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Problems with Boss Finley

Brian Parker



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After the huge success of *A Streetcar Named Desire* in 1947, Tennessee Williams decided to develop the left-wing tendencies of such earlier works as *Candles to the Sun*, *Fugitive Kind*, and *Not About Nightingales* by writing a play about the populist governor of Louisiana, Huey Long, who had been assassinated in 1935. Many reworkings under various titles—"Big Time Operators," "Brush Hangs Burning," "The Machine Exacts a Tribute," "A Horseshoe of Roses"—and the crucial intervention of director Elia Kazan finally developed into the Boss Finley sections of Williams's 1959 hit *Sweet Bird of Youth*. These sections, however, owed as much to Kazan as to Williams, and the playwright was never satisfied with them. When Williams revised the play in 1960–61 for publication by Dramatists Play Service, he cut most of the Finley sections out.¹

¶2

In its early stages, Williams's interest in Long waxed and waned. On November 18, 1948, he sent an enthusiastic letter to his agent, Audrey Wood:

Since I got here [Clayton, Missouri] I have been working on the average of six or eight hours a day. This evening even working on the graveyard shift! And have accomplished, I think, a good deal. It now looks as if "The Big Time Operators," which is the present title of play, might have a fairly complete first draft sometime this Spring, and I hope it won't take more than one re-writing. The story is not at all biographical but the material is drawn mostly from Huey Long, showing the main character in a mostly sympathetic light as a man very close to the people, fantastically uninhibited, essentially honest, but shackled with a corrupt machine and machine-boss. As a good half of the play deals with him as a young man (about 29, when first elected Governor)—though actually Long was a bit older than that—I am thinking now about Marlon Brando as in every respect but age the part fits him perfectly. [. . .] The girl's part is very young: something like Anne Jackson but with a bit more pathos and delicacy, though she is not at all the faded lily type of typical Williams heroine. And I think there is a good part in it for Sidney Greenstreet as the corrupt but suave boss.

The letter goes on to request that Wood's secretary find some reference books on Long and try to discover whether the governor's speeches are accessible. One research avenue, however, is off limits:

I have avoided, and will avoid reading, all *fiction* about Long [Robert Penn Warren's *All the King's Men* had won the Pulitzer Prize in 1946] as I don't want any unconscious coloration to creep into the play, and my character, Pere Polk, will be pretty much my own creation with just as much of the Kingfish [Huey Long's nickname, taken from the *Amos 'n' Andy* radio series] as I find theatrically enticing. For one thing he has plenty of sex-appeal, and that's what made me think of Brando for it. (*Letters* 2:212)

¶3

The following year, Warren's novel was made into a successful film. Perhaps not coincidentally, Williams turned his attentions elsewhere. In a letter to the Kazans, postmarked Rome, he claims to have lost interest in the project as early as the previous December:

I worked on a new play there [in Missouri], about a southern demagogue and with a social emphasis, which I thought I was seriously interested in and would push through to completion. But no sooner did I sail out of New York than my interest in it dissolved. I couldn't convince myself that I cared enough about the character and ideas involved to put any fire into the writing. (*Letters* 2:261)

A journal entry dated December 5, 1948, written on board the liner *Vulcania*, confirms the shift in plans:

I review the idea for the political play, that is the ghost of an idea and it doesn't seem very like me. It seems forced, outside my real sphere of interest and aptitude. So far I have not written anything—except certain scenes in *You Touched Me*—that did not come out of my heart, but this would be like those scenes that didn't, that is, most of it would. It is a big and important theme that doesn't really interest me very much: it gets too far away from my own experience. How could I hope to handle it and invest it, under those circumstances, with any vivid reality. . . . The trouble is that I am being bullied and intimidated by my own success and the fame that surrounds it and what people expect of me and their demands on me. They are forcing me out of my natural position as an artist so that I am in peril of ceasing to be an artist at all. (*Notebooks* 493)

This marks an important turning point in the playwright's political development. Williams would continue to distrust those in authority and to sympathize with the socially marginalized (hence his dossier with the FBI)—but as he would put it subsequently, his politics remained “those of the heart.”

