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A Directorial View of Tennessee Williams' Suddenlly Last Summer

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A Directorial View of
Tennessee Williams'
Suddenly Last Summer

A Masters Thesis

By
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M.F.A. Directing
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The Department of Performing Arts
Of
Lindenwood University

Upon the recommendation of the Department of Performing Arts, this thesis is hereby accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

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Prospectus

The nucleus of my thesis will be the direction of "Suddenly Last Summer", by Tennessee Williams. This play will be performed under my direction for The St. Charles Theatre Company on October 27 and 28, November 3 and 4, 2000. "Suddenly Last Summer" was first introduced to the public at the York Theatre, in New York City, on January 7, 1958.

It is my intent to present my own interpretation of this play and document my process of directing it in a community theatre environment. This becomes even more interesting to me because, although the St. Charles Theatre Company has been in existence for nineteen years, this is the first production in a new space that we are allowed to use as our exclusive new home.

This creates more problems to be solved that go beyond the direction of the play. We have to turn what was a reception hall that housed a small proscenium stage into a black box theatre that will serve our community effort for many other plays.

Before we can perform the play in question, we need to build walls and platforms, reinforce a stage floor, paint and plaster stage and walls, and build risers for audience members to sit on. These preliminary necessary endeavors must be handled before the production of "Suddenly Last Summer" can go up. Needless to say, this will take a large portion of our funds to accomplish which means my budget for this production will be small and require a minimal expenditure to produce.

Chapter One of my thesis will focus on background information regarding Tennessee Williams and his family with particular attention paid to the situations that arose culminating in his sister's lobotomy. Chapter Two will be comprised of a script

analysis of the play based on the process taught in Francis Hodge's book Play Directing. Chapter Three will be a journal documentation of the rehearsal process, including what we did at each rehearsal, what problems we encountered, and what solutions were devised. This chapter will also include information on the remodeling of the theatre space by the St. Charles Theatre Company.

Chapter Four will include objective feedback from the cast, crew, audience members, and my thesis committee members as to how successful I was at communicating the play's message and my objectives. It will also focus on my performance as a director and will answer such questions as where did I succeed, what could have been improved, and what I learned from the experience.

Being a community project, this will require the expertise of many people. Theatre is always a team effort, and this project is no exception. The concept of team spirit is one that attracted me to this profession in the first place. My hope is that this thesis can help others start their own community theaters in an effort to keep live theatre thriving in communities everywhere.

Chapter One

Tennessee's Rose

Tennessee Williams was one of the most acclaimed playwrights of the Twentieth century. He received the coveted Pulitzer Prize for both A Streetcar Named Desire and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, as well as the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for The Glass Menagerie, A Streetcar Named Desire, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, and Night of the Iguana. Before he became world famous, he was the recipient of many awards and grants that helped him pursue his dreams.

Most of the works of Tennessee Williams are based on the author's autobiographical experiences. His genius lies in his ability to transform the emotion generated from events in his real life to the characters and situations he created in his work. The plays he writes reflect the ebb and flow of his sensibility to the world in which he lived. In her book, Remember Me To Tom, his mother, Edwina Williams, tells us that Tom wrote to escape madness, insecurity, and death. He had an obsession about death and a strong fear of it his entire life. Death represented to him the ultimate act of violence. He once said, "There is a lot of violence in my work, but there is a lot of violence in my life" (qtd. in Edwina Williams, 252). In his own book Memoirs, Williams states, "Maybe I am a machine, a typist a compulsive typist and a compulsive writer. But that's my life, and what is in these memoirs is mostly the barest periphery of that which is my intense life, for my intense life is in my work"(84). In Tennessee Williams: Everyone Else is an Audience, Ronald Hayman quotes Elia Kazan as saying, "Everything in his life is in his plays, and everything in his plays is in his life. He was so naked in his plays" (xiii).

There is no greater proof of this than to look at how Tennessee Williams exposed and dealt with his feelings for his sister Rose. Characteristics of Rose are in many of his plays. In The Glass Menagerie, characteristics of Rose can be found in Laura who lives in a dark, secret world, unable to cope with harsh reality. In Summer and Smoke, Rose appears as Alma who doesn't fit in and is ostracized by society. Rose surfaces as Serafina's young daughter Rosa in The Rose Tattoo, who suffers at the hands of an overprotective mother. Glimpses of Rose can be found in A Streetcar Named Desire, in the characters of Blanche and Stella where they are both victims of a cruel and violent world. Stella survives but has to live with the violence and domestic upheaval heaped on her by Stanley, while Blanche, who loses everything that life held for her, has to spend the rest of her days in an asylum. The most telling account of Williams' feelings for his sister is found in "Suddenly Last Summer," a play he wrote in the 1950s which contain his response and feelings concerning his sister's lobotomy.

This discussion will explore the events that led up to the lobotomy and look at how Tennessee Williams chose to express his feelings of anger toward the violent way in which Rose was silenced by Edwina. This discussion will also compare the real life drama of Rose Williams to that of Catherine Holly in "Suddenly Last Summer."

To begin, an exploration of the parentage and childhood of Rose and Tom Williams will reveal the events that occurred in their lives which shaped who they were to become as adults.

Their father, Cornelius Williams, had fought in the Spanish American War, achieving the rank of officer. Although he had completed one year of law school before going into the service, he did not pursue a law degree when he was dismissed. Instead, he went to work for the Cumberland Telephone Company (Spoto 7).

Edwina was the only child of Edwin and Rosina Dakin. Edwin Dakin was a pastor of an Episcopal Church in Columbus, Mississippi. Edwina led a charmed life as a young girl in Columbus. She had a score of “gentleman callers” from Kenyon College in her youth. Edwina admitted in her early life, “I was rarely required to do anything I did not want to do” (qtd. in Spoto 5). There were forty-five young men mentioned in Edwina’s diary, all noted with some level of affection. Although she only knew these young men casually, she had their poems and pictures plastered all over her scrapbooks with notations regarding their eligibility as gentleman callers.

Tom and Rose’s parents met in early 1906 after a performance of the Mikado in which Edwina had performed. This first meeting led to an eighteen-month courtship. After their courtship, Cornelius, with the approval of Reverend Dakin, asked for Edwina’s hand in marriage. The June 1, 1907 entry in Edwina’s diary read; “Many men have said I love you, but only three said, Will you marry me. I will marry one next Monday. Finis. Goodbye” (qtd. in Spoto 8).

Not much is known about the early years of Cornelius and Edwina’s marriage, but during her first pregnancy Edwina returned to live with her parents at the rectory in Columbus. Cornelius refused to live there due to his strict

upbringing and unpleasant experiences as a boy who lived in the restrictive confines of a seminary. While Edwina was with her parents, Cornelius would visit only a few times a month (Spoto 8).

Rose Isabel was born November 17, 1909. Shortly after Rose was born, Cornelius started traveling extensively for the Cumberland Phone Company. Edwina stayed living with her parents, and in her husband's absence, she resumed her active social life while her mother watched the baby. Cornelius would pop in for frequent visits. Edwina became indifferent to Cornelius' frequent coming and going. It became apparent in a short period of time that the marriage between them had been a mistake.

Cornelius' visits became less pleasant experiences in the fall of 1910. He would come home late, drunk and incoherent. This was embarrassing and sometimes frightening to Edwina. She knew he had been gambling in houses of ill repute located at the edge of town. But during a long sustained visit Edwina became pregnant again and gave birth on March 11, 1911 to Thomas Lanier Williams (Spoto 9).

Shortly after Tom was born, Edwina hired Ossie, a black servant who helped care for the children and did the shopping and cooking. She remained with the family for many years, going with them on their many moves. Reverend Dakin would move several times trying to better his position. After three such moves between the years of 1913 to 1915, Reverend Dakin settled in Clarksdale, Mississippi. Life in Clarksdale was good and exemplified the stereotypic idea of the genteel lifestyle in the Old South.

By the time Tom was five and Rose was six, they became each others sole playmates. This was due to the frequency with which the family moved. Later in life Tom would say of his sister, “She was an ideal playmate. She was charming, very beautiful. She had an incredible imagination. We were so close to each other, we had no need of others” (qtd. in Spoto 10). Dubbed so by Ossie, the children were known as “the couple.” They were so closely connected that when Rose was sick with some childhood disease, Tom was sure that he had the same ailment.

Because of Reverend Dakin’s status in the community, Edwina was allowed the status and prestige that gave her an active social life in her husband’s absence. Since Ossie took care of the household duties, Edwina was free to socialize. She always, however, set aside time each day to spend with Tom and Rose. The children also had their grandparents who would tell them Bible stories, and Ossie who would sing spirituals and African lullabies and inundate them with stories of Black and Indian folklore filled with ghosts and gremlins.

The Dakin’s were far from rich, and money was scarce in the house in Clarksdale, but the rectory contained large rooms, and the town was friendly with beautiful flowers and parks. Dakin Williams, the third child born to Cornelius and Edwina, comments, “They had more than money...They had the stature of being the ministers’ family”(qtd. in Spoto 12). It was a genteel life and Rose was a little princess. As the granddaughter of the minister, everyone in town liked her and looked on her fondly. They were like royalty despite the fact that they had no money (Spoto 12).

Those happy times were abruptly cut short during the summer of 1918. Cornelius had made a name for himself with the International Shoe Company. He was a good salesman and was well liked by his superiors. So it came as no surprise when he was promoted to sales management. The position carried with it a move to the then booming metropolis of St. Louis. This move was to have a profound effect on both Tom and Rose, the latter being the most damaged in the process. They were used to the gentler, kinder life provided by the confines of the Rectory in Clarksdale. They found St. Louis, in contrast, to be noisy and crude. Even Edwina found that the new city didn't measure up to her social aspirations and was certainly detrimental to the health of her two frail children.

St. Louis had a busy industrial base, a rising intellectual life, and a cosmopolitan personality that would have been a shock to the senses of any southerner, especially one who had lived a deeply traditional sheltered southern lifestyle where status wasn't based on how much money one's family had, but on who one was.

The children enrolled in school in September, 1918. They were both ridiculed for their southern accents. His fellow classmates further abused Tom due to his fragile, sickly mannerisms. This treatment caused Rose to stay home from school more and more. She would sit alone in the dark, which puzzled her mother. Rose's time in Mississippi had been markedly happier than what she experienced in St. Louis. According to her brother Dakin, "we had very little money and no status, and people in the neighborhood had nothing but contempt

for people like us 'poor whites.' The change was a great shock to Rose" (qtd. in Spoto 19).

Shortly after the birth of Dakin, Edwina fell ill with Spanish Influenza, and it was necessary for her to spend an extended recuperation period out west. Cornelius accompanied her on this trip, leaving the children in the care of their Grandmother. This stay with Grandmother was to provide some of the happiest times the children had in St. Louis, due to their Grandmother's generous and kind nature.

These happy times were again cut short with the return of Cornelius and Edwina. Their return prompted a series of moves for the family that continued for several years. By the time Tom was fifteen and Rose seventeen, they had lived in no less than sixteen different homes. Two reasons for this gypsy-like behavior were Cornelius' propensity to gamble away his paycheck on occasion, causing the family to miss the rent due dates, and Edwina's desire to recreate her elevated lifestyle of the past where she lived a more aristocratic existence. She was always on the look-out for something a little bigger and a little better than they had.

The 1920s were marked by a series of illnesses for Edwina that required surgery. One of these surgeries required a hysterectomy that almost killed her. According to Dakin Williams, "Life at home was terrible" (qtd. in Spoto 18). Cornelius would come home drunk and start a fight over the bills for items bought for Tom. Edwina would feign fainting, always landing on the couch to break her

fall. Dakin recalls one fight where his mother ran into the bedroom and locked the door. Cornelius broke it down and in the process broke her nose (Spoto 18).

Cornelius was promoted to management in 1922. Life wouldn't have been so financially difficult for the family had Cornelius not wasted so much of his money. Being a father was a burden to Cornelius. He felt he'd have been better off if the children had never been born especially Tom and Rose (Spoto 18).

In his book Tom The Unknown Tennessee Williams, Lyle Leverich reveals that Rose was desperate to be accepted by her peers and sought even harder for her father's attention. She displayed the typical pubescent characteristics of a teenage girl, having arguments with her mother while longing for validation and love from her father. She sought her father's affection in any way she could think of expressing her love to him. She gave him little tender gifts that were received by Cornelius with indifference and insensitivity. The more he rejected her attempts to receive his love, the harder she tried, until she was left void of defense and totally emotionally vulnerable (60).

Rose became terrified at the thought of her mother dying and being left in the charge of Cornelius. Due to the many operations performed on Edwina, Rose was kept in a constant state of anxiety at the thought of having to tolerate her father's drunken moods and his uncaring manners toward her.

One incident that quelled the storm inflicted upon the family by Cornelius was a party held at the International Shoe Company that Cornelius attended. He and another employee had sex with a prostitute and contracted gonorrhea. This information came to the attention of his superiors. Both men were called before

management, and the only thing that saved Cornelius' job was his honesty about the events. For several weeks he kept a low profile around the apartment and begged forgiveness from his wife out of embarrassment (Spoto 19).

The experiences since the move to St. Louis had a devastating effect on Rose, and were much more devastating for her than her brothers. The move took away the shelter she felt in Clarksdale and threw her into a harsh cruel world. Rose struggled inwardly, trying to cope with this abrasive new reality, but her fragility and sensitivity wouldn't allow her to cope. She fell deeper and deeper into her "world of darkness and unreality and eventually, complete psychotic breakdown" (Spoto 19).

Rose experienced one trauma after another in her feeble attempt to fit in. Edwina had provided her violin lessons and a recital at the YMCA that ended in catastrophe. Rose froze, unable to continue. She was taken home weeping by her family. There also was a bad ending when Rose was sent to Knoxville for her debut. No one came because she was from out of town. Edwina tried sending her to business college hoping she would learn stenography. The pressure and the contact with so many people proved too much for Rose, and she couldn't handle the situation (Spoto 19-20).

It was at this time that Tom was able to find a more creative outlet for his trauma. Edwina bought him a used typewriter to help him with his homework. It instantly became a safe retreat for Tom when he needed protection from his chaotic home life. This gave Tom a therapeutic outlet unavailable to his sister. He began to write as a way to cope with what he found disappointing in life.

Tom and Rose's relationship began to change during their teenage years. Rose isolated herself more and more from her brother. This confused Tom and hurt him and filled him with resentment toward her. At his young age, it was beyond his understanding to sympathize with what Rose was trying to cope. He also had difficulty dealing with the changes in her clothes and hairstyles. Other changes in Rose added to Tom's confusion. What was once considered Rose's good spirits now took on a more crazed and hysterical nature. Leverich tells us, "Her laughter was now more nervous than natural; she often quarreled over inconsequential things with Tom and Mother and Daddy" (62).

Rose was now showing an interest in boys that left Tom feeling even further rejected. Rose fell in love with a boy named Richard Miles only to have another disappointment befall her when he died at the age of seventeen. Tom would write of Rose.

...At fifteen my sister
 no longer waited for me,
 impatiently at the White Star Pharmacy corner
 but plunged head long into the discovery, Love!
 Then vanished completely-
 for love's explosion, defined as early madness,
 consumingly shone in her transparent heart for a season
 and burned it out, a tissue-paper lantern! (qdt. in Leverich 63-64).

Tom couldn't understand the changes Rose was going through. His youth and the lack of knowledge about the beginnings of Rose's mental illness confused

the issue even further. He responded to this rejection by withdrawing himself from his family and concentrated on his writing.

By 1925, Rose's behavior was intolerable to Edwina, and the mother insisted that something be done with the girl. Edwina decided that she would be sent to All Saints College in Vicksburg. Rose had been rebellious and displayed behavior that was frightening to Edwina. It must be remembered this was the 1920s, and the youth of that day struggled to break the Victorian chains clamped upon them by their parents. It was a changing world of which Rose was a very outspoken part, but Edwina would have none of it. The more Edwina insisted for Rose to change her rebellious ways and begin to display the gentle southern sensibilities that Edwina insisted upon from her, the more Rose resisted Edwina's demands. Rose saw all around her modern daughters modeling their modern mothers' behavior, which was quite different behavior than that of Edwina's generation. Rose saw her mother's ideas as conventional and antiquated for the modern times that was the roaring 20s.

The two were at odds with each other. Edwina was insistent that Rose become a proper young woman, making all the correct choices as to education and marriage, and not repeating the mistakes that Edwina had made in choosing a mate. Rose, just as strongly opinionated as her mother on this subject, longed to be a part of her own generation. Rose fought her mother's nagging and disapproval constantly. Leverich tells us of a letter written by an unknown source:

There is an adorable girl from St. Louis here. Rose Williams is her name. Ever since I arrived I have aided and abetted her in deceiving her mother! Isn't that wicked? But really we shouldn't be blamed. No is the principal word in Mrs. Williams' vocabulary. No matter what Rose asks to do--her Mother says no. Then Rose proceeds to do it and while she is busily engaged in disobeying her mother, her Grandmother soothes Mrs. Williams' wrath enough to make it safe for Rose to go home.

One of Mrs. Williams' strictest rules is that Rose shall never spend the night anywhere except at home. So of course Rose has a perfect passion for spending the night out. Another aid to our deception is Tom, Rose's fourteen-year-old brother, who is her constant companion, as well as our colleague (qtd. in Leverich 71).

