

A PRODUCTION BOOK FOR
THE WITHERED BRANCH

by

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MASTER OF ARTS

Department of Speech

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1967

Approved by:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Wallace D. ...", written over a horizontal line.

Major Professor

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE I

The Program

THE K-STATE PLAYERS AND THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH

present

Thesis Productions

Two Original One-act Plays

THE WITHERED BRANCH

by Frank Naccarato
directed by the author

HALF-A-COIN, HALF-A-MAN

by Mike McCarthy
directed by the author

Technical Direction by Daryl M. Wedwick

Purple Masque Experimental Theatre

8:00 p. m.

December 14, 15, 16, and 17

These plays were written in the Playwriting Course offered by the Speech Department.

Two Original One-act Plays

THE WITHERED BRANCH

Cast

Jim Dan Pierce
Alex Dennis Russell
Lico Gene Harris
Brack Bill Albright
Edith Leanna Lenhart
Dolly Barbara Filbert
Janita Wanda Black

Time: the late 1940's
Place: a ranch home in Southern
California

Literary Advisor. . Anita Pominguez

HALF-A-COIN, HALF-A-MAN

Cast

Timmy Leonard Lyle Hildenbrand
Jerry Mulligan Henry Vleck
John Daly Bill Henry
Larry O'Toole John Jagger
Maggie O'Toole Carolyn Lee
First Dice Player Frank Atkinson
Second Dice Player Mark A. Stueve
Sam O'Flynn Rex Garrelts
The Skipper Bill Kammer
Ronald Stark John DeWalker
Paddy O'Rourke Frank Siegle
First Sailor Larry Cornwell
Second Sailor Steve Knight
Officer Sullivan George Macy
First Prostitute Melinda Hrabe
Second Prostitute Barbara Mistler

Time: the late 1930's
Place: a bar in San Francisco

Literary Advisor. Marcus McInerney
Choreographer P. K. Duncan

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Manager Alice Sheik
Asst. Manager Rita Deyoe
Scenery Tech. Production
Class
Lighting Mary Berg, Mary
Horton
Sound Michele Clark
Makeup Glenda Apt, Karen
Comerford
Costumes Lydia Aseneta, Dedee
Miller
Properties Joni Johnson, Pat
Nicholson
Poster Design Denton Smith
Publicity Doug Van Wickler,
Jamie Acken
Business Manager Susan Peters
House Manager Bill Blackwell

THEATRE STAFF FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH

Head Norma Bunton
Director Dennis Denning
Associate Director Wallace Dace
Technical Director Carl Hinrichs
Costumes Betty Cleary
Wardrobe Lydia Aseneta
Shop Foreman Leanna Lenhart

These plays were written in the Playwriting Course offered by the Speech Department.

INTRODUCTION

This production book of The Withered Branch describes the development and writing of this original one-act play, the theory underlying its development, and the culmination of these efforts in an actual production presented to the public at Kansas State University in Manhattan, Kansas, in December, 1966. The production was sponsored as a Master's Thesis Production by the theatre area of the Department of Speech, and by the student organization, the K-State Players.

The Withered Branch was written and directed by this writer under the guidance of Dr. Wallace Dace, whose careful assistance through both the writing and production was invaluable. The technical crews were directed by Daryl M. Wedwick, to whom this writer owes a debt of gratitude for his efforts in designing and executing a set for an original play.

The following chapters will include a discussion of the theory of tragedy from Aristotle to the present, a short chapter on melodrama, a comparison of The Withered Branch with Riders to the Sea, by J. M. Synge, in relation to tragedy and melodrama, and a description of the writing and production of The Withered Branch with all production materials recorded. These discussions of the writing and the production of The Withered Branch are intended as a description of the author's efforts at playwriting and directing, because such a description should be valuable not only to those who might choose to

direct this play, but also to any beginning writer or director. It is not intended that this book serve as a handbook of rules, but rather as a record of one person's approach to playwriting and directing.

The Problem

The Withered Branch presents a problem of interpretation because it is a one-act play with some tragic overtones. Therefore, before a director could begin his interpretation, he would have to understand what constitutes a tragedy. This in itself is a monumental task. Since Aristotle first wrote his Poetics, what is and is not tragedy has been debated. It is the awareness of this problem of definition, not a definition as such, that is important here. Each person in defining tragedy takes a certain set of premises and then uses the literature of drama to prove his point of view.

A second aspect of the problem is the question of whether or not a play in the modern one-act form can even be any kind of tragedy. It is for this reason that a comparison is drawn between Riders to the Sea and The Withered Branch. Riders to the Sea is often referred to as the greatest and possibly the only one-act tragedy.¹ Therefore, by comparing these two one-acts and using them to test the various viewpoints on tragedy and melodrama, a conclusion may be drawn about the possibilities

¹Edward J. O'Brien, editor, Riders to the Sea, p. vi.

and existence of modern one-act tragedy.

The final area of interest is the effect of this knowledge of dramatic form on the writer's creative effort. It is often stated that playwriting cannot be taught, but a human being creates from his own knowledge gained through either personal or vicarious experience. A knowledge, therefore, of the form and meaning of drama would have a direct bearing on the writer's creative process. The same, of course, could be said of the director who takes a script and applies his knowledge to it in the form of a stage production.

Therefore, a restatement of the problem is this. In order to write and direct, a knowledge of dramatic form is essential. What, therefore, is the dramatic form of The Withered Branch as demonstrated by its production?

Purpose

This production book is intended to be a record of a production thesis which involved both the writing and directing of the play, The Withered Branch. It is, therefore, pointed out that the opinions expressed here are those of the author-director except where credit is given to other sources. This paper is an attempt to present those influences on the playwright and director which led him to the decisions made in connection with the writing and production of the play. Theory is presented first, because it is in theory that the germination of the play begins. From there the description

proceeds until the play ends in production. The production cannot be placed between these pages, but a description of the production, as it was viewed by the audience, is as adequately recorded as is possible. The specific purposes of this production book are: first, to record the influences of dramatic form on playmaking, using The Withered Branch as a specific case; second, to compare The Withered Branch with Riders to the Sea in relation to tragedy and melodrama; third, to decide the dramatic form of the original play; fourth, to describe the writing and eventual production; and finally, to provide a recorded account of playmaking and experimental production that may serve others who would write or direct.

Procedure

This production book has a natural division. The first part is a description of the creative process involved in writing and directing. The first half is divided into sections. Section One deals with understanding the nature of tragedy and the problems involved with classification of dramatic literature. Section Two concerns the nature of melodrama and its relationship to tragedy. Section Three is a comparison of The Withered Branch with Riders to the Sea and their relationship to the material discussed in the previous sections. Section Four is a description of the play starting with its background and ending with its production.

Part Two of this production book describes the production as the audiences saw it. Included are descriptions of characters, costumes, makeup, the set, properties, sound effects and lighting cues, because of their direct influence on the production. The major criteria for these theatrical elements involved here was appropriateness. A prompt script is included. The stage directions are almost entirely different from the original text. Cue sheets, photographs, sketches, and charts, including rehearsal and performance data are also included as part of this record as visual evidence of the production. This production book, then, is an attempt to describe both the creative and practical processes involved in production.

Tragedy

What tragedy is and is not has been debated ever since Aristotle first formulated his definition of it. It is not the purpose of the writer to debate the accuracy of this definition or of any other one. Rather this is intended as a presentation of the various major opinions of what tragedy is supposed to be. It is generally admitted that there are two main types of Tragic Drama--Classical and Romantic, which is sometimes called Modern or Domestic.² Classical tragedy is based primarily on Aristotle's definition:

²C. E. Vaughan, Types of Tragic Drama, p. 2

Tragedy, then is an imitation of an action that is serious and complete and has sufficient size, in language that is made sweet, and with each of the kinds of sweet language separately in the various parts of the tragedy, presented by those who act and not by narrative, exciting pity and fear, bringing about the catharsis of such emotions.³

Thus Aristotle states in due logical order what he thinks tragedy is and represents, the form it employs, the manner in which it is communicated, and lastly the function which it fulfills.

Aristotle says that the imitation of the action is the plot of tragedy. The means of this imitation are rhythm, melody, and metrical language. He also says that there are two causes of dramatic actions, character and thought.⁴ Serious can be defined initially as that which matters as opposed to that which is superficial, transitory, but its connotations have both narrowed and expanded throughout literary history.⁵

Then comes the phrase, "complete and has sufficient size," which is defined as that which has a beginning, a middle and an end. In reading the Poetics, one discovers that he means simply a beginning which has nothing before it necessarily, an ending which doesn't have anything following necessarily, and a middle bordered by a beginning and ending. He says that tragedy should be, "of a certain length," but the limit is

³Allan H. Gilbert, Literary Criticism, pp. 75-6.

⁴Ibid., p. 76.

⁵T. R. Henn, The Harvest of Tragedy, p. 2.

fixed by the nature of the drama itself. "The greater the length, the more beautiful will the piece be by reason of its size, provided that the whole be perspicuous."⁶ It must be of a size that permits a hero to pass from good fortune to bad fortune or from bad fortune to good fortune.⁷

Then he states that it should be expressed, "in language that is made sweet and with each of the kinds of sweet language separately in the various parts of the tragedy." This is usually understood to mean language having rhythm, harmony, and melody and by separately, he means there should be some parts spoken in meters alone and others where melody is employed.⁸

It is acted, not narrated, because tragedy must give a broad and deep account of the individual, and, at least by inference, his fellows, in which neither man's problems nor his ability to cope with them is belittled.⁹ Therefore, a chorus could not present the interaction of individuals nor could it take on the tragic stature of the individual. This tragic stature must be assumed because at the heart of tragedy is a struggle in which the victory of either side is credible. That the doom of the hero is inevitable is an irony that could not be presented through narration and could only be done through the acting individual.¹⁰

⁶Ibid., p. 3

⁷Gilbert, op. cit., p. 80.

⁸Ibid., p. 76.

⁹Eric Bentley, The Playwright as Thinker, p. 28.

¹⁰Loc. cit.

"Exciting pity and fear," immediately brings up the question: evoke pity and fear of what? Pity and fear are aroused by presentation to an audience of terrible and pitiable happenings to a man, a human, who is drawn as superior, but is still like other men. It is tragic enough if it stirs us to the extremes of pity and alarm.¹¹ Our alarm it would appear is the over-shadowing of death. The ultimate source of tragedy is indeed the simple fact that man must die. But it must be noted that death is not necessary to a tragedy. This is demonstrated by the tragedy of Oedipus. He dies in Oedipus at Colonus, but in the first part of the trilogy, Oedipus Rex, he does not die and this play is considered a tragedy in itself.

In tragedy it would appear that it is the woman's part to be the supreme evoker of pity. It is because of her love for a man or her children or both, that she is to be pitied, for it is her very role as a woman that is material for tragedy.¹²

The purgation of emotions, which is called the catharsis by Aristotle, is supposed to be a removing of those things which cause us to have pity and fear. Aristotle says that it is the spectacle which arouses pity and fear. It would seem then that it is a diminishing or removal of the spectacle that causes an end to the pity and fear. It is beyond the scope of this paper to attempt a complete explanation of catharsis.

¹¹W. Macneile Dixon, Tragedy, p. 101.

¹²Henn, op. cit., p. 120.

Aristotle says that, "tragedy should represent better men."¹³ However, these superior men are no greater than any other men in that they also are still subject to death and have the same inability to comprehend the metaphysical elements around them. This metaphysical element is to be found in tragedy in the relation between the mind of man and his incomprehensible cosmos.¹⁴ The result of this metaphysical approach makes the hero in tragedy at once great and small. From one point of view, in the integrity of his spirit and in his unequal battle against infinite forces, he arouses a feeling of wonder, admiration, and awe; from another, precisely because he is contrasted with the infinite and because we see his inability to cope with the problems confronting him, he appears incredibly minute.¹⁵ The hero of tragedy is a person of strong and compelling personality whom one can respect and admire, but according to Aristotle this character has a hamartia. This is interpreted as a tragic error. In fact, Aristotle says that error forms the most effective tragic plot. By this tragic error, however, he did not imply the narrow moralistic interpretation that later critics were happy to give it; the word he used means merely a mistake, not necessarily a sin.¹⁶

¹³Herbert J. Muller, The Spirit of Tragedy, p. 6.

¹⁴William G. McCollum, Tragedy, p. 20.

¹⁵Allardyce Nicoll, The Theatre and Dramatic Theory, p. 106.

¹⁶Muller, op. cit., p. 9.

In Classical tragedy the tragic hero must contend with the cosmos or fate. This appears to be fundamental to the differences between Classical and Romantic tragedy, at least as it is presented by a review of the literature on the subject.

In Romantic tragedy the stress is on the inner dynamics of man's destiny rather than fate. The personages belong to no royal lineage or noble rank; they are plain, everyday folk, such as are held to be unfit subjects for tragedy according to the classical rules. Rather than royalty or royal families, the themes circumscribe the concerns of a single family, centering around the primary causes of domestic dissension, such as infidelity, jealousy, revenge, selfishness, boredom, and poverty.¹⁷ Just as Greek tragedy is a reflection of the Greeks' relationship to their world, so modern tragedy or man-centered tragedy is a reflection of modern social problems.

After the passing of royalty from the scene and the assertion of the individual rights of man, a new tragedy was created, the tragedy of modern life. The modern tragic spirit reflects the truth of the human condition or tragedy of error.¹⁸ Greek tragedy presents sudden and complete disaster or one disaster linked to another in linear fashion while modern tragedy presents the complex, menacing spread of ruin caused by human actions; to the Greeks it was a breakdown of divine law, while to the modern writer of tragedy it is an evil quality which,

¹⁷Robert Metcalf Smith, Types of Domestic Tragedy, p. 1.

¹⁸Charles I. Glicksberg, The Tragic Vision, p. 12.

once it has broken loose, will feed on itself and on anything else that it can find until it reaches its natural end.¹⁹ Aristotle is singularly silent about this type of evil in his discussion of tragedy, but this idea of evil is the essence of modern tragedy.

Where do we get the concept that modern man has evil in him? This idea of evil in man is not a tenet of all Christian religions, but it is a basic belief of the general Christian culture. It is noted that the tragedy discussed here is that which has been passed to us from the Greeks through Western philosophy and culture. Aristotle himself did not presume to legislate on tragedy for all times and places. He spoke modestly about tragic art as he knew it had developed up to his time in Greece.

There have been "flowerings" of tragedy such as in the time of the Greeks, Shakespeare, and Ibsen. But if a date be established for the removal of royal families and the placing of the common family at the heart of tragedy, this date would have to be somewhere in the last half of the nineteenth century. It was the rise of huge fortunes and Capitalism's power, notwithstanding the takeover of nations by the common people and the tide of Nationalism that changed the basis of tragedy even though Christianity was established long before.²⁰

¹⁹H. D. Kitto, Form and Meaning in Drama, p. 337.

²⁰Robert W. Corrigan, Theatre in the Twentieth Century, p. 220.

By 1880 and the time of Ibsen, the Classical Idea of fate was completely replaced by social problems. The mores of society dictate Nora and Hedda's tragedies, just as syphilis does in Ghosts. Ghosts is Ibsen's effort to substitute the modern scientific concept of heredity for the Greek idea of Fate. But there is more to the play than merely a study in degenerative heredity; it is an attack upon society and the standards by which it lives. Ibsen explicitly says, in his notes, that these standards, such as the idea that a woman could not leave her husband and remain respectable, were responsible for the tragedy of Mrs. Alving.

It seems that the modern sense of fate may be just as strong as the Greeks. Modern man is no longer sure that he is the free master of his fate and ruler of the sciences and techniques which he practices. A keener awareness of recent psychology has made us readier to admit that there is another kind of fatality, no less implacable, at work within men, made up of evil biological, psycho-physiological or hereditary forces.²¹

Is it possible to have modern tragedy? The point is that, if one defines tragedy as Aristotle envisioned it, then this standard determines whether a play is or is not a tragedy. If, however, one accepts the notion, which was also mentioned by Aristotle, that all serious playwriting ends in tragedy, then

²¹Cleanth Brooks, Tragic Themes in Western Literature, p. 77.

it would seem that any serious play is a type of tragedy. The major distinction between Classical and Modern tragedy, however, that appears through a review of the criticism in the area, is the factor of fate as opposed to man-made destiny.

It appears that other parts of Classical tragedy have somewhere been duplicated in modern tragedy. On the other hand, it seems that all the things pointed out as being characteristic of modern tragedy can be found in the Greek form also. Even the great differences that so many cling to in their definitions of fate, as the basis of Classical or Modern tragedy, can be generalized by the following: Tragedy is that form of drama which seeks to penetrate as far as possible the mystery of existence, and to reveal the sources of human action.²² But as originally stated, the purpose of this paper is not to judge what is or is not tragedy, but simply to present the different viewpoints. It should be easy to see that there is no eternal idea of tragedy existing independently of the works of men, but only a host of works that men have called tragedies. Neither is there a typical tragedy--not even a typical Greek tragedy.²³

²²Charles Whitmore, The Supernatural in Tragedy, p. 355.