¶4

A “Tentative Outline” and nine pages of the opening scene in pencil holograph survive for “Big Time Operators,” in addition to some later scattered fragments. The chief characters are the Huey Long figure, Pere Polk (Polk is the name of a Louisiana parish); Boss Finley, the cynical organizer of his party “machine”; and a fifteen-year-old Mexican whore called Candy. The Outline runs as follows:

1. Pere and the Boss and the arrival of Candy.
2. A lyric scene between Pere and Candy.
3. Candy's morning departure. Pere: I have had a rude shock. Do you know what a rude shock is? It's when somebody knocks the props out from under you. But now I have made up my mind. There's fifty-two cards in a deck and either I deal them out myself or else I don't play. Or else I don't play at all. Where did you say you was going? Candy: Miami. Pere: Why Miami? Candy: A girl in Miami can make a hundred a night. Pere: Ha ha. The Miami whores are big time operators. But there's bigger whores and bigger time operators than the ones at Miami. Candy goes. The mirror scene. The blowing up of the cat-walk.
4. Pere's retreat. The Boss and Pere and Pere's wife, ending with his triumph and decision to return on his own terms.
5. PART TWO. Pere vs. The Big Time Operators. Oil Corporation?
6. Impeachment proceedings.
7. Proceedings collapse: Pere compromises?
8. Candy. Strained relations. Radio scene. Tenor.
9. Candy alone. The party.
10. Pere's return.
11. Candy's pregnancy and abortion.
12. Candy's bleeding: removal to the hospital.
13. Pere's disgrace: the smash-up.
14. The flight of the Big Time Operators: the cat-walk is blown up again.

(Texas 47.4^[2])

¶5

It is worth noting that even this early, the majority of sequences deal with sexual relations rather than politics, a pattern that would recur as Williams continued to develop the material. Having no real understanding of (or, perhaps, interest in) Long's outrageous political maneuvering, Williams made the crux of Pere Polk's downfall his fatal passion for a juvenile hooker.

^{¶6} The holograph of the first scene shows promise. It takes place in a cabin on a key off the Gulf Coast that serves as Polk's rural retreat. Because dialogue begins *in medias res*, an earlier page (or pages) would likely have described the setting. Another Polk fragment entitled "Brush Hangs Burning" provides a good sense of the setting, at this stage of the play's development:

AS THE CURTAIN RISES the stage is lit only by a fire in a grate which is nearly burnt out. It still casts wavering shadows upon the walls and the beamed ceiling. Proximity to the sea is early established by various sounds: the chiming of a buoy at some distance, the slap and gurgle of an incoming tide, the crying of gulls, perhaps even a fog-horn. The details of the set have not yet become very clear to me, but it is a two-room set, with curtains hanging between: perhaps the curtains are a fisherman's net. Most of the decor of the set is marine. Along the backwall, extending across both sections, is a window that looks out upon the open gulf with a lighthouse in the middle distance whose beam regularly sweeps across when the window is uncurtained. (Delaware F68)

The crying of gulls and the intermittent lighthouse beam survive to *Sweet Bird of Youth*.

^{¶7} In the holograph Polk is up a ladder painting (in another draft, tacking up oil lamps) and talking to his manipulative henchman, Boss Finley:

BOSS: Oh, you have presidential aspirations.

PERE: Like to know why I shouldn't.

BOSS: You're a tad too—unconventional, Pere.

PERE: In what way?

BOSS: Just about every way.

PERE: You mean I'm common.

BOSS: Yes.

PERE: So are most other people.

BOSS: The powers that be wouldn't back yuh, Pere.

PERE: What are the powers that be?

BOSS: (*laughs*)

PERE: I always thought that the powers that be was the people, the common people.

BOSS: They's never been an uneducated man in the White House and there won't ever be.

PERE: I'm educated.

BOSS: How much educated?

PERE: I got a law degree in the record time of 8½ months.

BOSS: No, Pere, you'll never make it. Unless—

PERE: Did you say unless?

BOSS: Yes, I said unless.

PERE: Implying that under certain conditions I might?

BOSS: Say that you got to be Senator from this State.

PERE: Uh uh?

BOSS: That would put you into the National Arena.

PERE: Uh-uh. Hand me that bottle again. Have one?

BOSS: Thanks.

PERE: My balls are itching—Spring!

BOSS: Ha ha!

PERE: Yes, sir—Spring—um hm . . .

BOSS: As I was saying . . . that—being Senator—would put you in the national arena.

PERE: The national arena?

BOSS: Yes, the *national*—arena . . .

PERE: Uh-huh. How's it look, smooth, to you?

BOSS: Very smooth.

PERE: I wonder if I got crabs?

BOSS: Ha ha.

PERE: So that would put me in the national . . .

BOSS: Yes, sir, Pere. Being a State Senator would put you into the national arena.

PERE: Well, that's what I'm going to be, Boss, I'm going to be State Senator in 1932.