Rose's letters to home complained about the strict rules, lack of funds, meager food offerings, and her distaste for the music lessons she was forced to take. The last item caused her much anxiety and ended up with Rose having to go to the infirmary (Leverich 76). In a letter to her Grandmother, she wrote:

I don't know what was the matter with me except that I was so nervous that I couldn't hold the glass to take my medicine in. I stayed in bed all day long and had a big dose of calomel and I feel better but still weak. I had just finished a music lesson, and Miss Butell nearly drove me wild. I simply can't stand to take another lesson from her or anyone else. It makes me nervous as a cat...I suppose you have paid for my music by the term but perhaps if you write Miss Newton she would refund half the

money and I could have peace again. I can't do a thing any more and it is making me lose time that I could put on my history and French. Please please do let me drop it. I will practice on Saturday mornings if you wish (qtd. in Leverich 76-77).

Other letters from Vicksburg expressed Rose's boredom and difficulties she was having with teachers. She described one teacher as "a regular pill" whom Rose detested entirely (qtd. in Leverich 76).

With all these problems in Vicksburg, Rose did experience an occasional happy time. Edwina's string of illnesses left the parental duties to Cornelius who actually made an effort to carry them out. He sent Rose money and infrequent gifts. She was quite pleased to receive a pair of slippers sent by Cornelius and sent a letter home expressing her gratitude and pleasure at receiving a pair of shoes that were all the rage. Edwina dismissed the gesture by her husband as being nothing but shoe samples.

In Cornelius's defense, it wasn't that he was inherently cruel. He was a man who believed in hard work, reading the sports page and in the discipline only the military could provide. It wasn't in his nature to be sensitive to the needs of women. He didn't have the capacity to understand that tenderness was needed. This could have made a difference in his marriage to Edwina, and definitely to the life of Rose who desperately sought his affection. Further complicating the communication needed to help him to understand his family's needs was his own hurt and mistrust of Edwina who shut him out of Tom and Rose's life at an early age. He believed Edwina made Tom a momma's boy and Rose a nervous wreck

through her overprotective nature toward her two children who had been ripped from a life of genteel sensibility of the south, to one of harsh coarse reality in St. Louis.

During this time, Tom was able to turn to his writing, and he had met Hazel Krammer who was his companion and his first physical relationship with a woman. Unfortunately for Rose, her life was without direction. Her focus was on fashion and her looks. She was caught up in appearances and her struggle to be liked by anyone she met. This was a desperate attempt to validate her existence.

In the later 20s, Rose became more distant. Tom was the only one close to her. In her school yearbook of 1927 a somber, slump shouldered Rose is depicted. When Rose returned to the family home, she found that Edwina and Cornelius had made the decision that Rose would not return to Vicksburg. It wasn't due to money but rather to the growing realization by Edwina of Rose's peculiar behavior. Edwina felt that if Rose were to be married that would solve her problems. With the help of Cornelius' sisters, Isabel and Ella, it was determined that Rose was to have a debut in Knoxville in the fall (Leverich 85).

Edwina had some reservations regarding this undertaking. She felt debuts weren't the great experience touted by the press for the girl in question. But she agreed because she knew that Cornelius' sisters would look out for her and give her the attention that she craved. The events that followed this decision held disastrous results. Rose put together a wardrobe for the event. Isabel's mother-in-law, Mrs. Brownslow was an important person in Knoxville society. She

decided to present Rose at her debut. Unfortunately, she died shortly before the planned event, and the debut had to be cancelled.

The new plan was to introduce Rose through a series of parties. These were to be small informal affairs. Rose was disappointed once again but tried to put on a happy face disguising the anguish she felt.

Once Rose arrived in Knoxville the newspaper had her picture and a story about her proclaiming that she "will be the recipient of marked social attention" (qtd in Leverich 86). The truth is that during her month long stay in Knoxville, Rose dated many men. None asked her for a second date. A friend of Hazel Krammer remembered Rose as, "A very, very pretty girl-who giggled a lot and who was so shy with boys she didn't know how to behave in their company"(qtd. in Leverich 87).

Once Rose returned from Knoxville, Williams says she was never the same. It was obvious that the first signs of serious depression were developing within Rose. When Williams would ask about her Knoxville experience, she would reply, "Aunt Ella and Aunt Bell only like charming people and I'm not charming" (Memoirs 117).

A cloud had fallen over Rose and would get darker in the next four to five years. She was now starting to display paranoia, thinking people were trying to poison her. She experienced severe stomach pain, was moody, and spent hours upon hours alone in her room.

Tom would try to include Rose in his social engagements as much as possible, taking her to the movies or on walks with Hazel. This often left Rose to

be the third wheel. Tom was preoccupied with his own needs as well. His writing took time as did his schoolwork. As he approached graduation, he began to see writing as a way to break loose from the family.

Rose so desperately wanted freedom for herself but had no way out. She spent much of her days alone not knowing what to do with her time. This lack of activity left her feeling worthless and unfulfilled.

While Tom was given a gift of an overseas vacation by his Grandfather, Rose was left to her perceived illness, making frequent trips to the family doctor for her stomach trouble. The doctor concluded that she had a nervous stomach condition that wasn't serious. He put her on a strict diet. This took place right before Rose was to leave on a vacation to Knoxville where she would be tempted by rich foods. This trip to Knoxville was thought to be good for Rose by all except Edwina who was becoming more and more concerned with Rose's strange behavior.

The trip to Knoxville was beneficial for Rose. She met a boy there by the name of Bill Chable. Unfortunately for Rose, Bill was engaged to a rich young woman who had been overseas for a year and would be returning soon. Consequently Rose, wrote to her mother that it was time to come home. Once again Rose reached out to someone only to be sent home unfulfilled.

Tom was preparing to leave for college. Upon his arrival, Tom majored in journalism. This was a compromise for Cornelius because he saw journalism as the only way Tom might be able to make a living as a writer (Leverich 105). This was a time in Tom's life when he appeared to be getting closer to his father. He

wrote to his father thanking him for some golf clubs that Cornelius had sent (Leverich 106). He also received some publicity from the school newspaper. Tom had some of his short stories published in Weird Tales and Smart Set magazines. The school picked up on that and wrote a feature article about the new freshman (Leverich 106-107).

Tom also joined a fraternity. Cornelius took a stronger interest in Tom at this time. Out from under the influence of Edwina, Cornelius felt he could make a man out of his son (Leverich 108).

Back at home things were getting worse for Rose. She was experiencing intense pain to her stomach. She was in and out of Barnes Hospital, which was running a series of tests in an effort to discover the cause of her ailment. The examinations showed the problems to be the result of nerves. She came under the care of a nerve specialist. The apparent cause for Rose's nervous condition was her home life. Always at odds with Edwina, she now was in open warfare with her father as well (Leverich 115). The doctors determined that Rose needed something aspire to, a goal that she could focus on to help relieve her nervous condition. So Rose entered Rubicam's Business School. The pressure of the class proved too much for Rose. She felt overwhelmed with the workload, and her instructor would reprimand her for her inability to complete the work. To relieve herself of this stressful environment, she just stopped going to class. She would spend her days wandering through Forest Park. Tennessee Williams would use this real life situation within his first play to hit the Broadway stage, The Glass Menagerie. Laura, who has dropped out of Business College, says:

I went in the art museum and the bird-houses at the Zoo. I visited the penguins every day! Sometimes I did without lunch and went to the movies. Lately I've been spending most of my afternoons, in the Jewel-box, that big glass house where they raise the tropical flowers (qtd. In Leverich 116).

Rose's situation at home wasn't getting any better either. Her flare-ups with her father escalated. On one occasion when Rose had a date coming over, Cornelius refused to leave the living room regardless of her pleading. Rose called the young gentleman and told him not to come. She then went back into the living room and said something crude to Cornelius. He slapped her. Rose fled from the house. Upon her return she wouldn't speak to Cornelius for days (Leverich 120).

Ronald Hayman adds that this incident resulted in Rose's running into the street to hail a policeman who would lock up her crazy father (30). Once again Rose complained of severe pains in her stomach. Her doctor suggested that she seek psychiatric care.

Once in therapy, Rose would complain constantly of her insensitive father. The psychiatrist suggested that Rose be put in a sanatorium for a period of time. She was sent to St. Vincent's. Here she was put in the care of the nuns that ran this Catholic institution. Dakin Williams relates what a visit to the sanatorium was like for his family.

Rose was like a wild animal. Often I would hear her screaming long before the Catholic sisters would usher us into her presence...Between

screams and the most vile cursing, she would be chain-smoking or pacing up and down the corridor or visiting room (qtd. in Haymen, 30).

Edwina would place much of the blame for Rose's problem on Cornelius. Her diary carries many passages that explain the situation. In one that she wrote shortly after Cornelius had returned from a sales trip, she relates two terrible arguments that developed in which Cornelius threatened to leave her. She felt that this added to the nervous condition of both children.

Her diary tells of a constant barrage of verbal abuse heaped upon them by Cornelius. His continual complaints of the cost of the children's needs, his threats to leave, although this might have been a secret desire of everyone concerned, created a lot of anxiety as to how they would provide for themselves without Cornelius' money, regardless as to how begrudgingly he doled it out. When Tom returned to school he wrote these words to his sister.

"As you can readily understand, I am anxious to hear from you concerning the situation on the home front. Has the spirit of Quiet Night now descended?" (qtd. in Leverich 124).

As time passed, Rose's condition would have periods of improvement. Tom's next year at school was filled with promise and disappointment. He wrote poems constantly and was passing all his courses except for R.O.T.C. The latter would prove to be his undoing. When he returned home for summer vacation in 1932, Cornelius was waiting at the door with Tom's grades in hand. He took Tom's flunking R.O.T.C. as a personal insult and made Tom leave the University

of Missouri and start working at the International Shoe Company. Edwina writes in her diary,

Tom wanted with all of his heart to get a degree, to keep learning, to be able to write more effectively. I think he would have given anything to remain in college. But he did not defy his father. {Cornelius} got him a job at sixty-five dollars a month, and so Tom entered a world of dusting shoes, typing out factory orders and hauling around packing cases stuffed with sample shoes, the world of his father (Leverich 129).

Now that both Tom and Rose were over twenty-one, Cornelius felt they should help with the finances if they were going to live under his roof. His main joy in the home was Dakin. He proclaimed Dakin to be a true Williams. He no longer wanted to squander his money away on Tom, Rose, and Edwina. He had Dakin's education to consider.

This treatment of Tom and Rose created problems for both children, but Tom always had a refuge to go to. His writing provided an outlet for him to express his rage, his feelings, and his hope for a brighter future away from the hell that had become home. Rose unfortunately had no refuge, and she sank deeper and deeper into depression and insanity.

One of the deepest pressures Tom felt at this time was whether he should stay to shield Rose as best as he could from the abuses thrust upon her from their father or to escape and abandon her and pursue his dreams. He opted to help her. The two of them painted her bedroom white and furnished it with white feminine furniture. They installed shelves that would hold her glass collection that was to

become famous much later in their saga. He took her to a Halloween Dance, but the costumes and the noise of the crowd upset her rather than made her feel better (Spoto 43).

None of these gestures seemed to help. She was losing her self-confidence, and everything she tried only pushed her further down. She was turned down for a modeling job because she was too short; she also lost a job as a dental assistant (Haymen 33).

By 1933, Rose was drifting further into her inner world. Even a second recovery period in a sanatorium provided only a short interval of relief from her torment. Edwina thought male companionship would help her daughter's situation. So she set up a string of "gentleman callers" to court her daughter. Edwina even called in one of Tom's friends from Columbia, a young gentleman by the name of Jim O'Conner. Although nothing is known about that meeting, except that it was a short visit, it very well may have inspired the event in The Glass Menagerie where a gentleman by the name of Jim O'Conner calls on Laura.

According to Dakin Williams, "Rose became increasingly unhappy and threatened, and depressed" (qtd. in Spoto 43). The fighting between her parents continued as did Cornelius' drinking, gambling, and lack of interest in both Rose and Tom. His upward social and provisional mobility had also come to a screeching halt. At the same time Rose and Tom became increasingly fragile (Spoto 43).

By 1935 Tom was becoming more depressed because of his work at the International Shoe Company. He was becoming terribly absentminded, a problem

that first began in college, but now manifested itself more predominantly in the day-to-day routine of the International Shoe Company. He got into trouble at work because a \$50,000 order had been ignored. The problem was traced back to Tom who had slipped the order into his pocket and forgotten to turn it in for processing.

He was also struggling at this time with his sexuality. He found himself becoming more and more attracted to boys. He began to lose weight as well as sleep. He was living on cigarettes and coffee. The caffeine brought on problems that manifested themselves as a panic attack that Tom mistook as a heart attack. He was rushed to the hospital (Spoto 45).

The doctors determined that nothing serious was wrong. But Tom took a leave of absence from work and for a month saw a doctor who made house calls. This time gave the doctor a clear picture of Tom's ailment. Tom was suffering from emotional distress. Already having these problems with Rose, the family decided it was too much pressure to have two depressed children in the home, so Tom was shipped off to Memphis to recuperate in his grandparents home.

Meanwhile, in St. Louis, Rose's phobias took on increased eccentricities further separating her from her family. She began to eat only Campbell Soup retaining the labels like coupons for savings toward future purchases.

Tom's bout with depression took a different path than Rose's. Secure in the arms of his welcoming grandparents, Tom was able to rest, eat, reflect on long walks through the streets of Memphis, and take long afternoon naps. He

improved rapidly, showing his strong ability to bounce back from illness, a trait that followed him throughout his life.

He started going to the Memphis Library. There he was introduced to the works of Anton Chekhov. Williams felt a kinship with the famous Russian playwright who, like Tom, hated his childhood city. Williams was impressed by Chekhov's exploration of the secret motives of his characters. When Williams read The Sea Gull he became fascinated by Chekhov's use of real objects in a symbolic way. The sea gull represents victory of spirit over hardship and the fact that those who kill beauty are too ignorant to see it (Spoto 46).

As summer approached, the month of June found Williams feeling better. The rest had done him good, as did his neighbor's daughter who had asked Tom to work together on a play for her amateur theatre group. It ended up that she only wrote the prologue and epilogue. Tom contributed the rest of the four scenes that depicted the troubled love affairs of two sailors. Although this was a modest work, it sparked in Tom the beginning of his work as a playwright.

While Tom was evolving, Rose continued her futile struggle to survive. Edwina tried to help by having Rose teach Sunday school at St. Michael's and St. George's. Rose discovered that the Reverend Carl Morgan Block, who was pastor at the church was half Jewish. She mentioned this in passing to friends and parishioners. This news was not received well by the congregation and when word got back to Reverend Block, Rose was immediately dismissed. This was a devastating blow to her sensitive condition (Spoto 50).

Another incident that traumatized Rose came shortly after a move to Pershing Avenue. This incident involved a young neighbor, Roger Moore, with whom Rose had struck up a friendship. Roger wanted to go into politics. But like Rose, he too had problems with mental illness. His family had him put into a private sanatorium in Kirkwood. One night he broke out and was tragically struck by a car and killed. This proved a crushing blow to Rose.

Around the same time, Tom had a party at the house, while their parents were gone for the weekend. Tom had been drinking, a habit that Rose detested because she saw what it had done to her father. Rose threatened to tell their mother about the incident. Tom angrily told her that "he never wanted to see her ugly face again"(qtd. in Memoirs 122). Dakin relates that from then on she became even more distant from the family. In reflection Tennessee Williams would say, "This is the cruelest thing I have done in my life, I suspect, and one for which I can never properly atone" (qtd. in Memoirs 122).

A friend of Tom's, William Jay Smith, explains what a visit to the Williams' home was like at this time. "[Rose] was rarely mentioned when we came to the house, but we knew that she was up in her room, perhaps listening at the top of the stairs. She was very withdrawn, on the edge of complete breakdown." (qtd. in Spoto 50).

In 1937 Rose was treated as an outpatient for two periods of time at the state hospital in Farmington, Missouri. She was then sent back to St. Vincent's mental hospital. Once she returned home she would throw wild outbursts, and

she would have hallucinations. She would on occasion threaten Cornelius with physical violence.

The thought of having a family member being confined to an asylum in 1937 was devastating. Conditions in these institutions were not much better in the 1930s than they had been in prior centuries. Freud was still alive in 1937 and thought to be a heretic by the medical profession. Psychoanalysis and psychiatry were in disagreement with each other's theories. Both practices were often deemed cruel and crude. Nevertheless, Cornelius, out of desperation, would threaten Rose with confinement in the State asylum if her behavior didn't improve. Edwina's terror at the thought of this had her turn to Cornelius' sisters to enlist their help in changing Cornelius' mind. Their response to Edwina was immediate. Isabel wrote:

I want you to know that I feel just exactly as you do about placing Rose in an asylum. In the first place she is not deranged, but would certainly become so in an institution of that kind (qtd. in Leverich 205).

Ella responded with similar sentiments. She indicated in her letter that there was nothing wrong with Rose's mind and it would be outrageous to consider putting her in an asylum (Leverich 205-206).

While this was happening with Rose, Tom decide to leave St. Louis for Iowa City in order to attend the University of Iowa and study playwriting. Tom hated St. Louis. According to Dakin, Washington University had disappointed Tom by not approving a play he had written as suitable for performance. To him, everything about St. Louis was based on materialism and social status. Tennessee

Williams would later tell a reporter "For all the family, life in St. Louis was dismal"; for many years to come he would refer to St. Louis as "that dreaded city" (qtd. in Spoto 57).