²³Muller, op. cit., p. 10.

Melodrama

Melodrama is a theatre term, the meaning of which has repeatedly changed. In the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries it meant drama interspersed with music, but since that time it has taken on different meanings. It is often defined as drama that intensifies emotion and passions and cares little about cause and effect.

Action! Thrills! Suspense! These are the stuff of melodrama. Character counts for very little or nothing; action is everything. Usually the hero of melodrama conquers obstacles which can only be surmounted by supermen or by the blessed intervention of chance.²⁴ By chance is meant little relationship between cause and effects. Also in a melodrama transitions are faulty or entirely lacking. Conflict is overemphasized. The lack of good transition is what produces the melodrama.²⁵ Suddenly we are moved from one emotional conflict to another without good cause.

The faults of melodrama are obvious. Credulity is stretched to the breaking point. Characters are reduced to types that have no reality: paragons of manly vigor, feminine charm, and cunning treachery.²⁶ Although melodrama makes no claim to be anything more than a passing form of entertainment,

²⁴Russell Thomas, Plays and the Theatre, p. 727.

²⁵Lajos Egri, The Art of Dramatic Writing, p. 255.

²⁶Thomas, op. cit., p. 148.

many of the later melodramas of the stage, such as those of Galsworthy and Pinero, show a moderation both in plot and diction. Today, however, heart-throbbing has been turned over to the movies and television soap-operas.

Melodrama is often discussed in relation to tragedy because melodrama is considered Tragedy's poor relation. Melodrama may have a sad or happy ending. It is distinguished from tragedy by a portrayal of characters who are all very violently and improbably good or evil, much more than is realistic, by a lack of real psychological insight, by a more far-fetched plot whose horrors and sensations may easily tumble over into the ludicrous, and by a continual pandering to the public desire for strong sensations and great excitement. Melodrama may also fall into sentimentality when an attempt is made to portray a tender or lofty emotion.²⁷ Melodrama is far more sensational than tragedy, less serious, and it can attain its effects by spectacle, while tragedy deals mainly with character and more importantly a close consideration of motive.²⁸ The way characters are drawn and the sense of inevitability are two of the more important aspects of drama which differentiate between tragedy and melodrama.²⁹

In distinguishing between tragedy and melodrama we should remember that the plot of a great tragedy may be highly

²⁷Marjorie Boulton, The Anatomy of Drama, p. 148.

²⁸Ashley H. Thorndike, Tragedy, p. 3.

²⁹Henn, op. cit., p. 34.

sensational--all those of Shakespeare are--but that unlike the plot of melodrama, tragedy will have a certain air of psychological probability.³⁰ It is this probability that will be discussed in the following section, because melodrama is that type of drama stressing a succession of improbable incidents.

Comparison

It has been said that the only difference between the long and short play is the magnitude of the action presented.³¹ It is this magnitude of the one-act that is to be considered here. There are some who say that a one-act cannot have a great magnitude. It is for this reason that The Withered Branch is to be compared with Riders to the Sea. Both are one-acts and both seem to have some tragic magnitude. It is not assumed, however, that The Withered Branch is as accomplished as Riders to the Sea; therefore, the discussion will serve only as a comparison to the views of tragedy and melodrama as presented in the first two sections.

A statement of the proposition is this. It is possible to have tragedy in the dramatic writing of today and it is possible to have modern one-act tragedy within this new dimension of tragedy. The most logical method for beginning

³⁰Boulton, op. cit., p. 149.

³¹Thomas Dickinson, Playwrights of the New American Theatre, p. 270.

such an investigation would be through a comparison of the two plays to Aristotle's definition of tragedy.

"Tragedy," Aristotle says, "is an imitation of an action." The concentrated action of Riders to the Sea is extraordinary. With absolutely no forcing of the effect, we receive a terrifying impression of the might of the sea, a remorseless power which has seized one member of the family after another. The sea is the center of the action which is magnified into an elemental force which takes on the attributes of the supernatural.³² The action stems from the sea which takes one son after another. There is a necessary end to the action when Maurya's last son is taken.

In The Withered Branch, the action stems from Edith. It is her inordinate, almost incestuous, love for her father and son that eventually eats away at all around her and then returns to destroy her in final madness. Her madness is the necessary end to her incestuous love.

The one-act play offers an opportunity for the development of a single unbroken action. However, the one-act form is limited to the simplest action. There is a time factor in the one-act form that forces the writer to compress the action within narrow limits.

The drama is made serious not by the degree in which it is taken up with the problems that are serious in themselves, but

³²Whitmore, op. cit., p. 314.

by the degree in which it affects us as tragic.³³ In both plays the problems are serious, but also, it must be pointed out that they are given a serious treatment. If the seriousness be considered in relation to its effect on the audience, it seems that Edith's problem would be just as identifiable with the audience as Maurya's problem is in Riders to the Sea. Today, people are as affected by the unknown powers inside of them as much as the Greeks were affected by the unknown power of nature around them.

Both of these plays are complete in themselves because they both have a necessary beginning, middle and end. The constraint of logic upon the imagination of the playwright extends always to the mechanical features of the plot. In Riders to the Sea, Bartley is starting out on a journey. This is a good place to begin a play because it gives the writer an opportunity to tell about past journeys, where sons have been lost and to foreshadow the approaching doom. It is not necessary that the audience know any more.

In The Withered Branch, the play begins at the end of dinner. It is not necessary that the audience know what they have just been eating. Starting here also provides opportunity for foreshadowing in their after-dinner conversations. It seems important that the audience learn about the past in exposition, but, of course, all the past cannot be shown on

³³John M. Synge, The Tinker's Wedding and Other Plays, p. ix.

the stage. Yet to make a play plausible, it must begin at a point where the audience doesn't need to know what has immediately preceded the beginning.

The ending, after which nothing must necessarily follow, is essential according to Aristotle. This does not mean that nothing else can happen or does happen. It simply means that the action begun is now ended. Bartley completes his journey in his death; the sea has taken the last of Maurya's children. The pity and terror of it all brings a great peace after the storm which has bowed down every character. It is this timeless peace in Maurya, who defeats the sea because it cannot take any more of her children, that makes for a good tragic ending. We need go no further in knowledge of Maurya's loneliness. She will be lonely until death takes her because it is her lot to be so, but of course this is also her greatness.³⁴

In The Withered Branch, the evil which Edith has set loose turns on her and destroys her. In her complete loss of everything she fought to hang on to and her insanity, the action is ended. But she also takes on stature because in her insanity the evil is destroyed and can no longer touch her and this is a suitable ending of the action. Whether or not it is tragic will be discussed later.

Aristotle said that tragedy must be, "complete and have sufficient size." What this length is has never been decided.

³⁴O'Brien, op. cit., p. 10.

Criticism of The Withered Branch stemmed mainly around its swift movement. It was stated in the review of the show that appeared in The Collegian, that the time elapsed on the stage was not enough in which to portray tragic emotions or sentiments. This is then a structural defect in the play. It apparently is not, "of a certain length." However, Riders to the Sea, which is called a tragedy, has this same problem of swiftness of movement. This structural defect keeps its action from succeeding also. For in its half hour's occupation of the stage we are asked to suppose that Bartley should be knocked over into the sea, and washed out where there is a great surf on the white rocks, and in this short time, his body recovered, and brought back again, even though, Bartley himself allows for half an hour to ride down to the sea.³⁵ This unreality is an undeniable difficulty in both plays and obviously stems from the form. The one-act does not seem able to show the whole tragic hero and only seems able to touch on tragedy.³⁶

Synge's Riders to the Sea has with some justice helped to foster the conviction that in poetic prose the modern dramatist has found the proper solution to the difficulties which stand in the way of making verse appear plausible on the modern stage.³⁷ There is obviously no poetic prose or verse in

³⁵p. P. Howe, J. M. Synge, A Critical Study, p. 58.
³⁶Rolan B. Lewis, Contemporary One-Act Plays, p. 4.
³⁷Moody E. Prior, Language of Tragedy, p. 309.

The Withered Branch. Nevertheless, artistic success is contingent on the relationship between diction poetically conceived and ordered and the dramatic character of the work.³⁸ The Greek poets used verse because to them it seemed appropriate. Aristotle does not say verse, he says language made sweet and this sweetness, whether it be music, poetry, or prose, must be appropriate to the tragic spirit involved.

Riders to the Sea excites both pity and fear, but here it is pity and fear for the common lot. In The Withered Branch pity and fear are excited for the individual. In Riders to the Sea, though, it is everyone on the island. More so, than fear, it is a feeling of pity that dominates both of these plays. It is the epitome of pity that is the archetype of all good tragedy.³⁹

Is there a purgation or catharsis in either of these plays? In Riders to the Sea, the answer is yes because Maurya wins her battle. The sea can no longer take her children. In her complete defeat there is victory. For Edith the answer is not so simple because her insanity is a type of victory over the evil web she had spun, but the audience is led to believe that there is relief and escape in her insanity, which is in itself, frightening. Therefore, probably, the audience is not purged of their fear.

Since neither of these plays lives up to all of Aristotle's definition, especially The Withered Branch, is it possible that

³⁸Ibid., p. 15.

³⁹Howe, op. cit., p. 57.

they should be classified as melodramas? In Riders to the Sea, there is little left to chance; the transitions are smooth and the conflict has not been over-emphasized. The constant pressure of the sea and its crushing of the mere humans is overwhelming. We are not moved rapidly from one emotional conflict to another. We are set on a steady course of cause and effect in which only one conflict exists and this is the battle with the sea for Maurya's sons. We also see none of the unbelievable heroes of melodrama or the emotionalism and burst of glory at the end. Riders to the Sea is far from melodrama.

The Withered Branch is also not melodrama. The evil of Edith's misplaced love for her father and then her son becomes a force that cannot be stopped from destroying them. Are there emotional peaks? Yes, of course there are, which all drive toward the climax. Are we left with a burst of emotion? Possibly, but it seems more likely that we are left silently contemplating Edith. This play is sentimental, but it does not soak the audience in sentimentality. The characters are not more violently or improbably good or evil than is realistic, they do not lack a real psychological insight because the plot is not a far-fetched one that may fall easily into the ludicrous. There is also anything but strong sensations and great excitement. Yes, there are elements of melodrama in The Withered Branch and one of the larger weaknesses is the fact that the central theme is incest.

Great tragedy, it is frequently claimed with some show of justice, has departed with the advance of modern life and its complicated tangle of interests and creature comforts. The Aran Islands, where Synge gained his inspiration, were then still close to the elemental forces, those primal emotions, naked to the wind and sky.⁴⁰ More than most of the great tragedies, this tragedy is localized to the place where it is the life of a young man to be going to the sea. On Synge's second visit to the Aran Islands, he had the experience out of which came what many believe to be his greatest play. The story was told him of a man whose body had been washed up on the far away coast of Donegal and who in due course was recognized to be an Irishman.⁴¹ From this he constructed his play, which employs the sea as his supernatural fate for these people. Synge's play suffers from its one-act form, but it does live up to the definition of tragedy by Aristotle. Unlike most classical tragic heroes, it is the group represented by Maurya, not the individual, who is tragic in Riders to the Sea. There is a chorus, poetic prose, and steady action in Riders to the Sea.

If it is accepted that tragedy, to be tragedy, must have a supernatural fate involved, then The Withered Branch could not possibly be considered tragic. It is a play which refuses to admit a supernatural influence. However, if there is

⁴⁰O'Brien, op. cit., p. viii.

⁴¹Synge, op. cit., p. vii.

another kind of tragedy, be it called Romantic or Modern tragedy, then The Withered Branch, with all its imperfections can be at least called an imperfect tragedy of modern life or a domestic tragedy.

The most poignant tragedy of human life is the work of human blindness--the tragedy of errors--an intellectual mistake and no more. "For it is the perpetual tragic irony of life that men again and again do laboriously contrive their own annihilation."⁴² There are those who believe that the deepest tragedy is not when men are struck down by the blow of chance or fate like Maurya in Riders to the Sea, nor when they are destroyed by their enemies; but when their destruction is the work of those who wish them well, or of their own unwitting hands.⁴³

If this line of thought is acceptable, then is not The Withered Branch a one-act domestic tragedy even though it is flawed? Most of the plays to which the term tragedy has been attached at various times fail to reach the summit, yet, even when we recognize that properly the term itself must specifically belong to the greater works of this kind, there is some justification for extending its use to apply more widely to numerous dramas, which, although they cannot wholly satisfy, aim at conjuring up the tragic experience.⁴⁴

⁴²F. L. Lucas, Tragedy, p. 112.

⁴³Ibid., p. 113.

⁴⁴Nicoll, op. cit., p. 96.

The Creative Process

Despite analysis, praise or blame, the work of the play will always remain outside instruction or criticism. All that one may do in preparation for writing a play is learn how to tell a story in good dramatic form, how to develop it in such a way as best to seize and retain the interest of an audience. This all involves learning the art of structure.⁴⁵ The following is not intended as a guide on how to write a play. Instead it is designed to be a record of how one beginning writer wrote his first play and then directed it.

Perhaps a few things should be noted about playwriting in general before discussing the writing of The Withered Branch. In English the suffix -wright means maker, as in shipwright or wheelwright; hence a playwright is not a "playwriter" but a playmaker. He works not just with words, but with other tools.⁴⁶

The author of a play, in unfolding his plot and developing his characters is also under a strict time restriction which does not hamper a novelist. He must also be aware of the physical environment that can be provided by the theatre he is writing for. Artists are free, but free to choose their own sort of bondage. But to say something effectively in the

⁴⁵William Archer, Playmaking, p. 7.

⁴⁶Alan S. Downer, The Art of the Play, p. 11.

theatre one needs two things: substance, and the means to express it. In our transitional theatre the dramatists are like the architects, the scene designers, and the directors; they are all in search of forms, of methods of transportation, of style.⁴⁷

This is strange because it seems that as soon as a form is developed it disappears. The Greek theatre, with its god-like heroes, spare structure and lyric chorus, wore out its inspiration in less than eighty years; Elizabethan theatre took less than fifty-five. The point is that a time comes when every dramatic style and model disintegrates and disappears.⁴⁸

It is possible that the destruction of our theatre today will be caused by the modern playwright, who has come to assume that if he explains his characters he has written a play. He often forgets that a dramatic situation requires not that we should understand a character, but simply that we should believe in him. Dramatic action always leads to a judgement--good theatre requires that something happen to and through the characters.⁴⁹ Aristotle maintained that action, not character, is the basic ingredient of drama, and that "character comes in as a subsidiary to the actions."⁵⁰

⁴⁷Michele St. Denis, Theatre, the Rediscovery of Style, p. 11.

⁴⁸Walter Kerr, How Not to Write a Play, p. 15.

⁴⁹Corrigan, op. cit., p. 19.

⁵⁰John H. Lawson, Theory and Technique of Playwriting and Screenwriting, p. 4.

Probably the first question that enters the mind of a beginning writer is, "What shall I write about?" Some begin by rewriting older plays, others take novels or short stories and make them into plays. The Bible often is a good source, or sometimes even an old saying or proverb will provide the inspiration. The sources of playwriting are many, but there is no greater satisfaction than in writing an "original" story line. By original, I mean a new treatment of a situation. Almost everyone agrees that there are only so many basic plots, depending on the method of classification. There is little disagreement, however, among teachers of playwriting that beginning playwrights should write about the things which they know best.⁵¹ Even so, it has been said, "that the themes that arrive when one is seeking for them are liable to be false ones, of one's own devising. The only theme worth having is the one that comes and insists on being written."⁵²

Every writer of plays is faced with the fact that there are no rules for playwriting. Perhaps there is consolation in that no playwright, however great his contribution to literature, has failed at some time to commit instructive blunders. The very greatest of them have occasionally been careless, or dazed by their nearness to their work.⁵³

⁵¹Roger M. Busfield, The Playwright's Art, p. 61.

⁵²Druten, op. cit., p. 20.

⁵³Percival Wilde, The Craftsmanship of the One-Act Play, p. 6.

When I began to work I was faced with the realization that a person must write a play only, "if he is unhappy not writing it; that once decided, he must turn away from books of theory and write the play, rewrite it, rewrite it again, suffer to have it produced and after suffering through its production, suffer to write another."⁵⁴ With these words in mind I begin my description of the creative process of my first play, an experience recorded for the benefit of others who would begin.

Since my fourth birthday, my family has traveled every other summer to California. My mother's side of the family had moved there during the coal depression caused by the advent of cheap gas and electric heating. Southeastern Kansas lost much of its population during this time. Those who left were mostly immigrant families, who had settled in Kansas only for work in the mines. Our family stayed in Kansas, but the rest moved to Hollister, California, a town about one hundred miles south of San Francisco, in the heart of the apricot growing country. The land and climate were much like the Italy they had left many years before, so they stayed.

