

# The Tennessee Williams Annual Review

## Tennessee Williams Scholars Conference Panel: The Unpublished Tennessee Williams

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Moderator: *Robert Bray*

Panelists: *Allean Hale, Thomas Keith, Philip C. Kolin, Nick Moschovakis*

**Editor's Note:** *The following panel was transcribed directly from tapes made at the 2003 Tennessee Williams Scholars' Conference in New Orleans.*

### Participants:

Prof. Allean Hale (The University of Illinois),

Mr. Thomas Keith (New Directions Publishing Corporation),

Dr. Philip C. Kolin (The University of Southern Mississippi),

Dr. Nicholas Moschovakis (Georgetown University),

Dr. Robert Bray (Middle Tennessee State University)

¶2 **Dr. Robert Bray:** We're here to talk about the vast body of Williams's work that remains unpublished or has been recently published for the first time. All of us have visited most of the major Williams repositories, which include the University of Texas at Austin, Columbia University, Harvard's Theatre Collection, the University of Delaware, the Billy Rose Theatre Collection at the New York Public Library, the collection at New Directions Publishing, UCLA, the film files at USC and the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences Archives, and the Todd Collection at The Historic New Orleans Collection, which is an extremely important addition to the public collections of Williams materials. We urge all of you to take a look at the Todd Collection at some point during your stay here in New Orleans. In addition, there are numerous scattered private and public collections that have small quantities of Williams materials, so the task of the researcher is finding the means and energy—and money—to visit all of these various repositories. We're not really here to offer a cataloguing of the materials at each repository—indeed many of these now offer online inventories where one can just go to the web and have access, and others are moving in that direction. Instead we're trying to focus on some of the surprising finds that we've come across over the years, as well as some of the ethical, commercial, and aesthetic considerations in terms of whether or not these materials should remain unpublished or whether they should be put before the public.

What I'd like to begin by doing is just ask each of you what you've come across recently that's particularly illuminating or interesting. Obviously we'll have to pick and choose here because we've all worked at so many different archives. But Tom, maybe you want to start with some of the things that New Directions has that have been especially intriguing to you.

¶3 **Mr. Thomas Keith:** Some of the later plays that remain unpublished, such as *A House Not Meant to Stand* and *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder*, and we have lots of scraps of things, but I think assessing what's actually out there

is becoming the current key issue because there are fragments such as *This Is: An Entertainment*. We have seen some of the Columbia material. I want to know everything that's available to see if it's possible to read the complete script. *This Is* in particular intrigues me, but I haven't seen that much of it.

**¶14 Dr. Nicholas Moschovakis:** You'd like me to talk about the repositories that I've gone to. Well, one of my favorites is the little collection of Williams materials at UCLA in the rare books department at the University Research Library. There's a legend about how Williams ended up selling stuff to UCLA, which is that he was on his way to Bangkok with his friend Oliver Evans around 1969 and ran out of money in L.A. and had a brilliant idea. He called or had someone else call the Director of Acquisitions at the University Research Library, Rare Books and Manuscripts Division, and said, "I'm Tennessee Williams, and I have a suitcase full of manuscripts I'd like to sell you"; and at first apparently the curator said, "I don't believe you"; but he managed to persuade him. Anyway, it's an interesting little collection from my point of view. It contains a copy of a play that David Roessel and I recently edited together and published in an anthology entitled *Political Stages*—and that's the only known manuscript of this one-act play, called *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*, which is actually about almost exclusively gay characters, gay protagonists, and may have been written between—in different stages—between the '30s and the '50s, so it's an interesting manuscript; it was just published, so you can read about that.

It also has a bound collection of manuscript poems that he put together in the early '40s called *The Drunken Fiddler*, which contains a lot of poems, especially early poems, which of course I'm interested in as co-editor of the poems. I've also been to Austin on several occasions and have been through the collection there, and I guess the thing most important to me there so far has been the large numbers of unpublished earlier one-act plays which David Roessel and I are working on, editing, and hopefully putting before the public in various forms, maybe including performance, over the next few years, or making them available to people who would like to pursue those possibilities, so . . . that's what I've been involved with.

**¶15 Bray:** One of the most interesting finds that I've seen is the number of different versions of *Vieux Carré*. There are manuscripts scattered at probably eight different repositories of that play, and one of the most fascinating things in looking at these unpublished versions is that we find a completely different play, and it's extremely experimental, very modernistic. In reading the experimental versions one can tell that Williams had returned to his well-worn pages of Ionesco—he was an admirer of Ionesco—because it's a play within a play, much in the way of *Six Characters in Search of an Author*. I'm hopeful one of these days to be able to edit that version and publish it in the [*Tennessee Williams Annual*] Review.

Some of the things you come across are not quite that important, but they're quirky and amusing. In the Todd Collection, for example, I came across a western—yes, Tennessee Williams wrote a western—and he's got two gay cowpokes in this western named Smitty and Slim. I'm not sure if it merits publication, but it's really fun to read. Also, there's a version of *The Glass Menagerie*; it was actually a provisional screen treatment in which there is a Mr. Wingfield present, and there's this hilarious scene: Mr. Wingfield is running a still out in the woods, and the still explodes, and everybody is seen running away from the exploding debris, which is just a little bit different than the final version we see evolve from that. And one of my most recent finds was just

yesterday when I was going through some of the materials—I had never seen this before—Blanche DuBois's name was Blanche Boisseau before he settled on DuBois. So these little things that you find such as that are fun and really ultimately very rewarding when visiting these repositories.

¶16 **Prof. Allean Hale:** In the first version of *Streetcar*, he called her Gladys, and it took place in Chicago.