By the fall of 1937, Rose's behavior had become unbearable. She would get in terrible fights with Cornelius, yelling and threatening him with physical violence. This would bring on a violent, brutal response from Cornelius, especially if he had been drinking. One incident that provoked a beating by Cornelius left Rose hysterical; in an apparent effort to calm her, he must have done something that she construed as a sexual advance toward her by her father. Her hysteria lasted for days; the doctors couldn't calm her or control her outbursts and reported that she was now a patient beyond their ability to help with normal treatments such as medicines or hot baths or temporary confinements in rest homes. (Haymen 42).

Rose's condition had reached a point where she was capable of not only hurting herself, but also possessed the potential to inflict bodily harm on others, particularly Cornelius. Edwina Williams tells us that one doctor told Cornelius that "Rose is liable to go down and get a butcher knife and cut your throat" (qtd. in Remember Me To Tom 85). Edwina would say years later that "Rose was afraid of her father but I don't think she ever would have attacked him. She was too gentle to engage in violence even if she wished it" (qtd in Remember Me To Tom 85).

The doctors were strongly recommending a new procedure called a leucotomy or prefrontal lobotomy as the only cure available for Rose's condition.

They told the family that the procedure was safe, and since Rose would be one of the first patients to receive the procedure, it would be performed free of charge.

The lobotomy called for the opening of Rose's brain and for the nerve fibers connecting the thalamus to the frontal lobes of the brain to be severed. It was a delicate operation that would destroy the memory of the mentally disturbed person. The result of this would be a total and immediate calming of Rose, ending her fits of hysteria and rage. What they didn't know at the time was that it also left patients void of personality and the ability to communicate effectively.

The information regarding the lobotomy came to Edwina in the wake of the incident when Rose claimed that Cornelius had tried to have sex with her. This information was too much for Edwina to bear, and she wanted to stop her daughter's ramblings of this horrible, shocking story. She sent Rose back to Farmington and gave permission to perform the operation. Tom was not told of the operation until November when he returned home to see a production of his play The Fugitive Kind, which was being produced by Mummers, a St. Louis amateur Theatre Group.

Tennessee Williams would blame his mother for years to come. In later years he would say:

She gave permission to have it done while I was away. I think she was frightened most of all by Rose's sexual fantasies. But that's all they were---fantasies... She is the one who approved the lobotomy... My sister was such a vital person. She could have become quite well by now if they hadn't performed that goddam operation on her; she would have come

back up to the surface. My mother panicked because she said my sister had begun using four-lettered words (qtd. in Spoto 60).

So in the fall of 1937, a frontal lobotomy was performed on Rose Isabel Williams ending her ranting and ravings and silencing her personality and vibrancy forever. Tennessee Williams would carry the guilt of his sister's operation with him his entire life. Had he only been in St. Louis at the time, he could have perhaps dissuaded the family from giving their permission. This is documented in Edwina's book Remember Me To Tom. She says; "I think Tom always felt as though he had failed Rose, that had he been on hand when the big decision was made, he might have been able to stop the lobotomy" (86).

But Tom was young and restless. He wanted out of that house as badly as did Rose. As they grew up and became older, they weren't the playmates for each other they had once been. Tom was busy with school and his writing, and Rose had been trying desperately to fit in somewhere. Her preoccupation had been fashion and gentlemen callers. So although this split between brother and sister is a normal occurrence as siblings grow, for Tom it represented a crucial mistake in his ability to protect his sister. She was too fragile for this world, but he was too caught up in all the possibilities that lay before him in a world that was starting to recognize his potential.

Tom turned to his writing as a way to heal his pain. Reference to Rose can be seen in his earliest one-act plays in 1938 right on through to the end of his life. He repeatedly used the name Rose or images of Rose in many of his plays.

In years after the operation, Williams would reflect in a resigned manner that he doesn't think he would have been the poet he was if it wasn't for this horrible tragedy that was inflicted upon his family. But deep down he was angst-ridden at the situation that took place in the fall of 1937. He said in a correspondence to a friend that Rose was, "More beautiful, more intelligent, sweeter and warmer than anyone. Not one of us was fit to stoop and tie her shoes" (qtd. in Spoto 60).

Rose lived out her life, which lasted longer than her brother's, in a world where time stood still. When asked her age, she would reply that she was twenty-eight and her brother was twenty-six and that their lives revolved around visits from that man, Cornelius Williams. The truth is after the lobotomy Cornelius never visited Rose again. Edwina relates, "To him it was as though she disappeared from the earth" (qtd. in Remember Me To Tom, 86).

Although free from pain Rose was never again able to communicate with clarity to another human being. Upon seeing Rose after the operation at Farmington State Hospital, Tom would write in his journal: "She is like a person half-asleep now--quite gentle and thank God not in any way revolting (Delvin 139). Edwina tells us that after the operation, "Rose is no different today than at one stage of her illness. She is less excitable, but someone always has to be with her to take care of her" (Remember Me To Tom 85).

Rose's situation made clear to Tom how narrowly he had escaped the same fate and worried about the thin line that he walked between sanity and

insanity his entire life. After all, he had a nervous breakdown before and it could happen again.

Twenty years later he would write about the personal events that took place in his family in the years of 1936 and 1937, wrapping the truth in a myriad of dramatic dialogue, plot, and characterization. But in researching "Suddenly Last Summer" one can see the direct correlation to his real life situation and the emotions that he felt regarding his sister's lobotomy.

Before he would write "Suddenly Last Summer", Tennessee Williams would stamp his mark on the theatre world with a series of plays that would make him rich and famous and change the way audiences viewed drama on stage forever. He would do this using symbolism, poetry, imagery and the talent he displayed better than anyone, portraying his own life in fictional form.

Even after finding fame, Tom still remembered his sister. His wealth allowed him to care for his sister in expensive sanatoriums. He had moved her to a sanatorium called "Institute for Living" in Hartford, Connecticut. Upon one visit, he found that Rose had been confined to the violent ward. He was told that she had knocked down an old lady. Tennessee demanded to see Rose at once. Rose told him that she hadn't knocked the woman down. This woman kept coming into Rose's room at night interrupting her sleep, and Rose gave her a push when she wouldn't leave. The woman fell and blamed Rose. Upon hearing her side of the story, Tennessee removed his sister from that establishment (Memoirs 126).

He moved Rose to Stoney Lodge in Ossining, New York. His devotion to her caused him to start making regular visits to Stoney Lodge. Cheryl Crawford, one of the co-founders of The Group Theatre and a friend of Tennessee's, joined him on several of his trips. She found the two of them together very touching.

Tennessee Williams became involved with what turned out to be the love of his life in June of 1947. Frank Merlo was a second-generation American of Sicilian decent. Tennessee Williams had long since come to terms with his homosexuality, and Frank was a comforting companion compared to the relationship that had just ended with a volatile Mexican by the name of Poncho Rodriguez. The new relationship would last until Frank's death in September of 1963.

In the winter of 1949-50 Tom and Frank decided to spend the cold season in the southern climate of Florida. They went to Key West, accompanied by Tennessee Williams' grandfather. Tennessee fell in love with Key West because its warm climate provided a daily opportunity for him to swim in its cool blue waters. Key West, along with New Orleans, would become two of his favorite spots in the continental United States.

The 1950s were filled with travel both abroad and in the states. Some of the best creative work that Tennessee Williams would produce came out of this period. The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone, The Rose Tattoo, Camino Real, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Baby Doll, Sweet Bird of Youth, and Orpheus Descending were all written and produced, and releases of the films, The Glass Menagerie, A Street

Car Named Desire, and The Rose Tatoo. Additionally, the early 50s were filled with a growing dependence for Williams on liquor and drugs.

By 1956, his relationship with Frank was deteriorating. Williams was teetering on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Then he received the news that Cornelius had died in June of 1957. The news of his father's death caused unexpected results. He felt the pain so strongly that all of his familiar illnesses escalated quickly, overwhelming him. He displayed bouts of hypochondria and developed a persecution complex.

The condition continually got worse. Tennessee Williams, urged by his friends, entered psychoanalysis. This was an intense treatment that lasted over a year. He met for one hour, five days a week with Dr. Lawrence S. Kubie. Kubie, a strict by-the-book Freudian, tried to help Williams by offering constructive advise on how to put the pieces of his life back together.

Among his suggestions were that along with a drink stoppage, William's should give up his relationship with Frank and pursue a heterosexual lifestyle. He also concluded that Williams should stop writing at least for the time being. (Spoto 215). Williams was quoted as saying "I think if this analysis works it will open some doors for me. If I am no longer disturbed myself, I will deal less with disturbed people and with violent material...It would be good if I could write with serenity" (qtd. in Spoto 219)

During this time Tom began to visit his sister Rose with more frequency. Spoto relates a story that on one of these visits Tennessee had brought a friend with him. The friend returned to the car providing Tennessee and Rose a chance

to say good-bye. When Tennessee returned to the car he held a ten-dollar bill in his hand. Rose had given him the money. She had told him, "Tom I know how hard you are working at the shoe warehouse. I know you want to be a poet, and I believe in you. I have been saving some change for you, and I hope this will help things to be a little easier. If you will just be patient, I know good things will be ahead. Always remember I believe in you" (216).

The combination of the therapy and the frequent visits with Rose did open doors for Williams, but the results didn't yield a more serene Tennessee Williams. His next play was "Suddenly Last Summer", and it included some of the most shocking, violent material he had ever written. It was to be the autobiographical account of his sister's lobotomy and his response to it.

"Suddenly Last Summer" contained themes of cannibalism, homosexuality, religion, incest, and moral corruption. The characters for the most part are greedy, self-indulgent people who prey upon the weak in order to advance their own desires. The play tells the story of Catherine Holly who accompanied her cousin, Sebastian Venable, on a vacation the previous summer, replacing his mother, Violet Venable had taken ill and was unable to travel with her son as she always had in the past. Almost a year has past, and Catherine is in a sanatorium, frustrated because no one will believe the terrible story she tells of that fateful trip which results in the death of Sebastian.

Sebastian's death was the most shocking, violent act presented to a 1950s audience. Sebastian had been devoured, cannibalized by urchins in Spain. These urchins had prostituted themselves for Sebastian. This story is so hideous that

Violet wants the girl silenced by giving her a lobotomy. She wishes to resurrect her son's memory as a poet who wanted order and beauty in the world. She will do this at any cost.

Violet Venable is the most wicked mother image that Williams shows in his work. She represents the feeling Tennessee held for Edwina's decision to perform the lobotomy on Rose.

In the play Violet Venable tries to bribe Catherine's mother, brother, and the doctor into performing the lobotomy on Catherine. She holds an inheritance bequeathed by Sebastian for Catherine and her brother George over their heads. The doctor is in need of money to advance his research. He even confronts Violet with her offer to finance this research in exchange for Catherine's lobotomy as a bribe; to which she replies:

Name it that--I don't care--There's just two things to remember. She's a destroyer. My son was a creator! Now if my honesty's shocked you--pick up your little black bag without the subsidy in it, and run away from this garden! Nobody's heard our conversation but you and I, Doctor Sugar
(Suddenly Last Summer 16).

Violet Venable has to silence this most horrific story that Catherine tells of her son Sebastian's death. This is too terrible a story for her to believe of her son and all the implications it holds. Sebastian was a poet, and a gentle man of honor in the eyes of his mother. Catherine's story destroys that image and leaves us one of a predatory monster that is sacrificed for his sins.

The autobiographical parallels are clearly revealed here. Just as Mrs. Venable wants to silence Catherine for a horrific story, so did Edwina want to silence Rose for her horrific story of her father's alleged sexual advances. Tennessee uses this story to explain the violence and destruction that was inflicted upon Rose in real life.

All through "Suddenly Last Summer" one can see Williams' feelings and emotions about situations and choices that were made in his own life. These choices made either by him--his homosexual life style, or by his mother--Rose's lobotomy. William's images of birds ripping the flesh out of the baby sea turtles as they make their dash for the sea is described by Violet Venable, but held within that speech is Williams own disgust toward his sister's lobotomy. Like the innocent fragile bellies of the sea turtles, Rose's brain was ripped out, destroying a fragile innocent creature in a most violent way. His feelings for his sister's tragedy are apparent in the following speech delivered by Mrs. Venable.

And the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and --swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh ("Suddenly Last Summer," 9).

What haunting images Tennessee Williams must have been carrying with him all those years. The playmate of his youth had been violently removed from his life, and he could do nothing to prevent it from happening. His rage and

indignation of Rose's lobotomy came spilling out of him in 1958, a rage that had been seething for twenty years.

He also expresses his own guilt and need of atonement for his chosen sexual lifestyle. Sebastian Venable is in reality a homosexual predator who uses young, poor boys for his sexual pleasure. But he must pay for his sins and must be sacrificed for his transgression. Perhaps the young urchins who eventually overcome Sebastian and cannibalize him represent not only atonement of a sexual predator. They may also represent retribution for all of those who prey upon the weak, fragile people who can not fight, who are not strong enough to fight the wickedness and cruelty that exists in the world. Perhaps Williams felt that the fate which befell Sebastian should not only be that of the sexual predator, but also the fate of a woman who would have her daughter silenced by ripping out a part of her brain.

Ronald Haymen expresses the view that perhaps Tennessee Williams was treating Edwina too harshly. He reports that in her book Remember Me to Tom Edwina states: "We relied on the advice of a local psychiatrist." Dr. Emmett Hooctor, a pioneer brain surgeon had been experimenting in frontal lobotomy. Edwina claimed that two of the three doctors giving advice on what to do with Rose were in favor of the operation, and she had been given six weeks to make a decision about the operation, and that Cornelius had no part in that decision. According to Haymen, Williams gave an interview in 1981 claiming his father had no knowledge of the operation, that the decision was solely Edwina's. But Haymen goes on to point out that even if Cornelius didn't outwardly partake in

the decision, Edwina was strongly influenced by him at the time and was well aware of his priorities. He was frightened by the doctors reports of possible harm that may come to him from Rose, money was always tight, and the operation had been offered for a limited time as a free solution to their daughter's problems (Haymen 48).

Whatever the truth is regarding the operation, it created a rage and guilt in Tennessee Williams that manifested itself in his art, culminating in the explosion that was to become "Suddenly Last Summer," twenty years after the event.

"Suddenly Last Summer" opened as a long one-act play at the York Theatre in New York City on January 7, 1958. It was performed on a double bill with another one-act "Something Unspoken." Ann Meacham was cast as Catherine and Hortense Alden as Mrs. Venable. The director was Herbert Machis, who had directed a revival of A Street Car Named Desire in Florida and had banned Williams from those rehearsals. This time a clause in the contract stopped his ability to cause the same results here (Haymen 176).

Even the set reflected the inward rage that Tennessee Williams felt toward his sisters' violation. The description of the set follows: "There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood, there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature" ("Suddenly Last Summer" 3).

The double bill was performed under the common title The Garden District because the two plays had a common setting of New Orleans. The plays

met with a split decision by the critics. "Something Unspoken" was quickly dismissed as having nothing important to say, but "Suddenly Last Summer" was considered more noteworthy. Many critics were shocked at the play's subject matter. It must remember for a 1950s audience, lobotomy, homosexuality, and cannibalism were assaults to their senses. However, Williams mastery of the written word had never been better. John Gassner observed: "Williams has rarely written dialogue with such intensity of feeling and vividness of imagery as in ... 'Suddenly Last Summer' "(qtd. in Crandell_xxxiii). Conversely Tom F. Driver felt that Williams used intensity and vividness as a device in order "to deliver a sensual wallop" rather than a dramatic statement (The Critical Response to Tennessee Williams, xxxiii).

Whatever the response of the critics, the parallels with Williams own life and his own demons can not be overlooked. Not only the obvious issue of Rose's lobotomy and Williams shock and horror of its intrusiveness, but also the more sinewy side of Williams character as seen in the manifestation of Sebastian. Sebastian had told Catherine that he was fed up with dark boys and now wanted blondes. Ten years earlier, after spending two months in Italy, Tennessee Williams had told Donald Windham, a friend with whom Williams had collaborated on making a play adaptation of D.H. Lawrence's story, "You Touched Me," that he was tired of dark Romans and building up an appetite for northern blondes (Haymen 175).

Catherine relates the story of Sebastian's death. He became the target of the poor underfed island urchins whom he had exploited. Sebastian had told the

waiters at the restaurant where he was being taunted by the urchins that the waiters needed to make the children stop. The ultimate result of this decision was that the urchins chased Sebastian, killed him, and started to devour him.

Catherine ties the image of Sebastian's death to the birds of prey swooping down on the turtles as they race for the sea.

Haymen describes this as being William's "most ferocious theatrical image" he had found to express his guilt that came from his eating wonderful meals in cities where the local natives were starving. Also reflected is the guilt he felt for the poor boys of these islands whom he used for his sexual pleasure in exchange for money. The young boys subjected themselves to this abuse because they were too poor to say no (Haymen 174-175).

Other images in "Suddenly Last Summer" reveal the pressures that plagued Williams throughout his life. His images of white, hot steamy streets reflect the pressure cooker in which he found himself: the pressures of guilt that he felt for his inability to save Rose, the pressures of his homosexual encounters and the guilt associated with them, and the pressures of a mother who can no longer tolerate the horrid story told by a troubled daughter.

The purpose of the lobotomy in "Suddenly Last Summer" is to end the horrid story told by Catherine about Sebastian's death. This was the second play where Edwina had been so autobiographically depicted, and she wouldn't allow its truth to penetrate her protective shell. She would tell Tom upon seeing it "Why don't you write a lovely, long play again Tom?" (qtd. in Haymen 176).

