines. He advises that asking Susan to help with the question of "what props are mimed or seen" in the world of the play may be useful. I'm still struggling with the justification and overall aesthetic statement of what props - or lack thereof - mean in the storytelling and how that relates to our production choices. Realized also that the Ransom center in Austin may still house the backdrafts of T.

Williams' early versions of 'TGM' and that I should look into these during my free time in Austin this summer.

Late April.

Meeting with Shawn and Tennison on Monday at Noon in 404 to snap some pictures of Chris as the Father Wingfield. Upon arrival, Chris and Shawn have arrived early and are already popping photos. It is probably my micromanaging nature, but I was a bit bothered that they had started early before our pre-arranged time - particularly since I had scheduled and it was my idea to do the photoshoot. I didn't let myself show being bothered by it - and moved on. I appreciate their initiative. Perhaps I need to work on my own inner need to control all things at all times.

Meeting with Susan in the scene-shop to look over basic props and scenic furniture. We pick out plates (but during the initial table-reading the next week I realize that Amanda mentions bringing out her china for Jim's arrival). I need to follow-up with Susan. Also, Amanda makes a specific mention about the candelabra - it being bent from a church fire. I really need to comb back through the text for other details that may be important to know specifically and early. Susan and I look through the furniture. The table is a bit unclear. I think we find a good 'whatnot' for the glass figurines that can have its top 1-3 shelves removed and turned to mirror the groundplan. It was a big exciting, (albeit) small piece discovery!

Tanner and I meet to look over some sketches and early pulls from wardrobe. I like his instincts to start in sepia or muted colors and let things pop as they progress. He brings a great sense of texture designs to costumes that I enjoy. Some of his color ideas for the latter portion of the scenes I am concerned might be too bold/dark (Amanda discusses lighter colors for her dress in Scene 6), but since his sketches lack color still, I hold off on forewarning or critical adjustments. He wasn't aware of Laura putting on a coat to leave the house (possibly because the script mentions that she puts on Amanda's). I should personally go through and re-specify a list of all costume descriptors in the text (similar to the prop/furniture notes above for Susan).

April 30th: First Cast Meeting and Table Read.

The first read-through with the cast is at Mom and Dad's house, 1pm on a Sunday. We don't partake in snacks (though they are left out) and jump into the reading rather quickly. I take advice from William Ball's book on Directing and keep the discussion to a minimum. I mention the purpose is to acquaint ourselves with the text (no acting required) and to just listen to the story and words. I also let everyone know how honored I am to work with them on the project and briefly explain my measures for success being 1. Sharing an evocative and profound story with the audience and how it pulls at our heart strings and, even more so...2. Enriching our individual craft and work as artists individually and as a team. Mallory reads stage directions.

We go through the whole play without stopping, clocking at approx. 1 hour and 57 minutes. After a quick break, we discuss at the table for 20-30 minutes before ending the afternoon. Our discussion begins with Mischa talking about a ‘narcissistic personality complex’ in Amanda, which throws me off balance a bit, and I try to suggest Amanda’s struggles as a mother in the depression. I also bring up Richard Brestoff’s technique of judging our characters harshly so that we may then step into their skin and justify our own judgements back against ourselves. I wonder if I may have misplayed Mischa’s initial assessment as a concern rather than a legitimate and okay observation to have. Why did I so quickly try to defend Amanda? Of course, I think ultimately it is important for us to sympathize with her as a character. But I do wonder if my instinct to ‘correct or resolve’ Mischa’s judgement from the beginning exposed an insecurity of mine to rush things or dismiss her observation. I need to be wary of doing these things lest it makes the actors feel they can’t trust me with their honest reactions going forward. Perhaps I should bring this back up on our Wednesday rehearsal as we prepare for the Gala performance...and again at our more comprehensive table reading in August. Then I can thread to the team my own awareness of the importance of what they say. There seems to be some hesitation from the group to discuss the piece when I open it up to, “big questions, concerns, what pops?”. I decide to share the basic dynamic question the play evokes for me regarding obligation to oneself vs others. During the reading itself, the actors (particularly Meghan) were very engaged with eye contact. Mischa seems to rush things and not allow her heart into it. Cody has a bit of dyslexia or trouble with initial readings I’ve noticed, so it is hard to get a clear sense of his own impulses from the table-read. Chris reads soft and the articulate and the most ‘objective’. Meghan naturally has a matter-of-factness to her inflections, so her read felt nice and neutral. The rhythm of the play is interesting in how strongly it settles on the Tom/Amanda relationship and then segues into the Jim/Laura relationship in its lengthy climax. It’s the stabling / settling of the story I suppose from the more fluid and elusive/transitory early third. We wrap the table-read by listening to Ryan Dorin’s GLASSMENAGERIE DAYDREAM soundtrack.

Having worked with Ryan over the last 2-3 weeks sharing samples, we’ve been via long distance trying to begin the sound design process by establishing a basic theme “Laura’s theme” or the “Glass Menagerie theme”. I described it to him over the phone as the sort of foundational melody from which all the rest of the sound composition can be extrapolated. It’s the song that we want buzzing in our audience’s ears as they go to their cars / go home and sleep after the show. We discussed the production notes Tennessee himself wrote about the melody, to paraphrase: “a distant carnival / circus like song that is like the most beautiful song ever played and also the very saddest”. The melody serves as our musical thesis, I told him. He sent some samples last week and a marriage between two of his versions serves as the inspiration for DAYDREAM (currently in a 3 min format). It uses mainly piano keys, but later introduces some string plucking, that seem to wail briefly in high notes, unpredictable in its sequence and timing. Indeed, the long gaps between each note drag out our own sense of longing and expectation in a

powerful way. It feels restrained, and perhaps slightly pretentious. If he pulled back just a tad on the beats between notes, it may be better. We'll see what comes next. Mischa describes the music as "tragically gothic", which I found an interesting description as I had not read it as 'gothic'. Upon breaking, it feels good to have gotten through the first read, but I also felt there was a strange sense of flatness in the group. I'm not certain if this is due to exhaustion, boredom, intimidation or what. I must keep in mind that sometimes after table-reads, the group must need some very pointed and provocative questions to stir things into a more dynamic conversation. I should prepare very specific questions following our initial table reading next August.