**Bray:** [*Laughter in background*] And Stanley's name at that time was Ralph, right?

**Hale:** Yes, so he changed it quite a bit as it moved south. I've been trying to count the plays, which would take you all your life, but I've already counted more than a hundred early plays and more than twenty late plays that are still unpublished and relatively unknown to the public, so that leaves us quite a lot to work with.

**Keith:** And does that include scraps and pieces where you have a title of one thing, and character names and a title over here, different but some of the same character names, and you wonder was this a piece of this, or . . . an evolution here or . . .

**Hale:** I haven't read all of them, I mean . . .

**Keith:** . . . if somebody could do a map . . .

**Hale:** It's very hard to do that with Williams because . . .

**Keith:** . . . the map would be the size of this room . . .

**Hale:** . . . yes, and he keeps changing the titles and so forth . . .

¶17 **Keith:** Things turn up in unusual places. A very important image in *Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens* is about Candy telling his guests to cross over this bridge in the courtyard and go under a willow tree—I haven't read *Vieux Carré* in a long time, and then we saw it last night—and there it was, right in Ty's monologue, the whole thing. Williams always found a way to use things, you know . . .

¶18 **Hale:** . . . and he never let an idea die; I mean, I find many things that he put in his early unknown plays that turn up twenty, thirty years later in a late play. But one of the things that surprised me a lot in the early plays is how much he used dance in his plays. We've been talking about how he used music, which was also true, but actually he also used dance in a lot of early plays. His very first one, called *Beauty is the Word*, ends with a missionary's granddaughter who is rebelling doing a very voluptuous dance on stage. That's the climax of the play. He wrote a dance drama for Martha Graham, and, of course, in *The Glass Menagerie* Laura's dance is very important. And in *Streetcar* there is a crucial dance when Blanche is proposed to, and *Mr. Merriwether* ends in a cakewalk, and I'm working right now on a play called *Cavalier for Milady*, a late play, and it has Nijinski in it.

**Bray:** And of course Kip, one of his early lovers, was a dancer, and he writes about that in *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*.

**Hale:** And Williams himself was a very good dancer. Of course he came of a musical family, but somebody who knew him in college said that although he was too shy to ever ask a girl to a dance, the sorority sisters all

invited him because they needed an extra man, and he was such a good dancer.

**Bray:** Philip?

**Dr. Philip C. Kolin:** Christ has always talked about the least of these, and that's how I feel with these New Direction heroes sitting next to me. I'm glad they didn't raise the point about canonicity. The Williams canon is elastic; there is no established list of poems, plays, stories, or novellas. And I think what was said of Francis Ford Coppola as a director can be said of Williams the playwright: his script is like a newspaper—a new one comes out every day. [*Laughter.*]

Like Nick, I've worked at the Harry Ransom Center at University of Texas, which rightfully bills itself as having a four-star collection. I think there are some other places that have at least three stars. And I've also done a little bit of work with the Missouri Historical Society, which has a great deal of interesting material about Williams's years at the University of Missouri. I guess maybe some of the finds I have are a little bit different from the ones of my esteemed colleagues here. I found manuscripts that were written *about* Williams. Several years ago, almost a decade ago, I was at the Ransom just looking through some documents, and there was a handwritten, twenty-five page letter from Sir Laurence Olivier to Williams on directing *Streetcar* at the London premiere starring Vivien Leigh, the role that sent her 'round the bend. Olivier spent a great deal of time on seemingly small points chastising Williams for lengthening scenes, and for his use of "on butterfly wings." He thought that that was just a little bit over the top.

I also, as I said, did some work with the Missouri Historical Association, and in the early 1930s when Williams was at Missouri, he repeatedly entered the Mahan contest with his work. He entered poems, essays, stories, particularly "Big Black," which was the subject of our previous panel here. It won third place, and there are some fascinating comments from the judges about Williams's early style, which gives us an early assessment of his talents. I think there's a great deal of work to be done not only with the early Williams, but there's still a lot of work to be done with the late Williams. A play that was performed here last year, *Traveling Companion*, about two gentlemen, one of whom is clearly Tennessee (Vieux) and the other one a young man (Beau) who is in the tradition of *Orpheus Descending*. The older man's name is Vieux, and at one point in the typescript, Williams was so embroiled in the role that he just struck out the name Vieux and wrote his own name in. So we have Williams inscribed in the text, through the text, and all around the text. But I think we are just at the very beginning of Williams scholarship in terms of textual issues, and there's a great deal to be done in all categories.

**Bray:** Speaking of the textual issues, Brian Parker, who is also a Williams scholar, couldn't be with us today. But in any case, he has done developmental stemmata of many of the major plays, including *The Rose Tattoo*, *Camino Real*, *Cat*, and *Iguana*. Brian has probably spent as much time as any of us in the repositories, and he's also located two one-acts that have been published in *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*: the one-act version of *The Night of the Iguana*, which has all of the essential ingredients, maybe the iguana without the hind leg or something, [*laughter*] but most of it is in there—and also in the 2003 issue of the *Review* we've published a one-act version of *The Rose Tattoo*. Both of these plays, by the way, will have readings at the Food for Thought Theatre located in Manhattan's National Arts Club this fall, so it's gratifying to see that these plays are being performed as well as published.