So it was for my mother's sake that every two years our family vacation was spent in California. My mother's family was a large one which provided me with many aunts and uncles. One of these uncles bought a small apricot ranch and my happiest

⁵⁴Mary Hyde, Playwriting for Elizabethans, p. 19.

vacations were spent helping to harvest the crop. It was here that I became acquainted with the Mexican people and their traditions. I soon learned the hated terms gringo and wetback. From the wetbacks who worked on the ranch I learned much about their wandering lives and how they followed the harvest in their broken-down cars and old trailers. The poorer ones walked and slept under the trees at night.

The summer before I entered high school, I stayed for the entire summer and became very well acquainted with the ranches and the problems of the area. My junior year in high school my parents allowed me to stay home and work that year. So I missed out on the activities of our relatives in California for four years. It was during this time that another uncle decided to go into apricot ranching. So my uncle Jim mortgaged his small ranch and they went into partnership on one of the largest ranches in the area.

Meanwhile, I had entered college and had decided to be a Speech and Drama teacher. I trained in acting and directing and became more familiar with dramatic literature. When I returned to California, after my junior year in college, I found a very tense situation that threatened to split my family in two. I did not stay at the ranch that summer because my parents were afraid that I would side with one uncle or another and provide further agitation. Needless to say, the partnership had failed. One uncle was a fanatically hard worker, the

other was used to city living. I returned to college in Kansas with a very bitter taste in my mouth.

I received a B.A. in theatre in June of 1965 and it was time again for a trip to the west coast. My family spent two weeks there and near the end of the last week, I decided to stay. I didn't stay or work on the ranch that summer because the embers of the family feud were still hot. I worked in a clothing store and made friends in the town. I was always embarrassed when the feud was mentioned, for in the small town everyone knew the story, or at least they thought that they did.

One day, a friend and I went over to the Santa Cruz Beach. As we lay in the sun, the subject of the feud came up. Jokingly, he said, that since I was a drama major that I should write a play about it. I laughed and agreed saying that I would never write a play. But the idea did intrigue me for a while; however, I soon forgot it in the haste of preparation to begin my graduate work at Kansas State University in the fall.

The first semester at K-State, I was buried deep in problems of adjustment to the big school. It took a semester to straighten me out, but before I knew it, I was enrolling for the second semester and there on my enrollment card was a course called--Playwriting. The first few days in class we discussed the mechanics of playwriting such as self-discipline concerning time. Dr. Dace, the professor in the class, began the course

with the words, "I can't teach you to write a play, because it can't be taught. I can only help you with the mechanics of writing it." He advised that we all begin with an idea. I tried and tried to think of something, but nothing came to me. Then one day the words of my friend back on the beach came back to me. I decided to write a play about an apricot ranch with wetbacks and an old Spanish flavor, but in the modern setting that I had lived in.

I presented my idea in the form of a paragraph. Dr. Dace said that he found the idea interesting. He invited me to write a scenario and then to judge whether or not I could write a play on the subject. That scenario practically ruined the next two months of my life. I had to know how to write one first, so I looked it up and we discussed it in class. A good scenario begins with a list of the characters, that is, a statement of time and place if they are important, and of the settings for all the acts. Also a rough floor plan should be included, as well as a description of the scenes.⁵⁵ Included here is a reproduction of one of my early scenarios (see form I).

I soon learned that the cardinal principle in scenario writing, as in the play itself, is that action, not talk, is basic. In a scenario, however, this action is described rather than represented.⁵⁶ It seems strange as I reflect on my

⁵⁵George Pierce Baker, Dramatic Technique, p. 427.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 449.

EXPLANATION OF FORM I

A First Scenario

The Scenario Form

SET:

The set is an interior. Along the stage right wall there is first a picture window and then a typing desk near the corner. From right to left along the up stage wall there is a door leading to the outside, then a fireplace flanked by bookcases. Before the fireplace is a bear rug with a swivel chair next to it facing the fireplace, then there is another upstage door leading to the kitchen. Coming down along the stage left wall there is first a staircase and then a built-in bar. Stage left before the picture window is a divan-desk combination, back to back with the divan facing toward stage center. The desk has a swivel chair with it.

CHARACTERS:

Jim---about 48, husband to Edith, father to Alex, slightly balding with grey hair, his face is sun splotched and he has bad color, he has a heart condition. Dressed in work clothes and later casuals.

Edith---about 45, Jim's wife, black hair with streaks of grey, she is frail looking but in reality strong willed and sinewy, she is Brack's older sister.

Brack---about 35, younger brother to Edith and lover to Dolly. Dressed in work clothes.

Dolly---about 32, a high class slut, flashy dressing and seductive.

Alex---about 19, son to Jim and Edith, loves Juanita, dressed in work clothes.

Juanita Dominguez---17, a pretty Mexican girl, housekeeper-maid to the DeRoses and daughter to Lico Dominguez.

AT THE CURTAIN: It is late afternoon

In the opening scene Juanita is cleaning around the fireplace. Edith walks in from the kitchen and announces that she is off to do some shopping for supper. She asks Juanita if she will try and keep Jim out of his scotch when he comes in from the orchard. Juanita says that she doubts if she can stop him. Edith smiles and says she knows, but it never hurts to try. She goes over to the coat rack and takes a scarf and sweater and goes out. Juanita gets out a sweeper and starts cleaning the large bear rug.

When Alex comes in she is turned with her back to the entrance. Alex tip-toes up behind her and pokes her in the ribs and lets out a large growl like a bear. Juanita, scared, drops the sweeper and lets out with a little yelp. Alex puts his arms around her and pulls her to him and kisses her. He starts working her over toward the divan, but she runs behind the desk-divan combo saying that someone might come in.. Alex says that she isn't fooling him. He saw his mother's car leaving and that his dad and Uncle Brack are having an argument out in the orchard over her dad, Lico Dominguez.

Juanita wants to know what they are arguing about. Alex says that it is nothing and that his dad is on her father's side. Juanita is no longer concerned with the others, but she tells Alex that with everybody gone she will have to be even more careful with him and she moves further away from him. Like a cat after a mouse, he follows her around until he catches her arm. He kisses her and she responds, but suddenly she turns cold and places her hands on his chest and pushes him away. She looks at him. He wants to know what is wrong. She turns away and asks him if he loves her. He says of course he does, she knows that he does. She whirls around and glares at him. Then why do we hide and you won't tell anyone I am your girl she says. Alex says that she knows that

he does love her and that it is his father that wants him to go to school in the fall and that he keeps telling him to wait until he is older. She says that she isn't talking about marriage. All she wants to know is why he won't let anyone know that they belong to each other. He slowly turns away and says it is because of his father. She asks him what he means. He says that his father has always drilled it into him not to have anything to do with the Mexican girls. Juanita gets angry and asks him if he feels the same way. He says he doesn't but what can he do. She tells him he should stand on his own two feet and be a man instead of a boy. Isn't he old enough to make his own decisions yet?

Alex flares at being called a little boy. She continues to berate him until he is so mad that he impulsively says that if she doesn't think that he is man enough for her then she had better forget him. She starts to cry. But if he is, he goes on, then if she wants him bad enough they can drive across the line into Mexico and get married. Juanita takes it as a tease and laughs at him. Alex goes over to the desk and grabs a pen and paper declaring that he will show her that he is a man. He says he will leave a note so they won't worry but up on his bed so that they won't find it until it is too late to stop them. She still doesn't believe him. He doesn't care if she does or not he will show her and he runs upstairs.

Juanita starts putting the cleaning things away still not quite believing him. Alex comes back down the stairs with his shaving kit. He stops and looks at her. They stare at each other for a second. Her expression goes from disbelief to excitement. Alex goes to her and tells her they had better get going if they are going to go by her house and get away before Lico comes home. They exit.

Jim and Brack come in the right upstage door just a few seconds after Alex and Juanita exit. Jim wonders where they could be going at supper time. Brack says that Alex is probably just taking her home. Jim says he thinks Alex is seeing to much of her. Jim goes to the desk and sits in the swivel chair behind it. Brack goes over to the fireplace and stands before it kicking at the burnt coals. Brack wants to know why Jim stood up for Lico out in the orchard. Jim says because he thought Lico was right. Brack says that Jim knows it would be just as accurate to pay the pickers by the box rather than the bucket.

Jim says he knows, but it has always been done that way. Brack says, "But aren't I the boss out in the orchard. Isn't that what we agreed after your heart attack and the doc said you weren't supposed to go out in the orchard and work." Jim says yes, but that Brack knows that only one person can have the authority and that since Brack and Edith's father gave the ranch to him to run for them as long as he is able to, he has the final say. Jim reminds him that old Gabe gave him the ranch to until he felt that Brack was ready to take over. Brack says that Jim is crazy. And that Jim knows that he is old enough to run the ranch and doesn't Jim think he could do a better job since Jim can't work as hard any more. Jim sarcastically reminds Brack that as long as he is chasing after the skirts of that two-bit-slut Dolly, he won't have the ranch.

Brack protests saying that Dolly is his business and that the ranch is half his. Jim says only half the income as long as he is in control. Brack says yeh and that it isn't half of very much the way Jim runs it. "You overpay everybody and especially that no good lazy Dominguez. Why do you give him so much? He isn't worth it." Jim says, "I see you have been snooping around the books again haven't you?"

"What do you mean snooping," Brack spits back, "this place is half mine and you know it. Jim reminds him not according to his dad's will. In the midst of Brack's sputtering rage there is a loud knock. During this argument Jim has worked his way over to the bar and has taken down his scotch bottle and has had a drink or two. Brack answers the door. It is Dolly. Jim and Dolly exchange curt greetings reflecting obvious dislike for each other and Jim declares that he is going to wash up and then lay down for awhile.

Dolly goes over and flops down on the divan. Brack wants to know why she came out to the ranch. She says that she is lonely. Ever since the apricot cutting season started he never comes into town. Brack tells her that he is sorry and he offers her a drink. He asks her if she wants bourbon or scotch, or just her usual cold beer. She says she doesn't care for a beer and she can't stand scotch, so he had better make it a highball. Brack says he can't stand scotch either and that they only keep it around for Jim to guzzle.

Dolly asks him why he never comes in. He says he has been wanting to but he is dead tired at the end of the day and sometimes they even work at night under lights in the cutting shed when there has been a hot day and a lot of apricots have ripened. Dolly wants to know what she is supposed to do all summer, just work in her old man's beer joint? She doesn't like playing second fiddle to an apricot ranch. Why doesn't he get rid of it and move into town. Brack says he can't get rid of it because of Jim. She says that she thought that he owned part of the ranch. Brack says he is supposed to but she knows what a mess his old man made of the will, but if he could get rid of Jim before Alex can take over he might be able to get the whole damn thing. Dolly tells him it is a nice dream, but she doesn't live on dreams. Jim is going to live a long time and Alex will be old enough to take over the ranch.

Brack reminds her of Jim's heart attack. She laughs and says that lots of men have had bad hearts and lived for years. Look at his foreman old Lico Dominguez, he had a heart attack ten years ago after his wife died and he works all the time and goes out on the town too. Brack says, "yes, I know: and on my money too. Sixties, did you say he was in his sixties? What is he doing with a daughter as young as Juanita? How old was his wife? Dolly says that she was only a couple of years younger, but not for Brack to get all excited. Lico never had any children of his own. He wasn't able to or something like that. It is common knowledge that he found the baby. "Found the baby," says Brack, "thats ridiculous." Maybe so, Dolly replies, but that is what everybody says. I thought that everybody knew it. It must have happened while you were in the army right after high school.

Brack says that he never realized that Lico was that old. In his sixties and Jim pays him so damn much. Suddenly something strikes Brack. He remembers something he saw in Jim's desk while he was snooping around and he rushes over to the desk and pulls out a little book. Dolly wants to know what it is. Brack says that it is the bank book to the ranch's account in Old Mexico and that he had noticed that someone had been drawing miscellaneous checks on it for as far back as the book goes which is almost five years. Dolly wants to know what he is talking about. He starts going through the desk frantically until he finds the old account books. By now Dolly is getting bored.

Brack comes around the desk with three more of the little books which he is quickly scanning. Dolly says she is leaving if he doesn't quit his messing around with those damn little books. Brack pulls her to her feet and tells her that she doesn't realize what she helped him find.

This is all he has needed. He can't get his hands on any of the ranch because of his dad's will. Jim can't even sell it or give it away while he is alive, but the will can't cover Jim's will. He can will the ranch away. I've known this for a long time, but I had no way of making Jim give me the ranch. Dolly tells him that he is living in dreams again. Brack says that he isn't dreaming, he has been thinking about this for a long time, but he couldn't figure out how to get Jim to sign the ranch over. Dolly still doesn't know what he means. He tells her never mind and for her to take off and get herself all powdered up, because if things go as he wants them to they will soon be in clover.

Dolly laughs at this and Brack heads her for the door. She warns him not to be late and exits. Brack goes over to the bar and digs out a large can from under the bar. He opens it and funnels some of the dark powder into what has been established as Jim's scotch. Just as he gets the lid on the can, Edith, carrying package, comes in the front door. Brack is somewhat startled by her appearance and stiffens up. Edith sees the can and wants to know what Brack needs the arsenic for. Brack says that he has noticed a lot of rats around the drying area and that they were eating a lot of the apricots. She tells him to be careful where he puts it because of the wetback's kids.

Brack says he will and that he will tell Lico to warn all the worker's families who are camping in the orchard. Edith sees Jim's scotch out on the bar and goes over to it remarking that Jim must be nipping at it already and places it back in its usual place. She then hollers up the stairs for Jim and Alex to get cleaned up and come on downstairs because supper will be ready in a little while. She tells Brack to get cleaned up too. He says he will.

Edith also tells him to put the rat poison away before someone gets into it. She then exits into the kitchen.

Brack hurries over to the bar and places the can back under the bar. Jim comes down the stairs and starts toward the desk. Before he gets there Brack fires the following at him; "Going to check the Mexican account." Jim stops dead and asks him what he means. Brack says he thinks Jim should check the Mexican account. Jim flares and tells him he knows what is in the Mexican account and will Brack kindly keep his nose out of his desk. Jim goes to the bar and grabs his bottle of scotch and a glass. Brack tells him that he drinks to much for someone with a bad heart. Jim tells him to mind his own business. Brack becomes calmer and goes to the bar and fixes himself a drink. He casually asks Jim what he thinks of old Lico having a daughter like Juanita and him in his late sixties.

Jim wants to know what Brack is talking about. Brack repeats it. Now Jim wants to know what Brack is driving at. Brack says that he just thinks that it is curious that Jim should be paying Lico so much money, Juanita should be so young and that for seventeen years someone has been taking money out of the ranch's Mexican account. Jim, who is by now drinking heavily, goes to the swivel chair and turns it around to face Brack, sits, and after a pause says, "So you know." Brack, who really doesn't know the whole story, says, "yes!"

Jim takes another heavy swallow of the scotch. Brack somewhat frantically tells him not to hit it so hard. Edith comes in and startles them both. She asks where Alex is? Brack says that he is probably sacked out upstairs. Edith, who can't see Jim's face twisted with pain or the scotch bottle in his hand, tells them to go on in and she will go up and get Alex.

As soon as she is gone, Brack says, "Edith doesn't know does she?" Jim tells him of course she doesn't and she mustn't find out. Brack says she should know. Jim who is in pain and drinking heavily looks at him coldly and asks him what he wants. Brack says coldly as he is writing at the desk, "I know that you can't give me the ranch as long as you live because of dad's will, but all you have to do is agree that I get the place after you and I promise to share it with Alex like you have with me. For my part of the bargain I will keep my mouth shut. (crossing) Here it is, all you have to do is to sign it. Jim has a convulsion and utters a low moan. Edith comes down the stairs, her eyes are glued to the note, she doesn't look up until she hears her name.

Jim moans, "Oh my God, I can't stand the pain Edith must never know, Brack, promise me Edith will never know that Juanita is Alex's half-sister. Help me Brack, I'm burning alive." Brack putting the pen in his hand says sign this, sign this. I told you not to drink so much so fast. Edith who was stunned for a second by the revelation comes down to Jim and pushes Brack away. Jim, Jim she wails. He shudders, constricts and then is quiet. Brack, who has picked up the paper Edith dropped suddenly starts laughing. "So he didn't sign the ranch over. He just drank himself to sleep. (He laughs some more) and Alex has gone off to marry his sister. Isn't that the last laugh and Alex married to his own sister."

Edith, in her sobs tells him to get out, to get out of her sight. Brack says she can't tell him that, the ranch is his now as much as hers and besides don't they have to plan a celebration for Alex and his Mexican-sister-bride. Edith turns to him. She has stopped crying now. She Shouts, "Yes, Yes, Alex is going to bring home his bride and your not going to be here, I know what have done and your not going to be here are you Brack." She stares at him until he turns toward the door. She turns back to Jim.
CURTAIN

original scenario and see how much it changed. In the end, the play I wrote was removed entirely from the original idea. In the first scenario the place was the cutting shed and there were different characters entirely, even though the names were the same. The son was only using the Mexican girl and he even had designs on his Aunt Dolly. Edith and Jim were much weaker characters. It was not until the last draft of the scenario that Edith became the central figure.