June 28th

For two months, while travelling for gigs in Austin, Toronto and Montana - in what spare time I could muster - I've begun reading Tennessee Williams' other plays. Beginning with his short plays, and then - sequentially - his full lengths, the following pages will be notes on impressions / insights I've had from these readings.

***27 Wagons Full of Cotton** - (short play) Williams explores drastic changes in the status quo of characters surrounding an event of sabotage (arson explosion of a local mill). *Glass Menagerie* similarly explores the changing of circumstances but in a much more muted, subtly symbolic ways. The theme of heat and fire are omnipresent in *27 Wagons*, which in itself is a symbol to aggressive for TGM, which relies on smoke and glass as its dominant motifs. It's interesting to compare these two works side-by-side for these contrasts in tone. Male Dominance and desire are the driving forces of *27 Wagons*, whereas one could argue that the feminine personality is the overriding presence in TGM embodied by Amanda's dynamically complex maternal figure. In *27 Wagons*, the feminine energy is expressed as a submissive force, desiring victimhood and rape in its desire. The plays converge in their examination of triangulated relationships.

***Purification** - (short play) a powerfully interesting verse play set in New Mexico, its symbolism, imagery and lyricism are notable. As always, desire (notably, unfulfilled) is a primary theme, as is loss and incestuous desire. The secret silent language between Tom and Laura in TGM is a necessary element to land on the audience and develop work with the actors on this non-verbal communication.

***Lady of Larkspur Lotion** - (short play) - references to "Shakespeare" and alcoholism are of note. Delusions of grandeur and the delicate fictions slammed into conflict with reality bear an interesting correlation to TGM. Similarly, a play with a triangular relationship dynamic.

***Last of My Solid Gold Watches** - (short play) thematically links nostalgia, ego and death into an interesting web. Shoe as a major symbol. Salesman. Main character seems like an

aged possible version of Wingfield (the absent father) “infants on the road”. It is a study of a slow death of an old world, like TGM’s inner narrative itself is.

***Portrait of a Madonna** - (short play) Prototype of T. Williams’ insane heroine. Amanda as an older woman? Or Laura? The relationship between daughter and mother is an interesting read here. A potential future for our spinsters left behind in TGM. The shame of being seen is apparent and connects with Laura’s painful shyness. Pride’s merciless grip lingers in the piece and connects with Amanda’s tunnel vision. Nostalgia is a key ingredient.

***Auto-Da-Fe’** - (short play) The Mother-son relationship in this play is useful to view alongside TGM. A potential future for Tom and Amanda if he had stayed in the home until his late 30s and would burn the house down? Secret sins are a force in this short play. A letter has high action significance and symbolism much as the merchant marines letter does. Condemnation of illicit behavior is important.

***Lord Byron’s Love Letter** (short play) 2 old spinsters (Amanda and Laura in their futures?) clinging to the past as a real means of survival!

***The Strangest Kind of Romance** (short play) A room as ‘character’ is very strong in this piece and helps solidify T. Williams’ obsession with scenic space / setting / location. Various people who occupy a space. New vs Old / Themes of change abound.

***Spring Storm** - (1937 - written in the year of ‘Glass Menagerie’) considered to be his first full-length play, at age 26, it was dismissed in his playwriting class. Originally titled, ‘April is the Cruellest Month’ after the opening line of T.S. Eliot’s poem, ‘The Waste Land’. Williams hypothesized that it failed the opinion of the class / instructor due to the weakness of his main character, Heavenly. It received its first production in 1995 in Berkley, California. Thematically it explores the relationship of the elusiveness of romantic love - 4 characters: Heavenly, Dick, Arthur, and Herta all cannot achieve the love they each desire due to a fundamental fear of fulfillment or the friction of values / qualities of their characters. Ultimately, Heavenly is destined to become a spinster on the porch just like her Aunt because she is incapable of fully surrendering her image of herself with what she really desires. All the characters follow similar patterns. It also is a great examination of generational conflict. Many early themes that can be crossed referenced to ‘Glass Menagerie’. The idea of ‘escape’ - Dick resembles in certain ways Tom Wingfield in his desire to leave the Mississippi town, Porty Tyler behind. Tom, however is a composite of both Dick and Arthur. He is too refined and literary to compare fully to Dick’s overt masculinity. Tom shares Arthur’s escape into literary interests and fragile self image (a sissified sexuality), but without the privilege or wealth that allows Arthur a crutch to lean on. The shifting obligations to family and desire are best paralleled between Tom with Heavenly. Again, T. Williams doubles down on a culture still stuck in its attachment to antebellum past that

is disappearing in front of itself. Other notes: Society Clubs play a role in the obsession of town status (the 'D.A.'). Greta Garbo films - the morbid style of certain ones is mentioned in regards to Herta. Flowers are a theme - Mrs. Critchfield pours the water she is bringing to Heavenly in Lilacs on the table. General Miles photo is spoken to (similar to Mr. Wingfield's) on the mantle. There are many similar symbols and motifs like this in his early play.

***Not About Nightingales** - (short play) Prison story - about conditions / capitalism / escape / felt a bit 'cliché' at times in its telling, but some powerful imagery: heat and steam. Being trapped between a rock and hard space and survival are very prescient in the story.

***Tom by Lyle Leverich** - (biography) "Tom" is someone frightened, leery, and diffident. Bedeviled by the dread of loneliness, he could disappear into the night - "the enormous night" - in pursuit of an anonymous companion. "Old men go mad at night." For the first thirty years of his life, he was living *The Glass Menagerie* and it was from that traumatic experience that his masterpiece - this "little play", as he disdainfully called it -- evolved. A psychic line passing through the characters of the brother and sister. Tennessee was conveying with the power of illusion what in life is so often inexpressible: the tragic failure to communicate one's true feelings not only to others but also to oneself in an interior dialogue. The terrifying isolation of illusion = major theme. Tom's 'hated' father influenced him most personally. The missing ideal of a son in the loving image of his father became instead the identity of the artist in revolt. A lifelong flight from a family he could never escape. Traveling by himself in panic and desperation, as if taking flight, he could outdistance death. Williams died of the one thing that he feared most: suffocation. Williams had often declared that his strongest instinct was to be free, to take off when life closed in on him.