There's another aspect for us to consider here. After the exhilaration of locating a new text comes the sobering question: should this be published? And these are things that we all have to grapple with. I mean, we have a number of considerations, as I mentioned: the aesthetic considerations, the ethical considerations—how fair is it to Williams to publish this material? Would he have wanted this material to be published? There's also the commercial value—something that Tom can address—and just the sheer difficulties of the process involved in securing permissions. And especially now that the *TWAR* has gone online, I've found this to be a little more challenging because obviously the commercial value is diminished if a text is published free in an online version. So, maybe Tom could just begin by talking about some of the considerations when New Directions puts out a collection or a new edition of a play, or a play for the first time. Could you talk about some of the decisions that are made along those lines?

¶11 **Keith:** Yes, and the process overall. I think it's moved slowly and organically for a reason . . . because of some of the difficulties that you talk about. In our case, we're a small press; we publish a grand total of thirty books a year. We can only bring out so many. And also, although Tennessee Williams is one of those authors who pays for himself, because for every apprentice play that comes out and doesn't earn out its advance, there's at least a *Cat* or a *Glass Menagerie* that's able to supplement those. So even the ones that are on the runway right now—the last apprentice play *Candles* is going to be, I think, this fall, and then *The Selected Letters II* is after that—in spring 2004, and then it seems to be who comes forward with what. And I think, as in the case of the three later plays that have been published . . . after *Red Devil* are *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, *The Notebook of Trigorin*, and *Tiger Tail*. *Tiger Tail* was ready to go—I don't know anybody who's read it lately, but I think it's an excellent adaptation of his own material, and there wasn't much question about it. He worked on the production down in Gainesville, Florida. Attention was brought to *Trigorin* because of a successful Cincinnati production, and Allean did the editing there. And then with *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*. . . that was something that was actually an editorial choice at New Directions, and we went to Eve Adamson, and it turned out to be a lucky choice because she is an extremely conscientious person, was very committed to Tennessee Williams, and I worked with her on the text of *Something Cloudy*, and her script—she had the stage manager's script—she had various notes—and there is nothing in that text that wasn't performed, or that she doesn't remember specifically Williams saying [for example], “Bring the music in earlier” . . . things like that. In every stage direction she made sure that all of the stage manager's stage directions were cut out and Tennessee's were put in, and that's an unusual circumstance. We were talking this morning about *This Is*. Does anyone know where Lyle Leverich's script is located?

¶12 **Hale:** One of them at Columbia has his name on it. It's the shorter, first draft of, and it says Lyle Leverich on it.

**Keith:** In his handwriting?

**Hale:** Yes. I'm not sure if it's his handwriting. I think it is.

**Kolin:** As a corollary to that, The University of Delaware has a copy of *Period of Adjustment* that belonged to Audrey Wood, his agent, and at the end of it are twenty-five pages of insertions for textual variants, cancels, et cetera.

¶13 **Keith:** I was actually going to get to a point with *Something Cloudy*. . . so Eve Adamson was very strict, and then last year or the year before, it was 2001 I think, someone was given permission to do a production of *Something Cloudy, Something Clear* at St. Clements Church in New York. It's the Provincetown play. And the director was very excited. He found drafts and scenes that weren't in the published version, and he wanted to put them in his production. And the agents, Tom Earhardt and University of the South, looked at this, and they asked for advice from us, and as soon as I saw the stuff, I recognized it was from *The Parade*, which was a one-act he had written, or completed at least, thirty years earlier. It became *Something Cloudy*, but it is a distinctly different play, and my advice was "no." If you want to do *The Parade*, do *The Parade*; if you want to do *Something Cloudy*, do *Something Cloudy*. I think the same thing has to be kept in mind in terms of publishing. A lot of these are going to become scholarly editions where you have a variance, where you can say, here's what we have for *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder*, although that may be a bad example because Eve Adamson was involved and she's still around, but in *Masks Outrageous and Austere*, somebody who really wants that published or performed and feels that Williams has finished the work, might feel that it should be out before the public. I don't know if it would be New Directions or a university press, but I think a play like that that's so unfinished, you have to have a lot of notes and give the options. You know, no rewrites after death. [**Editor's note:** Gavin Lambert, a close associate and friend of Williams, has edited *Masks Outrageous*, and it is definitely ready for publication or production.]

¶14 **Kolin:** You know, with Shakespeare there is Geoffrey Bullock's *Narrative and Dramatic Sources of Shakespeare*. It makes one wonder if these early Williams plays are variants, or are they sources?

**Keith:** In the case of Williams, as meritorious manuscripts are "discovered," the publishing will be done carefully and judiciously.

**Bray:** We'll keep wrestling with some of these same issues in terms of collecting the poems and the short plays and so forth.

¶15 **Moschovakis:** Yes, and if I may return to an earlier point about distinguishing the genres and the way each genre works. With regard to the poems, the editors at New Directions pretty much told us that our mission was just to collect the previously published poems—which had not been available altogether between two covers—for republication. The question did arise at some point in the process whether we ought to include a selection of unpublished poems together with these previously published poems. There was no question of publishing the whole body of uncollected verse not only because it's huge, but also because we don't know where all of it is yet. Some of it might be in private hands, and it couldn't be a definitive edition of every scrap of verse he ever wrote, not to mention that a lot of it really is just scraps. But in the end—we all came to the decision not to include any of the unpublished verse, which raises the question, how much of it should see the light? Should there be a volume of previously unpublished poems by Tennessee Williams? I don't know. In this particular case, first, a bigger audience needs to be established for the published poems as a practical matter before anyone would consider bringing out such a volume. But from the viewpoint of aesthetics and whether it's fair to Williams to publish some of this stuff, I think it absolutely is because in fact the selections that were made on some of the volumes in the past, although they had Tennessee's imprint, although he was involved in the

selection process, he wasn't necessarily . . . they weren't necessarily coherent attempts to design volumes altogether. That was more or less the case with his first volume, but I don't think it was so much the case with his second volume. It was a collection of things that he had around, that were around, sitting around at New Directions.

