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A Directorial Approach to Tennessee Williams' *This Property is Condemned*

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**A DIRECTORIAL APPROACH TO
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'
*THIS PROPERTY IS CONDEMNED***

**A Master's Thesis
By
Chih-Shuen Hsu**

**MA Theater: Directing
Spring 2001
Lindenwood University**

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Prospectus

I have worked in performing arts for a number of years as a scriptwriter (TV), a director, and a producer. Also, I have taught theater-related courses in a high school for a combined total of twelve years. In choosing a show upon which to base my thesis, I have drawn upon on my experience, and opted for Tennessee Williams' one-act play "This Property Is Condemned."

In Taiwan various short plays are presented for an audience's entertainment. I have a lot of experience in these kinds of plays. These offerings have special styles and techniques: Simple and short are not necessarily equal to easy. Tennessee Williams' (Thomas Lanier Williams) insight into human nature is that of a poet. He can compress the basic meaning of life into one small scene which is full of the perception of life and passion. This is the primary reason why I chose his script.

In *This Property is Condemned* Williams used the technique of recalling previous action. This dramatic literary device is similar to a stream of consciousness. This is a challenge to both the director and actor to create the proper mood and atmosphere. I used the abstract concept and symbolic technique of Chinese opera. So, with this foreigner's view and director's cross-cultural vision, I will examine this American playwright's work.

This thesis will support all of the above statements in four chapters.

In Chapter One, I will detail the playwright Tennessee Williams' life and

works. In Chapter Two, I will analyze the play *This Property is Condemned* based on the format established in Francis Hodge's *Play Directing*. Chapter Three will consist of a daily journal of the rehearsal process to record the problems encountered and steps taken to conquer these problems during the production process. Chapter Four is an objective self-evaluation of the director in this project as well as opinions of others involved.

Chapter One

Enter Tennessee Williams

Tennessee Williams is one of America's greatest dramatists and leading twentieth-century playwrights, recognized as an innovator of the American theater after World War II. The gentle, drawling, miserable, gloomy, and melancholy style of his prose imprints itself on the mind. While most of his plays are set in the South, they present universal themes. His overpowering theme is the inescapable loneliness of the human condition, and his works display sexuality, alcoholism, homosexuality, violence, rape, and fetishism borne out of that condition that have shocked audiences. He successfully creates many memorable characters, like Blanche, Stanley, Amanda, Laura, Tom, Brick and Maggie, etc. who have suffered or make others do so.

Williams was born in Columbus, Mississippi. He seems to remember his childhood as idyllic. The Southern fantasy was shattered with a forced move to St. Louis, at the age seven. He was transported overnight from his agrarian Eden to an immense smoky city. In 1918 St. Louis was the fifth largest city in the United States, with a fine school system, universities, libraries, a famed symphony orchestra, and a splendid art museum. But in this city his mother felt like a nobody, and fell short of reverse snobbery, impressed on her son that in St. Louis only money and status mattered. Thus he first got the sense of being an outsider, which would become a pervasive theme in his writing. He called St. Louis the, "City of St. Pollution," and while much of his work originated in St. Louis, he would set the plays in the South. "New Orleans was the city to which he would most often return, the city which represented freedom against the encagement of St.

Louis. If St. Louis was his goad, New Orleans was his inspiration. The contrast between the two symbolized Williams's eternal struggle between opposites - the tension with which he lived and on which his plays are built." (Roudane 26). The virtue of the South, was its particular pathos, derived from the atmosphere that it had jumped the rails of history.

He entered the University of Missouri in 1932, but Williams found the classes boring and the Great Depression hit St. Louis; financial difficulties resulted in his father pulling him out of the university. Williams worked in a shoe factory and set a schedule of creating one story a week, writing on Saturday, polishing on Sunday, working into the night, stoked by coffee and cigarettes. (Roudane 26) In 1936 his grandmother supplied the funds for Tom to enter Washington University, but when the play he entered in a competition lost to a light comedy, he was furious. He quit Washington University and transferred to the University of Iowa.

"Iowa was a milestone in Williams's professional career: it focused him as a playwright. It gave him his first systematic exposure to dramatic theory and theatre literature, his first obligation to meet deadlines, practice in writing the dialogue and monologues which would become his trademarks, enough stagecraft to suggest the practical aspects of putting on a play, even two minor acting parts which helped him to understand the actor's viewpoint." (Roudane 19) He combined theory, technique and experience beginning his new step. He left Iowa with two other firsts-- his first and last sexual affair with a girl, and a new name Tennessee, given to him by some of his

schoolmates who couldn't place his Southern accent. Strangely enough, the ambience in Iowa helped him to establish himself as "the southern playwright." (Roudane 19)

Growing up in a female-dominated environment no doubt gave Williams the empathy he shows in his female characters creation. He was sensitive and quietly observant. He saw his work *Battle of Angels* as the record of his youth and wrote in his journal, "My next play will be simple, direct and terrible- a picture of my own heart... It will be myself without concealment or evasion...a passionate denial of shame and a cry for beauty." (Leverich 301) "It is important that by now he was admittedly a homosexual outside the law, outside the church, branded a pervert by conventional society. This laid a particular onus on Williams, with his religious upbringing, and might account for his deterministic point of view." (Roudane 21)

John M. Clum calls a "sex/gender system" that only recently has been more fully appreciated by both homosexual and heterosexual audiences. (Roudane 6) Clum focuses on three plays: Orpheus Descending, Suddenly Last Summer, and Sweet Bird of Youth. Sebastian Venable, Val Xavier, and Chance Wayne, Clum suggests, "were sacrificed for violating their prescribed roles in the patriarchal sex/gender system. The possibility of a new sex/gender system is seen through the two central female characters in each play, one mutilated, the other healed." (Modern, 44) Clum concentrates" on the beautiful male as a sexual martyr in these three plays, on the dynamics and eroticism of the martyrdoms, and on the ways in which his relationship to the fugitive woman suggests a liberating possibility." (Modern 44) No American playwright before Williams

eroticized the stage the way Williams did. I agree with Gilbert Debusscher who wrote "Williams is not a derivative artist, and his plays are nothing if not recognizably his own: he was in life as in the best of his art a devourer, a predator who seized upon his own experience and that of his literary predecessors to feed his imagination and trigger his creativity."(Roudane 6)

Williams had the power of imagination, capacity of language and a romantic's fascination with extreme situations to reshape experience. He had the self's skill to people the world with visions of itself. "He deployed the iconography of the romantic fading beauty, the death of the young dark violence, a redeeming love. Like the romantic he was inclined to blur the edge of the divide between his life and his art. It would be tempting to see his fondness for drinks and drugs as yet another aspect of the romantic's twin quest for vision and self-destruction except that in his case it had more to do with terror and despair. "(Modern 33) many great artists who are sensitive, ardent, and full of imaginative power, are sometimes victims of mental disorder. In Williams' psychological balance was always precarious. His journals show his struggles with depression, his "blue devils." He saw parallels between his own life and that of Van Gogh, another passionate artist. The possible cause of Williams' distress were his dysfunctional family, society's homophobia, his troubles in St. Louis, and his individual vision of the world.

In Williams' plays the varied components illustrate what he called his "organic" method of writing, where visual image becomes a poem, the poem develops into a scene, a series of scenes becomes a one-act and finally a full-length play. (Roudane 24) His

observation was that "poetry doesn't have to be words..." In the theatre it can be situations, it can be silences." (Albert 5) "He was a master of scenes, characterization, dialogue, monologue. He had introduced music, sound effects, movement, and lighting to expressionistic techniques, common today. These characteristics were blended and became the early embodiment of Williams's manifesto for a plastic theatre and, according to Esther Jackson, formed a lasting contribution to American dramaturgy." (Roudane 24) His sets have a metaphoric force, sometimes too literally so.