First Rehearsal.

Read through went well. Mom and Dad opened the house. Mallory and our ASM, Katie joined us. Mom prepared loin pork chops and mashed potatoes and beans for Chris, Mischa and Meghan to eat in silence (30's style American dinner) to help form visualization and muscle memory for the pantomime dinner in Scene 1. Mischa makes such an interesting Amanda - at times, I feel she's the most tonally 'off' in these early impressions (of course, Amanda being the most complex character, I give her some benefit of the doubt), but then she surprises me with a powerfully unique version of Amanda that is against the cliché of the character. It has a powerfully real feeling, despite not feeling true to the archetype of 'Amanda Wingfield'. We discussed fears about the play. It was a nice way to be honest and vulnerable with each other at the very start. Feels good to finally be kickstarting this thing after months of research. I met with Tanner to go over costume notes before tomorrow's design presentation at rehearsal 2. The only major developments were the agreement that Laura and Amanda's costume changes between Scene 2 and 3 with coincide in timing that they re-enter (Laura to couch, Amanda with phone) at

the top of the Ida Scott phone call --- as well as that Laura's change from Scene 4 to 5 will occur after scene 4 rather than within Scene 4 as Tanner had previously planned. I like the idea of keeping Laura sleeping onstage near Tom after his drunken rant to enhance the sibling connection in the story -- and think it may be interesting that Laura is forced to awkwardly go to Garfunkel's in her pajamas under Amanda's robe. The strangeness of the chore is enhanced by her not being fully changed and perhaps explains her slip (still in slippers) as soon as she steps out. Finally, I asked Tanner if Tom could have a signaling costume adjustment in Scene 5 that foreshadows his full immersion in costumed memory in Scene 6. He seems to think that a rolling up of the sleeves and suspenders can be just the touch we are looking for and I agree.

Aug 21st.

We started our 2nd rehearsal with a 45 min design presentations. I expressed to the group the excitement I had for finally having the entire creative team together in one room. I set up *The Glass Menagerie* pieces in dim-light and played samples from Ryan's theme explorations to kick-start the design impression. Tanner shared costumes. Michael and Shawn shared the scenic model and video samples which seemed to excite the cast. We wrapped things up with Catie briefly discussing her lighting insights. After the designers left, I decided to lead with a dark room memory exercise to encourage the actors to go to their childhood homes and focus on sensory examinations in their imaginative memory. We discussed after the elusive and yet vivid nature of memory. I changed plans and instead of launching into table-talk, we ran through the entire play on our feet / script in hand without stage directions. I felt that since this week gets so heavy into table-talk, that I wanted to allow the actors to explore initial impulses with no safety net or restrictions. There seemed to be a value in not only allowing them the opportunity to rely on instinctive choices at the onset as well as reinforcing their ownership of the story as the performers, but also in revealing my authority to change rehearsal plans based on spontaneous needs or adjustments I'd like to make as a director. I plan to stick pretty rigidly to our rehearsal plan, however wanted to lay the seed in their minds that at any time they should expect me to throw them slight curve balls. Chris mentioned afterwards that he had rathered done another table read before so boldly experiencing a run on his feet. I respect his desire for more concrete analysis prior to engagement, but still feel that Chris has certain blocks as allowing himself to be spontaneous and instinctive as an actor. Despite his reservations, I think it served him well to force him out of that comfort zone. I took notes on major brushstrokes I noticed to share with the cast - particularly as they relate to 10-15 moments of 'intense revelation or change' for each character throughout their arcs to begin to identify as narrative benchmarks.

Aug 22nd.

Our first production meeting after the summer break: It went quite smoothly, we negotiated microphone and haze ideas that Catie had brought up to me as a desire she wanted to explore with her lighting design. Weston seemed to have some logistical concerns about the facility construction interfering with set construction in the UT theatre. It currently feels that we are in very good shape and in a smooth communication process. Afterwards, Landman congratulated me on running the meeting well which disarmed me. I'm realizing that my nervousness in these meetings is improving and I'm getting more confident. It's helpful to accept myself in these scenarios and trust that I'm prepared and in control of my feelings about my own input / influence.

viii. Appendix 8: Thesis Initial Draft

What follows is an initial draft of this thesis document presented to my mentor, Michael Landman in October of 2017. It is primarily raw content, with gaps in thought and personal notes filled-in. Additionally, the formatting is not consistently or appropriately matched to the remainder of this document, and has been left as such, for the future value it may have as a comparative example to the final form in the body of this document. Much of the following style / narrative were completely scratched due to guidance from Directing Mentorship. In Hindsight, I agreed with the instinct to cut the majority of this form and content, but wish to include it here as supplement material for future interest in the process of my thesis articulation.

Chapter I: Introduction

A. Prologue

As the gentleman caller, James Delaney O'Connor holds a fragile figurine made of glass in front of the flame from a candelabra, his questions to Laura Wingfield reveal a variety of tonal possibilities. From the onset, let's establish potential interpretations from an excerpt to introduce the lyrical nature of the work which anchors the subject matter of this thesis:

JIM: What kind of thing is this one supposed to be?
LAURA: Haven't you noticed the single horn on his forehead?
JIM: A unicorn, huh?
LAURA: Mmmm-hmmm!
JIM: Unicorns - aren't they extinct in the modern world?
LAURA: I know!
JIM: Poor little fellow, he must feel sort of lonesome.