BOSS: How're things between you and your wife [?]

PERE: Not so good. Not so good.

BOSS: What's the matter?

PERE: I married a cold woman.

BOSS: That's a mighty serious mistake to make.

PERE: You're telling me. Hand me that—

BOSS: What?

PERE: Other can paint. Watch out you don't getcha—thanks.

BOSS: Yes. It's a mighty—

PERE: Serious mistake[,] that's right. A man ought to—a man ought to—Now would you mind passing me that bottle[?] Thanks. Have one yourself.

BOSS: Thanks.

PERE: You know a man ought to try out a woman first before he gets married but it ain't always possible to, and this was a fine lookin' woman.

BOSS: You going to break up [?]

PERE: Nope. I don't expect to.

BOSS: Why not?

PERE: Two kids. One eight and one five. She's a good woman, I guess we just—didn't like each other. She makes a good generous wife. Might even make a good first lady of the land someday.

BOSS: Could be. It's in the realm of possibility, Pere.

PERE: Now I got to get washed. I'm expecting a girl.

BOSS: What girl?

PERE: Don't know.

BOSS: Don't know what girl you're expecting?³

PERE: Naw, I called up the Dog House.

BOSS: What's the Dog House [?]

PERE: A cat house.

BOSS: I see.

PERE: Alice Reagan's. I told her I wanted a girl on the key tonight so she's sending one over.

BOSS: That's what I mean about you. Being too unconventional, Pere.

PERE: I'm not unconventional, Boss. I'm just human. And sexy. Boss, don't you like sex?

BOSS: I have outgrown that, Pere.

PERE: You ain't outgrown it[,] Boss. You never outgrow that. But sometimes it outgrows you. They say that a man has only got a certain number of (fucks) [sic] in him and each one is numbered. And when he uses them up, he's through.—Is that what happened to you[?]

BOSS: *(laughs uncomfortably)*

PERE: Well, when that happens to me. . .

BOSS: What?

PERE: When that happens to Pere—Pere is gonna put the butt [sic] of a pistol right between his eyebrows and push the trigger! Ha ha *Haaa!*

BOSS: O.K., you'll change your mind about that when that day comes.

PERE: No, I won't.

BOSS: If you were President?

PERE: Well, if I was President—*(Stares off dreamily)* < If I was President I would make this country a country where every man was a king!>⁴

BOSS: Pere?

PERE: Excuse me. I'm going to the bathroom. *(Pause)* Go on talking. <I can hear you.>

BOSS: I'll wait'll you git through.

PERE: Naw, go right on. I can hear you.

BOSS: Did you marry a rich woman, Pere [?]

PERE: Shit, no. I married a school teacher.

BOSS: How much're you worth [?]

PERE: Y'know what the Governor's salary is[,] don't you?

BOSS: Is that all you're worth [?]

PERE: I'm worth a hell of a lot more'n that, but that's all I got.

BOSS: Well, Pere—

PERE: Keep right on talking.

BOSS: There's lots of money to be made by a man in your position[,] and I'm telling you right now you might as well make it as anyone else.

PERE: Honest money?

BOSS: What money is honest money, and what money isn't?

PERE: I see what you mean. I get you. Sure, I know all about the policy racket racket [sic]. The numbers. The slot machines and all that. And the money to be got out of bootleggers is a considerable sum, I know, but that is your department, not mine. You put me in office, Boss Finley. And I'm grateful to you. I expect to show you

my gratitude to you [sic]. (*Flushes toilet. Appears with towel*) But I don't expect to dirty my hands with none of your racketeering.

(*A long count*)

BOSS: I don't know whether it's the words or the tone of that speech that I object to.

PERE: You can object to 'em both but that don't alter my determination to keep my own hands clean. It ain't that I'm being noble. I am as down to earth and as ornery as the next guy. But I don't think there's been but one crook in the White House and *he* wasn't even a 100% crook, was he [?]*—*just a guy that*—*played ball with the big time operators.*—*Well, I ain't*—*because I aim to set someday in the White House.

BOSS: You'll sit on your ass, on your dead ass, Pere, with an attitude like that one. I came out here to offer you a half a million dollars with no strings to it. Where did I put my hat[?]

PERE: Here.

BOSS: Thank you and goodnight.

PERE: Hurry back*—*sometime later.

(*Motorboat comes up. Stops outside. PERE climbs back up ladder and fills an oil lamp. GIRL [CANDY] enters as BOSS starts to the door. She looks almost like a child.*)

CANDY: (*Uncertainly, to BOSS*)*—*Hello.