Now I realize, that when I was constructing my plot, I used Aristotle's rules and I was strongly influenced by my liking for the work of Tennessee Williams. The reason for the strong influence of the Poetics stemmed from the fact that I had spent most of the semester previous to writing the play studying them. In constructing the plot I kept well in mind Aristotle's often-quoted paradox to the effect that, in drama, the probable impossible is to be preferred to the improbable possible.⁵⁷ This was what I strived for in my plot. I aimed not so much at concrete probability, but more for plausibility. It is not always clearly recognized that chance and coincidence are by no means the same thing. Coincidence is a special and complex form of chance. Chance is a falling-out like that of a die from a dice box; and coincidence signifies one falling-out on top of another, the concurrent happening of two or more chances which resemble or somehow fit into each other.⁵⁸

⁵⁷Archer, op. cit., p. 275.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 285.

This was what I was trying to do in the plot of The Withered Branch. In fact the structure became almost too tight. The concurrent happenings of chance were the arrival of Dolly and Brack, the discovery of Juanita's pregnancy and the discovery of the diseased trees. All three were chance. It was not their happening at the same time, but their interrelationship which made them highly plausible. These occurrences do not, as demonstrated in the production, bother the audience because they seem to grow out of Edith's incestuous love. These happenings of chance in coincidence form the basis of the plot of The Withered Branch.

Once I had written a strong scenario with a good beginning, middle and ending, I began to write the play. During the process of hammering out a scenario, I had been collecting ideas, writing them down and saving them. Words, little snatches of conversation, anything I thought I could use in the dialogue, went into my collection.

After I had written a first draft, I took it to class and read it. It was very upsetting to find out how horrible my creation was. The others in the class made suggestions, but they couldn't write my play for me. So began a long period of rewriting and rewriting the play. At the end of the semester, I turned in a draft of the play for a grade in the playwriting course, but I knew it wasn't finished. I kept rewriting throughout the summer. This is where I learned that plays are not written; they are rewritten.

When I returned to K-State in the fall, Dr. Dace said that he thought that the play was ready for a trial run. Production dates were set for January and then changed to December. Try-outs were held in early October and I was amazed by the turnout. Seventy-six tried out for the seven roles. I decided then to make the production even more experimental, so I looked for fresh people with little experience.

The playwright's development remains incomplete until he witnesses his work in rehearsal and performance.⁵⁹ Because not infrequently a new play is half rewritten at rehearsals, and even though the director may do none of the actual rewriting, it is often his feeling for the play as a whole that serves to bring out the need of revision.⁶⁰ This I found to be true as the director of my own play, but I remain curious about another director's interpretation, because I feel that the beginning playwright is much too close to his play to serve objectively as its director, for as the director he will unfortunately remain a playwright trying to organize his concept into a production entity.⁶¹ This is what I found myself doing a large part of the time. However, I do think that as a director it is also true that there is no such thing as a play directed exactly as it is written any more than there is a landscape painted as it really is. Of course there are

⁵⁹Busfield, op. cit., p. 213.

⁶⁰John Dolman, The Art of Play Production, p. 2.

⁶¹Busfield, op. cit., p. 214.

directing extremes such as the virtuoso or improvising director, who completely changes the play. On the other hand, there is the director whose aim is to carry out the dramatist's idea to the letter.⁶² I felt more like a virtuoso in the production of my play, but I know that as a director, I usually try to take the author's work and interpret it without destroying his play for him.

Just as I found my scenario evolving and my script evolving, so also did the production evolve. I found that I had to remove the characters from life-like to the more theatrical because acting is not art until it ceases to be life. It is not art until it takes what is portrayed and recreates it in its own terms and adds to it a theatricalness that was not there before.⁶³

The next section of this production book is a record of the production and it is as detailed as is possible. Visual evidence and interpretation of that production are presented. I found that by working within the creative bond of writer, director, actor, and audience which resulted in a living play, that I had learned a great deal. I hope and intend that this record will serve not only as a record of my experience, but also will be of value to another person, who may choose to direct this play or to a person who would choose to write and then direct his own play.

⁶²Stark Young, Theatre Practice, p. 9.

⁶³Ibid., p. 9.

II. PRODUCTION NOTES

The thematic material has not been discussed in relation to the characters until now because this is a part of the production notes. The actors had to know and understand the background of the story in The Withered Branch, before they could develop their characters. The director went over his concept of the thematic material and characterization with the actors during several of the earlier meetings. In this production it was necessary for the director to do this in greater detail for the actors because he was also the author. The actors couldn't do research on their parts to help them with their interpretations because it was an original play and nothing has been written about it. The director was here, also, the author sitting in on early rehearsals.

The second part of the production book also contains descriptions and sketches of the costumes, makeup chart, set plans, properties, light charts and cues, sound charts and cues, and photographs of the production. All of this second part is provided as an accurate record of the actual production.

Backgrounds for the Characterizations

The Withered Branch begins long before the time of the production on stage. Gabe is the real beginning. He was one of those early settlers in California. It wasn't gold that brought Gabe to California; it was the land. Since cheap

fertile land was available to all, Gabe took his wife and two daughters, Edith and Dolly, and established an apricot ranch. The first five to seven years are very difficult in this business, because there is little or no income until the trees mature. It was during this difficult beginning that Gabe lost his wife.

It was around the turn of the century that the wetbacks began swarming across the Rio Grande in search of work. They found that they could follow the harvest for about five months and then sneak back to Mexico and live like kings for the rest of the year. This practice continued until the late fifties when the U. S. government started cracking down, sealed the border, and started regulating the flow of migrant workers.

Lico, with his daughter Marcia, was one of these early wetbacks. His wife had died of plague in Mexico and he had decided to stay in the United States. He worked the harvest and saved until he could buy a broken down trailer that would be their home. He was following the harvest when he met Gabe. He had stopped at the ranch to see if there was any work. Gabe told him that the trees were still young and that he didn't have a very large crop yet, but that the next year the crop would double and then double again as is the case with fruit trees when they are maturing.

Gabe asked Lico what he did in the fall after the harvest. Lico told him that after the apples were picked in Washington, they would return south and he would do odd jobs through the

winter until the next harvest began.

Gabe told him that he wanted to build a house and asked him if he would return and help. The pay, he said, would be low but it would be steady work until spring and then he could help with the harvest. The mild climate makes it possible for building to continue during the winter in California. Lico agreed to this and when the harvest was over, Lico and Marcia returned to the ranch. That winter they built the ranch house in which the living room-dining room is the set for the play.

During these early years, Edith and Marcia became close friends. As soon as they were old enough, they worked in the cutting shed preparing the apricots for drying. Dolly on the other hand was sickly and didn't like the rough work of the ranch. She used hay fever as an excuse to stay the summers in San Francisco with relations. A wall came between the sisters and this wall was the ranch. Because of this, Gabe turned all his love on Edith, who responded in an unhealthy affection for her father. The ranch became her whole world and life and her father was the maintainer of this reality.

Dolly married a city boy named Brack and she stayed with him in the city. They only returned to the ranch out of respect for the rapidly failing Gabe. As the ranch grew and prospered, Lico stayed and he became Gabe's foreman.

Edith's husband Jim was the son of a nearby rancher. Gabe wanted Edith married, but Edith had never gone out to

parties and dances. She wasn't a homely girl, but there was something strange about her.

Gabe and Jim's father made the arrangements. Jim would marry Edith and after a while the ranches would be joined. Jim accepted these terms knowing full well that he did not love Edith and that she had feelings only for her father. Jim's father died shortly thereafter and the ranches were both under Gabe's firm hand. Jim was crushed under Gabe's drive. He took up drinking and became practically an alcoholic.

Time and hard work finally caught up with Gabe. He collapsed while washing trays one Spring. Spring, when the trees are in bloom is the most beautiful time in the orchards. His death came as quite a shock to Edith. The father who had ruled and ordered her world for her was dead. She came near a nervous breakdown.

With Gabe's death, Jim left the bottle and tried to straighten himself out. Lico helped by keeping the ranch operating. Finally a type of love grew between Edith and Jim. He took over the ranch and for a few years things ran smoothly. Edith became pregnant and gave Jim a son, Alex. Jim was never happier.

Soon, however, he noticed a coldness from Edith again. She was turning all her attention on Alex. Once again she removed her love from Jim, but this time Jim was strong enough to resist her turning away from him. Alex was not the Gabe

who had crushed Jim. As for Edith's love he turned to Marcia, Lico's daughter. This illicit relationship was disastrous because Marcia became pregnant. Lico found out and almost killed Jim. But there was nothing they could do. To save face, they blamed it on a wetback who had worked on the ranch and had spent some time with Marcia that summer. Lucky enough for Jim, Marcia died having the baby, Juanita. Now only Jim and Lico knew and Lico kept his mouth shut. Jim paid Lico for taking care of Juanita, but Lico wouldn't take any money for himself because of his pride.

Both Alex and Juanita grew up on the ranch together during a period of prosperity. Jim eventually buckled under the strain with a heart attack and Lico was getting older. Naturally the ranch started going downhill. Brack and Dolly, who were half owners according to the will, tried to get them to sell. The will had tied both Dolly and Edith to the ranch with the condition that both must agree to sell or else none of the ranch could be liquidated. As Alex grew older, he began to take up the slack and the ranch was placed back on an even keel, but there were still many problems.

Edith came to idolize Alex as she had her father. Alex naturally became interested in women and soon was involved with Juanita, who was serving as their housekeeper. She became pregnant and they were forced to tell Alex's parents because Lico knew that she was with child. Dolly and Brack are down from the city with another attempt to get them to sell

and it is here that the play begins.

Inner Character and Relationships

It is important that the actress who plays Edith be aware of the two-sided nature of Edith. She is soft and then hard in an instant. For the actress, it is like playing two different parts in the same show. The Edith who remembers that Daddy died when, "the ground was white with blossoms," is also the Edith who is ferocious when she says, "You could never be like him."

Edith is definitely the center of this play about misplaced love. She breaks the rules of life by her inordinate love for her father and then her son. She sets loose the evil that will eventually destroy her. Because of her love for the wrong things, Jim seeks love elsewhere. Because of this, Juanita is born and Marcia is destroyed, but the evil infection isn't over yet. It festers until it finally ends in her loss of Alex, the ranch, and finally her sanity.

Edith is a woman frantically groping for the happiness that she once had as a child. This is why she dresses as she does. When Dolly and Brack come down from San Francisco, she has them eat in the dining room. She attaches Gabe's birthday to Alex's day because it restores the past for her. She has even planned a big barbecue like they used to have. She even calls Juanita by her mother's name, Marcia.

In the play her relationship to Jim is little more than a contracted one. There is little between them, except when there isn't any Alex or Gabe. Then and only then does she turn to Jim.

She idolizes Alex because she sees her father reincarnated in him. She looks upon Lico and Juanita as friends, as part of the ranch, until they threaten to take Alex from her and then they are enemies. She takes the money from Jim and gives it to them not only out of compassion, but also because she wants them to leave.

Her feelings toward Brack and Dolly are friendly until they too stand as a threat to her. She realizes their treachery when Jim tells her that Brack will use Juanita and Alex as a weapon against them.

Edith doesn't even know herself. She sees herself as the gracious mistress of the finest rancho in California, as a loving daughter, wife, and mother. She is none of these things. She is blind as Jim says and she wants to live only in an illusion of happiness.

At the end, she sees her world crumble around her. The ranch and Alex are lost. Her arrangement with Jim has failed. She must escape, but she can't leave. So it is in her mind that she searches for escape. She finds it in a total shutting out of reality, in insanity.

The actress who portrayed this role had difficulty in capturing the duality of the role in the early rehearsals, but

after several discussions, she started to see the two-sided nature of Edith and this realization seemed to be the clue to the character. Edith screams for Alex to come back, collapses in tears by the chair and then suddenly and soberly states that, "He will come back." From the director's point of view, the actress gave an excellent interpretation of the part and this was borne out by the reviews of the play.

Jim is a very difficult character to understand. He seems to lack any kind of stature. Yet Jim is a man who has been burned out, who has given up the fight. In the course of the action of the play, only once does he rise to meet a challenge and this is when Brack confronts him with his past sin. Jim does not, however, carry through with the fight that is expected. He just simply no longer cares. The drinking, his heart attack, his marriage to a ranch instead of a woman, and his living with a lie have eaten away at him until he is destroyed. He tries to end it when he tells Edith his secret. In the last moments, when Edith's sanity is ebbing away, all he can do is stop in the doorway, look at her, and then go out to burn the trees.

Long before the time of the play, Jim had failed the game of life. By the time of the play, he was merely going through the motions. His relationships to the others are simple and passive. He sees Edith for what she is; he expects and demands nothing of her; he accepts her. Jim sees in Alex something quite different from Edith. Alex is his son, he is

proud of him and he doesn't see Gabe in him. Lico is, to Jim, a man that he has wronged many years before, but Jim no longer feels guilty about what happened. Lico is no more than a painful remembrance. Juanita is Jim's daughter, but he doesn't feel toward her as a father would. Just as Lico is a remembrance, she is a living symbol of the same. He doesn't hate her, but he is incapable of love for her.

Dolly is only a woman like others in Jim's eyes, but Brack is a threat. It is Brack who almost spurs Jim to action. It is Brack who forces the issue and makes Jim decide to air the past. The hate for Brack turns into simple revulsion. The young actor who undertook this very difficult role never was able to capture the spirit of emptiness in Jim. He did a commendable job on this difficult part, however, considering his youth and inexperience. It is difficult to play the part of a man who is incapable of a strong act or decision since action is the basis of character.

Lico is a man who has mellowed with age. He is a product of the Mexican culture and he still has a strong temper and will. But it is his love and not his hate that makes him what he is. Lico is wronged by his daughter and then by her daughter. He lashes out at Juanita because she has rejected his love. No longer does he hate Jim; in fact, he has forgiven him. He also understands Edith. All he wants is peace for everyone. Even Alex and Juanita's sin does not bother him deeply. It is Jim's offer of money that strikes his pride and makes him seethe

with hate and disgust. He is a strong man grown old who feels that he has lived too long and is being punished a second time for remaining in the land of the gringos.

Alex learned compassion and understanding at an early age, because of his mother. He honestly falls in love with Juanita, but like most gringos he is afraid of loving a Mexican. This is why he waits until it is too late to tell his parents. Alex loves and respects his father until his image of him is shattered by the horrible news of his father's relationship to Juanita. He is strong willed, full of life and ready to reject the inwardness of the ranch and his parents. The young actor who played this part did an extremely fine job. As the author-director, I thought that he added much spark and life that was not in the script.

Juanita is typical of the Mexican girls in California, quiet and very sensitive. She is very aware of being a Mexican. She loves Alex, but is always not sure of his love. She knows only too well the prejudice of the gringos. She is deeply religious and the child she carries in her is a constant hammering sin to her Catholic conscience. Her fears are justified in what happens. She is hurt and confused. She is made very happy by Edith's acceptance of her. Her heart leaps at the thought, only to be dashed in the revelation of her mother's sin, the same sin that she had committed. The girl who played Juanita was appearing in her first play. After she grasped the fundamentals, she rapidly built her characterization

and by opening night, except for occasional whyness, she was enhancing as Juanita. Physically she was perfect for the part. She is a beautiful, dark-haired girl.

Dolly loves Edith because she is her sister. She honestly tries to understand her. She knows that Brack, her husband, is right, but she doesn't want to see Edith hurt. Her early jealousy and contempt have turned to pity and a groping for understanding of Edith. The actress never captured the character. Again it was a first performance. The interpretation of Dolly was too melodramatic and wishy-washy. Dolly had come for the same purpose as Brack--the destruction of the ranch. She would not have been as weak a woman as she was interpreted.

Brack is faced with the job of being the bad guy. The strange thing is that he is not. He is both good and bad like everyone else. He is probably right about selling the ranch. He is straight forward and doesn't resort to force until he sees the futility of reasoning with them. His forcing of Jim is an evil act, but is a necessary one. The actor taking this part, except for high school experience, was a novice. To him, Brack was the bad guy and the director could not break him of this concept. Direction merely made him more mechanical.

In these character sketches, I have often referred to the inexperience of the people who were playing the roles. I don't mean this lightly and I do not offer it as an excuse. I think that graduate production should be the training

ground for new people. When this is done there is bound to be some miscasting. Directors usually will not cast untried people in a major production. It is in plays of this sort that actors gain experience. The overall success of this production cannot be judged on the basis of reviews alone, but rather on its value as an educational process.

The Physical Characters

Costumes for The Withered Branch were intended to be as representative of the 1950's as possible. In the case of Lico, audience consideration and understanding took precedence over accuracy. The costuming ideas were gathered from personal experience while living in an area similar to the play. There were really no unusual costuming problems in this play. The only difficult to locate costume was Edith's Spanish lace dress. Sketches of all the character's costumes have been included even though they did not offer problems.