Williams' originality remained varied and complex, but his use of set and setting, of music, lighting, screen projections and so on all coalesced in the plays in ways that were as fresh as they were original. As Cohn writes, Williams, "expanded both his visual and sonic repertory: soap bubbles, iron gates, spotlights, dancing, and manipulation of props; the noise of knocks, rattles, sea, wind, and giant wings."

Cohn suggests, "Almost always, these devices Williams's stage effects and expressive dialogue function dramatically, even when the plays are slim. Without exception, these late plays, like the earlier ones, provide opportunities for passionate acting." (Roudane 9)

"More so than any other literary form, playwriting quickly becomes a collaborative, involving a whole range of players who never take the stage on opening night... indeed, in the case of Williams, the role of the director has been enormously influential-and at times controversial." (Roudane 9) The playwright and the director's relationship

sometimes became, for Williams, a contentious one.

As a playwright, Williams would become known for his unforgettable characters. Much of his characterization was accomplished through dialogue. He would be criticized for his one-to-one symbols, but would point out that as a symbol, even a character's name, is a shortcut to the play's meaning, replacing many lines of exposition. It is the allusive multi-layered symbolism of Williams's plays that makes them so rich.

"He reinforced his language, moreover, by refining what he termed his plastic theater: the use of lights, music, sets, and any other forms of nonverbal expression that would complement the textual version of the play. This willingness to open up his theatre to more than the traditional forms of realism, then the dominant mode of theatrical expression in America, allowed Williams to create a lyric drama, a poetic theatre. Stage symbol, scenic image, body language were to assume important roles, roles accentuating the conflicts that the characters themselves were articulating to audiences through their language." (Roudane 3)

Tennessee Williams' favored the one act form because he "found it easier to get across a message and with more impact "if he made it brief."(Albert 99) The one-act, "This Property is Condemned" demonstrates the forceful impact of Williams one act play. This is the story of a lonely girl whose promiscuous sister has died of tuberculosis and who deludes herself into thinking she has acquired the sister's boyfriend.

The story-- sprawling, funny, and bawdy-- was something of a tangle, he wrote to

Audrey, but he was sure it had promise. In time it became the single most controversial work of Tennessee Williams's career when, more than three years later, it reached the screen. Several times he tried to use *This Property is Condemned* in another way so readers and viewers could find that this short play is a typical, an original, a "plastic" work.

Williams's work is considered as one of the most savage indictments of culture in our time. By his own admission a rebellious Puritan, Williams was really a moral symbolist who projected the tradition of Poe, Hawthorne, Melville, and Faulkner into the present. More than any of these writers, however, Williams made the mystery of sexuality his central metaphor. (Adler 173). Tennessee Williams' presents an ongoing essay on the inescapable loneliness of the individual. This work continues to be performed frequently and to influence other playwrights.

- | | |
|---------------|---|
| 1911 26 March | Born Thomas Lanier Williams in Columbus, Mississippi to Cornelius Coffin and Edwina Dakin Williams. |
| 1911~18 | Tom lived with his mother and her parents, in the Episcopal rectory of various Southern towns, as Tom's father was often absent as a traveling salesman. |
| 1918 July | Family moves to St. Louis, Missouri to live with father who has been made branch manager of International Shoe Company. Tom fears father, who taunts him as "Miss Nancy." |
| 1924~26 | Writes first story," Isolated," finds his first girlfriend in Hazel |

- Kramer.
- 1928 July His short story "The Vengeance of Nitocris" is published in magazine Weird Tales.
- 1929 September Enters the University of Missouri and joins a fraternity.
- 1932 Father withdraws him from the university after the winter semester, presumably for failing ROTC. Begins working at International Shoe Company and spends his nights writing.
- 1935 Spring Claims he has a heart attack, and recuperates at his grandparent's home in Memphis.
- 12 July First production of his one-act play "*Cairo Shanghai Bomba*" by Memphis Garden Players.
- 1936 Autumn Enrolls in Washington University, St. Louis. "27 Wagons Full of Cotton" is later adapted into two plays and a film.
- 1937 First full-length plays are produced, *Candles to the Sun* and *Fugitive Kind*, by the amateur group the Mummers in St. Louis. Transfers to the University of Iowa, where he studies playwriting and production. Has several short plays produced.
- 1938 August Graduates with BA degree in English from the University of Iowa. Lives briefly in several places in the Midwest, South, and West, and it may have been here that he has his first extended homosexual experience. First uses the name "Tennessee" as the author of "The Field of Blue Children," published in Story magazine.
- 1939 September First meeting with Audrey Wood, who becomes his agent.

- 1940 January Moves to New York to enroll in an advanced playwriting seminar taught by John Gassner at The New School for Social Research. In February, leaves New York and travels to Memphis and Provincetown, on Cape Cod, where he has his first sustained homosexual affair.
- 30 December *Battle of Angels* opens in Boston but quickly closes after a censorship controversy; is revised as Orpheus Descending in 1957.
- 1941 Starts the story "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," which will be developed into *The Glass Menagerie*.
- 1943 Spring Returns to St. Louis. April, Audrey Wood gets him a job as a scriptwriter for MGM and he moves to California. October loses his Hollywood job.
- 1944 April Awarded \$1000 dollars by the National Institute of Arts and Letters for Battle of Angels.
- December *The Glass Menagerie* premieres in Chicago.
- 1945 Starts working on *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
- March *The Glass Menagerie* opens on Broadway and wins the New York Drama Critics' Circle, Donaldson, and Sidney Howard Memorial awards.
- 1946 *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays* (this anthology including **This Property is Condemned**) published. May begins work on *Summer and Smoke*.
- 1947 December *Streetcar Named Desire* opens in New York. Meets Frank Merlo.

- 1948 Visits Europe, including London. Frank Merlo moves in with him, the beginning of a fourteen-year relationship.
- 1949 April Goes to London, where *A Streetcar Named Desire* is about to open.
- Winter Works on *The Rose Tattoo*.
- 1950 December *The Rose Tattoo* open in Chicago.
- 1951 *The Rose Tattoo* opens in New York, and wins a Tony award. Film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* released.
- 1952 *A Streetcar Named Desire* film version wins the New York film Critics' Circle Award.
- 1953 Works on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.
- 1955 March *Hot on a Hat Tin Roof* opens in New York, where it runs for 694 performances, winning the Pulitzer Prize, and the New York Drama Critics' Circle and Donaldson awards.
- 1956 Spring Relationship with Frank Merlo deteriorating.
- 1959 March *Sweet Bird of Youth* opens in New York.
- 1961 December *The Night of The Iguana* premieres, and he later wins his fourth New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.
- 1962 July *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* opens at the Spoleto Festival in Italy.
- 1964 Film version of *The Night of the Iguana* released.
- 1966 February *Slapstick Tragedy* opens in New York.
- 1967 First version of *The Two-Character Play* produced in London.
- 1969 May *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* opens in New York.

- December Enters Barnes Hospital, St. Louis, for psychiatric care.
- 1971 Audrey Wood, Williams's literary agent for thirty-two years, is replaced by Bill Barnes.
- November *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* produced in New York.
- 1972 April *Small Craft Warnings* opens for a successful run off- Broadway. Williams makes his acting debut as Doc.
- 1973 Award the first Centennial Medal of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine.
- 1975 Receives Medal of Honor for Literature, National Arts Club. His autobiographical Memoirs, which deals openly with his homosexuality, is published.
- June *The Red Devil Battery Sign* plays briefly in Boston and New York opening postponed; revised versions latter produced in Vienna (1976) and London (1977).
- August Out Cry opens New York.
- September Revival of *Summer and Smoke* in New York.
- October Revival of *Sweet Bird of Youth* in New York.
- December Revival of *The Glass Menagerie* in New York.
- 1976 January *This Is (An Entertainment)* opens in San Francisco.
- 1978 June *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* opens in Charleston, South Carolina and at Spoleto Festival.
- 1979 December Honored at Kennedy Center by President Carter.
- 1980 March *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* opens in New York.