The play ends in mayhem with the doctor delivering the last line. "I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl's story could be true..." ("Suddenly Last Summer" 44). It's interesting that Williams ends the play on this note. It may have been his attempt to say to the world that perhaps they should have listened to Rose and investigated the possibility of truth in her accusation of Cornelius' alleged advance. It also leaves open the outcome of Catherine's situation. We don't know if the doctor opts for the operation or not. It is left to our judgement to decide what the outcome will be. This struck me as providing a glimmer of hope for a different outcome than that of Rose. This last line of the play is William's own feeling of what he wished he could have said on Rose's behalf had he been there. It will forever be stated in the annals of time as a declaration of his outrage for his sister's lobotomy.

Williams would go on to write other plays including The Night of the Iguana which would also prove a critical success. The world was changing, and Williams had told his story and exorcised his demons over and over again. As he explored new material, the genius that had stayed him so long was now evasive. Regardless of this, Williams continued to write daily-- producing fifteen full-length plays during this time. He would tell his biographer Lyle Leverich, "I have done my operas, now I want the privilege of doing my chamber works. (*American Theatre* 22).

Troubled by depression, alcohol and drug abuse, he entered an even darker period of his life. His type of writing was out of step with the sexual and political revolution that was taking place in the 1960s. In Williams' fashion, he continued

until his death writing and reworking plays that smaller and smaller audiences were interested in seeing (Rizzo 2).

In his book Costly Performances, Bruce Smith states that Williams knew near the end of his life that his romance with the theatre had ended and that his life with the professional theatre was over. When approached by a journalist in Sicily and asked what he was writing about, Williams replied "Exploding volcanoes." (261).

During the last five years of his life, he indulged in public readings of his works. Included in this was a poem he wrote "Old Men Go Mad at Night" which conveyed his personality to his audiences.

What's left is keeping hold of breath

And for cover never now a lover

rests them warm...

Was that a board that creaked

As he took leave of us,

or did he speak-

"I'm going to sleep, good night" (qtd. in Spoto 364).

On the evening of February 24, 1983, Tennessee Williams went to his bedroom accompanied with a bottle of wine. At his bedside table were his usual array of capsules, tablets, and nose drops-- all evidence of a lifelong path of hypochondria and chemical dependence. The medical examiner and pathologist would later report that as the night progressed Williams had ingested small quantities of several drugs including cocaine and wine. A barbiturate cap had

somehow become lodged in his throat. It was imagined that he had used the cap like spoon to swallow some pills during the night and apparently swallowed the cap along with them. Unable to dislodge it, and apparently unable to call out, he died. And so it was over (Spoto 365).

Marlon Brando would say of Williams after his death:

By the time death came he had been so close to it so many times psychologically, emotionally, and physically that it was probably just a shave and a haircut to him.

We are all diminished by his death. Lessened by his passing. If we had a culture that gave support and assistance to a man of his delicacy, perhaps he could have survived. There is no real solace or cultural support for artists who find it difficult to find root in this culture, which is so hard and fast and commercial.

Brando's final words were "His was a wounded Life."

It is now eighteen years since Williams' death, and the world has changed many times over, bringing a change of attitude toward Williams' work. This has sparked a revival in the last five years that has introduced a new appreciative audience not only to his masterpieces, but also to performances of works from his early developmental years and his late experimental and expressionistic period. The consensus of this new examination of his work is that Williams is a greater writer for the stage than previously thought, rivaling the likes of Eugene O'Neill as the greatest American playwright of the twentieth century.

The new attention cast upon Williams' body of work was fostered with the death of Lady Maria St. Just, who controlled the rights of Williams' work with an iron clad fist. Thwarting all attempts of producers for years, her death opened the floodgates and no less than twenty-two professional productions of Williams' plays graced the stages of theatres across America in the last years of the twentieth century .

The passage of time has given Williams' body of work a sense of perspective. There are new generations of young people in their twenties who long for something not based on materialistic values: they seek something more spiritual, more poetic to carry them forward into their unknown future. Perhaps Williams' writings hold the key to those desires. Tennessee Williams speaks to that desire in a way that few others ever have.

Chapter Two

“Suddenly Last Summer”—Script Analysis

(Note: All citations are from, “Suddenly Last Summer.” Tennessee Williams.

Sewanee, Tennessee: The University of the South 1958. Renewed 1986.)

I. Given Circumstances:

A. Environmental Facts

1. Geographical location

Mrs. Venable. “Of course in this semitropical climate—some of the rarest plants, such as the Venus flytrap... has to be kept under glass from early fall to late spring...” (5).

This is an indication of a warm climate location.

Mrs. Venable. “...he wrote one poem a year which he printed himself on an eighteenth-century hand-press at his –atelier in the-French-Quarter” (8).

They live near the French-Quarter in New Orleans.

Mrs. Venable. “On the Berengaria bringing her back to the States... even at the airport when she was flown down here...” (13).

This information tells us that the play takes place in the United States. The facts state that Catherine had been at a clinic in Paris and arrived by boat, the Berengaria, which probably docked in New York, and she was then flown down to her present location, telling us the play takes place somewhere south of New York.

Mrs. Holly. “...I want you to know that nobody in the city knows a thing about what you’ve been through” (21).

Now we know the play takes place in a city in the United States.

Mrs. Holly. "...did Gawge tell you that he received bids from every good fraternity on the Tulane campus..."(25)

Tulane University is in New Orleans, Louisiana. This is another clue that New Orleans is probably the location of the play's action.

Catherine. "At a Mardi Gras ball some-some boy that took me to it got too drunk... We stopped near the Duelling Oaks at the end of Esplanade Street" (31).

New Orleans is known for its elaborate Mardi Gras balls. The "Duelling Oaks" refers to a location in New Orleans where men fought, including Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton, thousands of duels in the nineteenth century. This location is in City Park in New Orleans, Louisiana. (Garvey 67). Although this information refers to previous action we can be fairly confident that the present action also takes place in the New Orleans area.

Catherine. "I came out in the French Quarter years before I came out in the Garden District" (38).

These are both New Orleans locations.

2. Date:

Mrs. Venable. "I've waited months to face her because I couldn't get to St. Mary's..." (7).

Gives us some notion that several months have past since last summer when Sebastian was killed. We may be in spring of the following year.

Mrs. Venable. "Poem of Summer, and the date of the summer, there are twenty-five of them, he wrote one poem a year which he printed himself

on an eighteenth-century hand-press at his –atelier in the-French-Quarter-
so no one but he could see it.”

Doctor. “He wrote one poem a year?”.

Mrs. Venable. “One for each summer that we traveled together.” (8)

This gives us a time frame that tells us how long Sebastian and Violet traveled together and is some indication of the hold she had on her son.

Doctor. “In your letter last week you made some reference to a to a fund
of some kind, an endowment fund of”-(14).

This gives us a sense of how quickly Doctor Cukrowicz responded to Mrs. Venable’s
letter. Could be an indication of his desire for money.

Mrs. Venable. “Title? ‘Poem of Summer,’ and the date of the summer-
1935”(34-35).

Establishes the year in which Sebastian died. From this we can estimate the present to be
at least nine to twelve months later.

3. **Economic environment:**

Mrs. Venable. “It has to be kept under glass from early fall to late spring
and when it went under glass, my son, Sebastian, had to provide it with
fruit flies flown in at great expense from a Florida laboratory that used
fruit flies for experiments in genetics”(6).

First indication that the Venable’s are rich.

Mrs. Venable. “...he wrote one poem a year which he printed himself on
an eighteenth-century hand-press at his atelier in the French Quarter (8).

Sebastian’s wealth allowed him to have a studio in the French Quarter.

Mrs. Venable. “He read me Herman Melville’s description of the Encantadas, the Galapagos Islands... and said that we had to go there. And so we did go there that summer on a chartered boat, a four-masted schooner, as close as possible to the sort of a boat that Melville must have sailed on...”(8).

Further indication of the vastness of their wealth.

Mrs. Venable. “Next? India, China...booked us into Shepheard’s Hotel in Cairo and the Ritz in Paris”-(10).

This dialogue is an indication of the upper class life style led by Violet and Sebastian.

Mrs. Venable. “I wrote that my lawyers and bankers and certified public accountants were setting up the Sebastian Venable Memorial foundation to subsidize the work of young people like you that are pushing out the frontiers of art and science but have a financial problem”(14).

Doctor. “Yes we do have that problem. My work is such a new and radical thing that people in charge of state funds are naturally a little scared of it and keep us on a small budget, so small that –We need a separate ward for my patients. I need trained assistants, I’d like to marry a girl I can’t afford to marry!”(14).

This indicates that Mrs. Venable uses her wealth to manipulate those she supports.

She dangles a carrot in front of the doctor in order to get him to perform the operation on Catherine.

Mrs. Holly. “Sebastian has left, has -BEQUEATHED-to you an’ George in his will”.

George. "To each of us fifty grand, each! AFTER TAXES! GET IT?"(22)

George and Mrs. Holly are both caught up in their greed for the cash that has been left them. The truth doesn't matter. To them it's the money that counts.

Catherine. "Do you want to bore a hole in my skull and turn a knife in my brain? Everything else was done to me! You would have to get my mother's permission for that."

Mrs. Venable. "I'm paying to keep you in a private asylum."

Catherine. "You're not my legal guardian."

Mrs. Venable. "Your mother's dependent on me. All of you are! Financially...."(26).

Mrs. Venable uses her money to control her world. She will threaten to take the money away from those she supports if she can't get her way.

Mrs. Venable. "I went to the expense and humiliation, yes public humiliation, of giving this girl a debut which was a fiasco"(27).

Further indication of the wealth and status that surrounds the Venable home. Upper class Southern families provide debuts for their daughters when they reach an age appropriate to socialize.

4. Political environment:

Mrs. Venable. "I wrote you that my lawyers and bankers and certified public accountants were setting up the Sebastian Venable Memorial foundation to subsidize the work of young people like you that are pushing out the frontiers of art and science but have a financial problem"(14).

Mrs. Venable uses the legal institutions to her advantage in order to get what she wants.

Catherine. “Do you want to bore a hole in my skull and turn a knife in my brain? Everything else was done to me! You would have to get my mother’s permission for that.”

Mrs. Venable. “I’m paying to keep you in a private asylum.”

Catherine. “You’re not my legal guardian.”

Mrs. Venable. “Your mother’s dependent on me. All of you are! Financially....”(26).

Mrs. Venable thinks that her money is more powerful than the laws that govern the world of the play.

George. “Cathie, Cathie, you got to forget that story! Can’tcha? For the fifty grand?”

Mrs. Holly. “Because if Aunt Vi contests the will, and we know she’ll contest it, she’ll keep it in the courts forever”(22).

Mrs. Venable will use the laws to manipulate and bully Catherine and her family in order to force them into giving her what she wants.

Sister. “She lost yard privileges because she couldn’t be trusted in the yard without constant supervision or even with it because she’d run to the fence and make signs to the cars on the highway”(26).

Catherine displays her contempt for authority by trying to fulfill her own desires in spite of the rules.

Mrs. Venable. “We had an agreement between us a sort of contract or covenant between us which he broke last summer when he broke away from me and took her with him not me!”(36).

Mrs. Venable feels covenants and agreements spoken between her and Sebastian are held in higher regard than the laws that govern the world of the play.

5. Social environment:

Dr. Cukrowicz. “It’s like a well-groomed jungle.”

Mrs. Venable. “That’s how he meant it to be, nothing was accidental, everything was planned and designed in Sebastian’s life and his-work”(6).

Sebastian’s life was ordered and orchestrated. This is perhaps an indication of a very strictly regimented personality who probably had difficulty with anything he could not control. This trait surfaced in his personality because he was so controlled by his mother. Outside of her influence he wanted to control all around him.

Mrs. Venable. “You would have liked my son, he would have been charmed by you. My son, Sebastian was not a family snob or a money snob but he was a snob, all right. He was a snob about personal charm in people, he insisted upon good looks in people around him, and oh, he had a perfect little court of young and beautiful people around him always, wherever he was, here in New Orleans or New York or on the Riviera or in Paris and Venice, he always had a little entourage of the beautiful and the talented and the young”(11).

Sebastian surrounded himself with people who suited his tastes. His social world was sculpted to create his perfect world.

Mrs. Venable. "Here is my son, Sebastian, in a Renaissance pageboy's costume at a masked ball in Cannes. Here is my son, Sebastian, in the same costume at a masked ball in Venice"(11).

This is an indication of the vast amount of partying that went on in the circle of friends in which Violet and Sebastian traveled. Violet continually refers to Sebastian as "my son Sebastian." This is an indication that all Violet is concerned about is herself. She parades her son around her friends showing him off as a way to validate her own existence. That is why she can not let Catherine besmirch the memory of Sebastian.

Mrs. Venable. "My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-e-d! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it, too, we had to be very fleet-footed I can tell you, with his looks and his charm, to keep ahead of pursuers, every kind of pursuer! I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e-Chaste"(12).

The idea that people chased Sebastian, and they had to keep moving so he could maintain his chaste existence, is a telling indication of the true world of light and shadow in which Violet traveled. She was a chief player in procuring lovers for Sebastian, yet she duped even herself into believing he was pure. Perhaps this was her way of coping with the harsh reality of her son's sexual preferences.

Scene II

Catherine. "Cousin Sebastian said he was famished for blonds, he was fed up with the dark ones and was famished for blonds. All the travel brochures he picked up were advertisements of the blond northern countries.... Fed up with dark ones, famished for light ones: that's how he talked about people, as if they were-items on a menu- That one's

delicious-looking, that one is appetizing, or that one is not appetizing”(19).

Sebastian was a predator who traveled around the world looking for prey to devour.

Scene III

Catherine. “They send you to the beauty parlor whenever you’re going to have a family visit. Other times you look awful, you can’t have a compact or lipstick or anything made out of metal-because they’re afraid you’ll swallow it”(20).

This paints a vivid picture of the social environment in which Catherine is forced to live.

George. “Aunt Violet has an elevator now.”

Mrs. Holly. “Yes, she has, she’s had an elevator installed where the back stairs were, and sister it’s the cutest thing you ever did see! It’s paneled in Chinese lacquer, black an’ gold Chinese lacquer, with lovely bird pictures on it. But there’s only room for two people at a time in it. George and I came down on foot”(21).

This is an indication of class distinction between Mrs. Venable and her hated in-laws. It also points out the jealousy that Mrs. Holly holds for Mrs. Venable.

Mrs. Holly. “But I want you to know that nobody, absolutely nobody in the city knows a thing about what you’ve been through....Not a thing. Not a soul even knows that you’re come back from Europe. When people enquire, when they question us about you, we just say that you’ve stayed abroad to study something or other”(21).

This indicates that to Mrs. Holly appearances are more important to her than her

own daughter's needs. She covers up her vanity by making it sound as if she is doing this for Catherine's welfare.

Catherine: "But, Mother, I didn't invent it. I know it's a hideous story but it's a true story of our time and the world we live in..."(23).

Gives us a view of Catherine's slant on what the world has become. If we look at the world that Sebastian lived in, and consider the actions of the children on the beach, we see a world of horror, violence, greed, and want. In addition to this expressing Catherine's slant of what the world has become, it is also a metaphor for how the author viewed the world in which he lived.

Scene IV

Mrs. Venable. "These people are not blood-relatives of mine, they're my dead husband's sister and-her two worthless children. I...went to the expense and humiliation, yes, public humiliation, of giving this girl a debut which was a fiasco. Nobody liked her when I brought her out. Oh, she had some kind of notoriety! She had a sharp tongue that some people mistook for wit"(27).

This information gives a strong indication of how Mrs. Venable views herself above her in-laws. They are not part of her blood as her son is. This relegates them to a lower social position, unlike her son who is a blood relative and is almost viewed as royalty by Mrs. Venable. Her husband wasn't seen as important as her son, even when on his deathbed. He wasn't blood either.

Catherine. I wanted to go home. My coat was in the cloakroom, they couldn't find the check for it in his pockets. I started out for a taxi.

Somebody took my arm and said, "I'll drive you home"... but, he took me to another place first. We stopped near the Duelling Oaks at the end of esplanade Street... Stopped!-I said, "What for?"-...I looked at him in the car and I knew "what for"!...I lost him.-He took me home and said an awful thing to me, "We'd better forget it," he said, "my wife's expecting a child and"-...I entered the house...and then I suddenly called a taxi and went right back to the Roosevelt Hotel ballroom....I rushed right into the ballroom and spotted him on the floor and ran up to him and beat him as hard as I could in the face and chest with my fists"(31).

This tells us something of the type of people who made up the coterie of friends that Violet and Sebastian collected. These people were gave the appearance of belonging to upper class society, but were no more than vultures waiting to prey on the weak. Yet Violet doesn't see this truth. She only believes the lie that Catherine made an outrageously embarrassing scene on the dance floor of the Roosevelt Hotel Ballroom.

Doctor. "Every afternoon last summer your Cousin Sebastian went out to this free public beach?"

Catherine. " No, it wasn't the free one, the free one was right next to it, there was a fence between the free beach and the one that we went to that charged a small charge of admission"(37).

In the world of Sebastian there were always fences that separated him from those who were beneath him in social status. Sebastian would use these people to his own designs, but never let them infiltrate the appearances he wanted to create around him. He

would meet them in shadows and privacy, helping to create the lie that was his life, the lie that Violet wanted to protect so vehemently.