Edith is a woman in her early fifties. She wore an old-looking pecco colored lace dress. Her general appearance is a woman rapidly growing older, but desperately trying to hang on to the past. Her costume and its color are strangely out of place, just as Edith's mind is strangely out of place. She also wears a frilly handkerchief on her waistband and when she goes out she wears a black lace scarf.

Jim is in his middle fifties and is dressed in a blue-green, long-sleeve sport shirt and dark brown slacks. He wears

a long-sleeve shirt because of the extremely cool evenings caused by ocean breezes that are mentioned in the play. He uses a cane and limps because of the stroke he has had. His casual dress reflects and heightens the ranch atmosphere and also heightens the effect of his limp with the cane.

Alex is dressed as any nineteen-year-old would dress in the fifties. For Alex a pair of tan slacks and green and brown plaid shirt and brown loafers are dress up. He is about nineteen and tanned, but his hair is light and sun bleached. In the fields he would wear only the wide-legged blue jeans like the Mexican laborers; this is why the slacks and sport shirt are dress.

Juanita is about eighteen and wears a dark red and black striped dress that is below the knees in length. It is not only reflective of the longer dress styles of the fifties as compared with today, but also reflects the conservative air of the young Mexican girls of Southern California. The color and style, however, only make her that much more attractive. In her first two appearances she wears a white apron bordered by multicolored frills. She removes this for her last entrance.

Lico is about seventy and wore an old dark blue sport shirt, also long-sleeved, with a pair of wide-legged work pants. On the pants are some patches. This is not accurate as far as the actual style goes, but is a concession to the audience. A wetback would never wear patches. Harvest workers never wash the jeans. The jeans get very dirty, but they never

wash them, they throw them away first.

Dolly is about fifty and wears a wide collar suit-dress that was popular in the fifties and considered high style then. Her dress is the shortest of the three women. The color is a black and beige plaid with a plain beige collar and she wears a beige cardigan sweater that is very stylish.

Brack wears a blue suit, typical of the middle aged, business man. He looks like a real-estate salesman and must look at home in a suit. He wears conservative plain black or brown shoes, black for this production, and a plain narrow tie which was the tie style then.

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EXPLANATION OF PLATE II

Review printed in

The K-State Collegian, December 14, 1966, p. 2.

New Talents Worth 'Chance'

By DAVID SADKIN, ENG Gr

Of all the aspects of a university theater, one of the most exciting is the opportunity to see new talent. We have long been accustomed to seeing fine student acting and directing. But it is a rare treat to see plays written by students.

The Purple Masque Theatre will be lit this evening through Saturday; and those adventure-some souls who attend the production of two original one-act plays (directed by their authors) will be in for a stimulating evening of theater.

"**THE WITHERED** Branch," by Frank Naccarato, is a drama **review** of symbolism and high emotion. Don't let the word "symbolism" scare you off. The author has chosen his symbols, not to obscure, but to clarify the rather staggering thematic content of the play.

Naccarato has read his Greek drama, and has chosen one of the great classical themes—incest—for the core of his play.

Perhaps too much has been attempted for a one-act format. The gravity of the subject bears gradual development, and the short-play form does not allow time enough to prepare the audience for the agonizing revelation. Instead, the author resorts to melodrama, the effects of which, combined with some less than assured

performances, tend to undermine the tragic mood being attempted.

NEVERTHELESS, the play is stimulating, and at the end, thanks to Leanna Lenhart's sensitivity in the role of Edith, quite moving.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE III

Review printed in

The Manhattan Mercury, December 15, 1966, p. 2.

Program Of One-Acts Is Interesting Time

The Kansas State Players are currently offering a unique program in the Purple Masque Theatre, consisting of two one-act plays written by graduate students in speech who have undertaken as part of their master's thesis requirements to direct their own works. One gets little opportunity to see a bill of one - acts any more, and these two make an interesting evening.

The first, "The Withered Branch," by Frank Naccarato, tells of California family closely tied to the parently ranch by the conditions of the will of the domineering father. The fortunes of the ranch have steadily declined under the hands of the inept son-in-law, and his wife, one of the two surviving daughters, is clearly obsessed with a love for the dead parent and a too - strong affection for her son. Before all is over, revelations of illegitimacy and incest, heralding the breakup of the loveless family, drive the grandson out of the house and the daughter into insanity.

For all of the suggestions of Williams or Faulkner degeneracy, the play is not particularly sensationalized in the tone of its writing nor in its production. As a matter of fact, a marked increase in pace and more polish in timing would have favored and would perhaps have given some of the situational cliches more appeal.

Leanna Lenhart, as Edith, the daughter who can't forget and mother who would bury her son's soul by keeping him on the ranch she insists he loves, is clearly the outstanding cast member, making a fine effort to push the play along. Dan Pierce as Jim, her stroke - crippled husband, and Wanda Black as Juanita, the illegitimate half-breed loved by her own half-brother, do more than passably well in supporting her. Dennis Russell, Barbara Filbert, and Bill Albright as son, sister, and brother - in - law, complete the cast, except for Gene Harris, who offers a nice little bit part as Lico, the old Mexican grandfather.

It's good to be able to view the end products of the work of these talented students. You will have pleasantly entertaining evening if you attend one of the remaining performances beginning tonight and extending through Saturday, 8 p.m. — Jordan Y. Miller.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IV