That's one of the questions on which this whole issue would turn—to what extent were the previous selections made on an arbitrary basis as opposed to a real, coherent plan, according to some coherent rationale. And if they were made according to a rationale that was Tennessee's own rationale, then that raises more serious questions about the fairness and the validity of publishing a whole lot of other unpublished stuff that he himself didn't choose to publish. With regard to *all* of the work including poems, dramas, and everything, yes, people will disagree, I think, about the aesthetic quality and the performability of the dramatic scripts that are in the archives right now, but I think I would personally, at this point, as a scholar—and maybe partly as a younger scholar—my own feelings would be that the texts that are in the archives have a value which increases with time, which is independent of its aesthetic value and even of its value as part of the canon of performed Williams works. I think there's another value *beyond* that value. You know, some of it may have the value of being performable, of being additions to the canon that haven't been known and publicized before, but I think there's another value—the one to scholars, to critics, to people who want to understand Williams's creative process in addition to being able to evaluate his achievement and pick out the best ones. That's not the only function a publication serves; it also serves the function of making the more obscure works of one of our greatest dramatists known.

**¶16 Keith:** But it's such a massive amount of material that naturally there's going to have to be a selection process. You were talking about the poems, and I was thinking—I don't mean to be cynical, but—outside of this room, who's ready to see those collected poems in paperback? How big is the audience? Who's going to be teaching them anytime soon? *Androgyne*, *Mon Amour* never really sold well. *In the Winter of Cities* still does; *In the Winter of Cities* is a steady backlist title almost like one of his plays, so go figure that.

**Bray:** Allean, you and I have wrestled, metaphorically speaking, with some of these issues of publication. I remember that we disagreed on “The Negative.” I thought it was a very good story and worthy of publication. New Directions chose not to include it in *The Collected Stories*, and I published it in *The [Tennessee Williams Annual] Review*. So when we're looking at these pieces, what are some of your criteria for judging the merit of their publication?

**¶17 Hale:** Well, I don't know about that question. I was sitting here thinking, I have mulled over this for many years, and my attitude has changed a good deal. A few years back when a Hemingway question came up, and the grandson rewrote . . . or finished a Hemingway book, there was a great deal of criticism about that; and they asked ten famous writers how they would feel about having their undiscovered things published, and they all said, “Burn 'em.”

But, on the other hand, you know they are going to be published. I mean, they're out there. And as a Tennessee Williams admirer, I must say, there are some of his plays I've read from his late years that I hate to see published. They don't do him any credit; in fact, they're very unpleasant, and they kind of go against everything

he wrote before, especially *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder*. I mean that's a satire on the church and theology and a brother and a sister and . . .

**Bray:** Yes—it's a wonderful play. [*Laughter.*]

**Hale:** Well, it's a very nasty play. I shouldn't make a comment like that. But, anyway, one wonders what to do with it. You know, you've got to find some justification for it. Too bad Linda Dorff isn't here; she could always find a justification.

**Keith:** I've got an answer for you, there. I know what to do with it. I think it needs to be performed. We need to find out if it's performable.

**Bray:** Right. I'd love to see it staged.

**Hale:** Yes, I agree.

**Keith:** You know Williams is not alive to do the rewrites and shape it up, but what's there isn't going to stand up in any way. And some of these later plays . . . has there been a production of *Red Devil Battery Sign*, outside of that London production, that's been critically well received? Has anyone succeeded in mounting a production that's made the case for it as a successful play? And I think the answer's no. And that's my question . . .

**Hale:** Well, I think they'll all be discovered and put on whether one likes the idea or not, and . . .

**Keith:** No, I'm saying I hope they all are put on, and if so, what will that tell us?

**Hale:** Yes, until they're put on, you really can't judge them. I mean, that's the way he wrote; he wrote for the stage, and . . .

**Bray:** Philip, do you have anything to add to that?

**Kolin:** Yes, I do. I'm going to take sides with Robert. I think *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder* is a remarkably ambitious, challenging script. I'd like to see it staged, and I'd like to see it published. There's a lot that's going on in that play that has larger implications for our discussion today. One of the issues that I think we have to grapple with—not only as editors, scholars, and critics, but as teachers—is what place do these documents have in the curriculum. And it seems to me that such documents have tremendous value to my students, schooled in literary theory, whether it's queer studies, or whether it's feminism, or new historicism, or whatever the area. Williams is a perfect writer for current study because he is a model of the self-reflexive, self-fashioning author. And when we see earlier drafts and variations of the script, we're actually getting to see how he absorbed, crossed out, rewrote, and expanded material; and I've found in teaching Williams that it is very helpful to show students various versions to spark their imagination and appreciation for Williams the creating self, the self creating.

Let me just give you two or three examples. Something that fascinates me—and Tom Adler and I were talking about this yesterday—is the earlier titles of works. *Baby Doll* was originally entitled *The Twister* or *Hide and Seek*.