Compared to rhythms earlier in their scene, the structure of this quick exchange suggests a heightened state of emotional connection between O'Connor and Wingfield. The circumstances of a darkened tenement apartment demand a physical intimacy; their dynamic is playful yet delicately focused on an iconic, albeit material symbol of the play. The pair's language is inquisitive and humorously phrased. Moreover, exclamation points in punctuation suggest Laura is at a peak of excitement, understandably, as she shares her intricately imaginative world with the boy of her dreams.

Further analysis on these 7 lines of dialogue will be addressed in this paper as a valuable microcosm to discuss *The Glass Menagerie* and my relationship to having directed the story in 2017. Before such examination however (*E. The Script: 1944, The Sands of Time*), it is helpful to connect O'Connor's question to my own reasons for choosing the play as a final project.

B. "Why this, why now, and why me?"

To be completed.

C. An Initial Sense: Fragility & Boldness

THE GLASS MENAGERIE is like a unicorn itself. Its arrival in late 1944 heralded a uniquely new voice and style into the American theatre heritage: one that embraced the emotional realism of Chekhov, the expressionism of Strindberg, the poetic pathos of O'Neill, and the aesthetics of an emerging popular cinema into a vision of his own. Once powerfully fused with his very personal sense of Southern vernacular, Post-industrial social despair, and spiritually

lyrical flight, his most delicate, least violent, and first successful play, *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* shines alone in the reflective light of an old candle.

My familiarity with the story, despite having never seen it in production (much less, scene work), gave me an initial sense about the negotiation, aesthetically and substantively, between the nature of fragility and boldness required in a successful approach to the project.

In its storytelling, an inherent fragility must be honored in balance with boldness in a contemporary production, lest it shatters into dull pieces thus rendering it non-existent for future audiences more interested in screens. This is not to say that credible acting and directing (sans vividly realized design methods) are incapable of grossly engaging the hearts of the future. My point is only that intuitive directorial risk based on a keen reading of the text is the only chance *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* has for existing in generations to come. Perhaps like approaches in Shakespeare, *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* has a universality that can only be tasted if served in a dish of fresh contexts. Since, however its story is so circumstantially hinged on the plights of The Great Depression, it is all the more tenuous to determine what production risks are appropriate to this purpose without abandoning this strict adherence to setting.

A beginning way through this conundrum, for myself, was to honor the time and place of the main action (indeed, a reality of the story divorced from the 1930s seemed too absurd a betrayal for my own standards), while accepting the true setting as indicated by the text and its narrator: *Memory*. Allotting an exploration into the nature of memory gave way to the necessary

re-contextualization that I felt a 2017 audience requests, by pushing open possibilities for new design interpretations.

D. Design and Interpretations

Concentrating my analysis on a spine for the play to encapsulate its most prominent idea that could connect design and acting approaches, I was confronted with the word, *Escape*. Just as for years I had been unable to escape its pull on my psyche, the play itself is an examination of a philosophy (and poetry) of *Escape*.

Being a “Memory Play” (notable - in fact - for coining the very term), *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* uses memory as a vehicle for its characters to escape from and escape into. The very substance of the story is indeed the nature of memory and how we, as human beings, seek refuge in its illusionary nostalgia, as well as avoid torment from its painful impressions. This exploration is ever-present in the script, and always shifting in its vantage point: As narrator, Tom seeks to escape the guilt associated with his memories of abandoning his family in such a fashion by ritualistically immersing himself into the memory. His motivation for doing so is complex and interpretational.

1. Tom of the Future: Textual interpretation and Choices of Setting

Our initial problem was where to place Tom in a timeline that showed fidelity to the script's enigmatic questions surrounding his purpose of presenting this play. Described by Tennessee Williams (hereafter, referred to as *TLW*) as "*strolling on stage, smoking a cigarette in a Merchant Marines Uniform* ", our mysterious narrator is at-times purposefully set apart from the actions of the play, particularly in the first 2 scenes. Since he has no direct costume change mentioned until the beginning of Scene 5, we could assume that Tom is meant to be figuratively in/out of the play unlike the characters of his imaginative memory, Amanda and Laura, who are captive in his mind's eye.

Although dedicated to a sense of verisimilitude implicit to the setting, our first betrayal of TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's instructions were to reinvent the 'Merchant Marine' identity he indicates in the opening stage directions. For audiences in 1944 this stage direction worked: the uniform's context would've had a clearer signal to the awareness of attendees in the midst of WWII, as it served as a common cultural type indicative of position, duty, and lifestyle. Likewise, the contrast of period attire seen worn by his mother & sister in relationship to the merchant marine uniform would have been all the more socially understood. For a 2017 audience however, the merchant marine uniform is less effective to the goal of drawing contrast or a cultural connection. TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's costume note, by today's terms, prohibits a fuller understanding of the separation the writer sought to enunciate between his narrator and the other characters.

In Tom's closing monologue, which served as a barometer for my early analysis, he states: "*For Time is the furthest distance between two points.*" Furthermore, his opening

monologue refers to “*..that quaint period, the 30s..*”, which carries with it a quality of separation for the contemporary ear that is more removed than the present TLW may have originally intended to complement its 1944 premiere. For today’s listeners, the phrasing resonates with a sense that the narrator is decades rather than some mere 7 years removed. Analysis (again, of Tom’s closing monologue) tells us an immense amount of who he has become: a man who travels city-to-city, drinking a lot, seeking out ‘companions’, catching glimpses of glass perfume bottles in shop windows that remind him of *The Glass Menagerie* his sister once owned.

“I traveled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly colored by torn away from their branches. I would have stopped, but I was pursued by something. It always came upon me unawares, taking me altogether by surprise. I am walking along a street at night, in some strange city, before I have found companions. I pass the lighted window of a shop where perfume is sold. The window is filled with pieces of colored glass, tiny transparent bottles in delicate colors, like bits of a shattered rainbow...I reach for a cigarette, I cross the street, I run into the movies or a bar, I buy a drink, I speak to the nearest stranger - anything that can blow your candles out! For nowadays the world is lit by lightning!” (New Directions, 97)

Incidentally, there are some fascinating insights into the nature of time in this closing monologue, particularly in its shift from past-to-present-tense, which will be elaborated on further below in Section E of this Chapter (The Script: *1944, The Sands of Time*).