6. Religious environment:

Mrs. Venable: ...My son was looking for God and I stopped myself because I was afraid that if I said he was looking for God, you'd say to yourself, 'Oh a pretentious young crack-pot'... All poets look for God, all good poets do, and they have to look harder for him than priests do since they don't have the help of such famous guide-books and well organized expeditions as priests have with their scriptures and churches. Alright! Well, now I've said it my son was looking for God. I mean for a clear image of Him. He spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow's nest of the schooner watching that thing on the beach of the Encantadas till it was too dark to see it and when he came back down the rigging he said, 'Well now I've seen Him!'-and he meant God (9-10).

Violet feels that organized religions have an easier job than a poet because of all the books and readings that help them point the way. But a poet can only see God through what he observes through his life's experiences. In the world of the play God is viewed as a violent destructive God, one who allows the strong to prey on the weak.

B. Previous Action:

This play is told in retrospect. For this reason there is a lot of previous action that needs to be dealt with as the story unfolds. It is necessary to make the previous action dialogue fully motivated in order to hold the audience's interest throughout the play.

William's imagery and shocking story helps to that end, but the actors must bring his words to life through their actions, in order to create an aura of suspense.

In many plays the first act or scene carries most of the previous action and, once it is disclosed, the action in the world of the play takes over. In this play the action is held within events that occurred last summer. Much of the previous action paints a picture for the audience of who Sebastian really was and what really happened to him suddenly last summer, leaving no question as to the validity of Catherine's story.

The beginning scene allows Mrs. Venable to set up an image of her son to the doctor that represents how she wants Sebastian's memory to be viewed. It allows her an opportunity to win the doctor to her side before he meets Catherine.

Scene 1

In this scene the previous action gives us our first look at Sebastian. His story is told through the eyes of his mother. We find out that he kept a well-trimmed garden that resembled a jungle. We learn that Sebastian was a poet who died last summer while vacationing with his cousin Catherine.

Violet blames Catherine for Sebastian's death and wants to confront Catherine for the shocking story she is telling about his death.

Violet tells the doctor about the Encantadas. She and Sebastian traveled there together and witnessed the hatching of sea turtles on the beach. As the turtles started to head for the ocean carnivorous birds attacked them.

Mrs. Venable: "Over the narrow black beach of the Encantadas as the just hatched sea-turtles scrambled out of the sand-pits and started their race to the sea... To escape the flesh-eating birds that made the sky almost as black as the

beach! And the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and eating their flesh.” (9)

Mrs. Venable tells us her son was looking for God and after witnessing this vicious attack on the sea-turtles he felt he had seen Him.

Williams use of this story is serves two purposes. It is foreshadowing within the play of Sebastian’s own demise, and it creates an image of a world where the weak are preyed upon and devoured. This is an expression of the feelings Tennessee Williams had for his sister Rose who was too fragile for the cruel world in which they lived.

The previous action continues by giving us some insight into Violet Venable’s character. She relates a story of her son getting sick and her having to take over command of the ship. We hear of Sebastian entering a Buddhist monastery, promising to give away his fortune. Violet stepped in and cabled Sebastian’s father to put a freeze on his accounts. When she received a cable back stating that her husband was very ill and needed her, she decided to stay with her son and see him through his crisis.

This shows the devotion Violet felt for her son. She would sacrifice her husband in order to save Sebastian. This overbearing care of Sebastian by his mother is a telling tale of the type of man that Sebastian was. He had to have been sheltered and pampered his entire life by his mother. She created a shell around him and set him on a pedestal. There she worshipped him and blinded herself to the horrible truth of who he really was,

a man who preyed on young boys for sexual favors, a person she can't bring herself to admit that she helped create.

As the scene continues we find that Violet has sent a letter to Doctor Cukrowicz telling him of The Sebastian Venable Memorial Foundation. This foundation was to subsidize the work of young scientists and artists who were trying to break out of the paradigms that exist in their fields. It is here that we find out about Dr. Cukrowicz's needs and the ruthlessness of Mrs. Venable.

Mrs. Venable is frustrated that Catherine keeps babbling about Sebastian's death everywhere she goes, smashing the memory and reputation of her dead son. Mrs. Venable wants her silenced. We find here that the memory of Sebastian is more important to Mrs. Venable than Catherine's life, even if her offer of money might be construed as a bribe.

Scene Two

In scene two the previous action gives us our first glimpse of Catherine. We see the rebellious nature of her personality and how the world could view her as a problem. But if we look further into the dialogue we will see reasons for her rebellious attitude. Catherine is the most honest person in the play and has difficulty coping with hypocrisy and deceit. She is troubled and frustrated because no one will believe her story.

Scene III

The previous action in Scene III introduces Catherine's mother and brother. Their motives and desires are revealed through the previous action. Because of their views on what has taken place, we learn they are greedy self-serving people who are out for their own interests.

Sebastian has left George and Catherine fifty thousand dollars each in his will. But everything is being held in probate. Catherine's mother and brother have not been to see her at the home she where she is staying. They use the excuse that the doctors said it would be too upsetting to Catherine. Catherine's family covered up her illness to friends by telling them Catherine is abroad. They do this with pride, missing the point that it's obvious they are embarrassed by Catherine's behavior.

They inform Catherine that she has to stop talking about what she thinks happened to Sebastian last summer, or she will mess up the inheritance.

Scene Four

Scene four holds a lot of previous action because it describes the events that took place just prior to Sebastian's death. In this scene, the previous action explodes and uncovers the truth about Mrs. Venable's feelings for her in-laws, the truth about Catherine's past, Mrs. Venable's role with Sebastian, Catherine's involvement, and what happened that day last summer in Cabaza de Lobo.

We learn that Catherine is not happy living at St. Mary's. Her aunt informs us that she is paying for her expenses. We are told that Violet had a stroke last year that made it impossible for her to travel with Sebastian.

In a fit of rage Violet lashes out at Catherine and her mother and brother by telling the doctor that she never liked them. They were not of her blood. They were her dead husband's relations. She goes on to tell the doctor that she tried to be nice to them she even gave Catherine a debut party when she was of age. It turned into disaster and Catherine was dropped off the party lists. According to

Violet, this happened because Catherine had caused a scene with a married man at a Mardi Gras ball. But, despite all of this, Sebastian took Catherine with him last summer and not her.

When Catherine relates her side of the story about the Mardi Gras ball we find that she left the party alone because her date had become too drunk to stand. As she started for a taxi, another man offered her a ride home. Before he took her home he took her to the Duelling Oaks. They had sex on the grass; then he took her home. Once there, he told her that they better never see each other again because his wife was expecting a child. Then he left and she went into the house. His words angered her, so she went back to the ball. When she found him on the dance floor, she ran to him and beat him with her fists until her Cousin Sebastian took her away.

Catherine was depressed and started writing in a journal in the third person as if she wasn't really the person her life was happening to. She couldn't leave the house, then one morning Sebastian came to her and said, "Get up." He informed her then that Violet wouldn't be able to travel with him this summer, and Catherine was going in her place. They got passports and were off.

On the trip, Sebastian was very kind to Catherine. He was affectionate, attentive and sweet to her. He bought her all new clothes. Once she began to respond to the kindness that Sebastian gave, he became restless. They flew down to Cabeza de Lobo, and he stopped writing his poem.

Catherine and Sebastian spent their afternoons on the beach in Cabeza de Lobo. He bought Catherine a swimsuit made of white lisle that she didn't want to

wear because the water made the suit look transparent. He would force her into the water, and she would come out looking naked. She tells us that she was procuring for him. We learn that Violet had done it in the past, although she might not have known it.

Once the beach became crowded, he no longer needed Catherine's services. She would go off and write in her journal and then meet Sebastian at five o'clock. He would come out of the bathhouses followed by homeless hungry children who lived on the free beach next store. He would give them money. Each day the crowd became bigger and noisier. This scared Sebastian, so they stopped coming to the beach.

Then, one day, they were having a late lunch at an outdoor restaurant. Just outside of the restaurant were bands of naked children begging yelling out "pan, pan, pan." Catherine describes them:

"...they made gobbling noises with their little black mouths, stuffing their little black fists to their mouths and making those gobbling noises, with frightful grins!"(40).

The children were playing music on instruments made of metal and tin cans strung together. Sebastian recognized some of the boys in the crowd. Their presence angered him, and he made the waiters get rid of the boys. The waiters chased them off, beating them with clubs and skillets. Sebastian and Catherine ran out of the restaurant. Catherine urged him to come down to the waterfront to hail a taxi. He insisted he would handle this situation. He ran up the hill followed by the boys he had chased away. They over ran him. Catherine describes them in

a way that gives us an image of the birds that preyed on the sea turtles on the Galapagos Islands.

“I heard Sebastian scream just once before this flock of black plucked little birds that pursued him and over took him halfway up the white hill”(43).

She goes on to tell us that once the police and waiters and a crowd of others ran with her to where Sebastian was, the boys were gone and Sebastian was dead.

“..he was lying naked as they had been, naked against a white wall, and this you won't believe, nobody has believed it, nobody could believe it, nobody, nobody on earth could possibly believe it, and I don't blame them!-they had devoured parts of him. Torn or cut parts of him away with their hands or knives or maybe those jagged tin cans they made music with, they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouths of theirs. There wasn't a sound any more, there was nothing to see but Sebastian, what was left of him, that looked like a big white-paper wrapped bunch of red roses had been torn, thrown, crushed against that blazing white wall”(44).

C. Polar Attitudes

Polar attitudes in a play reflect the conditioning a character receives through out the course of the play. The position of the main character is stated early on in a play. This states her position apart from the other characters in the play. Then, through the events and situation that arise during the play, the main character's attitudes change.

In “Suddenly Last Summer” we have Catherine who is angry and confused in the beginning, caught up in the frustration of no one believing her story. She is not even allowed to tell her story, but she can’t get it out of her head. It is with her at all times thwarting her efforts to move on with her life. Early on she says:

Catherine. “WHEN CAN I STOP RUNNING DOWN THAT STEEP WHITE STREET IN CABEZA DE LOBO?”(19)

We can only assume at the end of the play, after Catherine has told her long story, that the telling of it has provided her with relief. A large weight is lifted from her shoulders, perhaps altering her attitude from when we first met her.

Many productions have set Catherine as the main character; however, for my production, I see the main character as Mrs. Venable. She has her world altered the most by the events that take place in the play.

It is her belief in the beginning that she can manipulate the doctor into believing that a lobotomy is the best thing for Catherine. This is only a guise to hide the truth that she wants Catherine shut up so she can preserve the image of her son’s life. She believes so strongly in her righteous attitude that she tells the doctor:

Mrs. Venable. “I’ve waited months to face her because I couldn’t get to St. Mary’s to face her-I’ve had her brought here to my house. I won’t collapse! She’ll collapse! I mean her lies will collapse not my truth-not the truth....”(7)

Mrs. Venable’s polar attitude takes place at the end of the play through her action. She strikes out at Catherine in a last desperate attempt to silence her. It is at this point that she has, in essence, collapsed. She is dragged away screaming:

Mrs. Venable. “Lion’s View! State asylum, cut this hideous story out of her brain!”(44)

Mrs. Venable knows now that she has lost. Catherine’s truth will be believed and she will not be lobotomized. That is why Mrs. Venable strikes out at Catherine, to try one last attempt to control her world.

II. Dialogue

A. Word Choice:

Insectivorous: Feeding on insects, insect-eating; applied to several groups of animals, and various birds, such as swallows; also those plants which capture and absorb insects, as the sundew, Venus Flytrap, etc.

Williams uses this word as an image of violence and savagery to clarify the sense of horror that happened to Sebastian in the play and to his sister in real life.

Coterie: A circle of persons associated together and distinguished from “outsiders” a “set”: a. A select of exclusive circle in society.

Mrs. Venable’s use of a word like “coterie” helps to define her character. She sees herself as above Catherine and the others around her. This elevated position she casts herself in allows her the ability to silence Catherine through lobotomy without remorse or pause

Chaste: Pure from unlawful intercourse; continent, virtuous.

This is the image Mrs. Venable wants the world to have of her son. If she believes in it strong enough, she can erase the horrible truth about Sebastian from her mind.

Vowed: Devoted to a service or cause.

Violet wants to elevate Sebastian's persona by displaying his will to stay celibate, or mask his true personality behind the appearance of celibacy.

Black: Having dark or deadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister.

Williams colors an image of death, literally in the play, and also in a way to reflect the spiritual and personal death of his real life sister Rose once the lobotomy was performed.

Savage: Wild, undomesticated, untamed. Often, and in later use exclusively, with the contextual implication of ferocity.

Williams use of this word colors the play with violent images.

Devouring: The actions of the verb devour, which means to consume, destroy, or waste. The act of greedily eating a thing.

For William's, a metaphor depicting the savagery that accompanies the acts performed within the world of the play apply to not only Sebastian, but also to Catherine and in real life, Rose.

Steep: Extended to a great height; Elevated, lofty.

Projects an image of danger, suspense and anxiety.

D'ya: Contraction of "do you do".

George uses this contraction to show his boredom and disinterest in meeting Sister Felicity.

Gawge: A distortion of the name "George," used here to affect a southern dialect.

Sister: Southern connotation.

Scavenger: In designations of certain animals that feed on decaying matter.

Again, Williams uses words like this to paint a violent image in our minds to elevate the level of disgust we feel as an audience toward the act of lobotomy.

B. Choice of phrases and sentence structures

Williams takes a lot of liberty with the structure of his sentences and phrases in Suddenly Last Summer. Generally they are lengthy and sporadic. This makes them more conversational and realistic. They are filled with adjectives that create images in the mind of the audience. Some of these are shocking and horrific.

Mrs. Venable. To escape the flesh-eating birds that made the sky almost as black as the beach! And the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea-turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh. Sebastian guessed that possibly only a hundredth of one percent of their number would escape to the sea... (9).

Some of the sentences are long and run-on, giving a sense of stream of consciousness on the part of the character. Catherine shows us an example of this type of wordy run on sentence structure in her description of what happened to Sebastian.

Catherine. ...That five o'clock lunch at one of those fish-places along the harbor of Cabeza de Lobo, it was between the city and the sea, and there were naked children along the beach which was fenced off with

barbed wire from the restaurant and we had our table less than a yard from the barbed wire fence that held the beggars at bay. ... There were naked children along the beach, a band of frightfully thin and dark naked children that looked like a flock of plucked birds, and they would come darting up to the barbed wire fence as if blown, there by the wind, the hot white wind from the sea, all crying out "Pan, pan, pan." (39-40).

C. Choice of Images

Williams uses many images in his writing. He was one of the best playwrights at creating poetry with his words and images. Some of the images he uses are meant to shock and horrify, exemplifying the savage horror that was enacted upon his sister through the lobotomy.

Images are used often to foreshadow the horrific death of Sebastian. Some examples follow:

Venus flytrap-a carnivorous plant that feeds on live insects. These insects are sacrificed for the Venus flytrap to survive.

Well groomed jungle-gives us a sense of how Sebastian lived his life.

Outwardly expressing a sense of order, while internally concealing a wild sexual predator--Both images foreshadow what is to come.

Mrs. Venable. "And the sand all alive, all alive, as the hatched sea-turtles made their dash for the sea, while the birds hovered and swooped to attack and hovered and, swooped to attack! They were diving down on the hatched sea turtles, turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh". (9)

The image that Williams creates here is comparable to Sebastian's violent death in scene four. The person retelling that story is Catherine who says:

Catherine. "When we got back to where my Cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little black sparrows, he-he was lying naked as they had been naked against a white wall, and this you won't believe, nobody has believed it, nobody could believe it, and I don't blame them! They had devoured parts of him. Torn or cut parts of him away with their hands or knives or maybe those jagged tin cans they made music with, they had torn bits of him away and stuffed them into those gobbling fierce little empty black mouths of theirs"(44).

Some of the images reflect the cannibalistic elements to the play. Examples of these are:

"color of caviar," "Carnivorous birds," "flesh eating birds," "turning them over to expose their soft undersides, tearing the undersides open and rending and eating their flesh" (9).

"a sacrificial victim...they want your blood"(13).

"blonds were next on the menu", "Cousin Sebastian said he was famished for blonds," "That one's delicious looking, that one is appetizing."(19).

"...they made gobbling noises with their little black mouths, stuffing their little black fists to their mouths and making those gobbling noises...(40).

Images of color and heat reflect the uncomfortable situation Sebastian and Catherine find themselves in while in Cabeza de Lobo:

"the hot white wind from the sea"(40),

“It was white outside. White hot, a blazing white hot, hot blazing white,...”(42).

Sebastian’s body is also reflected in imagery to point out the savage violence in a very poetic way:

“There wasn’t a sound any more, there was nothing to see but Sebastian, what was left of him, that looked like a big white-paper-wrapped bunch of roses had been torn, thrown, crushed!-against that blazing white wall.”(44)

D. Choice of peculiar characteristics.

Williams style of writing in “Suddenly Last Summer” contains characteristics that tell us we are dealing with southern characters. This is reflected in the phrasing of their sentences and in the sound of the words that Williams has provided with phonetic pronunciations for us to hear and for the actor to assimilate. Examples of these are:

Phrasing of sentences:

Mrs. Venable: “As many times as I’ve had to answer that question! d’you know it still shocks me a little?-to realize that Sebastian Venable the poet is still unknown outside of a small coterie of friends, including his mother”(6).