**Bray:** As well as *The Whip Hand* and *Mississippi Woman*.

¶20 **Kolin:** Yes, and all of those title changes seem to be as convenient rubrics to get at some of the material in the play. And so, with a play like *Kirche, Küche, und Kinder*, there's a long tradition in German literature on that particular phrase, which refers to a woman's role and the way in which Williams explores and expands that—and in many ways destabilizes it. One small thing about that play: one of the satiric targets—and Allean is quite right—is religion, but it's a very debauched religion. The person who is one of the villains there is a Lutheran pastor who rapes a ninety-nine year old woman with an umbrella. You know, not everyday fare. Nonetheless, Williams in other works seems to have a critical, satiric edge against Lutherans. [Laughter] Well, take look at “Mother Yaws,” and in one of the stories, which is biographical from his own ancestry, “Grand” there's some Lutheran influence. As somebody who is interested in biography, I, too, would like to be able to track that down and see some type of a pattern. So, I think there are larger implications for everything that we've spoken about, and I don't want us to forget the teaching part.

¶21 **Bray:** Brian Parker wanted me to bring up this point: Williams's haphazard habits of composing his material and the challenges in working with his papers. And once you do find a text and select it for publication, there are enormous challenges for the editor. For example, Williams wasn't as capricious a punctuator as Faulkner, but he came close in some of his plays; and therefore, do you honor his quirky punctuation? I mean, these are just minor considerations it seems, and yet, the editor has to make those decisions. And it's really tough. Here's the situation: when I'm editing one of Williams's unpublished pieces, I have this almost sacrosanct piece of material before me. What do I do with it? How do I change it? Do I? And usually Williams would delete material by drawing a diagonal line through it. That was his common habit most of the time. And, you know, sometimes this material adds to the texture of the play, and then the editor has to think, “Do I include it, or exclude it?” And my inclination has always been to exclude it because that's what Williams chose to do, but maybe some of you all can talk about that as well.

¶22 **Keith:** Well, I think it's going to come up with *Candles*. Dan Isaac is editing *Candles to the Sun*, the last of the apprentice plays. The script he's using was given to him by a cast member who was in it, and it's considered very accurate. Well, that's a play Williams worked on for a while, and Dan wants to include other material that he feels strengthens it, and the decisions haven't been made yet, but if there are any lines, phrases, where sometimes there's a gap, like there was a gap in *Spring Storm* where Williams had just never gotten around to cleaning up the fact that the picnic happened on the day before it should have happened, for example—if there are any things like that, they'll be annotated. And if *House* ever gets published—I don't have a copy of Philip Kolin's *Undiscovered Country*, to which I contributed the essay on *A House Not Meant to Stand*—but in some of the drafts of *House* are these incredible descriptions of the characters that don't appear in the final script. They're illuminating, and I think should be kept attached to the play . . . perhaps in the appendix or something.

¶23 **Kolin:** Can't we do with Williams what we do with Shakespeare and Elizabethan/Jacobean playwrights, and just do the emendations and put the brackets around it?

**Bray:** . . . or a gloss

**Kolin:** . . . or a gloss or something?

**Keith:** Well, the problem I think with that is, if you do that you're going to have a two hundred page bracketed play [*laughter*] in some cases, because there are just pages and pages of this stuff. It just goes on and on and on, and then you find these scraps where there are these characters' names you've *never* heard of.

¶24 **Hale:** I had an interesting time in editing *Not about Nightingales* because you have a chief black character in there named Ollie; only, in the script I had, he has three different last names. Well, obviously you've got to try to do something about that, and you have to make an editorial decision. So, one name was Oliver White, and I thought, well that's too cliché [*laughter*], and one was Oliver . . . I think it was Amstead, and I thought, well maybe he's trying to connect it with that ship, you know, Amistad, where the black man was the hero. So, I did a lot of research trying to find out if Tennessee Williams could have read that, and I don't think there was anything written on that at the time he could have read it. So I looked it up in the National Directory on the net, and there were only two people in the United States named that, and I thought, well . . . so, I finally ended up with whatever the last name was—I've forgotten, but anyway, it was the third choice.

And also in that play, I did take a liberty, which maybe I shouldn't have taken; but clipped to page fifty of the manuscript were two handwritten pages, and they were about Butch, the lead prisoner, who is a very tough guy, about his memories of a night he spent with Goldie. And it's sort of a dream. So, it was so well written, and it was so unusual for Williams to write a real love scene—I think maybe it's the only love scene I've ever read in a Williams play—I mean, you know, it was quite poetic. But there were two versions, and I could see that it was just two attempts to write the same thing; so, I thought, well I'm going to put this in after page eleven; I can see where it should go—I mean page fifty. And so I took the liberty of taking the best out of each, you know, and making one edition where Goldie comes to him in a dream. Well, when it got to Trevor Nunn, he liked it so well that he had her come back twice. [*Laughter.*] Sort of defeated my editing.

¶25 **Bray:** For those of you who might not know, Trevor Nunn was the director of the play.

**Hale:** Yes. And directors, though, can do a lot of things that I feel editors should not do. I try to respect the material and keep it as authentic as possible while removing really goofy things that are obvious mistakes like having a character appear in one scene and be referred to as appearing in a different scene.

¶26 **Bray:** Well, even in the published plays like *Battle of the Angels* there are these two characters who get their husbands mixed up . . . that doesn't seem to fit, and you wonder if somebody should have caught that and corrected it earlier on.

Philip brought up an interesting point when we were speculating about topics to discuss: the issue of the paratextual. I mean, that is, letters, notes, cocktail napkins—Williams, you know, wrote wherever he was, so . . . I wonder what value these have, and if there will ever be any sort of effort to collect this ephemera or . . .