Costume sketch for Edith



PLATE IV

EXPLANATION OF PLATE V

Costume sketch for Jim

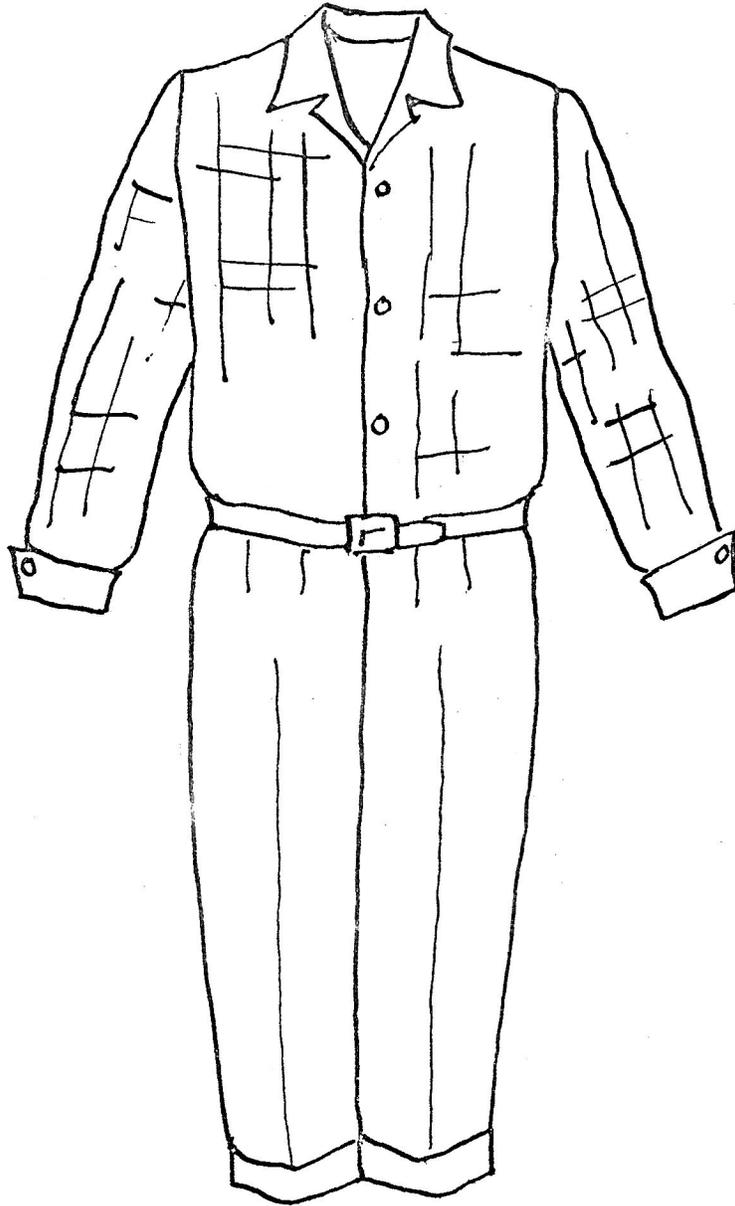


PLATE V

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VI

Costume sketch for Alex

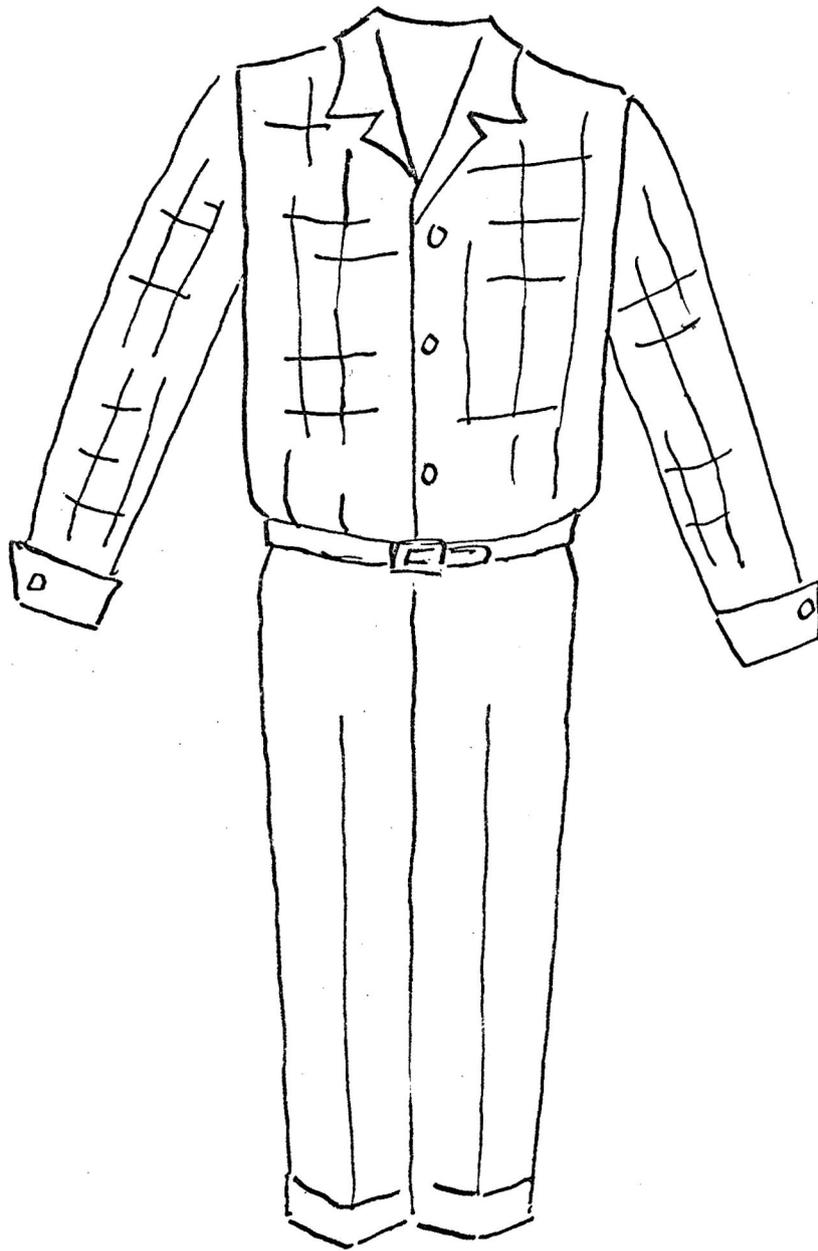


PLATE VI

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VII

Costume sketch for Juanita

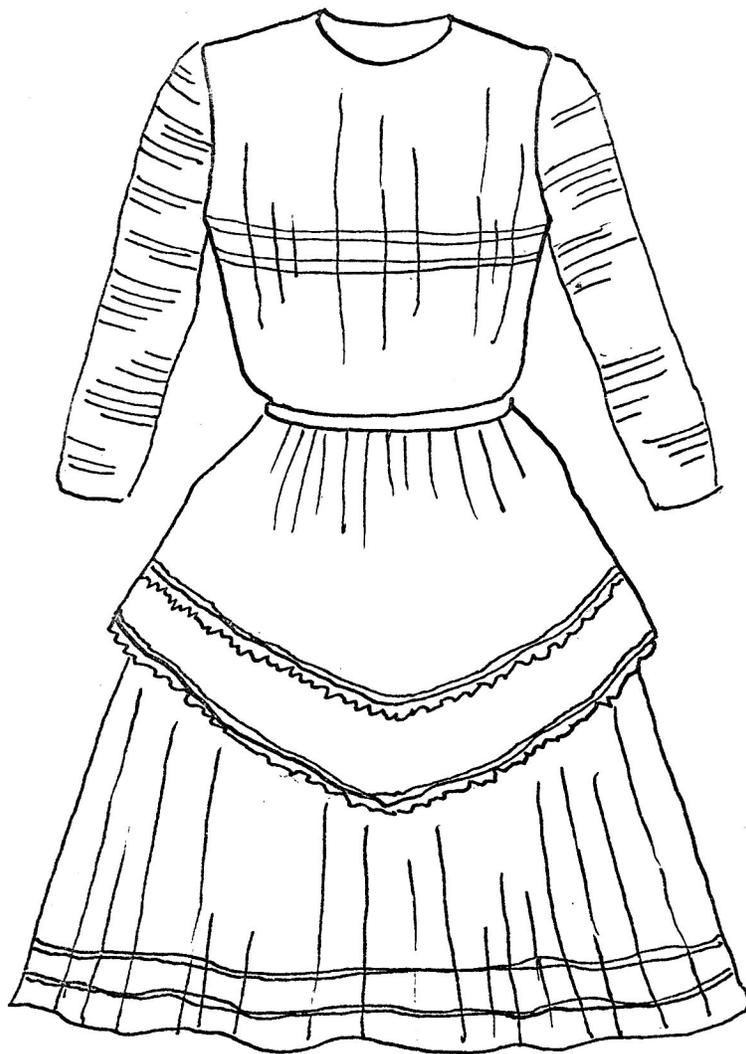


PLATE VII

EXPLANATION OF PLATE VIII

Costume sketch for Lico

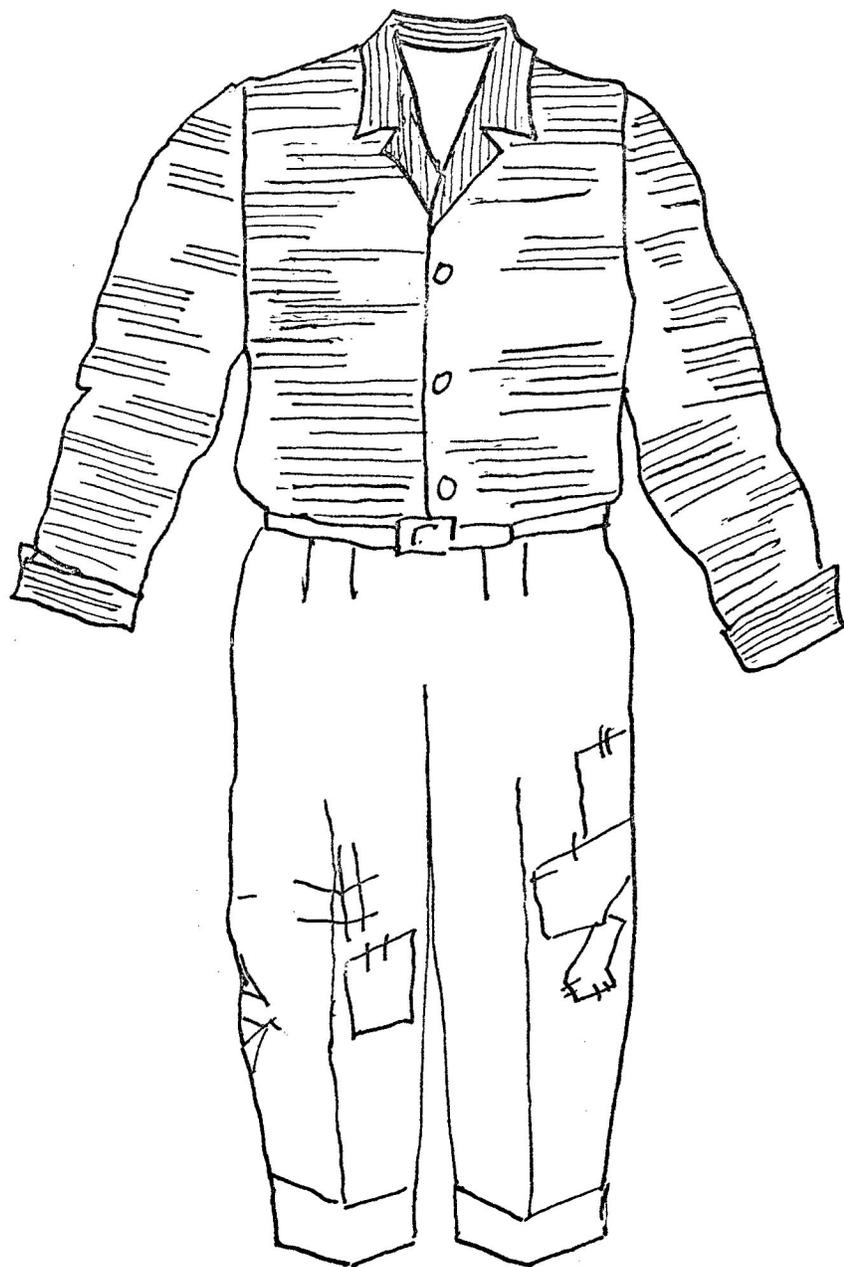


PLATE VIII

EXPLANATION OF PLATE IX

Costume sketch for Brack

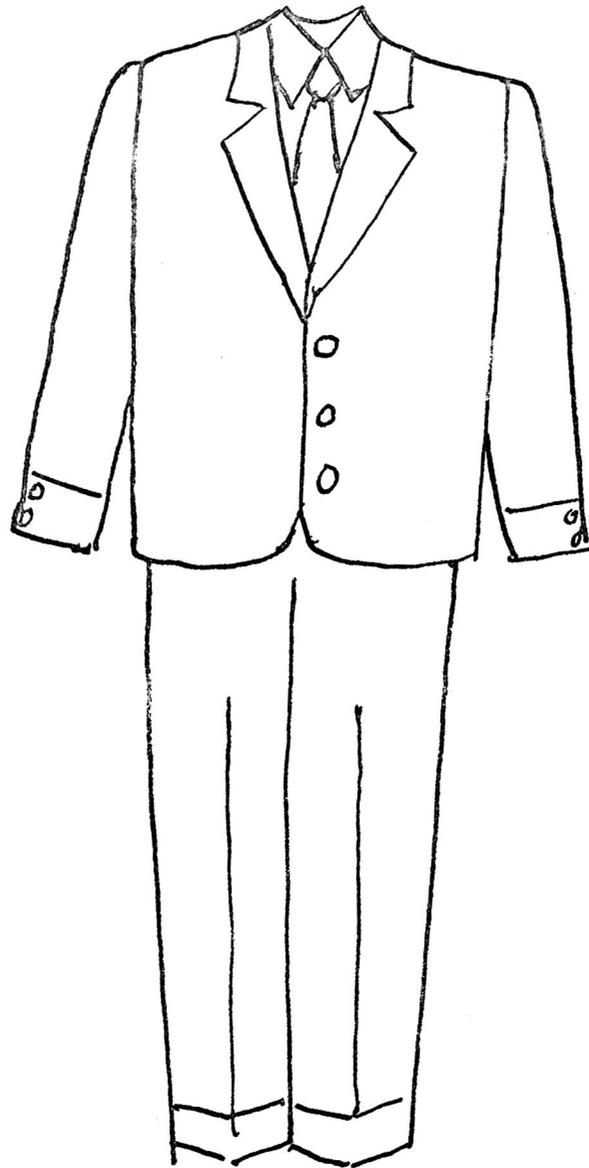


PLATE IX

EXPLANATION OF PLATE X

Costume sketch for Dolly

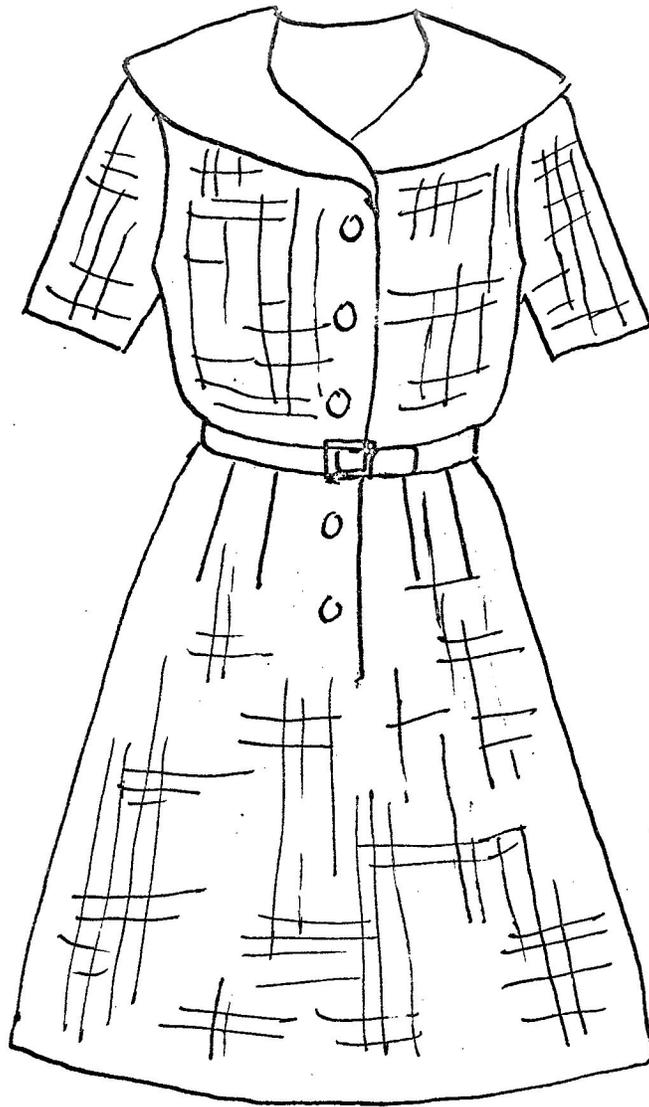


PLATE X

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XI

Makeup Chart

MAKEUP CHART

NAME	BASE	SHADOW & LINES	ROUGE	POWDER	OTHER
Leanna Lenhart	5½, 6	Brown	Dk.	Trans.	Hair streaked
Dan Pearce	5½, 6a	Dk. Brown	--	Trans.	Hair streaked
Bill Albright	5½	Dk. Brown	--	Trans.	--
Barbara Filbert	2a, 7a	Brown, Green	Dk.	Trans.	--
Dennis Russell	6a	Pancro	--	Trans.	--
Wanda Black	6, 7a	Blue, Brown	Lt.	Trans.	--
Gene Harris	cold crm.	Dk. Brown	--	Trans.	Grey hair and beard

SETTING

Description

The script of The Withered Branch dictated that the set be a dining/living room of a house occupied by three people. A table which would be of an ample size for three people, but which might be a bit crowded with six dinner settings, an appropriate number of chairs were placed around the table, a divan, and a large stuffed chair were indicated. Also mentioned was a mantle on which whiskey bottles, brandy snifters, a music box, and other items were placed. The portrait of the deceased father, Gabe, was also necessary.

A perfectly balanced design would not have contributed to the general effect of the play. Since Edith shows signs of mental disturbance, the designer used a form of asymmetrical balance in the design, placing the table and chairs in the center of one half of the stage and the divan and stuffed chair at the periphery of the other half and placing the mantle slightly off-center with regard to the back wall. This arrangement produced a slightly unbalanced and therefore slightly uncomfortable effect. A degree of balance was produced, however, by the symmetrical placement of the doors in the back wall.

In the set for The Withered Branch, the predominant sense of rhythm was produced by the relatively regular panels on the back wall. To a lesser degree, the evenly spaced and identical dinner settings on the table contributed to this effect of rhythm.

The absence of most non-functional frills was most evident in the decoration of the set. Only a bouquet of flowers on the table, a plant on the mantle, the scalloped edge of the tablecloth, and the brandy decanter and snifters could be said to be decorative. A masculine, slightly foreboding environment was produced by the use of dark wood in the back wall, the mantle, and the chairs. The portrait of Gabe was also expressively stern.

The volume inherent in the various pieces of scenery was evident to the audience due to the smallness of the Purple Masque Theatre. The mantle was conspicuous in this respect as was the stuffed chair. Viewing the element of volume from the point of view of space of the set as opposed to the mass of the objects, the size of the set was that of a dining/living room. Ceiling height was indicated by the horizontal moulding at the top of the back wall. Although no ceiling was placed on the set and three walls were missing, the impression of a three-dimensional volume bounded by the edges of the stage platform, the stage floor, and the level of the molding was accepted by the audience due to their suspension of disbelief.

Color and Texture

The most common color in the set was the dark, rather warm brown in the wall, the chairs, and the mantle. The use of a white tablecloth and the shininess of the glasses, silverware, and other items on the table tended to be slightly unsettling, much as Edith, Gabe's daughter, found her situation unsettling.

this white shiny aspect tended to advance in the design to some extent. This was especially effective at the end of the play when the lights on the set were faded out and only Edith, seated at the table was spotlighted.

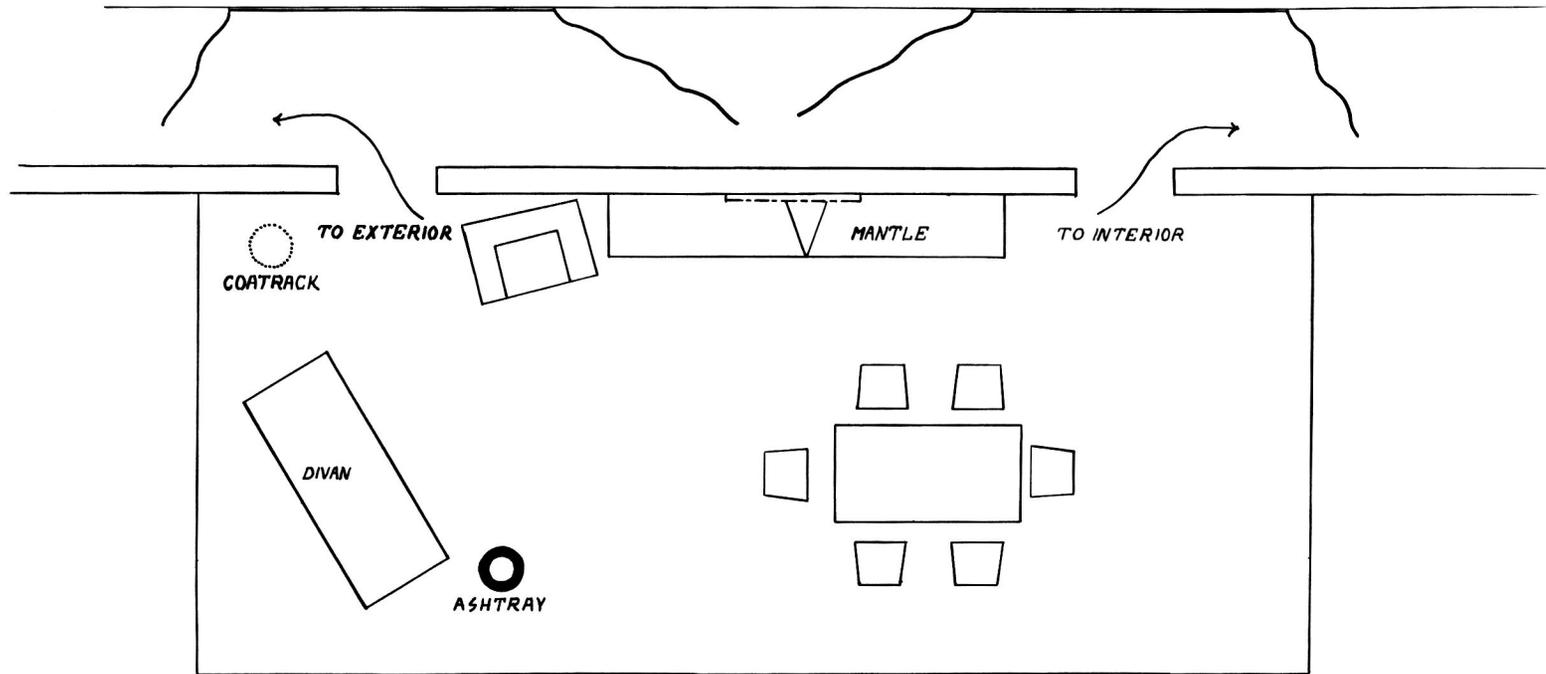
The use of texture in this set was evident in the lining and dry-brushing of the back wall to give the appearance of wood paneling, a similar treatment of the picture frame, the inherent texture of the mantle, and the appearance of the glasses, plates, and silverware on the table. Of course, the fabrics used in the tablecloth and upholstery also showed a texture.

The design principle of harmony was produced in color and texture. The color of the wall and that of the mantle, while not identical, were close enough to be considered harmonious.

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XII

The floor plan of the set

PLATE XII



KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY - K-STATE PLAYERS	
NO.	PROD: THE WITNESSED BRAND
1	BY: FRANK MACCARATO
	DES. BY: DARYL M. WEDWICK
SCALE: NOTED	DATE: 12-14-66

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIII

Stage right view of Set

PLATE XIII



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIV

Stage left view of set

PLATE XIV



PROPERTY LIST

Coffee pot
Brandy decanter
5 brandy glasses
Music box
cane
6 coffee cups with saucers
Legal contract
Stage money
Account book
Tea towel
Whiskey bottle
4 whiskey glasses
Wash cloth
Pocket watch with chain
Table cloth
Dessert dishes
Silver tray
Silver
Centerpiece
Smoking stand
Handkerchief
Pipe with tobacco
Cigarettes
Matches
Lighter
6 cloth Napkins
Clock
Plant
Small pitcher
2 Doilies

LIGHTING

Description

Lighting for The Withered Branch was relatively simple. General illumination was used throughout most of the play. A special was focused on the picture of Gabe above the mantle. At the beginning of the play, this special was raised to half intensity for a few seconds before the general illumination revealed the dinner scene. This was done to help set the feeling of father dominance. General illumination was maintained at an intensity level that made the room seem normal in appearance. This was intended as a contrasting factor with the unsettling effects of the set design. After Gabe leaves at the end, a fire special was used in the doorway to give a burning trees effect. Symbolically, Edith was being destroyed at the same time. As soon as Gabe moved to the doorway the general lighting started fading out until finally the only illumination was a special on Edith and the special on the picture of her father. When the first three notes of "The Shadow of your Smile" were played, the light on Edith slowly faded out and then the light on Gabe faded out.

LIGHTING CUE SHEET

CUE NO.	MASTER	1	2	3	4	5	6	MASTER	7	MASTER MASTER	SPECIALS
1											1a ↑3
2	10	7	4½	4½	7	6	7	9	7	10	2a-↑5 5a-↑5 3a-↑7 6a-↑3
3										↓7	2a-↑6 3a-↓0 5a-↓0 6a-↓0
4										↓0	4a ↑8
5											1a-↓0 2a-↓0 4a-↓0
6 Curtain Call										↑10	

1. For The Withered Branch dimmer 4a was plugged with 701.

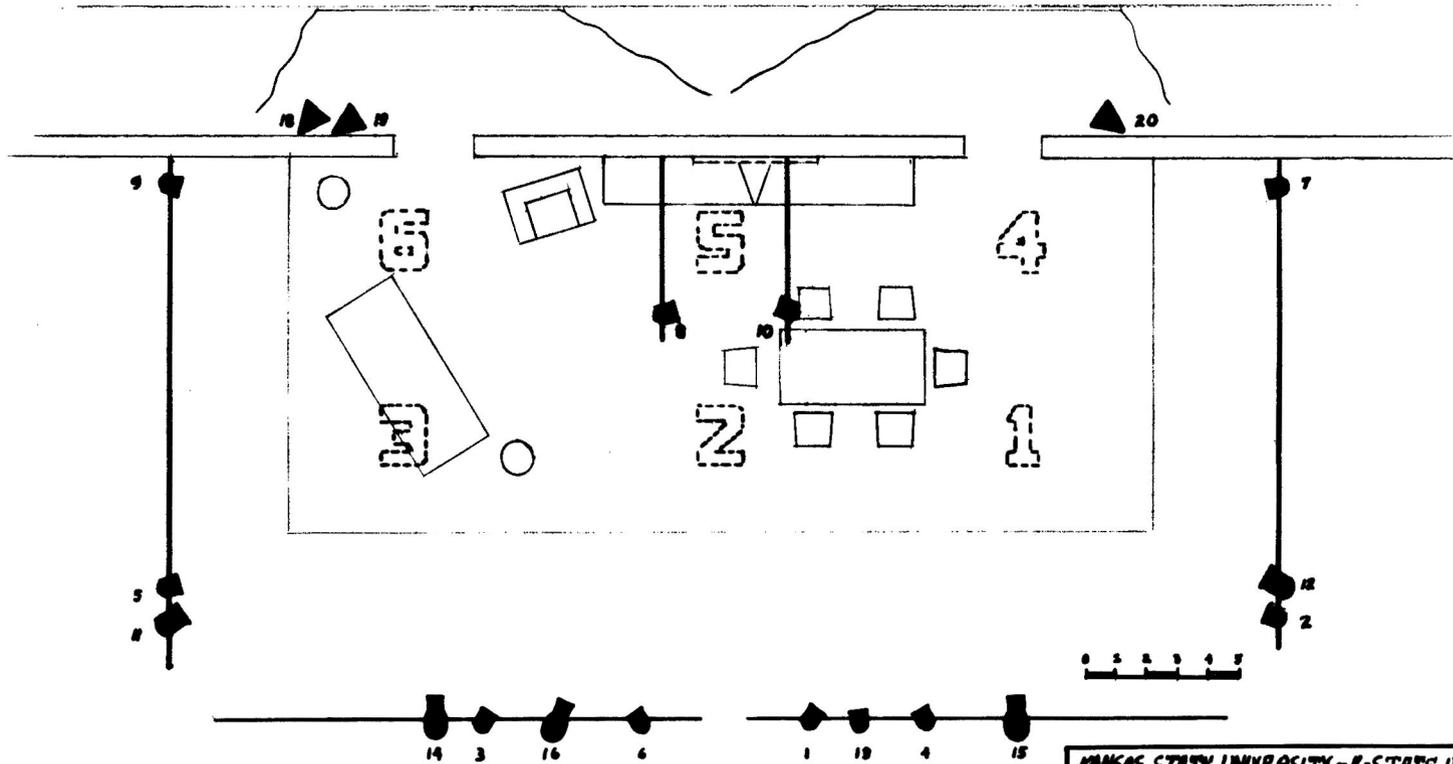
LIGHTING INSTRUMENTS

LAMP NO.	SIZE	TYPE	AREA	GEL	PLUGGED WITH	DIMMER NO	
101	6"	Fresnel	3	Straw	501	4	
102	8"	"	2	"	-	3	
103	6"	"	6	"	205	7	
201	6"	Leko	SR Door special	"	-	5a	
202	6"	Fresnel	5	Pink	207	6	
203	6"	Leko	Picture special	-	-	1a	
204	6"	Fresnel	4	Straw	302	5	
205	6"	"	6	Pink	103	7	
206	6"	"	Edith special	Straw	-	2a	
207	6"	"	5	"	202	6	
208	6"	Leko	SL Door special	"	-	6a	
301	6"	Fresnel	1	Pink	401	1	
302	6"	"	4	"	204	5	
303	8"	"	2	"	-	2	
401	6"	"	1	Straw	301	1	
501	6"	"	3	Pink	101	4	
601	6"	Leko	Bar special	Straw	-	4a*	*replugged between shows
701		PAR	Fire special	Red	-	4a*	
702		PAR	Hall light	-	703	3a	
703		PAR	"	-	702	3a	