From the vantage point of 2017, a hunch in me formed about Tom (as Narrator) being a much older man: an alcoholic and a veteran of sorts, if we are to assume he fulfilled his Merchant Marine obligations, now tormented wandering cities, consumed and terrorized (again, “*pursued*” as he says in the above excerpt from his closing monologue) by guilt and memory. Our narrator is a deeply tortured man with a fragmented identity. Indeed, character, one of Tom

Wingfield's most signifying features is the ambiguity which he exerts on us as an audience: a man in search of himself, out-of-time, restless, and dreamy. It is no mistake that his behavior is rooted in the consummation of cigarettes: smoke is a terrific symbolic metaphor for his own identity. The Tom Wingfield who frames our play then, may be at best a drifter, or at worst, homeless. The questions beg itself: "*How long has he been running away from himself and his memories?*"

To make what might be for some a customary calculation of Tom's age in a production, regardless of its ultimate value in 2017, it would be determined today that the narrator's age is 101 years old (if we are to follow the 1937 timeline).

Finding a 101-year-old actor, or an actor to successfully portray that age in 2017, seemed not only unpragmatic though excitingly interesting, but ultimately less stake-driven a choice to explore a narrator still existing in the 21st Century. Having entertained the idea of a 'deathbed confession' narrator (i.e. a man's last gasp while looking back from the end of the road; putting on a play in an effort to release the guilt of his memories before eternity), I hesitated on its merit in relationship to the highest possible stakes. Though bold in interpretation, it gives Tom less to fight for if he is at the very end of his life. The possibility of future torment: many more years of wandering, drinking and shame-fueled pursuit created, in my opinion, a much more powerful objective for Tom's need and desire to tell this play, to rid himself of guilt, to escape his demons, and so to passionately move on with his life, however long and whatever may be left of it.

Once I understood this criteria in my own search for our Narrator's highest stakes of circumstance, I needed to arm myself with more research to ascertain the best possible approach. As a weapon for a much-needed resource in this process-of-elimination, I started to examine the science of memory. Studies on mid-life crisis phenomenon helped greatly. In particular, one study noted evidence that by middle age, humans start to have more lucid realizations related to memories from childhood, as if rediscovering recollections otherwise lost to our psyches. *Cite reference. This phenomenon, like many in the field of memory science, is not fully understood, but has a fascinating implication if applied to the character of older narrator, the play's framing device.

Are the memories more painful and real in the narrator's present because he is neither young, nor old, but somewhere in between, existing in a purgatory of mid-life crisis? Researching the average age for mid-life crisis reports in adult males, I learned 42-55 was a range noted in a scientific journal. *Cite reference. Seizing upon this age for our narrator, it then became incumbent to localize an even more specific year to help ground choices our actor and designers might need for further understanding. The opening monologue hints at the social unrest in Europe (Sc 1, pg 5) and, elsewhere (Sc 5 - pg 39), the narrator suggests how it foreshadows America's impending involvement, "*..the world is waiting for bombardments.*"

This notion that society, like the Wingfield family itself, is (perhaps even complacently, naively) on the verge of breaking into chaos, is a fundamental theme of the play, to be discussed in greater length in *Section E: The Script: 1944, The Sands of Time*. Our narrator is returning to an America that, despite being ravaged by the Great Depression, is innocently ambivalent to the

horrifying shattering of identity it will undergo as it is pulled into a World War of atomic proportions within a few short months. To exploit this consciousness, it became interesting to envision our narrator dropped into a year that mirrored the unravelling of the fabric of society he may have experienced in a 1944 timeline glancing back to a pre-War status quo. If the narrator could equate his current experiences amidst a frighteningly shifting national schism to those memories of “that quaint period, the 1930’s”, it might best serve both a personalization for the actor portraying the role, as well as a directorial justification for the needs of the character.

Studying the timeline of the Vietnam conflict, one year in particular seemed the most enticing to visualize a narrator inhabiting: 1967. Besides this year endowing a nice round-number quality in relationship to our 1937 timeline (30 years removed), the year also marked the beginning of a radical shift in American politics and the emerging counter-cultural attitudes to War. Transporting Tom 30 years into the future of the events of his memory would land him at the age of 51 years old in the year 1967. Considering the possibility, the setting choice began to have a profound impact on my imagination as it related to the tumultuous issues engulfing America (i.e. the onslaught of Vietnam as mentioned above, the Civil Rights Movement, Cold War anxieties, etc.), and how those issues might mirror a need, a sort of ‘*generational-nostalgia*’ if you wish, to return to “the social background of the play” the Narrator defines and that TENNESSEE WILLIAMS might approve of.

The solution to our ‘narrator Tom’ problem was thus: He is a 51-year-old, alcoholic drifter, merchant marine veteran, in ‘*some strange city*’ - an alley in the autumn of 1967 (his final monologue also describes “*leaves that were brightly colored but torn away from their branches*”).

2. *Scenic: Escape and Expressionism*

Using the spine of *Escape*, and the above conclusions related to memory and circumstance, the first design discussion that was important to establish was the scenic world.

A critical choice I made early on was to embrace the definitive text (sometimes referred to as the Reader’s edition) rather than the acting edition, which is often used in production. I felt TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’s definitive text (published by New Directions, with production notes and the essay, “The Catastrophe of Success”), was a more exciting source to use for a graduate project, particularly in its essential relationship to TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’s total textual vision. The New Directions includes a pervasive pattern of screen images and legends of text, which were cut for the original premiere at the urging of producers, and subsequently not incorporated into the design of productions often associated with *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*.