- 1981 *A House Not Meant to Stand* produced, Chicago. The Notebook of Trigorin, Williams's adaptation of Chekhov's The Seagull, produced at Vancouver Playhouse.
- 24 August *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, his last play to be produced in New York during his lifetime, opens. He, along with Harold Pinter, wins the prestigious Commonwealth Award.
- 1982 Receives honorary doctorate from Harvard University.
- 1983 24 or 25 February Dies at the Hotel Elysee, New York City, from choking on a cap from a medicine bottle.
- 5 March Funeral at St. Louis Cathedral.

Stage Productions

- 1935 Cairo, Shanghai, Bombay, Memphis.
- 1937 Candles to the Sun, St. Louis.
The Fugitive Kind, St. Louis.
- 1940 Battle Angels, Boston.
- 1944 The Glass Menagerie, Chicago.
- 1945 The Glass Menagerie, Chicago.
- 1947 A Streetcar Named Desire, Broadway.
- 1948 Summer and Smoke, Broadway.
- 1951 The Rose Tattoo, Broadway.
- 1953 Camino Real, Broadway.

- 1955 Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Broadway.
- 1957 Orpheus Descending, Broadway.
- 1958 Garden District, off-Broadway.
- 1959 Sweet Bird of Youth, Broadway.
- 1960 Period of Adjustment, Broadway.
- 1961 Night of the Iguana, Broadway.
- 1963 The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, Broadway.
- 1966 Slapstick Tragedy, Broadway.
- 1967 The Two Character Play, London.
- 1968 The Seven Descents of Myrtle, Broadway.
- 1969 In The Bar of a Tokyo Hotel, Broadway.
- 1972 Small Craft Warnings, off-Broadway.
- 1973 Out Cry, Broadway.
- 1975 Red Devil Battery Sign, Boston.
- 1976 This Is (An Entertainment), San Francisco.
- 1977 Vieux Carre, Broadway.
- 1979 A Lonely Sunday for Creve Coeur, off-Broadway.
- 1980 A House Not Meant to Stand, Chicago.
- Something Cloudy, Something Clear, off Broadway.

Selected Williams's Publications

Plays

- 1945 27 Wagons Full of Cotton, and Other One Act Plays.

- Battle of Ages
- The Glass Menagerie
- 1947 A Streetcar Named Desire
- You Touched Me!
- 1948 American Blues
- Summer and Smoke
- 1951 I Rise a Flame, Cried the Phoenix
- The Rose Tattoo
- 1952 Camino Real
- 1955 Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
- 1958 Orpheus Descending
- "A Perfect Analysis is Given by a Parrot"
- Suddenly Last Summer
- 1959 Sweet Bird of Youth
- Garden District
- 1960 The Fugitive Kind
- Period of Adjustment
- 1961 The Night of the Iguana
- 1962 Five Plays
- 1964 The Eccentricities of a Nightingale
- Grand
- The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore
- 1967 The Mutilated

- 1968 Kingdom of the Earth
- 1969 In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel
- 1970 Dragon Counting, A Book of Plays
- 1973 Small Craft Warnings
- 1979 Vieux Carre
- 1980 A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur
Steps Must Be Gentle
- 1983 Clothes for a Summer Hotel: A Ghost Play
- 1984 The Remarkable Rooming-House of Mme. LeMonde.
Stopped Rocking and Other Screenplays
- 1995 Something Cloudy, Something Clear
- 1998 Not About Nightingales

Chapter Two

A Script Analysis Of This Property Is Condemned

According to Francis Hodge, a scholar on the subject of play directing, "a director's preparation is a written analysis of given circumstances, dialogue, dramatic action, character, ideas, and rhythmic beats..." (Hodge 55). The script provides all the information needed to understand a play. The analysis helps the director to understand the characters, setting, etc. The analysis assists the director in discovering what is hidden in the words the author has provided and further defines the world of the play. It is sensible and wise for the director to analyze the script before mounting any production, taking it apart and rebuilding it to learn as much as possible about the information the playwright has given. The director writes an analysis to help define the play and allow him or her to have a starting point when communicating that world with the actors." Good directing is not a gabfest of talk, talk, talk; it is made up of economical and appropriate suggestions made at the right moments." (Hodge 55) A director can use the analysis as a way of getting inside plays so he or she does not miss the playwright's meaning. As Hodge notes, "no matter how skilled a director may be, no matter if he has been directing for many years, he will always have to do intensive homework --- the study of the play script" (55).

A required preparation will generally carry over into the performance. While it would be highly doubtful that someone would know the meaning and significance of every word of the script, taking apart the play will better enable the director to communicate important concepts to the actors, designers, and technical crew. The

director should break down the play into manageable portions that can then be used throughout the course of the rehearsal period. The script analysis of *This Property is Condemned* which follows is based upon Hodge's play-analysis found in Chapters Four through Eight of his book on directing.

* The script used is from on 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and other Short Plays. The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, vol. vi. New York/; New Directions, 1981.

I. Given Circumstances

" The given circumstances resemble the deeply rooted base of a building -- the substructure and foundation upon which it is built; and dialogue is the outer shell, the facade, the transparent encasement covering the activities that will go on inside." (Hodge 17)

A. Environmental Facts

By systemically examining the environmental facts the director can better grasp the author's setting and determine what he is trying to emphasize or accomplish within the plot design. The six areas Hodge lays out for analysis are (Hodge 19):

- a. Geographical location: " ... the exact place. This category should also include climate since weather often defines specific locations and can affect dramatic action."
- b. Date: includes the year, season, time of day.
- c. Economic environment: the class level, state of wealth or poverty.
- d. Political environment: " the specific relationships of the characters to the form of government under which they live. " (Hodge 19)
- e. Social environment: " the mores and social intuitions under which the characters live. These facts are extremely important because they may be manifested through their restrictions on the outward behavioral patterns of the characters and consequently may set up basic conflicts in the action of

the play." (Hodge 19)

- f. Religious environment: "formal and in formal psychological controls."
(Hodge 19)

1. Geographical facts:

This play is set at a railroad embankment on the outskirts of a small Mississippi town. Most of the characters have a relationship with the train company so each scene is set at the railroad embankment. This property to which the title refers is also behind the low embankment of the tracks.

- a. Page 197 "...on the outskirts of a small Mississippi town ..."

Mississippi, one of the East Southern Central states of the United States, bordered on the north by Tennessee, on the east by Alabama, on the south by the Gulf of Mexico and Louisiana, and on the west by Louisiana and Arkansas. The Mississippi River forms almost the entire western boundary, and the Pearl River forms part of the southern boundary. Mississippi has a warm, humid climate, with long summers and short, mild winters.

- b. Page 200, Tom guessed that Alva was in "Memphis" "New Awleuns" "St. Louis" and page 201 "The fastest thing on wheels between St. Louis, New Awleuns an' Memphis." In this play, Tennessee Williams mentions some of American cities with which he is familiar.

"Memphis": The largest city in Tennessee, located in the southwestern corner of the state, on the Mississippi River. The city is the world's largest trading center

for spot cotton, and hardwood lumber trading and processing center in the world.

“New Awleuns”: (New Orleans) New Orleans is the largest city in Louisiana and one of the world's busiest ports. It is also a leading business, cultural, and industrial center of the Southern United States. New Orleans lies along the Mississippi River about 100 miles north of where the river flows into the Gulf of Mexico.

“St. Louis”: St. Louis is the second largest city in Missouri and a leading industrial and transportation center of the United States. St. Louis has the state's largest metropolitan area. St. Louis lies on the west bank of the Mississippi River, about 10 miles south of where the Mississippi meets the Missouri River. This location has made St. Louis the busiest inland port on the Mississippi River.

c. Page 205 “She had ambitions to be a designer for big wholesale firms in Chicago.”

“Chicago”: Chicago is a huge city in northeastern Illinois that stretches along the southwest shore of Lake Michigan. It is the third largest city in the United States. Chicago also ranks among the world's leading industrial and transportation centers. Trucks and railroad cars carry more goods in and out of Chicago than any other city in the country.