Mrs. Holly: “...she still has a frozen daiquiri promptly at five o’clock ev’ry afternoon in the world”(21).

Phonetic examples:

Mrs. Holly: “GAWGE! WILL YOU BE QUIET”(21).

George: “How d’ya do”(20).

George: "Cathie, Cathie, you got to forget that story! Can'tcha?"(22)

E. Sound of the Dialogue

The dialogue of the first scene is soothing and genteel. It reflects Mrs. Venable's grace and charm. It only gets tense when she is talking about Catherine or when she thinks she might not get what she wants from the Doctor.

Scene two starts out fast; the dialog lashes back and forth between Catherine and the sister to a crescendo when Catherine burns the sister with her cigarette. A calm is provided when Catherine sits down as ordered by Sister Felicity and remembers that she is in Sebastian's garden again. It becomes more tense when Catherine realizes she is being watched by the doctor. Her frustration at not being able to get the images of Sebastian's death out of her mind causes the dialogue to erupt again on the top of page nineteen. The dialogue slows down and becomes more reflective in nature as Catherine remembers her relationship with her cousin Sebastian.

Scene three starts out cordially with niceties between Catherine's mother and brother, while Sister Felicity is still in the garden. Once the nun is escorted out and the mother and brother are alone the dialogue ignites. It is rapid fire at Catherine at first until Mrs. Holly silences George. The dialogue then becomes calm and flowery for awhile as Mrs. Holly explains about Mrs. Venable's illness and her explanation to Catherine as to why they haven't come to visit her. George tries a new tactic also with Catherine, only to explode when he calls Catherine a "BITCH!"(23).

Scene four begins with the false saccharine homage George and Mrs. Holly display in front of Mrs. Venable. Underlining this is a tension that carries with it the

true feelings of the characters. That tension explodes once the doctor comes into the scene and the discussion turns to Catherine's and Sebastian's going away together last summer. It is calmed again once Catherine leaves the garden and the doctor gets the others to leave so he may talk to Catherine alone (29). In this calm George tries to soothe things over with Mrs. Venable, only to cause the tension and anger to rise and explode by Mrs. Venable striking George with her cane (29).

Once alone, the Doctor and Catherine have a discussion that starts out calmly but builds to Catherine kissing the doctor and George breaking in witnessing the act. Catherine runs out of the garden. The mood shifts and is filled once again with tension when Mrs. Venable enters and tells the doctor to call Catherine back from the garden. From this point on the dialogue builds as Catherine retells what happened in Cabeza de Lobo. The dialogue starts calmly and then becomes faster as the story unfolds. We can almost hear the pounding of the drums of the black beggars as the dialogue builds the suspense. Once the horrific events are out in the open about Sebastian's death, there is a dull shocking silence among the characters, which is broken only by Mrs. Venable's strike at Catherine in a last futile attempt to silence her (44).

F. Structure of the lines and speeches.

Sentences are structured in long conversational phrases. The characters have thoughts they want to convey and a lot of previous action to explain and reflect on. This is especially true in the case of Mrs. Venable and Catherine. Sentences are choppy imitating natural speech patterns as the characters try to find the right words to explain their meaning.

III. Units

Unit 1

Botany 101

Mrs. Venable: Educates

Doctor: Offers

Unit 2

Let's make it comfortable.

Mrs. Venable: Charms

Doctor: Eases

Unit 3

Who was Sebastian Venable

Mrs Venable: Enlightens

Doctor: Seeks

Unit 4

About this meeting.

Doctor: Explores

Mrs. Venable: Challenges

Unit 5

Sebastian Venable, "This is your Life"

Mrs. Venable: Defines

Doctor: Absorbs

Unit 6

The Encantadas

Mrs. Venable: Entices

Doctor: Searches

Unit 7Sebastian's Quest

Mrs. Venable: Defends
Doctor: Delve

Unit 8Mrs. Venable's Sacrifice

Mrs. Venable: Stands
Doctor: Listens

Unit 9Hee Haw

Mrs. Venable: Apologizes
Doctor: Caters

Unit 10You're as young as you feel

Mrs. Venable: Brags
Doctor: Investigates

Unit 11The Intruders

Foxhill: Announces
George: Sucks up
Mrs. Holly: Camouflages
Mrs. Venable: Simmers

Unit 12Folie de grandeur

Doctor: Searches
Mrs. Venable: Boasts

Unit 13

Let me tell you what she's really like!

Mrs. Venable: Vents

Doctor: Seeks

Unit 14

Calm yourself Violet.

Mrs. Venable: Breathes

Doctor: States

Unit 15

Let's Get Down to Business

Doctor: Worries

Mrs. Venable: Pushes

Unit 16

What the Hell's the Matter with You, Foxhill!

Mrs. Venable: Scolds

Mrs. Foxhill: Worries

Unit 17

First Impressions

Catherine: Apologizes

Doctor: Counts

Sister: Orders

Unit 18

Cat and Mouse

Sister: Insists

Catherine: Ignores

Unit 19Discovery

Catherine: Uncovers
Sister: Evades

Unit 20Summer Vacations

Catherine: Reminisces
Sister: Worries

Unit 21Mom's Here

Mrs. Holly: Seeks
Catherine: Qualifies

Unit 22Niceties

Mrs. Holly: Condescends
George: Ignores
Catherine: Complains

Unit 23Lose the Nun

George: Presses
Mrs. Holly: Pushes
Sister: Stays

Unit 24Let's get to It

George: Pounces
Catherine: Drifts
Mrs. Holly: Worries

Unit 25The Cover Up

George: Envis
Mrs. Holly: Covers

Unit 26The Coaches Corner

Mrs. Holly: Pleads
Catherine: Discovers
George: Pleads

Unit 27All Out Press

Mrs. Holly: Accuses
Catherine: Defends
George: Attacks

Unit 28We are On

Miss Foxhill: Calls
Mrs. Holly: Rushes
George: Excites

Unit 29Greetings

Mrs. Venable: Brushes off
George: Blurts
Mrs. Holly: Reprimands

Unit 30Tense Moments

Miss Foxhill: Cowers
Mrs. Venable: Shakes
Catherine: Paces

Unit 31An Attempt to Break the Ice

Mrs. Holly: Dodges
George: Whines
Mrs. Venable: Condemns

Unit 32About the Will

Mrs. Holly: Dances
George: Pushes
Mrs. Venable: Stiffens
Mrs. Foxhill: Worries

Unit 33Can It!

Mrs. Holly: Warns
George: Pushes

Unit 34Not Lions View!

Sister: Soothes
Catherine: Reels
Miss Foxhill: Enlightens
Mrs. Holly: Pleads
Mrs. Venable: Defines

Unit 35It's not all that its cracked up to be!

Mrs. Holly: Smooths
Catherine: Complains
Sister: Clears
George: Rushes

Unit 36The Doctor From the Black Lagoon.

Mrs. Venable: Conceals
Doctor: Corrects

Unit 37The Storm

Catherine: Confronts
Mrs. Venable: Pushes
Doctor: Calms

Unit 38I Hate Them!

Mrs. Venable Condemns
Catherine: Runs
Mrs. Holly: Intervenes
Sister: Worries
Doctor: Stops

Unit 39Aftermath

Doctor: Commands
Mrs. Venable: Snaps

Unit 40You fix it George!

George: Cons
Mrs. Venable: Orders

Unit 41Exploration

Doctor: Examines
Catherine: Searches

Unit 42Duelling Oaks

Catherine: Remembers
Doc: Pushes

Unit 43Hypnosis

Doctor: Suggests
Catherine: Submits

Unit 44Last Summer

Catherine: Seeks
Doctor: Defines
George: Pushes
Sister: Warns
Mrs. Venable: Hates

Unit 45The Blue Jay Note Book!

Doctor: Prods
Catherine: Starts
Mrs. Venable: Enlightens

Unit 46Mamma's Boy

Doctor: Warns
Catherine: Defends
Mrs. Venable: Strikes

Unit 47Surf City here we Come!

Cathy: Informs
Doctor: Searches
Mrs. Venable: Condemns

Unit 48The Procurer

Doctor: Nudges
Catherine: Shocks
Mrs. Holly: Blushes

Unit 49Job's Done!

Catherine: Crystallizes
Doctor: Pushes

Unit 50A Late Lunch

Sister: Starts

Doctor: Ushers
 Catherine: Reflects

Unit 51

Band on the Run

Doctor: Pushes
 Catherine: Erupts

Unit 52

The Horror

Catherine: Remembers
 Doctor: Pushes

Unit 53

The Verdict

Mrs. Venable: Explodes
 George: Deflates
 Mrs. Holly: Frets
 Doctor: Decides

IV. Characters

Mrs. Venable:

A. Desire

Mrs. Venable wants to have Catherine silenced at any cost. The story Catherine tells of Sebastian's death is a threat to Mrs. Venable's son's memory. It besmirches the image of her son that she has created.

She wants complete control over her son's life. She wants to inflate the image of her son and elevate his importance to the world. In order to do this, she must have

Catherine's story ripped out of her brain so that Catherine can not damage Sebastian's reputation.

B. Will

Mrs. Venable's will is strong. She is a woman who is used to getting what she wants. She uses her financial support of people as leverage to control them. She will go to any length to achieve her goal of preserving her son's reputation. She will use bribery, bullying and even violence to attain her desire. She has plotted and planned this meeting, and she is convinced that her truth will prevail and Catherine's lie will be destroyed. She fights right to the end to control the outcome of the meeting between her and Catherine. Mrs. Venable has to be dragged off stage kicking and fighting because her will drives her to accomplish her desire.

Mrs. Venable is a tragic figure in that she can't see that what she wants is wrong. She has fooled herself into believing a self-induced lie about the character of her son. Perhaps she had to create the image of him as being something more than he was in order to mask the unspeakable truth of his real character and life.

Moral Stance

Mrs. Venable's morality is based on her view of the world. It was shaped by years of growing up in a world of affluence. She has always had what she desired, and she sees her and Sebastian's role in the world as elevated, special, almost regal.

She has created an image of Sebastian that belies the truth of who he was. In her moral code she could not allow the reality of Sebastian's character to be remembered. She is adamantly opposed the truth; she came to believe the lie she created. She is blind

to the truth because of her revulsion of it. She will go to any lengths to continue the lie, even if it means the destruction of Catherine as a functioning human being.

Because of her view of the world, she thinks Sebastian's memory is more important than Catherine's life. Her sensibilities will not allow her to see the glaring truth of her son's existence.

D. Decorum

Mrs. Venable is a woman who is vain and who takes pride in her looks. She is always well groomed. Her mannerisms show us a woman who has lived a life of privilege and opulence. She is very aware of appearance and has a desire to stay young. She hides her illness and stroke as much as possible.

She walks with a slight limp and uses a cane to get around refusing to sit in a wheel chair. Even her cane is disguised with painted flowers to hide the truth of its purpose which is to help her walk in her weakened state.

Her southern upbringing is shown through her speech. She has the soft, elegant, slow speech of a southern belle. But she is not above using her tongue to lash out at those she despises. Even this is done in an elegant manner. She is almost always in control. Her southern sensibilities will not allow anything else. However, when really upset, she can lose control and strike.

E. Summary adjectives

Strong, biting, bitter, vengeful, calculating, tragic, regal, venomous, delusional, misguided, embittered, proud, elegant, aristocratic.

F. Character-Mood Intensity

Mrs. Venable's mood intensity at the beginning of the play is one of calm control on the outside and a raging volcano about to erupt inside. The only outward sign of her rage at the beginning is the handkerchief she uses to dab the perspiration from her face. This is masked by the humidity of the air in the garden where Mrs. Venable is meeting with the doctor.

As Mrs. Venable begins talking about Catherine's relationship with her son last summer, we see the volcano start to spew. It is controlled, but she has obvious shifts in her mood and intensity when she broaches this subject.

As the confrontation between Mrs. Venable and Catherine begins, Mrs. Venable erupts completely. She lets all the frustration and anger she has been suppressing come to the surface. She lashes out at Catherine and her family and even Sebastian who let this girl into their lives.

Mrs. Venable's physicality is feeble. She walks with a cane but is too proud to give up her legs to the wheel chair. She can't stand for long periods of time and must rest often and sit down. She is short of breath, and we can see the toll that her stroke took on her. The only thing that drives her forward is her desire to accomplish her goal of saving Sebastian's reputation.

Catherine:

A. Desire:

Catherine wants to relieve herself of the guilt and horror of Sebastian's death. She wants to be believed, and she wants her freedom.

B. Will

The strength of her will is a complex issue. She is strong willed although life has thrown her some hurtful blows that have made her vulnerable and numb and susceptible to the wills of those around her. This, added to the constant medication she has been subjected to over the last six months, gives her the appearance of being weak willed. Her strength comes from her persistence of trying to get someone to listen to her so the truth about Sebastian's death can be told. In spite of all those who try to thwart her, she wins in the end.

C. Moral Stance:

Catharine is an extremely moral person, although some in the world of the play don't think so. Violet thinks she is evil, Sister Felicity has issues with her behavior, George thinks she's vindictive and crazy, and her mother is frightened of her. Yet, of all these people, it is Catherine who carries the torch of truth. She screams the truth to all who will listen and is persecuted for her efforts.

The guilty feelings she carries with her are an indication of her moral code. She wanted to help Sebastian but failed and struggles with that failure. In "Suddenly Last Summer." Catherine says:

"Why wouldn't he let me save him? I tried to hold onto his hand but he struck me away and ran, ran, ran in the wrong direction, sister!"(19).

Catherine's moral stance becomes more complex in her quest for love and her desire to please her cousin. In the first case her need to be loved leads her to have an affair with a married man. Then later she does her cousins bidding to

quench his homosexual desires by knowingly soliciting for him. We must excuse some of Catherine's behavior. We can never forget that in the world of this play, the characters were created in the mind of Tennessee Williams who has a propensity for creating characters whose actions, feelings, and desires, don't exactly exude, home, mom, and apple pie.

D. Decorum

Catherine appears distant. She has a far away look in her eye. Much of this is due to the drugs she is taking. She is attractive and alluring, and her posture is somewhat slouched, again due to the drugs. Her words come to her with great difficulty. She has moments of memory lapse. This is because of her medication, but also because of the terrible weight of the occurrence that took place last summer.

As the play progresses, Catherine becomes more lethargic and confused. The harsh realities of her world are difficult for her to understand and are destructive to one so fragile.

D. Summery adjectives:

Honest, fragile, confused, hurt, angry, burdened, outspoken, intent, and searching.

E. Mood Intensity:

Catherine is nervous from the start. She is not comfortable returning to Sebastian's garden. It brings back too many memories. Her hands are clammy and her pulse is racing. She feels like a caged animal might feel when being contained in a zoo. Her movements are quick and evasive.

When she is told to sit, there is a tension in her body. She wants to break free but can't. This frustration builds in her until she flees from the garden unable to tolerate the tension any longer.

Doctor Cukrowicz

A. Desire:

The doctor wants to investigate Mrs. Venable's request to have Catherine lobotomized. He wants to make sure that extreme treatment would be right for her situation. He also wishes to receive money from Mrs. Venable to continue his research at Lions View. Although these two desires conflict with each other, the good doctor has his priorities in the right order.

B. Will

His will is strong. He is motivated and focused. Not only for his personal stake in this meeting with Catherine, but in order to make the right decision about Catherine's condition. He will do the right thing according to his oath and not let his own desires and needs thwart him from correctly diagnosing Catherine's situation.

C. Moral Stance

He is a moral person who realizes the power his position as a doctor holds over Catherine. He will make the determination as to whether Catherine is lobotomized or not. Because of his strong moral code, he will not allow himself to be bribed by Mrs. Venable even if she holds the purse strings on his need of funds for research and his romantic interests as well. He has Catherine's interests in mind first. This is evident before he meets Catherine, but becomes even

stronger after he meets her. The immediate attraction he has for her makes him want to reach out and help her.

D. Decorum

Dr. Cukrowicz is strikingly handsome. He symbolizes the type of blonde whom Sebastian wanted to pursue next. He is tall, blonde, and trim. He possesses a strong jaw line and a lean muscular body.

He has a sense of control and intensity about him at all times. He appears relaxed and calm at all times. He is searching for the truth and looks for it intensely in the people he encounters.

E. Summary Adjectives

Calm, intense, inquisitive, intuitive, commanding, handsome, care giver, gentle, kind, honest, focused.

F. Mood Intensity:

Dr Cukrowicz is calm and friendly. He is focused and is trying to uncover the truth regarding Mrs. Venable's request to perform a lobotomy on Catherine. He speaks quietly, yet intently, and with purpose. He has a commanding, sure way about him that allows him to stay calm in any situation. For instance, when Catherine and Mrs. Venable argue about Sebastian's death, the doctor is the calming force.

Mrs. Holly

A. Desire:

Mrs. Holly wants Catherine to stop telling the story Catherine created

regarding Sebastian's death. She wants to calm Violet's rage so her family may receive the money that Sebastian bequeathed to them in his will.

B. Will

Mrs. Holly's will is weak. She doesn't possess the capacity to orchestrate the outcome for which she is looking. She is easily upset and is extremely dependent on others for emotional, and in the case of Mrs. Venable, financial support. She does try to control her own fate by coming to see Catherine at Mrs. Venable's home, but her efforts are futile because her weak personality and reduced brain capacity don't allow her to get what she wants.