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XV

Lighting layout

PLATE XV



ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY - R-STATE PLAYERS	
NO.	PROD: THE WETHERED BRANCH
	BY FRANK MACCARATO
5	DES. BY: DARYL M. WEDWICK
	SCALE: NOTED
	DATE: 12-14-68

SOUND

Description

There was a very limited amount of sound effects used in this production. There was a definite purpose in this. Since Edith was to use a music box without music, other sound effects would have detracted from the effect of her hearing the sound and nobody else hearing it. For thirty minutes before the show a recording taken from the record, "Nights in the Gardens of Spain," by Manuel De Falla, was used to help set the mood and Spanish atmosphere. This record was produced by the National Orchestra of Spain for London Records. The recording number was CM-9212, Espana, Vol. 7. This recording is a very eerie one and it prepared the audience for the alternating between quiet and hysteria in the play. At the end of the play, when Edith goes into final madness a recording of "The Shadow of Your Smile" was used. This recording was made by the director from the sheet music. It was modified to help set the final mood. The first three notes were hammered to give the effect of a pounding on Edith's mind. Her sanity is lost completely in these first three notes. Then the full score of the song was played to give a pathetic effect. The song was continued through the curtain call.

Sound Cue Sheet

CUE	PLACE	RECORDING
I	Thirty minutes before play	"Nights in the Garden of Spain"
II	When Edith sits at the end of the play	"The Shadow of your Smile"

PICTURES

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVI

Jim and Brack



PLATE XVI

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVII

Alex, Edith, Brack, Dolly, and Jim

PLATE XVII



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XVIII

Alex and Juanita



PLATE XVIII

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XIX

Lico, Jim, and Brack



PLATE XIX

EXPLANATION OF PLATE XX

Lico, Juanita, and Edith

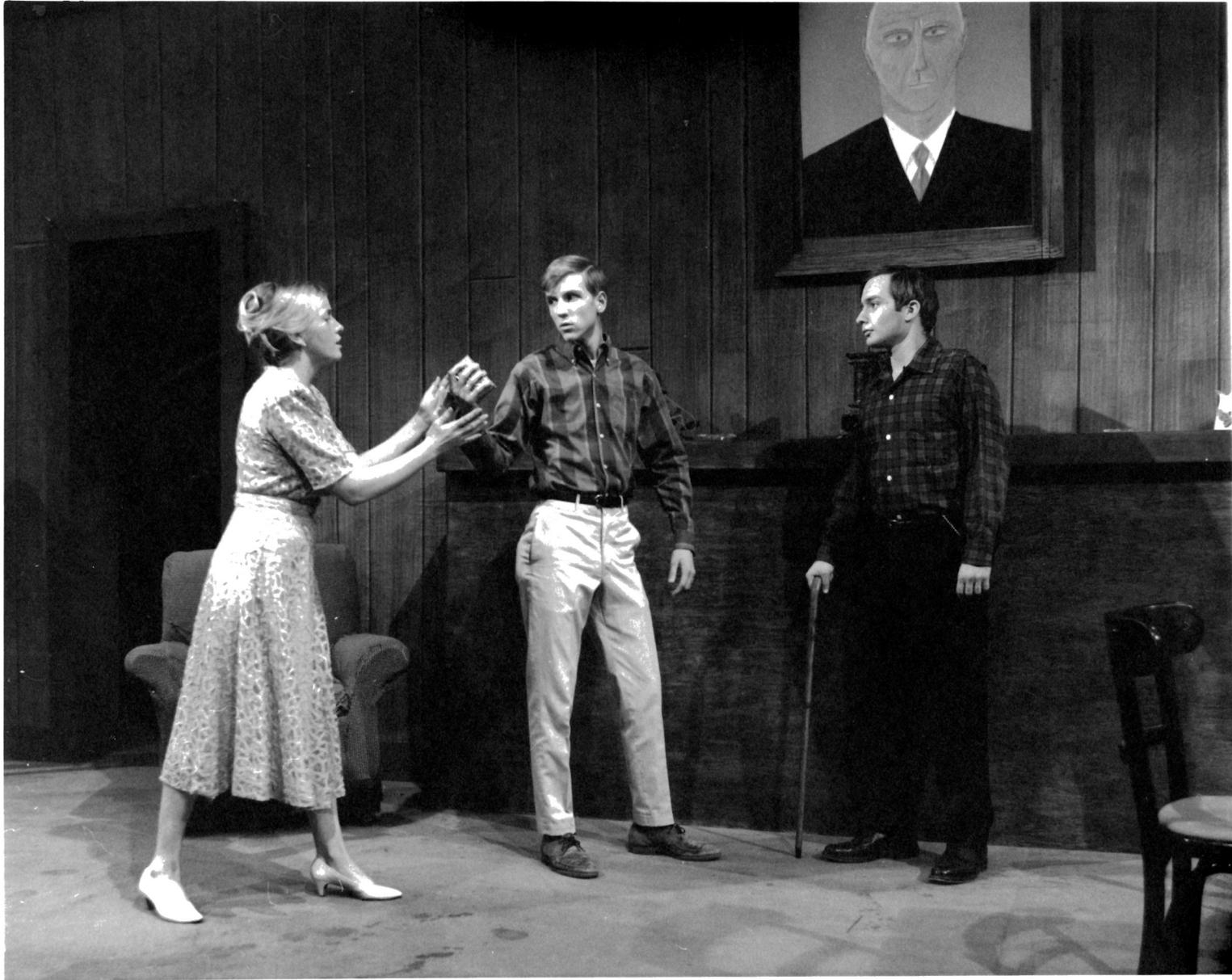
PLATE XX



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXI

Edith, Alex, and Jim

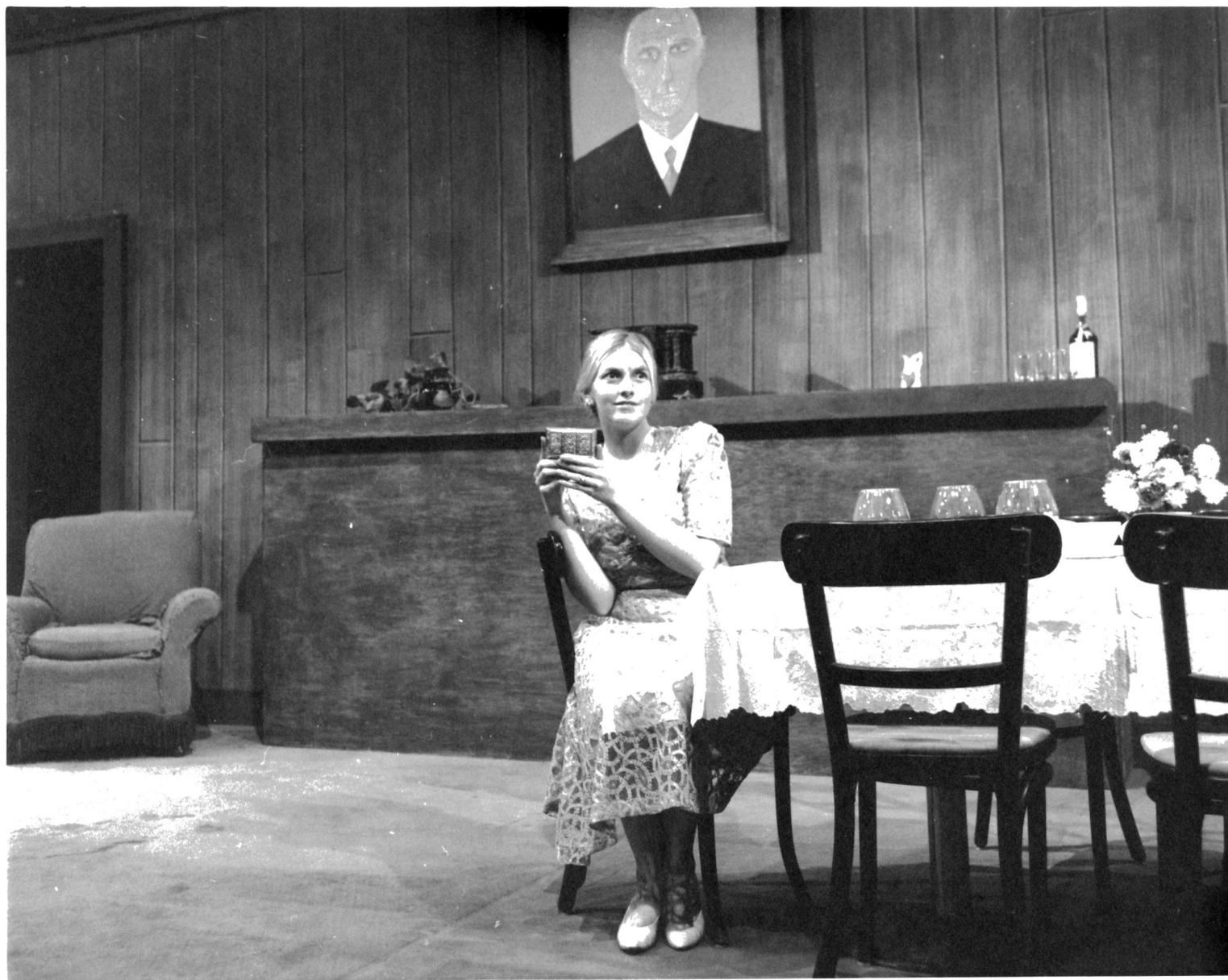
PLATE XXI



EXPLANATION OF PLATE XXII

Edith

PLATE XXII



THE PROMPT SCRIPT
The Withered Branch
by
Frank Naccarate

THE WITHERED BRANCH

by

FRANK NACCARATO

30 MIN. Prior
To The Show 130 SEC. Prior
To The Show 1

Time: 1950

Place: Southern California

Scene: The living room-dining room in the ranch house on an apricot farm. At lights up, Brack, Alex, Edith, Dolly, and Jim are seated around the table. One chair is empty, but there is a place setting. This was Gabe's chair. They are just finishing dinner.

Brack

(Finishing an off-color joke)

...and/so she said, "You are kidding me." I said, "You are right."

(They all laugh)

Jim

That was fine, Brack.

Brack

But not nearly as good as this dinner. Edith.

Dolly

Yes, it certainly was.

Edith

Well, you can thank Juanita for it, she did most of the work fixing it. All I did was lend a hand.

Jim

(Joking)

Yes, without Juanita's work and Edith's hand we would starve to death around here

(They all laugh again. Juanita enters from the kitchen with a coffee pot. She is nervous. She looks at Alex. They exchange glances. She moves to Brack's right.)

Juanita

Would you like some more coffee, Senor Brack?

Brack

No thanks, Juanita honey, I've had enough.

Juanita
 (Moves around to the right of Jim)
 Senor Jim?

Jim
 No thank you, Juanita

Edith
 I think we have had enough coffee, Juanita. Please bring the
 Apricot brandy.

(Juanita goes out)
 Isn't it wonderful that we are all here together again. Ever
 since you two were married and went up to San Francisco to live
 we haven't been together like this. It's like a reunion.

Dolly
 (Looking at Brack)
 Yes, I guess it is---sort of.
 (Brack and Dolly are staring at each other as if
 they are reading each other's thoughts)

Edith
 I could hardly believe it when you called and said you were
 coming down and tomorrow of all days is Alex and Daddy's
 birthday. That's why I had us eat in here. We never do, but
 this way it makes me feel like we are all here together again.
 (She looks at her father's empty place)
 We have a big barbecue planned for all the hands tomorrow. We
 have always had a barbecue on daddy's birthday. Did you know
 it was, Brack?

Brack
 (Turning to her)
 Was what?

Edith
 Alex and Daddy's birthdays tomorrow. I was sure that that was
 why you came down.

Brack
 Not exactly, but it was rather lucky wasn't it. Happy Birthday,
 Alex.

(Pats him on the back)
 How old will you be anyway?

Alex
 (Not looking up)
 Nineteen, Uncle Brack.

Edith
 Your grandfather would have been seventy-four.
 (She rises, looks at the picture, then at Alex)
 He was a lot like you, Alex.

Alex
 (Still looking down)
 Mom...

Edith
 (Ignoring him)
 He loved the ranch, too.
 (To Brack)
 You didn't know that he built this house, did you Brack?

Brack
 As a matter of fact, Dolly has never mentioned it.

Edith
 (She goes behind Dolly's Chair. Juanita enters)
 Oh, Dolly wouldn't have known. She was too young and she never
 cared about things like that.

Jim
 Edith...

Edith
 (Ignoring him)
 He built it with only the help of a few Mexican wetbacks. Lico,
 Juanita's grandfather was one of them.
 (Indicating Juanita, who is filling the brandy glasses)
 It is a strong house, built by a strong man. It has daddy's
 heart and soul in every bit of it.
 (Moves behind Jim and places her hands on his
 shoulders, he looks at his plate)
 Jim and I have done our best to keep it the way he wanted it,
 but since Jim's stroke it hasn't been easy.
 (Smiles and goes behind Alex. She runs her fingers
 through his hair.)
 But everything is going to be fine soon again, isn't it Alex?
 (Returns to her place. She runs her fingers over
 the empty chair.)

Alex
 Sure mom. Sure it is

Edith
 (Standing above her own chair)
 Alex is going to go to the agriculture school over in Salinas.
 He is going to make this the finest ranch in California again.
 (She sits)

Alex
 (Places his hand on hers)
 Mom, take it easy.

Edith

Well it's true. Ah, here is the brandy. This is a special brandy. We have it made from our very own apricots.

(Rising with a glass of the brandy)

I propose a toast. A toast of brandy to my father Cobe and to my son Alex, on the eve of their birthdays.

(Everyone drinks, but Jim and Alex. She puts the glass down)

Now then, before it gets too dark, I want to show you something, Dolly.

Dolly

Show me something?

Edith

(Starting to the kitchen)

Our Mopacs.

(Edith pulls out Dolly's chair for her)

Dolly

(Rising)

Oh yes. Of course

Brack

Your what?

Dolly

(Going to get her sweater)

Our Mopacs. Don't you remember about those two trees that my father planted separate from the others. You remember, the ones that are supposed to be Edith and me.

Brack

OK, I remember that, but what is a Mopac?

Dolly

(Going to him)

Don't get excited, it's just another kind of apricot.

Edith

Only they're bigger and better than the ordinary ones. That's why daddy picked them. "Nothing but the biggest and the best for my girls," he used to say.

(She sticks her head out the kitchen door)

Juanita, Dolly and I are going down the orchard. I'll help you when we get back.

Alex

(Standing up and going to the kitchen)

Go ahead, mom. I'll help her.

Edith

(She stops him)

Alex don't be silly, you work hard enough.

(She smiles)

You don't have to do the dishes, too.