2. Date/Time facts:

In this play the present time is a milky white winter mornings. Willie recalls a lot

of events that occurred two years ago. There are many past references in this play.

- a. Page 199 " I quituated. Two years ago this winter." Winter's mood is one of desolation and sorrow, like Willie's story.
- b. Her life begins to change from her mother running off with a brakeman and her father's disappearance, from that time point.
- c. Since Alva's death, her life has been completely different. The phase is worsening.

3. Economic environmental facts:

Willie is an extremely poor orphan, thin as a beanpole and bearing the marks of malnutrition, wrists with dime store jewelry, and she carries a dilapidated doll. Mama ran off with a brakeman, the father was a drunk and disappeared. Her sister was almost a prostitute who died of a lung affection. So Willie lives in a condemned house with an irregular existence along with a railroad man.

- a. Page 197, the author describes the scene and character, we can feel the economic situation of the characters are low.
- b. Page 199, Tom does not believe Willie's diamond is genuine because she carries "a banged-up doll and a piece of a rotten banana." We can see that her appearance is one of poverty and misery.
- c. Page 204, Willie has inherited all of her sister's beaux, and her income is dependent on these men.

4. Political environmental facts:

- a. Page 201 " They got a big sign ... THIS PROPERTY IS CONDEMNED" The government uses its power to label the house where she resides.
- b. Page 202 " They said it didn't agree with the hospital regulations." The hospital restricted Alva's last requests.
- c. Page 204 Tom says " Why don't you do that for me?". He tries to ask her to dance for him with her clothes off.
- d. Page 204 Miss Preston does not understand Willie's picture, after Willie explains it, she says "You can't make a school-teacher laugh." to show her resentment of education.
- e. Page 205 "About the investigators?... Laid low upstairs. ... see things lying around." Their power frightened her to the point that she had to hide herself like a dog.

5. Social environmental facts:

- a. Page 198 "Spit on it. ... lick their wounds." This action is what countryside children or lower class people do.
- b. Page 200 " She used to think my hands was dirty ... tracks so much." Individuals who are of a higher social class look down of poorer members of society.
- c. Page 202, "Sidney his teeth were decayed so he didn't smell good." Alva's beau is of a lower class.

- d. Page 205 " I'm going to dance with them at Moon Lake Casino. ... drunk in the morning!" This is to show her life style.

6. Religious environmental facts:

Willie only believes in her sister Alva. Page 200 " I learned all of that from my sister Alva." She inherited all of Alva's possessions, including her favorite dress, her solid gold beads, clothes and her beaux.

B. Previous Action

This play of Tennessee Williams use a lot of memory, thus there are many past actions.

1. Page 199 " I was expected to be a boy but I wasn't. ... one girl already." She was not considered necessary by her family.
2. Page 199 " I quituated. Two years ago this winter." She quit school. She only studied until fifth grade because she could not understand algebra. But that's only one of many reasons.
3. Most of time Willie narrates Alva's life.

Page 200 " She had a wonderful popularity ... railroad man."

Page 202 " She says, "Where is Albert? ... They all run out on me like rats from a sinking ship!" She recalls that at Alva's funeral, there were no violins playing, no white flowers and all of her lovers deserted her. It was not like death in the movies.

Page 203 Alva " Always singing around the house."

Page 205 Alva had ambitions to be a designer and use to submit her pictures, but she never attained her dream.

Page 206 Alva stuck flowers in a bowl of water to freshen them up.

Page 207 "Alva did once. At a dance marathon ... Alabama." Alva is Willie's idol, so she talks about Alva a lot.

4. Willie recalls school, page 204 " In Five A we use to draw ... what we pleased." "

I remember I draw ... a bottle!" " The principal used to say ... slept with my sister." Her school experience was full of misunderstanding and unhappiness.

5. Tom only brings up the subject on his own initiative, on page 203 " You took him inside and dance for him with your clothes off." Before he met Willie, he had known something about her.

C. Polar Attitude

From certain a point of view there is not any change. This play is like a soliloquy of the soul.

On Page 206, Willie says that she will go back to the water-tank. On page 207, Tom wets his finger and holds it up to test the wind. These actions let us think about Willie and her future, or everything coming back to the same point like a circle, where Willie becomes Alva.

Nevertheless, Willie and Tom use this time to face their lives and hearts.

II. Dialogue

The section on "dialogue" is obviously the conversation between characters in a play; it is designed for finding words that define the word of the play. Dialogue may appear as a written line on a printed page, but its primary intention is to be heard rather than read. It is not just the things characters say but also, far more importantly, what they do, " it is a artificial, highly economical, and symbolic intercommunication of actions between characters in which each forces his wants and needs on the other.(Hodge 25)" Dialogue is a building process, its basic function is to contain the heart and soul, the blood and guts of the play -- the subtext or dramatic action."(Hodge 25) Plays vary greatly in the choice of language used by characters. This choice is dictated by the given circumstances, since they specifically delineate the decorum or outward show -- that is, how the characters behave."

(Hodge 25) Dialogue is inner language, it is thus said to be connotative rather than denotative. In *This Property is Condemned* we can find several examples of Tennessee Williams's special style.

A. Choice of Worlds

1. "Crazy doll" is used to symbolize Willie. On page 204, lines 1~5, and page 207, line 9, and 16, she uses "crazy doll" to shift the mood. On page 198 "Take my crazy doll -- will you." Here she gives Tom the crazy doll. It's representative that she will talk about some things.
2. "Water-tank": Page 198 Willie comes from there and page 206, line 32, she will

- go back to the water-tank. "Tank" has a underlying meaning of a cell or prison.
3. "A rotten banana": to symbolize penis, the male aspect of her life.
 4. "Kite": Willie can be represented by the kite in her pursuit of freedom and purity, as represented by the free flying kite and pure white sky. In reality the kite is afforded no such freedom as evident by the string attached to it. All the while wishing to have the freedom of a kite, when the opportunity presents itself, she discovers that is freedom has a string attached to it.
 5. " Frank Waters": on page 203 line 30,page 204 line 10, page 205 line 23, Page207 line 2, Willie states " you can tell Frank Waters". "Frank" means "sincere." She has to face her life. However, her options remain broad.
 6. " Cannonball Express": give us a feeling of high speed, like a train of thought running fast. Williams uses Cannonball Express to lead Willie and audience into her memory. The train also gives us a romantic mood.

B. Choice of phrases and sentence structures

1. Page 198 "Willie: Skinned my knee ... Glad I didn't put my silk stocking on."
She cares more about her silk stockings than her skin. Material possessions are very important to her.
2. Page 199 line 24," It's perfectly white, paper."
Page 204 line 12," The sky is white, paper."
Page 205 line 33," The sky will be white ... "
Page 206 line 3, " white as ... paper."

Page 207 line 20 "The sky sure is white" , line 22 " white ... paper.

These sentences are to show her desire to see life as pure as a clear sheet of paper.

3. "Bone-orchard": Displays her intellect is not of a high caliber.
4. "Buddy": Shows her low intellect.
5. "My old man": her father. Representing that she is not an intellectual.

C. Choice of images

1. Page 200 line 13 " What a girl needs to get along is social training. ... from my sister Alva." This expresses her idea that outward appearance is very important.
2. Page 200 line 20," movie star " In this play Willie talks about movies several times. They are a form of escape for her.
Page 201 line 31, " Did you see ... spring. "
Page 202 line 30, " It wasn't ... in the movies."
Page 207 line 12, " maybe not like the movies... " The movies are a dream. They display her hope.
3. Page 202 line 2, "Violins playing" and line 30 "when somebody ... violins." Refers to the movies, her fond dream.
4. Page 201 line 23: from "A train whistles," that's the Cannonball Express," until page 206 line 26 "the train whistles The Cannonball Express ... " she explains most of her history. The train whistle symbolizes recall or

imagination. So, page 207 line 5, " Don't you believe me?" "Tom: I think ... your imagination." Everything is like the truth but also illusory.