BOSS: (*Coldly*) Good evening, young lady. [*Exit.*]⁵

CANDY: What's the matter?

(*PERE laughs from top of ladder. She gasps with surprise. He turns the lamp up.*)

CANDY: Oh! You scared me. I didn't see you up there.

PERE: Who're you?

CANDY: Candy.

PERE: Candy?

CANDY: Uh uh.

PERE: What's a kid like you doing in a cat house?

CANDY: I'm going.

PERE: Why?

CANDY: You hurt my feelings.

PERE: Hey!*—*Candy.

CANDY: Well?

PERE: Come here.

CANDY: Say please.

PERE: Please!

CANDY: Say*—pretty* please!

PERE: Shit!

CANDY: That's not pretty please.

PERE: Go on back to Alice and tell her not to send me no more jail bait. I want a real grown up woman with long hair and silk stockings on her.

CANDY: Call the boat then.

PERE: You can go back on the cat walk. If you watch your step. It's only a half mile to shore and the boat won't come for an hour.

CANDY: You're in a hurry to get rid of me.

PERE: Yeah. You tempt me—jail bait. (*Hands her a bill.*)

CANDY: Okay. I'll go back. [*Exit*]

(He is at the phone.)

PERE: Get me the Dog House.— Alice? What was the idea of—

(A scream and a splash)

(*He tears off his pants and runs out*)

(Texas 47.4)

In later fragments, the Boss assures Pere's unpleasant wife—who cares only for her “sissy” son and seems to reflect Cornelius Williams's indictments of Edwina—that Candy provides a “string” with which to manipulate the governor.

¶8 There are obvious parallels between this presentation of Polk and the real-life Huey Long. A “messiah of the rednecks” (Schlesinger) with a Baptist preacher's rhetoric and fiery, vote-winning stump speeches, Long became the youngest governor in Louisiana history and, later, a senator with aspirations to the White House. With no secondary education, he became a lawyer after only eight and a half months' study—in Huey's case, as a non-credit student at Tulane, via a special oral bar exam. In his portrayal of Polk, Williams uses, and then crosses out, the Long slogan “Every Man a King”—itself taken from William Jennings Bryan's “Cross of Gold” speech and used as a campaign song and the title of Long's autobiography. (Stanley Kowalski would later echo the phrase in *A Streetcar Named Desire*). Polk is closely connected to racketeers, as Long was to the New York mobster Frank Costello. Later fragmentary drafts add further details reminiscent of Long: a narrow escape from impeachment; armed body guards who double as hit men; collusions with gangsters and Texas oil executives; and the innovative use of radio, sound trucks, and a Dixie band to attract and influence voters.

¶9 Other details, however, seem more likely to derive from the career of Huey's younger brother, Earl, who was governor of Louisiana when Williams was living in New Orleans. Though Huey did have a young mistress—his “secretary” Alice Lee Grosjean, whom he met when she was eighteen and installed in hotel suites in Baton Rouge and New Orleans—Alice was nothing like the naïve Candy: she claimed aristocratic antecedents and became Louisiana's secretary of state. It was Earl Long, not his brother, who was notorious for cavorting with strippers and common prostitutes, including the celebrated Blaze Starr (who scandalized Baton Rouge by turning up at his funeral). One of Earl's paramours was actually called “Candy” Kane. It was Earl, moreover, who “wasn't even house-broke” (Peoples 445) and urinated in public (he had a bladder problem); Earl who was involved in the New Deal's Home Owners Loan Corporation that Finley is accused of bilking;⁶ and Earl who kept a famous rural retreat, the “Pea Farm.”

¶10 Although both Longs used segregationist language, neither was racist. In fact, each did his utmost to ensure that African Americans shared in Louisiana's social progress, and Earl—described ironically by A. J. Liebling of *The New Yorker* as “the only effective Civil Rights man in the South” (233)—was temporarily institutionalized for doing so. The racism of Boss Finley in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, which is even more rancid in the drafts, derives not from either of the Longs but from later opposition to the Civil Rights movement. In this regard, Boss Finley recalls Earl Long's opponents, not Earl himself.

¶11

However, the Long brothers were certainly morally ambiguous—particularly the brilliant, charismatic, and Machiavellian Huey. They were responsible for a great deal of reform legislation—in transport, education, health, and insurance for the poor—but their methods were protofascist, subverting the law whenever it suited them. “I *am* the Constitution,” proclaimed Huey (Kane 64), paraphrasing Louis XIV of France; his “Bureau of Criminal Investigation” was virtually a private army, through which he governed by intimidation. When Huey announced his intention to run for president in 1934, Franklin D. Roosevelt called him one of the two most dangerous men in America (the other being General Douglas MacArthur). The more Williams read about the Longs, the more he would have been confronted with their sinister side.