Since, however TENNESSEE WILLIAMS includes them in his definitive text, what value might these have in the overall storytelling? He discusses their inspirational and practical point in his production notes preceding the drama in the New Directions’ publication:

“THE SCREEN DEVICE: There is only one important difference between the original and acting version of the play and that is the omission in the latter of the device that I tentatively included in my original script. This device was the use of a screen on which were projected magic-lantern slides bearing images or titles. I do no regret the omission of this device from the original Broadway production. The extraordinary power of Miss Taylor’s performance made it suitable to have the utmost simplicity in the physical production. But I think it may be interesting to some readers to see how this device was conceived. So, I am putting it into the published manuscript. These images and legends, projected from behind, were cast on a section of wall between the front-room and the dining-room areas, which should be indistinguishable from the rest when not in use. The purpose of this will probably be apparent. It is to give accent to certain values in each scene. Each scene contains a particular point (or several) which is structurally most important. In an episodic play, such as this, the basic structure or narrative line may be obscured from the audience; the effect may seem fragmentary rather than architectural. This may not be the fault of the play so much as a lack of attention in the audience. The legend or image upon the screen will strengthen the effect of what is merely allusion in the writing and allow the primary point to be made more simply and lightly than if the entire responsibility were on the spoken lines. Aside from this structural value, I think the screen will have a definite emotional appeal, less definable but just as important. An imaginative producer or director may invent many other uses for this device than those indicated in the present script. In fact, the possibilities of the device seem much larger to me than the instance of this play can possibly utilize.” (xx, New Directions).

The important takeaways from TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’s prelude here are the practical value in the use of images and text to provide the audience with narrative anchors, and the aesthetic value of emotional points that might support our understanding of the characters onstage. I began to wonder, though not mentioned above, how the screen device could be a supplement to an imaginary world of memory. The question entered my head,

“What if the screen device is a projection of memory itself - a way to visually enter into our narrator’s own creation of past events in play?”

Having consulted the artistic director of Raleigh Little Theatre in Virginia, Patrick Torres on his 2016 production of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*, he provided the following as an insight from his own process in answer to my question, “In hindsight, what do you think is most challenging about the story? How did you connect to it? Any advice on staging?”:

“I really enjoyed Glass Both times I worked on it. My way in was to see Amanda through Tom's eyes - so she can be outlandish and crazy and larger than life. It is his memory of his mother and sister that we see throughout. So, you can really have fun with the actors throughout. The tricky part is that there are those scenes when he is not on stage - so you must make the concept of his memory still clear. I may have failed at that. My production really placed Laura as the central character. Tom and Amanda don't change. Tom only stays because of how much he loves his sister...and she will never leave because she is terrified of the world outside her walls. I played a ton with Tom and Laura's love for each other. She is the older sibling which is sometimes forgotten. Then my brother died right when I was a week away from tech, so we focused on the sibling relationship even more. It made the ending violent. He locks her away from anything good when he walks out that door and ultimately asks her to put her own light out. She does, she blows her light out, so he can be happy. To me she is the tragic heroine. But that is just me and how I loved the work. I also love that the play was not written to be realistic. I didn't go far enough, and if I ever do it again, I will go further. I want to abstract it more - no dishes, very few props...constantly asking, ‘what does Tom remember?’ We see the entire show through his eyes.”

Trusting his personal and professional tastes, I particularly honed in on Torres’ response to the lack of realism inherent in the play and gave deeper consideration to TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’ desire to create a scenic environment that honored both the

Depression-era setting, yet also the very unrealistic nature of memory. Wrestling still with a clear way to encourage scenic exploration of the screen device, I discovered an exciting question to put to our designer, Michael Riha: “*Rather than designing a scenic world first, then looking for where to place a screen device within in, what if you begin with the screen device as the essential scenic element, and then build the remainder of the world around it?*”

3. Video: The Screen Exploit

In what became a natural progression, further discussed in *Chapter IV: The Process, Section B. Design Meetings*, an update on TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’s original conception of the magic lantern slides to depict images and legends (text) was married with a scenic design choice to fundamentally exploit the device from the script into a fully-realized component of the imaginary world in our production of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*. Drawing inspiration from the playwright’s final statement of his production notes, “*an imaginative producer or director may invent many other uses for this device than those indicated in the present script...the possibilities of the device seem much larger to me than the instance of this play can possibly utilize.*” (xx, New Directions), we innovated a larger invention for the screen as originally imagined.

The ‘screen’ became a utilitarian concept, in that it was both a device for imagery and text, but also the very architecture that engaged the Wingfield family. In this way the video designer, Shawn Irish, and myself realized quickly that the screen could have a wide array of pragmatic and aesthetic uses for our storytelling: serving as a collection of multiple screens to fluidly depict scenic elements such as wallpaper (referenced by Amanda in SC 5, “I need

to get these walls re-papered), the father's photograph (referenced throughout the play, with significant emotional qualities), weather references (referenced as rain in Sc 6-7), and, in addition to the images and texts TENNESSEE WILLIAMS specifically denotes consistently, a translucent surface to employ backlit shadows of the gentleman caller and the other characters at various moments of dramatic emphasis (further investigating TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's fascination with 'the inner life' of persons, as well as figuratively foreshadowing / commenting on the action of the narrative).

In total, 22 unique screen areas were identified and became manifest in production which were used both in isolation, and as aggregate forms of the screen device element.

4. Lighting: Noir and Loneliness

There seemed to be two distinct ideas that the script informed on how to approach lighting design. Again, TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's production notes and stage directions provided an impressive resource: Encouraging freedom of convention and non-realistic attributes in his opening of the production notes (New Directions, xix) he writes, "*the lighting of the play is not realistic. In keeping with the atmosphere of memory, the stage is dim. Shafts of light are focused on selected areas or actors, sometimes in contradistinction to what is the apparent center.*"

Coupled with our screen device concept (particularly in regard to how video projection is a source of light in itself), the other primary insight on lighting design can be extrapolated from Tom's obsessive retreat to the cinema. A recurring theme in his behavior and passions, the cinema seemed to represent a fantasy world of illusion that, similar to

Laura's glass figurines, provided temporary relief to a character's inner anguish. Tom's secretive missive to Jim on the balcony ("I'm going to move!", SC 6, New Directions) is a useful study, as it, other than a vitriolic release of energy towards his Mother in SC 4, is the most expressive and uninterrupted we ever witness Tom's 1937 character. The fact that his monologue in this scene so effectively employs the movies to paint his dissatisfaction with the status quo, elucidates the grip that the cinematic has on the imagination of TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's autobiographical figure, and moreover on the play as a whole.