5. " You're the only star In my blue hea-ven And you're shining just For me!" This is Alva's favorite song and Willie imitate her in all ways. It's representative of her will. Other references are found in page 203, line 8, page 204, line 24, page 205, line 12, page 206, line 14, and ending page 207, line 28. The song is full of romantic and sad feeling.
6. Page 204 " Oh. Crazy Doll's hair ... doing the most outrageous things." This symbolizes Willie's psychology condition. Williams presents Willie's sentiments and hysteria in a very ingenious manner.
7. Page 204 line 15 " draw what we pleased."
Page 205 line 23 " draw what you please."
Page 206 line 4 " I'll draw picture on it."
She draws a picture of her father, but remarks that " You can't make a school-teacher laugh." Her teacher misunderstands her drawing. She wants to draw another picture depicting dance, her imagination overwhelms the truth.
From" The sky sure is white. White as a clean piece of paper."
"...give us a piece of white foolscap an' tell us to draw what we pleased."
White paper symbolizes pure life and fond dreams.
8. Page 205 "Tell him the freight sup'rintendent has bought me a pair of kid slippers. ... of Alva's." This symbolizes Willie's desire to become Alva.

D. Choice of peculiar characteristics

1. "wanta" : "want to, American slang."
2. "naw" : "no, American slang."
3. "hurtcha" : "hurt yourself, American slang."
4. "ain't" : "are not. American slang."
5. "sup'rintendent": "superintendent, American slang."

E. Sound of the Dialogue

Tennessee Williams's poetic language uses, in dialogue, to follow Willie's mood changes. The dialogue is fluent, with a sure sense of rhythm and speed.

III. Dramatic Action

"Dramatic action is the clash of forces in a play -- the continuous conflict between characters. Every experienced director knows that audiences can be aroused to excitement only by the clear and explicit acting of these small units, for a good play is packed with these detailed, revealing moments. The director's mastery of the unit concept is an absolute necessity if he is to understand at all the nature of dramatic action. "

(Hodge 31)

Titles of the Units

- Unit # 1. Willie is danger. ("Tom: Hello. Who are you? ~ Willie:.....Oh! Here I go!")
- Unit # 2. Willie is hurt. ("Tom: Hurtcha self? ~ Willie:... You never can tell.")
- Unit # 3. The introduction. ("Tom: Tom. ~ Willie:the furniture up there!)
- Unit # 4. She quit school. ("Tom: Uh-hum.... ~ Willie: ... a red kite neither.")
- Unit # 5. Alva's status. ("Tom: What? ~ Tom: ... pretty tough.")
- Unit # 6. Old times are beauty. (Willie: You don't know... ~ Willie: Uh-huh.")
- Unit # 7. Her mother's elopement. (Tom: What happened?... ~ Willie: ... Alva's lungs got affected.")
- Unit # 8. Alva's funeral. (" Willie: Did you see Greta Garbo ... ~ Willie: ... just for me.")
- Unit # 9. Willie's inheritance of responsibility. ("Willie: This is her clothes ... ~ Willie: ... Look it here!")
- Unit # 10. Willie's sorrow. ("Tom: What? ~ Willie: ... go out steady with men in responsible jobs.")
- Unit # 11. The misunderstandings and taunts. ("Willie: The sky sure is white. ... ~ Willie: ... The Main Attraction.")
- Unit # 12. Willie was hiding ("Willie: The house is sure empty ... ~ Willie: ... I told you that, hum?")
- Unit # 13. Her unrestrained life. ("Willie: Will you give Frank ... ~ Willie: ... I'm going back now. ")
- Unit # 14. Endless cycle. ("Tom: Where to, ... ~ Willie: ... you wouldn't be worth convincing.")

Unit # 15. Willie's dream. ("Willie: I'm going to live for a long ... ~ Willie: ... so long.")

Unit # 16. Her impossible wish ("Willie: You're the only ... For me.")

IV. Character Analysis

A. Willie

1. Desire:

She hopes her life can be pure like a clean piece of white paper. She wants to break some kind of continuous record, walking the railroad tracks. She wants attention. Ultimately, she wants positive attention. Because of her home, she sometimes accepts negative attention.

She wants to be adored and respected. She also wants her sister to be remembered.

2. Will:

She hopes for happiness in her own life. She plays her favorite music, she dances with the superintendent with heels. She can live for a long, long time like Alva. She is going to die like Alva, with violins playing, with pearl earrings on and solid gold beads. Willie is willing to lie and even debase herself to get the attention she desires.

3. Moral Stance:

I think Willie believes in heaven but, since her family and social life never

offered a religious upbringing, she doesn't have too much of a moral stance. She does not observe conventional rules of behavior.

Page 198 line 13~15 " No, don't touch me. It no fair helping! You've got to do it all by yourself!" : We find that she is very stubborn.

4. Decorum:

She is wild and vulgar, with a sort of precocious, tragic abandon. She wears her hair up in a still messy manner. Her make up is cheaply done and very dark. She wears a gown or party dress and short heeled shoes.

5. Summery of Adjectives:

Thin

Childish

Innocent

Wild

Precocious

Tragic

Solemn

Violent

Slight

Emotional

Spasmodic

Grimy

Smiling

Excited

Passionate

Gaily

Uneducated

Needy

Mentally unstable

Uneducated

Sexual

6. Character-Mood-Intensity:

- a. Heartbeat: rapid.
- b. Perspiration: medium to heavy.
- c. Stomach condition: sinking.
- d. Muscle tension: tense.
- e. Breathing: quick and shallow.

B. Tom

1. Desire:

He wants to explore the unknown, his sexual desires. He also wants to find out more about Willie. He is searching for love, but a childish idea of love. He mainly wants to fly his kite. He also wants Willie to dance for him, without her clothing.

2. Will:

His willpower is weak. He can be easily side tracked by outside influences.

3. Moral Stance:

An average Joe whose mind is at the peak of sexual emotions. Tom is a child and therefore is not extremely passionate about his desire.

4. Decorum:

Tom is a person who is filled with as many bad thoughts as good ones. Tom is a fifteen year old boy. He wears biggie baggy pants, and an oversized shirt with a sweater over it.

5. Summery of Adjective:

direct

young

cute

kind

gentle

6. Character-Mood-Intensity:

a. Heartbeat: slow.

- b. Perspiration: medium.
- c. Stomach condition: fine.
- d. Muscle tension: loose
- e. Breathing: deep and full.

V. Idea

This is the final point of Hodge's analysis." The idea of a play is the core meaning of what it has to say. It is derived from an assessment of characters in action and is therefore a summary statement of such action. Consequently, the idea is the sum total of the play script." (Hodge 43)

A. Meaning of the Title

Willie and her sister Alva and their unfortunate destiny, have no choice but to move forward. That's like humans living in this world, destiny decide our future. Earth is our property.

B. Philosophical Statements

1. Page 198 Willie " No, don't touch me. It's no fair helping. You've got to do it -- all -- by yourself!" One kind of outlook on life.

Page 200 Willie " What a girl needs to get along is social training. I learned all of that from my sister Alva. " Query of school's education system.

2. Page 207 Willie " I'm going to live for a long, long time like my sister. An' when my lungs get affected I'm going to die like she did -- ... Somebody else will inherit all of my beaux!" This expresses fatalism but still contains some hope.

Chapter Three

Rehearsal Log

February 26, 2001, 2:30 ~ 3:30 PM

After auditions, I arranged a rehearsal schedule according to the actors' available time and gave it to them on Feb. 23. Today, I am very excited and well prepared for our first rehearsal. I showed up at the Downstage ten minutes earlier than the agreed-upon time but no one came along after an hour of waiting. All I could do was to call them. It was really pissing me off because I think "on time" should be one of the most basic rules in theatre.