¶27 **Kolin:** There are so many letters out there in so many different repositories. I know this from talking to Al [Devlin] and Nancy [Tischler], who have prepared their major edition of the letters. We're all waiting for the second volume to appear—they clearly had to make a *lot* of decisions because it was impossible to put all of

Williams's correspondence into two volumes. I found one letter from William Carlos Williams to Williams in the late 1940's asking Williams's opinion about where William Carlos Williams could publish some drama. And I think that's a crucial letter because it says, Tennessee Williams is being written to by a recognized poet, an esteemed poet, as a major voice in the theatre. It's a gauge of Williams's reputation. As far as a lot of the other things we've talked about, I know that Wesleyan University has the Elia Kazan papers. When those are made public, how will that change our view of scripts? How will that change our view of Williams? Brenda Murphy several years ago wrote a fascinating study for Cambridge University Press on Kazan and Williams which she subtitled *A Collaboration in the Theater*. In previous years here, I know people have caviled with the word "collaboration," thinking that Williams's achievements had been lessened. But I think, to answer the question, it has invaluable implications for our view of Williams and the American theatre in general.

¶28 **Bray:** Does anyone know what kind of progress is being made—speaking of unpublished things—on the journals?

**Hale:** I just heard from Margaret Thornton.

**Bray:** Maybe we should frame this. Margaret Thornton is collecting and editing the Williams journals.

**Kolin:** Margaret is one of the many Williams scholars who have contributed to the *Tennessee Williams Encyclopedia*. I heard from her last month when she sent her entries on the journals. She informs me they will be out next year.

¶29 **Bray:** The other amazing gap is volume two of the biography. You know that Lyle Leverich died, but he was, some people say, halfway through, perhaps two-thirds of the way through, at least in terms of his notes and the progress he had made with drafts. Norton Books, who took over the project, has decided to give the job to John Lahr. This is a very controversial: first of all, the choice of this biographer is viewed with some skepticism by members of the academic community, and secondly (and this might be hearsay), but what I've been told is that Lahr intends to use *none* of Lyle Leverich's notes. And, this again is just hearsay, the speculation is that this will become a celebrity biography, which would be a real tragedy if that happens. Thomas, do you know anything about this speculation?

**Keith:** John Lahr is the biographer of his father, Bert Lahr, and of Joe Orton. And he is also the theater critic for the *New Yorker*. My question after that would be then—I know he has access to Lyle's files, which are massive—if he doesn't want Lyle's notes, is he going to use his files?

**Bray:** That's a good question.

**Hale:** I would think he would want to use the many discussions and reviews Lyle had with theater people, directors, and—he interviewed all the famous living directors and actors and actresses—that would be an invaluable addition to a book. But whether he's going to, no one seems to know.

**Kolin:** We do know Maria St. Just isn't going to come out very well. He wrote a thirty-page diatribe in *The New Yorker* on her.

¶30 **Keith:** Well, Lyle was planning on covering Maria—fairly—but Lahr has more of a bone to pick with her. That’s on his particular agenda, and now she can’t fight back. I have just a small point, but I have to see that letter from William Carlos Williams because he and Tennessee Williams had the same publisher at the time, New Directions, which had been Williams’s publisher since ’36. So maybe William Carlos Williams was asking where to put on a production. William Carlos Williams was a good friend of James Laughlin, he wouldn’t have had to ask advice—

**Kolin:** Yes. I think he was asking Williams, according to the tenor of the letter, if Williams would read the plays . . .

**Keith:** Ah!

**Kolin:** . . . and Williams politely declined. [*Laughter.*]

¶31 **Moschovakis:** On the subject of biography, that’s one of the sources of value that’s independent of literary value, of course, in unpublished manuscripts. Literary manuscripts, poetry, drama, are of course, biographical. Leverich used a lot; he didn’t use everything by any stretch of the imagination. There’s such a vast quantity of manuscript, literary manuscript, material in the archives that it’s an endless source of biographical fascination. Along with the journals—which I have only seen scraps of, and probably no one except Margaret Thornton, the editor, I guess has seen everything that remains—but the literary drafts also contain a lot of seemingly direct expressions of Williams’s own feelings at the time.

**Bray:** Should we open the floor to questions at this time? Or does anyone have any other points that they’d like to make? Because we can come back to some of the prepared material, but I think some of you might have questions . . . Annette?

¶32 **Annette Saddik** (*in audience*): Yes, I wanted to ask Nick—I read *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*, and in the beginning the setting is 1942 or something like that, and then later you have the pick-up of the sailor saying, “I’m looking for a woman, and she drives a ’52 Cadillac.” So I was wondering if—and there are no notes—so I was wondering if the discrepancy was Williams’s, or what . . .

**Moschovakis:** Williams’s typescript does not indicate any date at the beginning of the playlet, although internal allusions in the composite script do suggest some inconsistency with regard to its period setting. David Roessel and I plan to amend our treatment of the setting in a future edition, so you’re correct in pointing this out, Annette. He put the complete script together from two versions that were obviously done at different times, with different character names and discrepancies in various details, but because he did put in the effort to make one play out of it, we’re justified in seeing it as a complete work. It wasn’t a completely finished work in the sense that he hadn’t gone through and ironed out these discrepancies. Same as *Spring Storm, Not about Nightingales*, the kind of stuff Allean has worked on. So he cobbled together two versions of the script, which he had clearly been working on at different times in his life. Although ultimately they represent similar events.

This is related to a question that affects some of the internal coherence of some of the published and performed plays, I think, just in terms of what they mean, like in *Small Craft Warnings*, for instance. It struck me, seeing

that play performed in the production here last night, that some of the sensibility of that play really is more evocative, I think, of the events that Williams based it on back in 1939 with *Laguna Beach*, or 1939, I guess, than it is of 1973 when he ended up setting the events. And so some of the details seem as though they might be coming from a different portion of his memory than others.