In addition, then, to a sense of isolation in the form of shafts of lighting areas (further found to be problematic to execute in our production due to scenic limitations - See *Chapter IX, Section B: Design Process* for more on this challenge), the other question I posed to our lighting designer, Catie Blencowe, was: "*How might cinematic styles be explored in the lighting style of the world? In particular, what films from that era could be studied as a resource for inspiration?*" My hunch was that there could be some mileage in honing in on a slightly *Film Noir* aesthetic: shadows, half-lit faces (angularity), shafts of haze-filled light, figurative bodies. The reasoning was that Tom's memory of that time in his life might conjure an atmosphere that associated or layered such illumination from his fantasy world (via escape into late night movies) into or with the realm of the tenement apartment.

5. Costume: Memory, Closer to Reality

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's instructions in his production notes has a lead-in worth quoting pertaining to the unspooling of these initial design understandings. In New Directions (xix) he writes, "*Expressionism and other unconventional techniques have but one*

aim: a closer approach towards the truth...vivid and penetrating.” Secure in a sense of the scenic universe that was less realistic in its form in architecture, it seemed a necessary choice for our team to honor a sense of verisimilitude as the design approached a material proximity to our characters. There were exceptions to this rule (notably in the commitment to abandon certain props like the dishes in scene 1 as suggested by the script), but otherwise the attention to detail and the striving for authenticity became important philosophies for our property and costume design.

The first question I raised to our costume designer, Tanner McAlpin was, “*How, as we get closer physically in design to our characters onstage, do we honor the 1937 setting by being truthful to what the characters wear?*” In the overall balancing act between “expressionism” and “realism” in the script, this focus had not only value in how it paralleled an anchoring point for reality against a more psychic landscape of the scenic design, but also it how it would support the actor’s suspension of disbelief as they sought to embody these very difficult roles.

Aside from natural questions arising from this aforementioned notion (detailed in length in *Chapter IX: Design process*), the last major inquiry at the onset for me was in how Tom Wingfield was expressed due to the ambiguous and fragmentary nature of his character in time. “*What does it tell us and how can we use the fact that TENNESSEE WILLIAMS does not mention a costume change for Tom until Scene 5? In what way does the coat Tom uses to accidentally shatter the glass figurines factor into an overall symbolic statement we can explore with his character? What are Tom’s intentions and expectations with inviting Jim O’Connor to dinner and how does that inform his attire in the final two scenes?*” Ultimately, these 3 questions became the trickiest and most important to bring up to McAlpin

early on in how they dictated an understanding of how to best track the arc of our elusive narrator.

6. *Sound: Reality of the Mind*

If, as noted above, we took advantage of a design principle that stated, “*as we zoom in and get closer physically to the actors, we honor more and more a sense of verisimilitude*”, it might seem like a betrayal of this hierarchy to suggest using microphone amplification attached to their bodies (and somewhat visible in a flesh-tone wire on their foreheads) as a means of aesthetic unification. It is fitting that this section of our protean thoughts on *Design and Interpretations* will conclude with this topic however before moving into our next section, *E: The Script*, (subtitled “*1944, The Sands of Time*”), as an intuition on the quality of sound in the play was one of my earliest acknowledgements.

From multiple readings of the play, I sensed rhythmic structure in it that straddled both a lingering intimacy as well as an explosive gregariousness. A series throughout seemed apparent of escalating tension, released into either fury or humiliation, at the enduring expense of its characters. Scene 4, in its presentation of Tom’s brutal argument with Amanda, read to me as the first manifestation of this release in sequence, and this was further confirmed by my observation of the whole of the script enacted in the perpetuity of our final runs. I’ll articulate more on these rhythmic patterns in the following section, however it is sufficient to note here that this sense of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*, not only inspired a musical understanding of TENNESSEE WILLIAMS’s lyrical writing, but also an overall aesthetic regarding possible sonic qualities to the storytelling.

In contradiction to the explosive moments of the text, the conversational essence seemed to demand an exploration of the quieter, delicate, and intimately real moments exchanged between characters onstage. For example, in the second salvo of Scene 4, Tom and Amanda attempt to have a reconciliation over coffee, all the while discussing Laura's future and Tom's decision to join the Merchant Marines. This scene, being both a figurative hangover to the dynamism of their previous fight, and also a literal hangover in Tom's intoxicated psyche, requires a re-establishment of the rhythmic pattern previous explored in the first quarter of the play. Since tension has been released in the form of name-calling (Tom to Amanda) and material destruction (Tom's coat to Laura's figurines), it is important to view the Mother-Son early morning discussion as tender, quiet, intimate and sonically authentic (no less anxious-filled and stake-driven).

Another example of this quiet tension important to the play can be read in Scene 2, as Amanda confronts her daughter with her dishonest compact to attend Rubicam's Business College. The stage directions indicate two places where Amanda takes a ten second pause, as she reassessed an approach, or perhaps creates a space for Laura to confess to her betrayal. Regardless of the interpretation of these pauses, they themselves permit a space for quietness as a potential tension-motif foundation in an overall execution.

The essence of this grasped me with such certainty early-on, that it indeed was the first design-based idea I had for the storytelling, so much so that I mentioned it to our Department Chair and Scenic designer, Michael Riha in February of this year, in a brief conversation following an opening night reception for a University production of *Lysistrata*, yet preceding any formal design meeting. I recall using Amanda's ten second pause in her scene with Laura as an example of this quiet tension to convey to Riha the quality of

quietness necessary to exploit in production. As we chatted over the course of just a couple of minutes, I brought up the idea of using live microphones as a method to encapsulate the moments of quiet dialogue between characters. Retrospectively, I've come to believe this idea was rooted in a desire to encourage the actors to connect vocally with each other as authentically as possible while simultaneously inviting our patrons to hear such private conversations as if they were voyeurs, sonically more immersed in the reality of the character's minds.