The actor called me that night and threw me an excuse for his absence, which was that he lost the rehearsal schedule. I accepted his apology. The actress, due to her late start class conflicting with our previous rehearsal schedule, was also unable to make it. Therefore, we decided to have a whole new start tomorrow and double-checked our rehearsal time. It's always hard to coordinate everyone when a new project has just begun, but after a while one gets used to it. But for some reason, I don't like my actors to look down on this project because it comes without a big budget and grand title.

I hope the actors can feel involved in this production, and hope they will be motivated and get involved. The director should be able to inspire those artists he works with and lead them into the ideal scenario, which is designed by the director. It is also very important for him to be possessed with communication and leadership skills. After

all, theatre is an integrated art form. Organizing successfully the whole production team smoothly is proof of the director's people skills. This is the first time I worked with American students; I wonder whether my know-how would work out or not. Somehow I believed there must be some thing in common within our humanities.

February 27, 2001 Time: PM 2:30 ~ 3:30

My actress did not show up today. I felt there was nothing I could do about it; plus, I have no right to fire her. She just simply likes this character and was always friendly towards Taiwanese students. That's the reason she was cast in this part, but when it comes to her absence, I have nothing to express but disapproval.

Since we cannot rehearse without the actress, I took some time explaining my ideas of this play to the actor. Hopefully we can find a common view on its style and format. Although I know the director uses blocking to communicate with the actors, this is our first time working together. I hoped he would understand the concept of my stage design. My hopes were that he would build up images when reading the script; give me his suggestions and get more involved in our play. I preferred to create an atmosphere of collaboration.

Jim, my actor, is very interested in the way I deal with the play because it's so different from other directors with whom he has worked.

I always like to make a comparison within each style and format and try to apply

every possibility. That's why brainstorming becomes so important for me. Therefore, I don't like to work with some one who never contributes his or her opinions. Average Americans like to compliment virtues instead of criticizing flaws. That is just not my way. Maybe it's because people tend to treat those with whom they are unfamiliar more politely. This cultural difference changed my directorial style: I gave the actors more freedom than I normally would. Fortunately, both actors are resourceful and are easy to work with.

After finishing the discussion with Jim, I felt the play is still going nowhere which really upset me.

March 1, 2001, 4:00 ~ 5:00 PM

We did warm-ups and then proceeded to read the lines from the beginning. The second time we read the lines I asked the actors to make some movement which would connect to their feelings. Then I asked them to write down my blocking of the whole play. Afterwards, they did it all over again. Up to this point, I calculated the length of the play at about 18 to 20 minutes.

I gave my actors character analysis forms and asked them to finish it and return to me at our next rehearsal meeting. I also asked them to memorize their lines so we could run with out the book next time. It was hard I know, but I still seriously asked for it. It's difficult for the actors to discover the character before they can remember all their lines, and too much discussion will be a waste of time under this condition.

I talked about the whole directing project with Bryan Reeder, and the play was scheduled on March 23. Since this was a very limited time for them to get together to rehearse, we decided to rehearse during spring break.

Both actors show great respect to me, the director; that's what we have been taught in theatre education--professional respect. I think this understanding is the same regardless of our cultural background. Both players are very good, but the actor was more experienced. That's why he found this play a real challenge even though he only had a few lines. The actress had great ability in controlling her emotions.

I really liked today's atmosphere and everything worked out very well; therefore, I felt much more confident. I think before I can get respect from others, I have to respect myself first.

March 5, 2001, 6:00 ~8:00 PM

Actors gave me a complete character analysis.

After warm-ups, rapidly running through the lines, we started rehearsing.

I did not interrupt them during the first run, maintaining the continuing of emotions will help them to understand what they have done in the play. The actress still needed a little prompting, but she had already memorized eighty percent of her lines.

During the second run, I started to correct the timing of movements. We exchanged opinions and I also heard their ideas about their inner motivation and meanings behind the lines. Taking this opportunity, I passed onto the actors what I had learned in script analysis and directing classes. Using blocking as we communicated did work out very well; it helps the actors get into their character, and established their own rhythm. If a specific emotion or movements are needed, now is the best time to add them. The actor can adjust himself to exactly where I want. After we finished the second run, we took a ten-minute break for them to collect their thoughts and settle down.

During the third run, the actors were really into their parts and became very powerful. When we finished it, the actress was so affected that she almost burst into tears. The actor cheered her up and that is why some young actors need a little push to get them into the role. In the meantime, continuing the rehearsal seemed improper because the actors were both tired.

I gave them some key points and interpreted my goals for setting up a mood of sorrow. My example was imaging one's heart being twisted by an unknown hand. I knew this might be too hard to achieve since it's too abstract; even when I worked with some professionals in Taiwan, it's hard for them to perform this well. However, the actress did a great job. The mood of sadness is difficult to present. If achieved, the audience will enjoy the play but they may not be able to tell why they like it. If you fail, the play would turn out to be boring. This is a task of how one can control the audience appropriately, in terms of this play.

March 9, 2001 Time: 2:00 ~ 3:00 PM

The actors should be able to run the play off book today, but the actress still forgot some lines. She was under the pressure of her undone duty and seemed unhappy about it. After two runs, she got much better but we were out of time. Warm-ups are not only helpful in stretching the actors' body and voice training, but also helpful in concentrating to get them into the roles. For the rehearsal, we didn't have enough time to warm-up. But I think it varies under different circumstances; many actors have their own warm-ups to help them get into the role.

March 13, 2001, 1: 00 ~ 3: 00 PM

Spring break. Both actors were absent again. There are only ten days left before the presentation. The actor told me he drove ten hours back from Louisiana and arrived at ten in the morning. He woke up too late and missed the rehearsal. As for the actress, I have no idea where she was, but the actor promised to contact her for me. If I were in Taiwan now, I would probably get another actress. I didn't do it here for three primary reasons. First, she was doing a great job. Second, for her, this was an extremely rare occasion, a no-call no-show. Third, I have no other options. Since there was no way I was going to lose my temper, I was still very nice to the actress; hopefully she would at least feel embarrassed by her behavior. Of course she apologized for this politely. My mixed love and hate feeling toward her can also be explained in this Taiwanese philosophy, "value the talents," which is the way I took it.

March 15, 2001, 1:00 ~3:00 PM

We warmed-up and went through the lines first, then followed by running the stage positions. It had been a week since our last rehearsal, so we tried to get all the feelings back.

Sometimes taking a rest can be helpful in settling one's thoughts, so basically the play went very well today. All together, we had three runs and each of them was under twenty minutes. I added some emotional flows, demands and expressions but nothing else. The message of the play begins to reveal itself now. In the case of the rhythm and fluency, it would take more practice and time. The more we rehearsed it, the more hidden meanings we found in it, whether in the sentence construction or the techniques of expressions.

At last, we chatted about our feelings about this play. Sometimes my expression was limited by my English skills, but the actors understood what I said. I know they are both smart. Working with some one of totally different culture background is the fruit I reap from this project; I hope they feel the same as I do. This was why I am here in the states.

March 19, 2001 Time: 6:00 ~ 8:00 PM

Our rehearsal today went very smooth and the actress was also very dedicated. I was so touched by it. We are getting closer to the opening night; they were under greater

pressure as well. If the pressure can be used positively, it can turn out to be helpful in this case. From my point of view, management of the play is very similar to management of a baseball team. In other words, we can see the director as the coach from the body and mind aspects, the same experiences and skills are also demanded. Sometimes we find the last rehearsal hits better than the debut and the second run of the play also hits better than the first run. I have to avoid this situation because we only have one chance, one run.

March 20, 2001, 5:15 ~ 6:15 PM

We put on costumes and set up the stage when we rehearsed today, to help the actors in getting to know the atmosphere and became familiar with the set. I had to admit that both actors performed excellently and the emotions flowed very precisely. The entire play was loaded with fluency. I was looking forward to keeping their performance and while they asked for additional rehearsals in the following two days, I was too willing to say yes. My actor had to get a quick meal before he went to his job as a waiter. He is an absolutely great young guy.