¶12 Williams’s first solution, obviously, was to divide the good side represented by Pere Polk from the bad side represented by Boss Finley. In one untitled draft (Texas 47.4), under the influence of an idealistic speechwriter (whom the Boss condemns as “a Jew Boy carpetbagger with red ideas”), Pere admits that the state political machine has corrupted him, and he decides to run again on a reformist ticket without it (saying, “rut the machine . . . wash me white”). Ignoring a throat illness, he leaves for the impoverished hill country of his most fervent supporters with a cavalcade of sound trucks and a band playing “Auld Lang Syne.” Meanwhile, back in the suite in which she has been installed as his mistress, Candy dreams that Pere has left her and springs out of bed; Boss Finley savagely concurs: “The dream is true, girl. He’s *gone*.”

¶13 In “Brush Hangs Burning” (Delaware F68), a one-act whose title refers to irate citizens burning a straw effigy of the governor on the statehouse steps, Williams tries to combine the two sides of Huey Long in a protagonist with the composite name “Pere Finley.” Like the opening of “Big Time Operators,” this fragment takes place in Pere’s hideaway cabin on the Gulf. Pere and Candy quarrel because of his recent impotence, caused, he claims, by “anxiety neurosis” about her sexual demands; as Candy storms out, naked under his Christmas gift of a fur coat, Pere’s idealistic speechwriter arrives. Following a gap, the manuscript resumes with Pere arguing with Doc (the former “Boss” figure) about the reformist speeches that have been written for him—and wondering how far his anxiety about that “little blonde-headed girl in a pink negligée” has undermined his efficiency as governor. The conversation is interrupted by a radio announcement that a warrant has just been issued for Pere’s arrest. Doc orders the boardwalk to the shore to be blown up (as in “Big Time Operators”) and exits through a trapdoor to escape by boat. After cowering on his great pink bed and ordering his servant to fly pink lingerie from the roof as a sign of defiance,^[7] and echoing T. S. Eliot, Pere asks, wryly, who said that the world would end not with a bang but a whimper—and makes his own ignominious retreat through the trapdoor.

¶14 What Williams tries to develop in a blizzard of draft fragments that follow (bewildering even by his own chaotic standards) is a combination of sequences in which the Huey Long figure, increasingly called Boss Finley, is caught between an Eastern speechwriter, Otto, who believes him to be a “Lincoln manqué,” and the dishonest machine politician, Doc. In the pink bedroom sequences, where he has installed his mistress (and where the Boss tries to conduct business with gangsters and Texas oilmen or to argue with Otto or Doc), intermittent phone calls from his chauffeur keep him informed about the progress of his mistress’s escape with her boxer-lover, Phil Beam^[8]—which sometimes Boss gets into the newspapers for pursuing. The Boss, in other words, is shown in these pre-Kazan drafts succumbing to the triple disasters of jilting by his mistress, legal attacks, and an increasingly painful throat cancer—the stench of which has alienated his mistress further, and in several fragments results in his sudden death from hemorrhage. Williams’s attitude to the character has become progressively more negative.

¶15 The Boss Finley character in *Sweet Bird* is very different, of course: still contradictory, but much simpler. Kazan, not Williams, pieced together draft material to construct the initial version of act 2 of *Sweet Bird* (Parker). Williams was accustomed to have his plots accumulate slowly from many rewritings, not to match a scenario that had already been laid out. The Finley that Kazan confronted him with is a vicious yet successful politician. Updated to the Civil Rights period, he is no longer in love with his middle-aged mistress, Miss Lucy, whom he treats with indifferent brutality; fiscal chicanery has given place to a racism lacking in the earlier, Long-inspired versions. Williams tried to convey his disgust with this character in drafts showing Finley's relish in the castration of Chance Wayne; his vicious riding of "the racial hate horse"; his plan to marry his daughter Heavenly off to a much older business crony; and his bragging of having to take Heavenly's fair-skinned mother sexually by force because she "wasn't warm-blooded like I was." But, as Brenda Murphy documents (152–53), by the New York opening all such denigrations of Boss Finley had been removed by Kazan, whose director's *Notebook* for the play shows a surprising sympathy for the character. Defensive about all heterodoxy since he himself named names to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), Kazan stresses Finley's "sincerity" both as a political "MARTYR and HERO" and as a father whose love is "deeply, truly emotional: he takes easily to tears." Kazan suggests that Miss Lucy should still be attracted to the Boss "because he is BIG, GENEROUS, FUN, DARING. And in most regions, honest" (Parker). While Williams's view of the character had grown steadily darker, Kazan seems to have stayed with the original Pere Polk concept and envisaged Finley as a crude and ruthless but essentially honest and life-affirming figure like Big Daddy in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. He wanted the audience to have some sympathy for Finley.