It may seem counterintuitive in this approach to sabotage the verisimilitude principle I had hereto laid out: *the closer we get to the performers, the more realistic our design must get*; nevertheless, something resonated in me with the choice of amplification. In a way, using microphones for each actor allowed possibilities for a more penetrating closeness to truth (in acting), in addition to a more vivid abstraction of reality (in the sonic-spatial suspension of disbelief). It had a bold characteristic to its concept, and one that I was discouraged from using in consultation with Mark Charney, the Chair of Theatre at Texas Tech University, when I consulted him on the project in July 2017. In my ever-strident commitment to intuitive risk-taking as a director, however, I placed the option for amplification confidently on the table at our first design meeting, knowing full well that it would be easier to subtract rather than add at a later time in the process. Having received no critical concerns about its justification from my design team, it became a bedrock for the production that eventually aided us in performance (though, I have one regret its final employment to be described in *Chapter IX, Design Process*).

In addition to electronic amplification of voices, I knew immediately upon the approval of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* for thesis production that I wanted to invite my long-

term sound design partner, Ryan Dorin to collaborate on the music and sound effects in the play. Dorin, a PhD in music theory from New York University, was an essential composer and resident sound artist for my New York-based company, *Aztec Economy*, where he had devised original compositions for a variety of complicated projects I directed. Our shorthand was superb, and further established by his agreement to design the sound via long-distance for *Angels in America, Part One: Millennium Approaches* at the University of Arkansas in October 2016.

Dorin's multi-instrumental skills, combined with a critical design mind provided me a strong option to best squeeze out TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's commands for the musicality in production. To the point, TENNESSEE WILLIAMS describes in detail the quality of sound he expects in performance, as well as certain relationships this music has to character moments (particularly as they relate to Laura). The specificity and directness of our playwright's elaboration in his production notes to '*the music of the play*' meant that it was imperative to choose a sound designer who could best achieve these goals as well as imbue an efficient communication style, a dynamic already fused from my ongoing working relationship with him. There are some artistic uncertainties I have in hindsight about my own approach to leading the sound designer, and thoughts on how I may have failed to best guide a more excellent soundscape for our production. These self-reflections will be elaborated on in *Chapter IV: Design Process* below.

E. The Script: 1944, The Sands of Time

An alternate title for this thesis document, “*The Sands of Time*” is an appropriate concept to introduce the essence of the script and story.

Just as glass is a powerful symbol of the play, so too is the nature of sand a powerful study into the mysterious underpinnings of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*.

Time is an extraordinary component, some might argue it even represents a 6th character in our story, and one that I believe I may have ultimately failed to bring to a full realizing for our audiences. The church bells - Ryan’s tick-tock sound design.

TENNESSEE WILLIAMS spent several years, in various formats, exploring the subject matter that would finally become *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*.

“For nowadays the world is lit by lightning.”

Elaborate on screen notions.

With this choice made, I invoked our scenic designer to embrace the idea of a ‘pretty trap’: a home-like cage that also allowed an expressionistic quality to understand that the world he retreats to is, as he says in his opening monologue, “is not realistic.” I brought up the “*larger than life photo of our father*” that Tom alludes to and felt this might tell us to be literal in its expression, which is non-realistic in his description. I also encouraged our scenic designer,

Michael Riha (also, the Departmental Chair) to consider the triangular relationship of the household's 3 characters and how that might be symbolically exploited. In his initial drafts, I particularly liked one sketch that he provided which seemed to hint at an even bolder form by its angularity. Commenting on how I felt his sketch could go further in its desire to emphasize forced perspective, he elaborated the scenic world into an extremely triangulated ground plan. Riha pulled a Scenic design book from his office shelf that had in it a black and white photo of a greenhouse-like home and asked, "What do you think of this?" This was our critical breakthrough. The greenhouse frame reminded me not only of a glass cage, but also referenced the symbolic power of plants / flowers throughout the story. Laura even mentions (Sc 2) to her mother how she would go to the St Louis Zoo to avoid Rubicam's Business College and "*the glass house with all the tropical flowers*" provided her imaginative relief. The final discovery from this scenic design direction took form when the idea of using back video projectors to provide content to the scenic cage-like walls throughout the story was determined. Having a fluid, dynamic yet ever-present video design to create wallpaper, thought balloons, as well as boldly honor TENNESSEE WILLIAMS's screen device of legends and images fulfilled the foundation of storytelling I was seeking to support the telling of *THE GLASS MENAGERIE* for a modern audience.

Add to script analysis section

If we are to accept his question at its face, O'Connor fails to view the Unicorn model as merely a legendary symbol of antiquity, but rather presupposes its preexistence as grounded in flesh, bone, fully-horned in reality. The sincerity of such a posit may not only provide a moment

of laugh-out-loud humor for an audience of more aptly educated audiences, but also aid us in understanding O'Connor's tragic imbalance of perception. Underpinning this moment in the exchange between potential lovers, is a revelation of his rote misunderstanding of things mythical, magical and ancient. From the perspective of the character's values, the future holds more mysteries worth chasing, evident as he waxes on the marvels of *The Hall of Science*; his braggart ambitions in the fields of electrodynamics, television, and radio engineering.

And so, in a single line of dialogue, Tennessee Williams provides mere minutes before the climactic kiss, a nugget of humor and tragedy yoked out of the basic perceptual differences between his two could-be lovers who are, in effect, ultimately incompatible.

Of course, a view might be pursued that O'Connor's question is a more deliberate action on Laura. If he is trying to make her laugh by exposing an attitude of naiveté, his objective to relax her throughout the scene falls more into alignment. Such a flash of singular cleverness however may require an even more calculating approach to the character overall which finally felt too cynical for my own interpretation working with the actor, Cody Shelton on our production at the University of Arkansas.

Our view became grounded in an approach to O'Connor as being just as oblivious to the inner mysteries of life as he is attracted to his outer reflections of vanity.

ix. Appendix 9: Ten Production photographs by Shawn Irish and Catie Blencowe