March 21, 2001, 5:00 ~ 6:00 PM

The actress was sick and she called off today's rehearsal, I was worried about her. As a matter of fact, taking good care of one's health is also an important issue for stage players.

March 22, 2001, 5:00 ~ 6:00 PM

Rehearsal and picture taking went well today. Only the actress' sickness weakened the power of her performance. I suggested saving some energy for tomorrow; therefore, we just rehearsed once. I begged her to take care of herself and fortunately there seems no problem with her voice. I was very pleased and relieved for what I have done as a director of this play.

March 23, 2001, 10:00 AM ~ 3:00 PM

I got some help from the Taiwanese students and they fixed up the decorations and simple lightening for me. We finalized the lightening very quickly since the theatre is a very plain one. The recorder we had in the theatre does not function, so I got another one from my place to replace it. Finally everything was set and we were ready for the presentation. Although I had been asked to focus on the performers' acting and management as a director, I was still trying to apply different elements to enrich the play. Consequently, my message was delivered successfully and be responsible to my actors, the audience and myself. The different concept sometimes led to problems and the only solution here was to communicate patiently. Because of this, I spent a lot of effort on presenting my ideas.

The show started at 2:30 PM, sixty percent of the seats were taken. It was going very smoothly and successfully for the whole presentation. After twenty minutes, the play was

finished and we pulled down the decoration and recovered the stage. After expressing my thanks to everyone involved, I finally completed this project.

Chapter Four

A self analysis

Regarding the directing project of "This Property is Condemned," I have learned the most in reshaping understanding theater. Another valued experience I had was working with people from different cultural backgrounds. I have been in theatre for twelve years and have had no difficulty directing a production. However, my thoughts and personal improvement actually became major to my graduate education while studying in the states.

Sometimes a great amount of experience makes one rigid and stubborn; this is just what I opposed. By learning and examining new theatrical knowledge in an objective and humble way, I wanted to examine both sides of practice and theory, western and eastern. I did not want too much preconception to limit my total appreciation of what I learned doing my assignments here in the states. It is inevitable that I will use basic theories in this project, but it has already been a lot of fun to coordinate my production and this thesis.

For me to choose a play from Tennessee Williams was a smart move, but it was also sort of bold. It is like undertaking a thankless task, for a foreigner to analyze a famous American dramatist; it would become evident if I made any mistakes. Even before I moved here to study, I had decided to pick one of the following three playwrights to serve as the topic of my thesis. They were Eugene O'Neill, Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams. The reason I am here is to learn western theatre practices. As a

result, I gained better understanding in rehearsing my directing project and thesis writing process.

The actual production, I am proud to say, was very fluent and appropriate in regard to tempo. For every theatrical element like pacing, movement and flow, all needed to be set with perfection. From this point we can conclude that control is the mission of a director.

This presentation was very successful, but my intention to build up a sense of unending grief seemed unaccomplished. Maybe it's because we didn't have enough rehearsal time, or my English is not good enough to deliver my direction. Probably it was because the actress was too young to portray such misery. Some people said the actress made too many movements, while some people really liked her performance, saying she expressed her mood through detail.

The actor's performance was positively worthy of compliments. This is partly because the leading role is usually more demanding than the supporting role. Since the actress led the whole play, her acting was definitely more visible in all aspects. But with an actor presenting a professional supporting role, the leading role can be elevated through the chemistry of the two players. I believe this play can hold a standard level because of my actor and actress. Both of the actor have notable talents on the stage. And undoubtedly, I was confident with my ability in handling the whole production. Again, the director should unify the production, taking all responsibility for his play, whether it

fails or succeeds.

There is never enough time and we had to produce the play in a hasty manner. For once every one got involved. We encountered all kinds of problems. As a leader, the director should deal with all situations. Getting across the key points, constantly making choices, pressure, pain and pleasure are always part of the directing process. For a director, the importance of patience and self-control are equal to talents in art and taste.

It is very complicated to balance one's ability between administration and personality. In this case, I found the actress' tardiness caused a lot of delay in the progress; besides, her work ethic was poor too. If she wants to stay in theatre, she must get rid of this problem as soon as possible. It is only common sense to say that being on time is very crucial for team-players.

I constantly ask myself the following questions about my work. What is special about the play? Does it capture interest? How does one balance art and commercialism? With considerations of the labor, timing, location and materials, have I made the best decision at the time? If I judge this play by these criteria, the production was a success.

One thing worthy mentioning is my stage design, Willie always says "The sky sure is white, white as a clean piece of paper." The concept of "white paper" strongly symbolizes her life, dreams and hope. I applied toilet paper and divided traditional Chinese painting decorations as a metaphor for Willie's illusions. Because of this, I got a

lot of white space for the fluorescent lightening I used, and therefore, a very special intensity was established to fit the unrealistic scenario of the play.

My managing ability to apply every element of theatre has improved. The theatre is difficult because of its mixed art forms, therefore one must understand every part of it before he can really handle the elements. Understanding the real meaning of life is a critical thing, because drama intends to reflect life to the audience. Without a deep understanding of life, there is no way to tell the story.

Tennessee Williams established the character of Willie as lonely, fatalistic and sentimental. And of course it is difficult to express these kind of feelings. I would like to inspire the audience members to think about their lives.

My goal for this play was to give the audience something to think about after the production. If they relate to the play, I would consider the play and my direction as successful.

A play does not come to life without an audience. Sometimes a vainglorious artist might say things like "Great work can attract the audience automatically," but we must admit to the fact that we are in the era of publicity and marketing. It's very important for artists to learn how to promote their ideas and works in their own way. My presentation was on a Friday afternoon, even though the time was not right, we still had a sizeable audience joining us. I think my poster is one of the reasons for this. But I have to admit

there were more promotional plans I could have done for this project.

As a director or producer in modern times, one needs to be possessed of all different capabilities to put on a production. The issue of pure art, applied art and art marketing have to be dealt with, and the attitudes of average college students majoring in Drama are also important to us. When I was in Taiwan, I thought about whether the school was disconnected from the reality of society: What are these drama students' futures after they finish school? What kinds of courses and training really help them? What is the final goal of theatrical education when we look at it through our entire civilization? I know these questions are complex, but they raise important issues and can promote creative thinking. I was so inspired by these issues and got to go deeper and deeper with my philosophy. If a student can perform well in academic subjects accordingly, he can adjust to the artistic environment and find his own original ideas.

The history of drama offers a view to the deep thoughts of the human mind. And script analysis trains our skills at dramatic critique and playwriting.

Learning theatre is to learn how to become a complete human being. There is an old Chinese saying "life is just like drama, and drama is reflecting our real life." The theatre is so diverse and interesting that I can't help but be addicted to it. I am lucky to make a living through theatre. The influences from my own production of this play, Broadway musicals, Off Broadway experimental productions and shows in Las Vegas all inspire me to be more confident at what I am doing.

Upon completing this project and thesis, I feel that my strongest point as a director is the passion and creativity I bring to my work. But my weak point is being too conscious of the audiences' reactions. Thinking and making choices amongst many points of view, between reality and idealism, between pain and joy, is the road to performing art in a creative manner.

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Appendix B:

Audition Form

This Property Is Condemned
by Tennessee Williams

Name: _____ M ___ F ___

Height: _____ Weight: _____ Age: _____ Hair Color: _____ Eye Color: _____

School Address: _____ School Phone # _____

Home Address: _____ Home Phone # _____

Will you cut your hair and/or shave (as applicable)? Y N

Will you grow your hair? Y N

Will you change your hair color? Y N

Will you smoke cigarettes if role dictates? Y N

Will you accept any role? Y N

If "Yes", what? _____

Performance Credits

Production	Character	Where
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

CONFLICTS

Please list your class schedule for the Spring semester:

Please list any other conflicts or rehearsals you will be unable to attend:
(including work, meetings, birthdays, concerts, etc.)