¶16 Williams, however, now found such an attitude totally antipathetic. As he explained in an interview for *Theatre Arts*:

I have to understand the characters in my play in order to write about them because if I just hate them I can't write about them. That's why Boss Finley wasn't right in *Sweet Bird of Youth*, because I just didn't like the guy, and I just had to make a *tour de force* of his part in the play. . . . The only thing I cannot—I can understand maybe—but, no, I don't even understand that kind of self-infatuated, self-blindness and cruelty, you know, such as he—Finley—personified. (Funke and Booth, rpt. in Devlin 103)

¶17 Williams's original attraction to the "fantastically uninhibited" and "essentially honest" populism of Huey Long had become twisted hopelessly out of shape—and in the playwright's opinion, this development had ruined the play. Yet, paradoxically, when Williams radically reduced the Finley sections in his 1962 Dramatists Play Service revision, act 2 worked even less well than before. Sensibly, it was the original New Directions script that Williams included in volume 4 of his collected *Theatre of Tennessee Williams* (1972) and approved for the next major stage revival in 1975. Unfortunately, that text fails to capture the full effect of Kazan's theatricalism, the "tricks" the director said were necessary to rescue Williams's script.⁹

¶18 On the page, without Kazan's bravura staging, the character of Boss Finley remains morally and dramatically problematic. He is neither Kazan's "sincere" statesman and caring father, nor the hateful political and domestic bully that Williams had come to consider him. Or, rather, he is both. It is a disagreement that goes right back to the enigma posed for Tennessee Williams by Huey Long himself.¹⁰

Notes

¹ *Sweet Bird of Youth* was first published in the journal *Esquire* (April 1957), then by New Directions Press in 1959; the latter version was reprinted in volume 4 of the *Theatre of Tennessee Williams* (1972). The heavily revised text for Dramatists Play Service was published in 1962 but has never established itself theatrically.

² This is the most comprehensive of several similar outlines scattered among the multiple drafts.

³ Three lines of dialogue are omitted here that Williams has rephrased but not deleted.

⁴ Pointed brackets mark a phrase that has been crossed out in the ms.

⁵ A fragment of a related draft in the same file at Texas has this description of Boss Finley:

Out of a mysterious region of watery sounds and glimmers the figure of *Boss Finley* approaches the building and comes into the play. He stops for a few moments beneath the murky lantern that hangs at the island end of the cat-walk that connects with the shore. We see a great heavy-jowled man who thinks and speaks and moves with the singleness of purpose of a man who is out to sell or buy something at the best price and is not involved in cloudier speculations.

⁶ Several fragments accuse Pere Polk/Boss Finley of embezzling half a million dollars from the Home Owners Corporation, but Williams does not specify (and probably did not understand) how this might have been done. There were, in fact, two specifically half-million dollar scandals during Earl Long's governorship, but both of these were to do with crooked bond issues (one for the State University, the other for the levees) and concerned his supporters, not himself (Field 277–78). Williams shows no real evidence of understanding (or wishing to understand) the jambalaya of Louisiana politics.

⁷ One of the sources for *Sweet Bird* is a playlet about a kept woman entitled *The Pink Bedroom*. This began as a short story when Williams was a student at the University of Missouri at Columbia in 1931, and went through many transformations thereafter.

⁸ “Phil Beam” is one of the earlier names of the Chance Wayne character in *Sweet Bird*. It derives from a high school classmate of Williams's in St. Louis.

⁹ Kazan's staging is not adequately represented in the New Directions text but survives in mss. at the Morgan Library and Columbia University. These seem to have been prepared for Dramatists Play Service from the stage manager's copy, as was usual, but were not printed presumably because Williams wanted to prepare a revision for DPS to publish later.

¹⁰ Research for this paper was funded by fellowships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Andrew Mellon Foundation through the HRHRC of the University of Texas at Austin. I should like to thank my research assistants Anny Vexler and Lenore Morra for patience with difficult handwriting.

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