C. Moral Stance:

Mrs. Holly is not an honest person. Her words are overshadowed by her actions. She tells Catherine in one breath that the reason they hadn't come to visit her at the hospital was because Catherine was disturbed and a family visit would disturb her more. Then she tells Catherine that they have covered up Catherine's illness to the world, as if it were a shameful thing that needs to be hidden from public view.

Mrs. Holly doesn't see the harm she inflicts upon her daughter because she is too caught up in her mission to get the money. This is the sole purpose that drives her through the play. She gives up in the end once she sees she can not control the outcome. The story Catherine tells is too grotesque and shocking to be believed. She is disappointed and once again misses an opportunity to do the right thing by supporting her daughter.

D. Decorum

Mrs. Holly's dress depicts the type of woman she is. She dresses in gaudy clothes that show a woman of lower class trying to make it look as if she belongs in the world of the elite. Her head is bowed much of the time because of her insecurity and fear of Mrs. Venable, as well as her inability to control her destiny. Her smile is saccharine and her manner is condescending and phony. She doesn't fool anyone with her behavior, but she is too blind to see herself as others see her.

E. Summary Adjectives

Weak, phony, greedy, needy, desperate, embarrassing, transparent, a user, untruthful and dull.

F. Character Mood Intensity

Mrs. Holly is nervous throughout the play. She has a lot riding on the outcome of this meeting, and she knows she doesn't possess the ability to control the outcome. She is tied up in knots, and although she tries to conceal her concern, Catherine and Mrs. Venable see it, understand where her nervousness comes from, and hate her for it.

George

A. Desire:

He wants the money Sebastian has bequeathed to him in his will. With the money George feels he could get the material things he wants in life. His needs can be fulfilled with the inheritance.

B. Will

His will is strong, but his brain is weak, so he doesn't possess the capacity

for cunning and devising a plan of attack that will help him reach his goals.

Instead, he approaches the issue with anger, over zealousness, and ignorance. His will is no match for Mrs. Venable.

C. Moral Stance

George has weak morals. He does what he does because it is best for George. He displays false concern for Catherine and fake affection for Aunt Violet. All of this is a guise for him to attain his goal of getting the money.

D. Decorum

He slouches when disinterested in the conversation. He appears aloof, bored, and arrogant. He only becomes focused when he is talking about what Catherine has to do to get the money. Then he is in her face trying to force her to see his point of view on this subject.

E. Summary Adjectives

Greedy, stupid, uncaring, selfish, arrogant whinny, pushy, brash, egotistical,

D. Character Mood Intensity

George begins the play wound up. He is waiting impatiently to get to the matter he came here to address, the money. He is explosive when he gets his chance to blurt out what he wants once the nun is out of the garden.

He becomes uncomfortable when Aunt Violet enters. He is unsure of himself with her because he is no match for her, although he doesn't consciously understand that concept.

In the end he is defeated and his mood is depressed and somber.

Sister Felicity

A. Desire

Sister Felicity wants this meeting to go well and for Catherine to behave while she has this visit with her family. She is in charge of Catherine and doesn't want to get into trouble from her superiors should Catherine act out.

B. Will

Her will is strong in that she has a duty to perform and she is going to take the responsibility and do what she thinks is right. She is somewhat weakened by her compassion for Catherine and her desire to take care of her.

That's why she leaves her duty by allowing Catherine to be alone with her family.

B. Decorum

Sister Felicity appears serene, yet nervous. She moves gracefully, yet she appears concerned that she and Catherine are going to get caught doing something they aren't supposed to do in this strange environment of Sebastian's garden.

C. Summary Adjectives

Nervous, compassionate, fearful, rigid, caring, determined, watchful, careful, serene, cautious.

E. Character Mood Intensity

She is nervous in the beginning. This is a strange place for her. She is outside of the world with which she is familiar, and she is concerned about what

Catherine might do to get them into trouble. This nervousness stays with her throughout the play. Although she can suppress it, she would like nothing more than to be removed from this garden and returned to a more familiar environment.

Miss Foxhill

A. Desire

She would like to see this day over and for Mrs. Venable's relations to leave.

B. Will

Her will is weak. This is mainly because she is a hired servant who has a duty to do her work and not work her will.

C. Decorum

She is fidgety whenever she is around Mrs. Venable. She is always worried about doing or saying the wrong thing.

D. Summary Adjectives

Scared, jumpy, nervous, efficient, giving, kind, private.

E. Character Mood Intensity

Miss Foxhill is nervous; she wants Catherine, Mrs. Holly, and George, out of here because she knows Mrs. Venable will be in a bad mood with them around. She is nervous around Mrs. Venable. She is always afraid of making a mistake and being chastised by her employer.

V. Idea

The idea in "Suddenly Last Summer" is that truth will win over those who try to conceal it. Misguided people often fall into the abyss by fooling themselves into believing falsehoods. Such is the case with Violet Venable. She has hidden from the truth for so long that she attempts to manipulate her world through bullying, bribing and baiting, those around her. It is her intent to shape the truth the way she wants it to look by using whatever measures she can devise, even at the expense of Catherine. Her tragedy is that she doesn't see the damage she has created. She believes the lie she created because the real truth is too painful for her to accept. But in the end truth wins over deception and Catherine is believed, leaving a sense of hope for a violent world.

This is perhaps the way Tennessee Williams would have liked his own sister's situation to turn out. Rose had told of her father's sexual advances, and instead of investigating these charges, it was too much for Edwina to bear, so she had Rose lobotomized to cut the terrible story out of her brain. If there had only been a Doctor Cukrowicz in Rose's life who would have listened to her and said, "I think we ought at least to consider the possibility that the girl's story could be true"(44.).

Chapter III

Rehearsal Journal

September 15, 2000:

We started with a read through tonight. Everyone was present except Dr. Cukrowicz. He is in the military and couldn't make it. He didn't call me to tell me he couldn't be there, so I had some concern about that. It's important when you commit to doing a play that you follow through as an actor, director, or crew person. It's not fair to the other people involved when even one person is missing. However, this is a community project which means that it's on a volunteer basis, so you have to be flexible and plan for that in your scheduling.

The read through is an opportunity for the actors, director, and assistant director not only to become familiar with the script, but also to break the ice with each other. You learn about the people that you are going to be working with for the next four to six weeks, as well as get to hear the play read out loud. This is especially important for the director as it gives him a chance to hear the interpretation of, and direction in which, his actors are headed. It becomes a good place from which to start.

We also used this time to sort out schedules and work up a useable rehearsal schedule that would meet everyone's needs. Since we have this space seven days a week, it was easy to accommodate everyone and left enough flexibility for future unforeseen scheduling problems.

One thing I really like about "Suddenly Last Summer" is the concise manner in which it is written. Each scene is broken up nicely to spread out the rehearsal process so that not every actor has to be at every rehearsal. Scene one consists primarily of Dr.

Sugar and Mrs. Venable, scene two, of Catherine and Sister Felicity, scene three adds Mrs. Holly and George to the mix and scene four includes the entire cast.

September 18th 2000:

We blocked scene one tonight of Suddenly Last Summer and managed to get through the entire scene which puts us right on schedule. I learned tonight of some of the restrictions that this stage presents to me as a director. It's small only-- 15' by 23'--so I had to adjust some of the actors movement to fit the space. Flexibility is an important virtue to possess when directing a play. You can't always count that everything you do on paper when you block a play will work when you put real bodies on the stage.

I let my actors know that it was important for them to let me know if the blocking I gave them didn't feel right. I could see if it didn't look right but if they were uncomfortable with a piece of blocking I wanted them to let me know so we could discuss it and change it, or allow me to give them the proper objectives to motivate the movement.

This first blocking rehearsal also gave me an opportunity to get a feeling for the experience of my actors. How they understand blocking and how quickly or slowly they pick it up is an indication of their training. It gives me an idea of how much help I will have to give the actor as a director. It also gives me some insight as to how to approach communicating with the actor. One actor might pick things up quickly by verbal communication, another may need to be shown visually what I am going for. All of this is filed away for future use when we get into working the scenes.

Whenever I can accomplish what I set out to accomplish at a rehearsal I consider it successful. This was the case tonight. We will work this scene again this weekend providing Dr. Cukrowicz's schedule allows. Again, flexibility is the key word here.

September 21, 2000:

Tonight we blocked scenes two and three. All went very well. My actors picked up on the blocking and what didn't work we changed until they were comfortable with it. Ideas were flowing between us that made the blocking better. I enjoy that aspect of the process most. I encourage my actors to tell me if something doesn't seem right or comfortable to them. Then I ask for their suggestion and if it fits with where I want the scene to go we use it, or it might spark something else in my head and we use that instead.

I have the play blocked when I come to rehearsal but working from an improvisational style has merit and many interesting things can evolve when you allow the actors the freedom to create what works for them. Then it becomes the director's job to tweak and adjust until the movement looks natural.

This evening also gave me an opportunity to discuss the set construction with Tom Kopp, who will be instrumental in getting the set built. I had a pretty clear concept of what I wanted, and Tom helped shape my ideas further into a working set. We will begin building the set on Sunday. This is another positive of having our own space. When the St. Charles Theatre Company worked at the St. Peters Cultural Arts Center, we had to compete with other groups for scheduling rehearsal time and could only construct our set the last week before the show. Here we have the luxury to work on it earlier. This will give the actors more time to get comfortable on the set. It will also allow me to

see any spatial problems that may arise once I put actors on the real set. What appears correct on paper and in rehearsal doesn't always work so adjustments are necessary. For all these reasons having our own space will give us a better production.

September 23, 2000

We worked scene one today. My main purpose for this rehearsal was to allow the actors to familiarize themselves with the blocking, and to begin to explore their characters. I knew I wasn't going to be able to rehearse this scene for a while because the actor I have playing Dr. Cukrowitz was going on vacation for a week and wouldn't be available.

This is an important scene to work on and make interesting; otherwise, we could lose the audience quickly, and it would be difficult to get them back. There is a lot of previous action explained here by Mrs. Venable, so I stressed the importance with my actress to get beneath the words and find the emotion that is causing Mrs. Venable to express the thoughts she is saying.

In this scene she is making a presentation. She is setting up the doctor to sell him on the idea of lobotomizing Catherine. Her tactic in doing this is to present the memory of her son's life as being more important than Catherine's. That memory should be preserved and not blemished with Catherine's hideous story of Sebastian's, son, death.

The doctor also has a difficult job in this scene. He needs to listen carefully to Mrs. Venable's story. There is a lot riding on the outcome of this meeting. He has to decide if Mrs. Venable's desire to have the lobotomy performed on Catherine is warranted or not.

He also is concerned about the funding she is offering for his clinic. He feels if, after his analysis of Catherine, he finds the operation Mrs. Venable is asking for is not the best solution, he could lose the offer of funding. He has to struggle in this scene with his personal needs of getting the funding and being able to marry a girl he is in love with, and his professional need to do the right thing based on the clinical evidence he discovers upon examination of Catherine. It is important that the actors convey these points. It is what I think needs to happen for the scene to be interesting. This is what we will continue to work on in this scene in the weeks to come.

September 28, 2000

Well, I had plans to block scene four tonight; however, three of my actors couldn't make it to rehearsal. So I thought I would run scenes, one, two, and three for continuity for the actors who were available. Then I thought I would plow ahead and start blocking scene four.

In retrospect, I should have stopped with the first three scenes. They were hard enough to get through with so many missing bodies. When I started blocking scene four, I ran into problems because the three people who were missing made it difficult for the other actors to make much sense out of the blocking. I decided to wait until I had a healthy cast.

Some positive things did come out of this rehearsal in spite of the missing actors. I was able to convey to Mrs. Holly some ideas that I had about her character. I see Mrs. Holly as a very weak woman. She is victimized by her own greed. Her desire for Sebastian's money leaves her helpless to offer Catherine any aid in her argument with

Mrs. Venable. She is whiny and upsets easily, so much so that Catherine has to be the strong one and offer comfort and aid to her mother. I want us to see Mrs. Holly's inner struggle with her desire to save her daughter, and yet not anger Mrs. Venable upon whom she relies for financial support. That struggle needs to leave her with an attitude that says there is nothing I can do to fix what is wrong in my world. We need to see her visually give up not knowing what to do.

October 2, 2000

I rehearsed scene one and two tonight. The doctor was still on vacation, so I used the time to work on characterization with Mrs. Venable. I asked my actress to tell me why she was telling the doctor all this information about her son. I wanted her to understand that the reason for Mrs. Venable's long wordy speeches were not merely a device Tennessee Williams used to explain the previous action. I want Mrs. Venable to do a sales job on the doctor. A presentation, so to speak, to validate the importance of who her son was in life. Her desire in doing that is to get what she wants, which is to persuade the doctor to perform the lobotomy on Catherine. In her warped way of thinking about the world, her son's, existence and memory is more important than Catherine's life. In Mrs. Venable's eyes, Catherine is out to destroy the respectability of her son's memory by telling the hideous story of her son's death. If she can convince the doctor that Catherine is evil and her son good then she can bring the doctor to her side and get him to perform the lobotomy. Sebastian's memory will be preserved and Mrs. Venable would be able to continue to live in a world of shadow and light.

The image of a world of shadow and light that Mrs. Venable speaks of as the type of world that she and Sebastian lived in is interesting to me. The image evokes the idea that perhaps the two didn't really see the world clearly. When one is cast in shadow the world around him can be distorted. In a world of shadow and light some things may be missed or hidden in the shadow. Mrs. Venable missed the reality of her son's sexual life style. Or perhaps she refused to accept what was before her eyes because his life was hidden in the shadow. In either case, she chooses to believe the self imposed lie that Sebastian led a celibate life, not willing to accept her own involvement in his sexual pattern.

We made progress working through scene one. I was able to help my actress understand the direction I wanted her to take with Mrs. Venable. It also gave me an opportunity to clean up the blocking. It will be difficult to bring the doctor back into the scene with the changes we made. I will have one rehearsal in the future that will be dedicated to putting the doctor back into the scene and bring him up to speed.

Scene two also went well. I used the time to discuss character choices for the Nun and Catherine. The nun is in a different setting with Catherine than any she has been in before with her. She is nervous and frightened that Catherine may do something that will get the nun in trouble. Although she is an authoritarian presence, she also has a genuine concern for Catherine's welfare. I want the nun to play cautious and worried that Catherine may do something wrong in this unfamiliar environment, and, at the same time, show compassion for Catherine who is so troubled.

This scene is also important because it is the first time we see Catherine. We have heard about this girl from Mrs. Venable. This scene allows us to judge for ourselves

if Catherine is evil as Mrs. Venable describes or perhaps Catherine is telling the truth. Through her actions and mannerisms we need to see who she is.

October 6th

I was informed today that the actor I have playing George is having an operation and will not be available to rehearse until next week. This concerns me greatly. The continuity of the production depends on an ensemble cast working together. With vacations and illness I haven't had a rehearsal with a full cast as yet.

When I scheduled the rehearsals I did it with the fact that I was going to have to be out of town for five days in October. I had planned to have the show running on eight cylinders by the time I left, and the two rehearsals I would miss were going to be run by my Assistant Director.

This is a situation that often arises in community theatre--the unforeseen missed rehearsals by actors who don't list all their conflicts. Had I known all that would happen I would have scheduled another week for rehearsals.

We plowed ahead tonight with blocking act four even with George missing. The cast's morale is poor because they aren't feeling any continuity. This is largely due to all the missing bodies.

My actors are floundering with their blocking. Changes haven't been written down, and I think they get confused because they don't know where a missing actor's character will be because he or she isn't at the rehearsal. It really slows the rehearsal process down when I have to go over blocking again and again.

All I feel I can do at this stage is plow through act four and try to straighten the problems later. My time to leave for two rehearsals is coming quickly. I have concern.

Oct. 10, 2000

I found out tonight that the actor playing George has to drop out. His operation was more severe than he realized. In a panic I asked the cast if they knew anyone who could step into the role. Dr. Cukowicz came up with a person. I called him and he will step in and take the role. The problem now is that I leave for my planned trip tomorrow. I left instructions that the next two rehearsals are to be spent putting the new George into the scenes and to run the play for continuity.

We ran through the play tonight. I wanted to get a run through done before I left. The entire play is blocked now. It will be necessary to put the new George into the mix, but I wanted to make sure I had the production completely blocked before I left. It will be interesting to see how they progress without me for a couple of rehearsals. It's not the way I suggest to work; however, in community theatre it is a common occurrence to have someone missing during the rehearsal process. I planned carefully for my absence but didn't foresee the problems that have arisen. I should have known better than to think all would run smoothly.

October 19th 2000

This was my first rehearsal back after my trip. I was actually gone for three rehearsals due to a death in the family. I'm beginning to think this production is cursed. I went into this rehearsal with high expectations of improvement. My hopes were dashed when I got to scenes three and four. They need a lot of work. The actors are having difficulty with lines and knowing their blocking.

I have four people in the play for which the stage is a new entity in their lives or who haven't had much experience. This is fine. One of the things I enjoy is introducing people to the theatrical experience. If they get bite like I did when I was introduced to the world of the stage then I am in a small way reinforcing the future of live entertainment. Ok maybe I'm sounding a bit like a Polly Anna, but I do get enjoyment out of bringing new people to the craft of acting.

This pleasure comes with a price for the director. Now to your many hats you have to add teacher and acting coach. You must give the novices all the tools they will need to present themselves in a believable form in a matter of a few weeks. A difficult task but not insurmountable.