By signing this form I agree to attend all rehearsals, and be on time, unless a conflict is listed on this form. Being late to a rehearsal, being unprepared, and missing classing are all considered grounds for dismissal from the production. I also understand that not complying with answers given on this form may cause my dismissal from the production.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

For Director's Notes Only

A. _____ B. _____ C. _____ D. _____ M.W. _____

Appendix C: Character Analysis Form

This Property Is Condemned

Actor's Name: _____

Character's Name: _____

1. What is the character's major drive or goal in life and in the play?
2. What does the character want most? What are his/her drives and needs?
3. What is the character willing or able to do to get what he/she wants?
 How conscientious is he/she of his/her motives?
 How badly does the character want the objectives and how vigorously does he/she pursue them?

The Character's Background

These are factors which influence the character's personality.

FAMILY

Father and mother what influence did each have?

Type of discipline subjected to as a child.

Brothers and sisters, if any, and quality of relationship to them.

Affection, overprotection or rejection in childhood.

Economic status of the family.

Religious attitudes of family and/or character.

Special situations -- drinking, divorce, illness...

Character's innate intelligence? Educational background -- level in school achieved, adjustment to school and peers?

Character's political and sociological environment, ideals, beliefs, politics opinions, heroes, etc.

**Adjustment To Background And Forces That Molded
Character**

Social Adjustments

Manners? Nature of friends?

Participation in social activities and organizations?

Role she or he plays in a group?

Dating, courtship, attitudes on sex?

Home and how she or he lives?

Hobbies and interests?

Marriage, Children, Career

Character's marriage, if applicable. Choice of mate? Success in marital adjustment?

Children and relationship to character?

Character's vocation and career -- kind of work, how character feels about work?
How did character get where she or he is?

Does character spend most of his or her time indoors or outdoors?

Emotional Adjustments

Character's emotional adjustments (reaction to stress or conflict).
 What kinds of outlets does he or she utilize under pressure and the amount of pressure tolerable. What is the character's tolerance level?

Which of the adjustments listed below apply to your character? If you're unsure how a word is used, look it up. Can you trace the source of these immature adjustments? To what degree do they exist? Is the character aware they exist? Does the character fight or accept them?

Compensation	Rationalization	Aggression	Self-righteousness	Masochism
Sadism	Alcoholism		Narcotics	Suspicion and hostility
Fantasy				
Negativism	Regression	Anxiety		Psychosomatic illness
Compulsions	Phobias	Illness		Hysteria

(Make comments on another sheet.)

Mature adjustments

Does the character deal successfully with his/her own emotions?

What is his or her awareness of self?

Does she or he have a sense of humor?

What do others say about him or her? Are they speaking truthfully?
 Why do they react to your character the way they do?

Other Important points
For Each Entrance, Know And Be Aware of ----

1. Where am I coming from?
2. What was I doing there?
3. Why did I leave?
4. Why have I come here and why right now?
5. What will I do here? What do I want?
6. Whom do I know here and what is my relationship to them?
7. Have I ever been here before?
8. What is the time of day and season of the year? Is either or both important? Why?

Image

Use An Animal, Vegetable, Mineral, Color Or Texture To Complete the sentence

"My character is like a _____"

Appendix D:
Rehearsal Schedule

Date	Day	Time	To Do
February	26	2:30 ~ 3:00	Read--thru
	27	2:30 ~ 3:00	Block
March	1	4:00 ~ 5:00	Run
	5	6:00 ~ 8:00	Run
	9	2:00 ~ 3:00	Run Problem
	13	1:00 ~ 3:00	Run
	15	1:00 ~ 3:00	Run
	19	6:00 ~ 8:00	Technical, Set, Dress
	20	5:00 ~ 6:00	If Needed
	21	5:00 ~ 6:00	Run
	22	5:00 ~ 6:00	Pre-performance
	23	12:00 ~ 1:00	Show Dates

Appendix E:
Copy of Promotional Poster

This Property is Condemned

By
Tennessee Williams



Appendix F:

Program

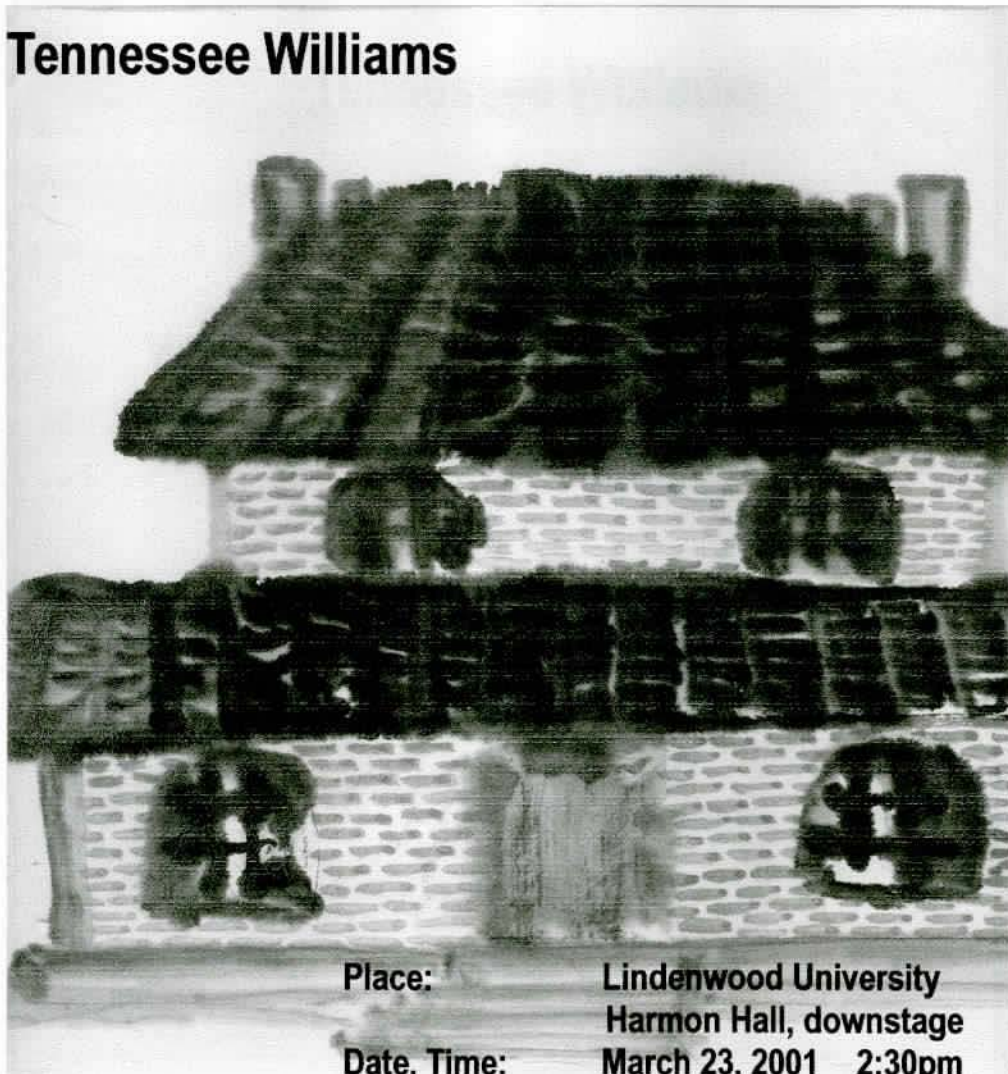
Lindenwood University Theatre Program

Presents

This Property is Condemned

By

Tennessee Williams



Place:

Lindenwood University
Harmon Hall, downstage

Date, Time:

March 23, 2001 2:30pm

**Lindenwood University Theater Program
Presents**

This Property is Condemned

By

Tennessee Williams

Cast

Willie..... Natasha Mangiavacino
Tom.....Jim Caskanett

Directed by

Chih-Shuen, Hsu

**Harmon Hall, downstage
Lindenwood University
St. Charles, Missouri**

Appendix G: Production Photographs



Natasha; Chih-shuen; Jim



Rehearsal (1)



Rehearsal (2)



Discussion



After The Show