(Alex ignores her and goes on into the kitchen)

Have you ever seen such a hard working boy? He is just like his grandfather

(To Dolly as they are leaving)

I think he is a little sweet on Juanita. I've seen them together, but it's only puppy love. You know...

Dolly

Oh, yes.

Brack

(They laugh and go out)

OK, What's so funny?

Edith

(They look at him laugh again and exit on the next line.)

Alex has been watching them for me. He trims them and when we irrigate he sees that they get plenty of water.

Brack

(After they are out, shaking his head)

Is she always like that?

Jim

(Taking his cane and rising)

Like what?

Brack

So fanatical about the ranch, Gabe, and Alex.

(Turning to follow Gabe who is going to the smoking stand)

Jim

Oh, I guess she is.

(He packs his pipe and lights it.)

You see, Edith has been a little disappointed in me. I haven't done much with the ranch and it isn't what it was when Gabe was still alive. There were fiestas, rodeos, and big barbecues.

(He crosses to the easy chair and sits, smoking)

Brack

I see.

Jim

But I've only been able to keep the ranch from going under. I can't even seem to do that since my stroke. Edith expects Alex to rebuild her "paradise" for her. I don't know. Maybe he will. He seems to be as much a part of this ranch as she is. I think it gets into your blood.

(Rises)

You want to know something else?

Brack

What?

Jim

(He goes over and pounds out the pipe)

Tomorrow is Alex's birthday, but it wasn't Gabe's. Edith just likes to put them together.

(Brack nods)

You haven't seen the office since we put in the paneling, have you? Come on, I'll show you, besides, I want to get the account book. We can look at it in here where it is comfortable and have a drink at the same time. It'll save me sending you an explanation.

Brack

(He rises as Jim goes toward the kitchen)

I'd like to look at it, Jim, because I want to talk to you about something.

(He crosses around the table to Jim)

Jim

(Out the kitchen door)

Juanita, would you get the table cleaned off and set out the whisky. You can put this damn brandy away, too. I'm afraid this isn't going to look too good, Brack.

(They exit. Juanita comes in and starts cleaning up the dishes. Alex comes in with a teatowel and throws it over her and pulls her back against him. He kisses her on the neck. She pulls away and he pulls her back to him roughly.)

Juanita

Alex you're hurting me.

Alex

(He releases her, she starts cleaning up the dishes and crosses to the far end of the table.)

I know. I'm sorry. What are you so upset about. You were nervous as hell during dinner. I thought you were going to scald Uncle Brack.

(He puts the brandy away and sets out the whisky and two glasses.)

Juanita
You are going to tell them aren't you, Alex?

Alex
(curtly)
I told you I would, now will you forget it. Don't you believe me?

(Juanita is hurt by this and she moves on around the table)
Look, I'm sorry, ok, but I thought we'd just settled it in the kitchen.

(Points to kitchen)
I said I would tell them as soon as Uncle Brack and Aunt Dolly go to bed.

Juanita
I know Alex, but...

Alex
But then what is it?
(She starts cleaning up the dishes again.)
Juanita?

Juanita
It is grandpa. He's drinking.

Alex
So what. He does it all the time.

Juanita
You don't understand, Alex. He knows.

Alex
(Crossing to her)
He what! But, how?

Juanita
Alex, he has eyes.
(She smooths the dress that is becoming tight at the waist.)

Alex
(Moving closer)
And he asked you?

Juanita
Yes. What could I say. But I didn't tell him it was... That is why I am afraid. He was so angry. He said I was like, was like mama. He called me a slut. But I didn't tell him, Alex. I didn't tell him.

(She starts to cry)

Alex

(Takes her in his arms)

Juanita, don't, don't cry. I'll tell them tonight, after my aunt and uncle go to bed.

(He presses her against him, he kisses her)

It'll be ok, don't worry my little ninita.

(He hears Brack and Jim coming back in. They break their embrace. Juanita dries her tears on her apron. They grab the dishes and go out. Jim is heard as he and Brack enter and go to the table.)

Jim

(Sees them and stops short, he is carrying a book)

The crop has been good, but the prices are terrible. We are drying as much of the crop as we can, hoping that the prices on dried cots will be better, but I doubt it. Since the government has cracked down on the wetbacks, we can't even get any cheap labor anymore.

(Jim places the book on the table. He realizes that he has placed it in Cabe's place, so he moves it to the next place, and Brack sits at the table to look at the book.)

Here it is.

(Jim runs his finger down the page)

Replacing trees, new cutting machines, drying trays, truck repairs, pruning, irrigation and so on. It all adds up to a bad year in the profit margin.

Brack

(Looking at the account book)

It isn't very good is it? Did we make anything?

Jim

(Going to the chair and sitting)

It looks like we will clear only a couple of hundred, maybe three. Frankly, we are going to need it. Some damn fool down in San Jacinta brought in some diseased trees from Mexico. Now it is spreading all over. Alex has found a spray that might protect the trees. They developed it at his school, but it will cost. Some of the orchards have been hit hard. As many as half their trees in a few days.

Brack

(Closing the book)

So we get nothing again this year?

Jim

Not exactly, the ranch increases in value. It is worth nearly eighty thousand now.

Brack

(Standing)

But Jim, that's what you said last year when you said you needed a new tractor.

Jim

I know.

Brack

(Moving to the mantle)

And the year before that the crop was bad. It's always been one thing or another.

Jim

It takes money Brack, you have to replace equipment.

Brack

Ok, but what about Dolly and me? You live here, you eat, sleep, and drink this place. Ww get notheing year after year. Gabe gave the ranch to both Dolly and Edith.

Jim

(Stands and goes to the pipe stand)

Brack, you know we want you here. We have asked you. Together we could make a go of it. You're the ones that wanted to live in the city.

Brack

(Moving in behind him)

There is nothing we can do then, is there?

Jim

(A quick glance at Brack)

What are you talking about?

Brack

(Crosses to Jim)

Gabe loved the land. He wanted to see the trees flower and bear fruit.

(Sarcastically)

He wanted his children to live here together in his "paradise."

(Pointing at the picture)

So he fixed us good didn't he. He made sure we would never leave. He was so sure of Edith, but not my Dolly. So he tied them together to this ranch. Dolly and I can't sell out or even sell our share because of that insane will. All we can do is get out without a cent of the old goat's money.

(Practically shouting)

Well we're not going to, Jim. We're not going to!

(Slams the book closed)

I came down here for one reason and one reason only.

(Suddenly Brack realizes that he has lost his temper. He calms down and goes on.)

Brack (con't.)

I have a client coming in tomorrow, so we can't stay. I want you and Edith to let me sell the ranch.

(Jim sits on the settee)

We can sell it if both Dolly and Edith will sign. I've checked. The will can't stop us then.

Jim

No.

Brack

We could split the money and you and Edith can buy another ranch or anything else you want.

Jim

I said no.

Brack

Jim, let me finish. I know that you have a pat little deal here. I can't make you, but at least look at this.

(He reaches in his pocket)

This is a contract with Amorex Chemical Co. They signed it and so has Dolly. All I need is Edith's signature. They want the whole place for a plant. Two hundred fifty thousand dollars. Just think, a quarter of a million. With your half you could buy two ranches like this.

Jim

(Handing it back)

It's fine Brack, but put it away. The answer is still no.

Brack

But why?

Jim

This is our home and Edith wants it for Alex. It isn't up to me anyway. You would have to get Edith to sign it. She won't.

Brack

(Placing the contract on the table)

But you could get her to do it.

Jim

I doubt it, but even if I could, I wouldn't. You see, Edith lives and breathes this ranch. It's part of her, like those damn Mopacs. She isn't interested in money.

(Knocking at the front door)

Just a minute.

(He starts to get up, but Brack, who is standing, goes over to the door)

Brack
That's ok, I'll get it.
(Offstage)

Lico. What can I do for you?

Lico
Hello Senor Brack, I did not know you come down. I want to see Senor Jim.

Jim
Who is it, Brack?

Brack
It's old Lico.

Jim
(Pouring a glass of whisky)
Tell him to come back tomorrow.

Lico
(Stepping into sight)
I can see him, no?

Brack
Right. No. He'll talk to you tomorrow.

Lico
No. Tonight. He will talk to me tonight. I want to talk now. He will talk.
(He tries to come in and Brack restrains him. Brack is surprised by Lico's demanding tone.)

Jim
(Puts the drink down and goes to the door)
I'll handle it. Why don't you fix yourself a drink.

Brack
Where is...?

Jim
On the buffet.
(Brack goes over and is fixing a drink, but is listening to them.)

Lico
I need money, Senor Jim. Much money.

Jim
I thought so. Forget it Lico. Go sleep it off.

Lico
(Flares)
Not for me, for Juanita. For Juanita su hija. For her, not for me.

(Brack perks up on this and moves a little toward the doorway. He is hidden from them by the angle of the hallway.)

Jim

Shut up.

Lico

You no understand. She is big with child.

Jim

I said shut up.

(He looks toward Brack anxiously)

I'll talk to you tomorrow.

(Jim tries to steer him toward the door.)

Lico

No. We talk now. Es su sangre en ella. It is your fault.

Brack

Just a minute, Jim. Come here, Lico.

(He crosses to the doorway and leads lico down to the settee)

Jim

Keep out of this Brack. It's none of your business. He's just drunk and wants money so he can buy more tequilla.

Brack

(Standing in front of Lico)

Look Jim, my Spanish may be rusty, but my brain isn't.

Jim

But Brack...

Brack

(Interrupting)

What did you say before Lico, "su hija," doesn't that mean "your daughter"? Is that what it means, Lico?

Jim

Lico...

Brack

Now Jim, you shut up for a change. Is that what it means, Lico?

Lico

(Shaking head and ruffling hat)

No comprende, Senor Brack.

Brack

Damn it. So you don't understand. What is it Lico? What's he got on you?

Jim

Lico, go home.
(He starts to go)

Brack

Sit down.
(He pushes him back down)

Jim

(Angrily, raising cane)
This is my home.

Brack

(Seeing the cane)
Your home is it. Is it really. Go ahead. Hit me with that thing if you are still man enough to do it.

Jim

(Defeated, Jim lowers the cane and goes to the drink of whisky that he had poured earlier.)
He just wants some money. I'll take care of it tomorrow. He's been drinking. He doesn't know what he is saying. We were going to talk about the ranch, remember?

Brack

Look, Jim, cut the act. I heard what he said.

Jim

(Moving away to the left of the table)
What he said? Tell him Lico, tell him how you get mixed up. He meant to say "my" instead of "your".

Lico

Si, Senor Brack, I get mixed up.

Brack

(Mocking him)
Si, Si, you get mixed up. You Mexes "no comprende" except when you get paid or swim the river.

(He turns and goes upstage a few steps. He remembers what Edith said earlier and he pulls a bluff. He turns back to Lico.)
I should turn you in, Lico. You're a wetback.

Lico

(Hastily)
No, I Mericano.

Brack

Listen you old wetback. I'm going to turn you over and they will throw you in prison.

Lico
No. No. They just send back.

Jim
That's right Lico, they would just send you back. Have you played enough games, Brack?

Brack
You see, Lico. It was just a game. I'm not going to tell anyone and neither is Jim. Is he? Because you know something about him, too. Si, Lico. Si. Si.
(Brack nods and smiles. Lico looks sharply at Jim, who is starring at him.)

Jim
Lico!

Brack
(Going to the mantle and pouring a drink)
Don't worry, Jim. He isn't going to tell me that Juanita is your daughter.
(Turns)
Isn't she?
(Moves in behind Jim)
Isn't she? Oh, don't say it, Jim. You don't have to.
(He throws down the drink)
All you have to do is help me to get Edith to sign that piece of paper.
(Points to contract on the table)

Jim
But Brack, I...
(He is cut off by the incoming Edith. Her fists are clenched and she has them raised to her face. She is out of breath and has a horrified look on her face. She stops, looks at them, utters a guttural sound and she goes to the mantle beneath her father's picture. She picks up the music box and opens it. She hears music, but there really isn't any. As she listens her expression and actions turn from panic to a relative calmness.)
Edith, what is it? What happened?

Dolly
(She doesn't answer. She just listens to the music box. Dolly enters, she has been running also.)
Edith. Edith, what is it.
(Dolly goes to Edith, but she ignores them)

Jim
What happened, Dolly?

Dolly

I don't know. We were looking at the trees when suddenly she cried out. I turned and she was running toward the house. Maybe she fell.

(To Edith)

Did you hurt yourself?

Jim

(Jim crosses to Edith and closes the music box. She wheels around and crosses to Gabe's chair and places her hands on the back of it. The panic enters her again.)

Edith, what is it?

Edith

(Voice breaking, turning to Jim)

We...we went to see the trees. There was a withered branch.

(Starting to cry)

There was a withered branch on mine.

Jim

A withered branch? Surely not at this time of the year.

Edith

The leaves were brown and the others were turning. All over the tree. Jim, Jim, I think my tree is dying.

(She returns to the music box and reopens it.)

Jim

Now Edith.

(To Dolly)

Was it?

Dolly

(She nods)

Well yes...

Jim

(He sticks his head out the kitchen door)

Alex, come here.

(Alex enters)

I'm afraid we have some infected trees.

Alex

How do you know? Where? Which part?

Jim

Your mother's Mopacs. Do we have any gasoline.

Alex

There is some in the garage. Are you sure it is...

Jim
 (Leading Alex to the door)
 No, but if it is they will have to be destroyed now. Take Lico.
 (Alex and Lico exit. Jim starts out also)
 Coming Brack? You wanted to see what a Mopac was.

Brack
 I'll be right with you. Go ahead.
 (Jim exits)
 (Brack takes Dolly aside)
 See if you can get her to sign it.
 (Indicating the contract)

Dolly
 But not now.

Brack
 Now. I want to get that contract signed and get out of here.
 (He exits)

Dolly
 (Returning to Edith)
 Can I get you something?
 (Edith ignores her)
 Can I get you something?
 (Dolly goes to the kitchen door, Edith turns and moves to the table.)
 Juanita, fix me a damp cloth for Edith.
 (She sees that Edith has moved, she reaches for the music box which is before Edith on the table.)
 You must put that away. Here, I'll do it.

Edith
 (Slams it shut, and is firm again)
 No.

Dolly
 Edith?

Edith
 Don't touch it.

Dolly
 But dear...

Edith
 (Clutching it to her)
 I can put it away myself Dolly, so I can find it again. You always wanted the pretty things daddy gave me. Especially this.

Dolly
 (Shocked)
 I don't want your...

Edith
I didn't mean that Dolly, I'm sorry. Sometimes I forget that we aren't like that anymore.

Dolly
Edith, this ranch is too hard on you. Have you and Jim ever taken a nice long vacation? I think that you and Jim need to go away for awhile. For a rest.

Edith
Where?

Dolly
Anywhere. Away from here.

Edith
Don't be silly, Dolly.

Juanita
(Juanita entering)
What is wrong, Senora Edith?
(She sits next to Edith)

Edith
Nothing dear.
(Taking the damp towel and wiping her brow)
Dolly is telling me that I should go away for awhile.

Juanita
Where?

Edith
(Rising and laughing, she puts the cloth down and moves away.)
See Dolly, where? Where shall I go?

Dolly
I only meant...

Edith
(Moving around the table to stage left)
I know, but Dolly I have nowhere to go. I have my family here, and besides, who would work the ranch while we were all gone? Besides, maybe the family will be larger soon.
(She smiles back at Juanita, who flushes at this)
You do like him don't you, Juanita? And I think he, well, it's none of my business.

Juanita
(Hesitatingly)
Then you know.

A PRODUCTION BOOK FOR
THE WITHERED BRANCH

by

FRANK JAMES NACCARATO

B.A., Saint Mary of the Plains College, 1965

AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S THESIS

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requirements for the degree

MASTER OF ARTS

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This production book of The Withered Branch is a record of a production at Kansas State University in December, 1966. The play was written and directed by the writer of this thesis. The specific purposes of this production book are: first, to record the influences of dramatic form on my writing, using The Withered Branch as a specific case; second, to compare The Withered Branch with Riders to the Sea in relation to tragedy and melodrama; third, to decide the dramatic form of the original play; fourth, to describe the writing and eventual production; and finally, to provide a recorded account of play-making and experimental production that may serve others who would write or direct.

This production book has a natural division. The first part is a description of the creative process involved in writing and directing. The first half is divided into sections. Section One deals with understanding the nature of tragedy and the problems involved with classification of dramatic literature. Section Two concerns the nature of melodrama and its relationship to tragedy. Section Three is a comparison of The Withered Branch with Riders to the Sea and their relationship to the previous chapters. Section Four is a description of the play starting with its background and ending with its production.

Part Two of this production book describes the production as the audiences saw it. Included are descriptions of the characters, costumes, makeup, the set, properties, sound

effects, and lighting cues, because of their direct influence on the production. A prompt script is included with cue sheets, photographs, sketches, and charts, including rehearsal and performance data. These are included as part of this record as visual evidence of the production. This book, then, is an attempt to describe both the creative and practical processes involved in production. The allotted budget for this show was \$150.00. A list of the expenditures is included.