October 23, 2000

We are now in tech week. This is the week where everything is to fall into place. During tech week we add all the elements that will make this production complete to help us tell the story: lights, sound, set, props, and costumes. This is an important week in the rehearsal process. Each night new elements are added as the tech crew and I confer on what I want to happen with lights and sound. It's important to have these elements ready as early in the week as possible for the actor's sake. They need to become familiar with how to handle the props and what affect lighting and sound will have on their interpretation of the role.

I told the actors tonight that I thought the production based on what I saw tonight was about one and a half weeks away from being ready. I told them they had two days to make up that gap.

We open on October 26th, and we have two rehearsals left. I still have a couple of actors working with their script in hand. This is something that will not happen tomorrow night, nor will they be allowed to call for a line. If they get in trouble, it is their responsibility to find a way out.

I thought later that these words might have been a little harsh. My frustration with this rehearsal process might have gotten to me. But I said what I said, now lets see how they respond.

October 24, 2000

Well, it finally happened; the production took a big leap tonight. We started with cleaning up some problem areas, and then ran the show. We knocked an hour off the playing time. We need to get another twenty minutes off and we will have the production I was hoping for.

It seems the talk I had last night worked. The actors were off book, and they didn't miss a line. I'm not saying they were all in the sequence that Tennessee Williams wrote them in, but they were all there.

Morale is getting better, which is important. The cast needs reinforcement from me that they are doing a good job. We have a lot of work to do, but we will be ready by Friday.

It's an amazing phenomenon to me that productions always have a way of coming together at the last minute. They are always better in the end than you think they will be when you are working on the production. The difference between a good production and a bad one is the degree to which the actors are able to convey the director's vision. I am

amazed at how much progress was made tonight. Tonight it clicked. I saw the actors bring in the elements I had been harping on them during rehearsals.

I always wait for the rehearsal that says we have a good show here. Tonight was that rehearsal. They haven't peaked, but they are primed to do that opening night. Tomorrow's final dress rehearsal should prove interesting.

October 25th

Well, tonight went as I had hoped. This may sound odd, but they weren't as good tonight as last night. Surprised that I think that's a good thing? My reasoning for my thinking that their set back is a good thing is that it will keep them on their toes for opening night. They have shown me that they are capable of performing this play at a very high level. There are a lot of old adages in the theater and one of them is that a bad final dress will make for a good opening night.

If they had a better final dress than the night before it might have made them cocky. They might have slipped back on their laurels a bit and not be as sharp on opening night. This will keep them more focused. I think they will peak as planned tomorrow night.

October 26th

Well this was it. We had a small house for our opening, only twenty people but the cast rose to the occasion. They were great. I am very proud of all their hard work and the length they have come in what was a difficult rehearsal process.

They deserve larger audiences. I believe once word of mouth gets out about this production that will happen.

One of the drawbacks of this new space is that it's a little difficult to find. Seeing how this is the St. Charles Theatre Company's first production in this space I thought audiences may be small. We are setting up signs at the highway and lights so the sign can be seen. Hopefully this will help people to find us.

This has been quite an experience for me and I learned a lot during the process. I will share what I learned in a later chapter of this thesis. Right now I am going to congratulate my cast and toast them with a glass of champagne.

Chapter Four

Directors Critique

I used the following questions for my cast to use as a guide to evaluate my performance as the director of "Suddenly Last Summer." I will list the questions and then provide the responses I got for each question. Along with each question I gave a point value of 1-5, with 1 being the poorest and 5 the best performance.

Critiques in general are a matter of opinion. And it must be said that many things can go into that opinion. It is sometimes difficult when people who work closely together on a production to form an unbiased opinion based solely on the merit of the work. Other issues come into play. Some times those issues have to do with personality differences, artistic differences, or even unrelated issues that spill over into a critic's evaluation. This can be compounded in a community theatre company where one has a group of people who have collaborated on more than one production. Perhaps someone in the cast has preconceived feelings towards the director that he or she is critiquing, and it is impossible for him or her to set those feelings aside, pro or con.

For all these reasons I offer that the information provided here may be skewed by these possible issues. That being said, here are the results.

1. Did the director communicate his ideas about my character in an effective manner?

A. Point value- 5

Yes, he made a point of helping me understand the character, which ultimately brings out the fullest performance.

B. Point value- 5

Very, to the slightest detail

C. Point value-5

Rough at first, but after he saw more of what I could bring to the character he communicated more ideas.

D. Point Value 4

Changed his mind about it.

Three others offered no comment but awarded the point values of, 5, 5, and 4.

2. Was the director prepared for each rehearsal.

A. Point value 5

Yes, on time and ready to go.

B. Point value 4

Yes-but because of conflicts missed one or two rehearsals.

C. Point value 5

Yes prompt and prepared.

D. Point value 3

Blocking was behind schedule.

Three point values of 5,5,and 3 were given with no comment.

3. Did the director give me the freedom to explore my own ideas of my character?

A. Point value 5

Yes, he encouraged it.

B. Point value 5

Didn't tell us "how" to act. Didn't "line read." Encouraged us.

C. Point value 5

Yes-"Just do what feels comfortable".

Four other point values of 5 were offered with no comment.

4. Did the director make me feel comfortable and confident in the development of my role?

A. Point value- 5

Yes he wanted the actor's interpretation of the role and strongly discouraged viewing the film beforehand.

B. Point value- 5

This was my first role and he made everything clear for my part to where it was very enjoyable.

Five other's provided point values of Four 5's and one 3, without comment.

5. How would you rate your experience with this production?

A. Point value 5.

It was an invaluable experience. I learned things about myself that I was unaware of.

B. Point value 5.

Good job John!

C. Point value 2

Frustrating.

Five others offered point values with no comment. Four 5's and one 3.

6. Additional comments

A. I was aware of John's talents as an actor but not as a director. I wasn't disappointed!!

He's and excellent director-professional in every way.

B. He has a warm/*sic*/way of changing blocking.

- C. John did a great job. Gave good guidance without being overbearing. Also, allowed us to explore our characters.
- D. This was a wonderful experience. The director is very good and he is a wonderful, thoughtful person, on set and off.
- E. John has his foot in too many different pots right now to do this play well.

One can see from the above comments that this production was seen differently by different members of the cast. Their comments only serve to reinforce the original premise that one's own preconception can color one's idea's regarding this experience.

A couple of people involved with the production didn't fill out a critique. I didn't feel I could force them to do it. I see these comments as a way to evaluate my performance as a director for this production. I can learn from them and incorporate their message into my developing directorial style.

What I find most interesting is the heavily weighted point value given one way or the other. I am going to attempt exploring the possible reasons for such a wide range of feelings for a couple of people when the majority found their experience to be enjoyable and of value.

Having been a board member with the St. Charles Theatre Company for fourteen years, I have formed many friendships with this dedicated group of theatre people. However, I don't think anyone can be involved in a group such as this for as long as a time without rubbing some people the wrong way.

When one is talking about the creative process, views range widely as to the way things should be done. It has been my experience with this theatre group that there

are some very strong egos and people with strong opinions involved. Having the ability to allow a lot of things to roll off my back has given me the strength to overlook this trait and work with and enjoy friendships with many in the group who harbor these annoying qualities. I would even go so far as to say that some of these qualities have endeared me to those who possess them.

All of us are egotistical some of the time, and all of us must fight for our opinion if we are to put our stamp on anything in this world. I believe that one has to have the ability to be able to acquiesce to another person's vision; otherwise, one can make the experience unpleasant for not only oneself, but also others involved in the project in question. Some of this ability to see another person's view comes with the growth that advancing years provide, some comes from an inner feeling of comradeship and willingness to be open to ideas that may differ from one's own.

While working on "Suddenly Last Summer" I found myself working with a cast member who had a preconceived idea of how her role should be played. This first became apparent to me in the early stages of rehearsal when I would offer direction that would steer her away from where she was going with the role. The character I am referring to is Catherine. A talented young woman who has joined our group in the last couple of years played her. She was a challenge to work with because of her aloof personality and her highly opinionated view on things. Looking back on the situation with Catherine, along with her evaluation comments, tells me that I should have spent more time developing her trust. Perhaps if I had explored her character more deeply in discussion with her, she might have had a more favorable response.

As a director I have developed a style where I allow the actor to bring his or her own vision of the character to the rehearsal. I feel it is my job to then shape and mold his or her performance to fit within the confines of my concept of the play.

I have found that this way of working has to be adjusted when one is working with less experienced actors. In that case, one may need to work as director and acting coach. This is one area in which I need to become more sensitive. I have been acting for over thirty years, and, over time, I found that I enjoyed working with a director who allowed me to explore ideas and play with different interpretations until a direction for the character is found. I find this way best for me as an actor. I sometimes superimpose my preference of working on other actors and actresses, thinking everyone likes to work that way.

This is really far from the truth. With this production of "Suddenly Last Summer," I realized that I needed to be more sensitive to my actors and actresses insecurities, and help them develop fuller confidence in their roles and in me as a director. Had I done that with Catherine, I think her experience would have been a better one. I felt her performance was wonderful, and although I knew she had problems with the production schedule, I thought she had adapted. I guess her comments prove that I was wrong.

The most frustrating aspect of this production was the scheduling conflicts that surfaced after the rehearsals started. We were plagued by illness, vacations, and in one case a hospitalization causing one of my strongest actors to drop out of the play. Although I had anticipated some of these problems and planned for them, I didn't plan for the illnesses that befell us causing blocking rehearsals to go slower than

anticipated. Because of this, it appeared to the cast that we spent all our time blocking and not enough time on character analysis. I tried to short-circuit that problem by talking individually between scenes one on one with actors rather than in a scene work-through. We had little time to go back and try different ideas right then and there because the lack of rehearsal time caused us to forge ahead. Out of necessity I trusted that my actors would take the notes I gave them between scenes and incorporate them into their characters the next time we ran the scene.

In retrospect, I would have been better to try to schedule one or two working rehearsals in addition to the ones already scheduled and used those specifically for my leads to explore characters through verbal analysis with my guidance as their director. I could have done a better job of explaining my views on their characters. I let the clock run me instead of me running the clock, and, in an effort to get the play up on its feet, I didn't follow through with enough analytic discussion with my cast..

Given the complexity of the characters in any Tennessee Williams' play leads one to the point that analysis is one of the most important aspects of the development of a character. And it is a director's job to help the actor to understand that process and what motivates a character. I didn't entirely overlook this process. I did express my interpretations clearly to my actors. However, due to the complexity of the roles, I think more time would have been helpful.

One area in which I found growth within myself was in the role of acting coach and mentor for less experienced people in the play. The woman playing Mrs. Venable had never played such a large role before. In the beginning she lacked the

confidence that she could do it. I had faith in her and encouraged and helped her to attain that confidence.

She is a woman who works with me as an actress at the Bissell Mansion where we do improvisational interactive comedy in the format of a murder mystery. The roles we play there are stereotypes much of the time--one-dimensional characters without much more motivation than getting laughs from the audience. She has been working in that medium for six years, so taking on a role like Violet Venable was a formidable task. I felt Carol, the name of the actress in question, would be great in the role. I also knew it would take my guidance, trust, and faith in her to make her understand that she could do it. She grew quite a lot from our beginning of the rehearsal process through the performance. I spent private time working with her alone exploring the character and offering ideas for possible motivations for her character. While doing this, I tried to maintain a balance that allowed my actress to develop my initial ideas into her own interpretation of the role. Through this process I saw Carol's confidence and character grow. It was a rewarding experience for both of us.

One issue that gave me more trouble that I ultimately realized was in the case of George. I knew going into auditions that I had a strong actor in the person of Tom Kopp, a fellow board member who I have acted with, directed, and have been directed by. Although I avoid pre casting, I do always have possibilities in mind for possible candidates for a particular role. It has been my experience that all directors do this, and I would say a director is lying if he says he goes into auditions without some idea of who he thinks could play a certain role. Having said that, I must also include that in that process I always keep an open mind should someone come that

blows my preconception away in the audition process. This is what happened at this audition. My original thought for Tom was to have him play the doctor. Although he is not blond, he is good looking and young enough and professorial enough to carry the role. When I held auditions we were short on men--a situation that always arises with this particular community theatre group. Although Tom had read for the doctor very well, validating my original thoughts, I had him read for George, Catherine's younger self-centered egotistical brother. He blew me away, and I immediately changed my mind and offered Tom the role of George, which he graciously accepted. It was my idea that George was a more interesting character than the doctor. George was a character who could add a bit of comedy to this heavily weighted drama. I figured I could find a pretty boy to play the doctor without too much trouble because I know so many actors.

Rehearsals began and I found my doctor, and then, after a couple of weeks of rehearsal, Tom came to me with the terrible news that he had to have an operation that would make him unavailable for a week. So we carried on without him and waited for his return. When he came back he tried to resume his role, but the recuperation period for him was more painful than he had anticipated, so he dropped out of the play. This left me two weeks to find a suitable replacement for one of my strongest actors. I asked the others in the play if they knew anyone who could play the role. My young blond doctor knew an actor who could solve my problem. In a panic, I said "call him right now and see if he will do it." Thanks to the technology of cell phones, the actor made a call and I replaced Tom with this new actor sight unseen based on the doctor's recommendation.

This decision gave me much trouble, but taught me a valuable lesson. I had replaced my wonderful character actor with a young twenty-year-old who was very inexperienced and didn't take direction well. It's not that he was difficult to work with, he really did try hard, but he didn't have the capacity or the talent to pull off the role with any sense of truth. After a week of trying to offer him some help, I finally gave up, and moved my concentration on other more important characters in the play. So scenes with George weren't the fun comic relief that I had hoped for, although I must say that he did an acceptable job in performance. It just wasn't as polished as it could have been if I had a stronger actor in the role or devoted more time to bringing my new George up to speed.

If this situation ever occurs again in a production in which I am directing, I will do things differently. I will hold private auditions for as many actors as I can get in a short span of time so as to have a choice of more than one possibility. Had I not panicked when Tom dropped out I might have been able to find a stronger actor with a couple of days of phone calls and brain storming. It would have ultimately made the production stronger.

As a side note, Tom did recuperate in time to run sound for the show--a job he managed skillfully which added a wonderfully eerie dimension to the production.

I had cast two actresses in the show with whom I had worked before. Both had a lot of ability but limited experience. The woman playing Mrs. Holly was Georgie Hetz. Georgie had a confidence problem, much like Mrs. Venable. What she didn't realize is that she has some very strong abilities as an actress. I have seen her grow since she joined our group about five years ago. She takes direction very well, and, although not strong when it comes to developing her own ideas for a character, she has the ability to

grow into a part once it's nuances are explained to her. Knowing this about her allowed me to bring her along throughout the rehearsal process. I felt she did a very good job and grew in her confidence as an actress. It always feels good when I am able to help someone in his or her growth as an actor or actress. It validates my decision to leave my other profession as a sales person and pursue my passion as an actor, director and acting coach.

My most positive example of this was with the actress who played Miss Foxhill, secretary and nursemaid to Mrs. Venable. I had been taking some acting classes from Carrie Hoak, a casting director here in St. Louis. It was there that I met a young woman who had never been in a play before but had a desire to act. She came to auditions with enthusiasm and a desire to do this play. So I cast her and began teaching her the rehearsal process. She was really green, so I had to work with her on everything from stage positions to motivating a move. She was smart and good at trying new ideas. If something didn't feel right to her, she told me about it and we either changed it or I was able to explain her character's motivation for doing a certain thing. She did very well and had a great experience. I hope it spurred her on to continue and grow as an actress in this field that has given me so much joy.

Another success I had in casting was with the doctor. I found another young good looking young man in Carrie's class by the name of Jeremiah Alley. I'd seen him act in Carrie's class and felt he had the right look and ability to portray the doctor. The doctor is a difficult role to make interesting because he is so introspective. He is there to observe and come up with a conclusion that will forever change the lives of everyone in the play. He is a very important character but one who has to display unspoken wisdom

and power. It can't be overlaid or else he would lose its truth. My problem with my choice was that this young man was full of himself. He didn't seem to put much importance to the rehearsal process. He lagged behind others in learning lines and often came late to rehearsal. I don't think these were deliberate violations. I just don't think he took the whole process all that seriously. This gave me a great deal of frustration. I even considered firing him a couple of times, but he was so right for the role and I did see from time to time an effort from him that told me all would be well. In the end he turned out to be one of those actors who rise to the occasion during performance. I don't like those type of actors; I think they drag down a production and aren't thoughtful of their fellow actors. The rehearsal process is about exploring character and connecting with others in the scene. It can be very frustrating for an actor to have to play with someone like that. But I do praise his performance, which validates my original thought in casting him. I hope he grows up to match his dedication to his talent.

My final struggle came with the actress playing Sister Felicity. This is a woman I had in mind for the role at auditions, who is also a board member. She came to auditions to help out, not to audition. I had to convince her that she would be great in the role as the nun. She finally succumbed to my plea and auditioned and was cast as Sister Felicity. This actress had some preconceptions about me that were unfavorable centering around jealousies regarding my role as a board member in the company. I knew there were some jealousy issues going on about my role on the board. I knew I was going to have to win her over to be able to work with me. I did that with praise and attention. I felt with Sister Felicity that I was able to smooth over her misconceptions about me and improve our relationship, both inside and outside of this play.

After everything we went through, with all the missed rehearsals and replacement of people, I felt everything came together for us to have a performance that was well received by the audience. I was able to walk away from this experience having learned some valuable lessons, while feeling I had done Tennessee William's justice. Just as some of my actors grew in their confidence as actors, I grew in my confidence as a director.

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