¶133 **Annette Saddik:** So he says, it's in the, what, 1972 interview? Where he says, "I have a play. It's called *And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens*." So you think it was written . . .

**Moschovakis:** Well, I think he mentioned it in that Rex Reed interview because he had recently gone back to it and put it together and tied up *most* of the loose ends, if not all, and presented it to someone as a complete script. So it was on his mind, and he had gone back to it, although it could have been with him for decades at that point. You know, somewhere where it couldn't be staged because it was about homosexual life and culture.

**Bray:** Any questions?

¶134 **Audience:** Yes—in *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review* you have a one-act version of *Iguana*?

**Bray:** Yes. Actually, it was one of the versions that came out of Spoleto. It was not the play that had actually been performed there, however.

**Audience:** . . . but around that time?

**Bray:** Yes.

**Keith:** Is it one of the one-acts published in *Esquire*?

**Bray:** No. It was published in the *Review* for the first time. Brian Parker and I edited it.

Other questions . . . yes . . . in the back.

¶135 **Audience:** [*Question inaudible.*]

**Bray:** It gets back to one of the things that I wanted to touch on in terms of the once "unprintable" subjects, which was a good question raised earlier: how do the exigencies of publishing and performance enforce a distinction between published and unpublished texts—in the treatment of, for instance, homosexuality?

**Kolin:** I think that's pretty much the case with some of the very late plays that were printed as limited press editions . . . *The Remarkable Rooming House*. But yet, a play called *Steps Must Be Gentle*, which, through the courtesy of Mr. Fred Todd, I got a chance to look at—this is a play from 1980 in which Williams had two characters, both from the other side of the grave, talking about their feelings for one another. One of them is Hart Crane, and his mother, Grace. This play needs to be connected with *I Rise in Flames Cried the Phoenix*, and then it needs to be connected with other Williams characters near to death, so it's leapfrogging. I particularly like Nick's point here about *Small Craft Warnings*—a play that I've done quite a bit of work on—linking it to an earlier time in Williams's life; he may have written a trilogy of the sea such as *Small Craft Warnings*, and *Something Cloudy*, and then maybe you link these in some way to *Glass Menagerie* where Tom

is the merchant sailor as kind of a prototype for Williams, the traveler. So the scripts suggest different patterns—cryptics, if you will—that might have some opportunity for critics.

¶136 **Keith:** I think, in terms of production of his plays, it was an issue. I think, in terms of the films, it was obviously an issue. But in terms of publication, I think it was harder probably in some ways to keep up with Williams, and I don't think subject matter greatly affected choices; and I think that if they had, we would have known about them—at least at New Directions. James Laughlin early on got money to get a business going from an aunt of his, and he turned down *The Tropic of Cancer* and *The Tropic of Capricorn* so as not to upset Aunt Leila, who would probably have cut him off. [Laughter.] If that were going to be the case with any Williams play or story, we'd all know about it—it'd be a story told over and over—and there's no such case that I know of. In a letter to James Laughlin he wrote something like “can you please make sure that they don't put it in the following bookstores around St. Louis”—with *One Arm* because he didn't want his mother to see it.

**Kolin:** Yes, it sold by subscription, I believe.

**Keith (laughing):** Right.

¶137 **Kolin:** Yes. But the point is that with some late plays such as *The Remarkable Rooming House of Mme. LeMonde*, I think there are only two people who have ever written on that play: one is myself, and the other one is my daughter who is a mental health authority. So I don't think that this play was ever intended for a mass audience or perhaps even for a production.

**Keith:** No, but I'm saying that it's such a massive amount of work, and it's kind of the answer to the guy's question way in the back there, that unpublished story that might be fantastic—we don't know where it is. I don't think everything has been found. I think the collections have to be completed assessed, and then there are all the things in private hands that show up every year.

¶138 **Bray:** That brings me to a point that I wanted to make: you know when New Directions was negotiating with Williams for a title for various volumes of his plays, it was suggested *The Collected Plays of Tennessee Williams*; and he said, no, that sounds posthumous. [Laughter.] So they settled, of course, on *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams*. And from what I've seen, it's virtually impossible to have a collected works of Tennessee Williams. Regardless of how persistent you are and how many lifetimes you have, you can never see everything that has been written; and just when you think you have, something else will pop up. For example, just because of the journal's website, this man sent me this thing called “A Playwright's Prayer,” and it's by Williams. It's been authenticated. I talked with Nancy Tischler, and we looked at the typescript, and so forth. And it's going to be published in *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*. And it's really very strange: it shows a contrite Williams, almost pious in talking about how he begs God to let him not interfere with the director's work once he turns the work over to the director. [Laughter.] So stay tuned, as there will always be “unseen” material popping up.

**Keith:** And I don't know when he had time to do anything between the journals and the correspondence and the drafts, and if he really couldn't think of what to do, he'd go start rewriting *Streetcar* or something. [Laughter.]

**Bray:** Other questions?

¶39 **Audience:** Did Williams talk about his intention in the way he arranged things?

**Moschovakis:** No, I haven't found any manuscripts, nor has David Roessel, and we were looking through the manuscripts for stuff concerning the poems. We haven't found any explanation of his rationale. But again, I think Laughlin had a very firm hand because there are lots of manuscripts at Austin which were submitted by Williams to Laughlin for publication as poems in the earlier part of his career that have a penciled . . . a big, penciled, handwritten NO, underlined a couple of times in Laughlin's writing. And so it's very easy to tell in those cases what was going on. Williams couldn't see an aesthetic difference between that poem and the other poem, and Laughlin did; and that's why the first one was published, and the second one wasn't.

**Keith:** But there's also correspondence that's extant where Williams will say, "I want to be sure to include those"—what do you call the section with songs and . . .

**Moschovakis:** The *Blue Mountain Ballads* . . .

**Keith:** The *Blue Mountain Ballads* . . . right . . . "Heavenly Grass" is in there and "The Kitchen Door Blues" and those things . . . making sure they were in there, and "The Summer Belvedere," which was the first section of poems he put together for *Five Young American Poets* . . .

**Bray:** Other questions? Yes.

¶40 **Audience:** What about gay characters in the late plays?

**Moschovakis:** Yes, we see some of that in that play that was recently published in the anthology entitled *Political Stages*, and they are very different, yeah. They're quite different. There are characters like them that showed up in some of the published stories, and the sensibility that he associates with the gay culture in the play is kind of like that that you can get from some of the poems that are written in a sort of homoerotic kind of voice. But, yes, they are different from the kinds of gay minor characters or offstage characters that you get in the major plays and in the published plays.

**Bray:** Any other questions?

¶41 **Audience:** How is it that he left so much material behind. . . did he fill trunks up and leave them at somebody's house, and then go on to the next trunk and fill that up, and . . .

**Keith:** Yes, he did that. In St. Louis, in New Orleans, in Key West.

**Moschovakis:** Well, in Key West there was a groundskeeper or something who stole material.

**Keith:** He'd drag them around just long enough, and he would be hanging out in New York again, and he'd say to somebody, here, do you want these six . . . whatever? [*Laughter.*]

**Audience:** He left his scripts behind?

**Keith:** All over the place. And different stories pop up, too. Not only the names, but the stories of how he left stuff or gave stuff away.

¶42 **Moschovakis:** The librarians at Austin have done a very good job—not a perfect job, yet, because that would be inhuman—but a very good job of trying to organize and put together different scripts that belong in the same files, for the most part, that—do you agree with me on that, all of you? At HRC do you find that you . . . that they’ve done a *pretty* good job?

**Hale:** Well, I have sort of a peeve about HRC. When they first got the material from Andreas Brown, they put it all on index cards, and then, as is the usual way when they improve things, they changed all that and put aside the index cards and made a finder’s list. And the index cards have much more material on them than the finder’s lists. So if you really want to know, say, the different titles of the play or different days or how many pages, that was all on the index cards, but now it’s very hard to get at.

¶43 **Bray:** By the way, the repositories that do have online access in terms of inventories are Austin, Columbia, Delaware, I think the Todd Collection is working on that in the future at some point. Does anyone . . .

**Hale:** What about Lincoln Center?

**Bray:** The Billy Rose Collection there? I don’t think so.

**Keith:** How about Harvard?

**Bray:** No—at least not the last time I checked.

**Moschovakis:** Harvard is making progress on the cataloguing but has not made it public yet.

**Bray:** They got their materials in 1983, and they were supposed to have it all catalogued by 1988.

¶44 **Keith:** Allean said something that makes me think of Andy Brown. You know, what’s he got that’s going to one day thrill everybody? Nobody knows.

**Hale:** Well, he still has some things, but you know he was the . . . he originally indexed those plays, not Drewey Gunn.

**Keith:** But he was also a collector, and he collected a lot of things that he was not required to hand over to Austin, and we have yet, I think, to find out about all that material.

¶45 **Kolin:** I’d like to respond to the question Joan had in the back about where are these scribblings kept, on cocktail napkins so forth. About five years ago, I went to Monroe, Louisiana and interviewed a man by the name of Speed Lampkin, who [*Bray laughs*] . . . yeah, you probably know Speed.

**Bray:** I know Speed. I grew up in Monroe, which is nothing to brag about. But Audrey Wood speculates in one of her letters that Speed might be the next Tennessee Williams.

**Kolin:** Speed was the subject of some notoriety in the early '50s, and in the '60s or '70s his house made the cover of *Architectural Digest*. Well, he had the honor of being a friend of Williams, and entertained Williams and the Reverend Dakin, for several days; and I interviewed Speed about this. And in the course of the interview, he said, "Well, yeah, I have letters from a lot of people." And he started to rattle off a whole list of individuals, and I said, "May I see them?" And he went upstairs, came back down, with a box about as big as Blanche DuBois's steamer trunk filled with letters. He said, "I'm sure there's some letters in here from Tennessee," and I never had an opportunity to reconnect with Speed to find out. Williams was a voluminous writer and wrote to everyone. What's still out there is only our guess.

¶146 **Bray:** Yes. Within the last few months, one of Williams's traveling companions, Victor, has been auctioning off a cache of his letters and journals. Dakin gave me a version of the poem "Shadow Wood" that was written on Japan Air Lines stationery. Dakin's comment was that "judging from the looseness of the script, it is entirely possible that Tom had taken full advantage of the airline's first-class amenities." [*Laughter.*]

¶147 **Audience:** . . . the gentleman from New Directions, are you going to be one of the legal entities that's involved with *Sweet Bird of Youth* coming from London to New York?

**Keith:** No, not at all. That will be all handled by the agent.

**Bray:** Other questions? Yes.

¶148 **Audience:** Is there scholarship that traces the development of major plays through different manuscript versions?

**Moschovakis:** Yes, Brian Parker's work would be the place to look with that because he's been tracing the connections among all these different mutations in a really valuable way.

**Kolin:** If you take a look at the Dramatist Play Service edition of *A Streetcar Named Desire* then take a look at the New Directions one, you don't have to get very far into the script to realize one has a sailor at the beginning, and one does not, and the list of variants goes on and on.

**Bray:** Any other questions? Thank you for coming.