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This is a collection of fourteen original essays from a team of leading scholars in the field. In this wide-ranging volume, the contributors cover a healthy sampling of Williams's works, from the early apprenticeship years in the 1930s through to his last play before his death in 1983, *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*. In addition to essays on such major plays as *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, among others, the contributors also consider selected minor plays, short stories, poems, and biographical concerns. *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams* also features a chapter on selected key productions as well as a bibliographic essay surveying the major critical statements on the dramatist.

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THE CAMBRIDGE
COMPANION TO
TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

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THE CAMBRIDGE
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EDITED BY
MATTHEW C. ROUDANÉ
Georgia State University



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[More information](#)

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
 The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
 The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, United Kingdom
 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
 10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, Melbourne 3166, Australia

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First published 1997

Typeset in Sabon 10/13 pt. [CE]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress cataloging in publication data

The Cambridge companion to Tennessee Williams / edited by Matthew C. Roudané.

p. cm. – (Cambridge companions to literature)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 49533 4 (hardback). – ISBN 0 521 49883 x (paperback)

1. Williams, Tennessee, 1911–1983 – Criticism and interpretation.
2. Southern States – In literature. I. Roudané, Matthew Charles, 1953–. II. Series.

PS3545-15365Z614 1997

812'.54-dc21 97-40036

CIP

ISBN 0 521 49533 4 hardback

ISBN 0 521 49883 x paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2003

Cambridge University Press
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For Susan and Nickolas

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ALLEAN HALE, Adjunct Professor of Theatre at the University of Illinois, is a specialist in Tennessee Williams studies. Her many publications in literary and theatre journals include "Tennessee Williams" in Gale's *Contemporary Literary Criticism*, volume 45. She was an opening lecturer at the Twentieth-Century American Playwrights Exhibit at the University of Texas in 1994 and has participated in scholarly panels nationwide. A consultant for two PBS television documentaries, *Tennessee Williams – Orpheus of the American Stage*, and *Tennessee Williams' Dragon Country*, she is also a contributing editor of the *Tennessee Williams Literary Journal*. In progress is a book with Nancy Tischler on Williams's late plays.

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Times Book Review. She has written books and articles on various other subjects – Southern literature, modern drama, religion, and women, but has continued to work on Tennessee Williams. She has been a member of the editorial board for the *Tennessee Williams Newsletter* and *Journal*, and has contributed to a number of collections and studies of Williams. Currently, with Albert Devlin, Professor of the University of Missouri, she is editing the “Collected Letters of Tennessee Williams” for publication by New Directions in 1999.

CHRONOLOGY

- 1911 *26 March* Born Thomas Lanier Williams in Columbus, Mississippi to Cornelius Coffin and Edwina Dakin Williams. Sister Rose Isabel born on 17 November 1909.
- 1911–18 Tom and Rose live with their mother and her parents, the Rev. and Mrs. Walter Dakin, in the Episcopal rectory of various Southern towns, as Tom's father is often absent as a traveling salesman. At five, in Clarksdale, Tom has diphtheria with complications that leave him an invalid for two years.
- 1918 *July* Family moves to St. Louis, Missouri to live with father who has been made branch manager of International Shoe Company. Tom fears father, who taunts him, calling him "Miss Nancy."
- 1919 *21 February* Brother Walter Dakin born.
- 1924–26 Writes first story, "Isolated," for junior high-school newspaper, and later, travel articles for the high school-paper, finds his first girlfriend in Hazel Kramer.
- 1927 Wins third prize (\$5) from the magazine *Smart Set* for his answer to the question "Can a Good Wife Be a Good Sport?" and published there. Also wins a prize for a movie review of *Stella Dallas*.
- 1928 *July* Short story "The Vengeance of Nitocris" is published in magazine *Weird Tales*. Tours Europe with his maternal grandfather.
- 1929 Enters the University of Missouri in September and joins a

CHRONOLOGY

- fraternity. Becomes the first freshman ever to receive honorable mention in a contest, for his play *Beauty Is the Word*.
- 1930 Earns money during summer vacation by selling *Pictorial Review*.
- 1932 Father withdraws him from the university after the winter semester, presumably for failing ROTC. Begins working at International Shoe Company and spends his nights writing.
- 1934 Story "Stella for Star" wins first place in amateur contest.
- 1935 *Spring* Claims he has a heart attack, and recuperates at his grandparents' home in Memphis.
 12 July First production of his one-act play *Cairo! Shanghai! Bombay!* by Memphis Garden Players.
- 1936 *Autumn* Sees Alla Nazimova perform in Henrik Ibsen's *Ghosts* and is inspired to be a playwright. Enrolls in Washington University, St. Louis, where he published poetry in the college magazine, *Manuscript*, and wins top prize in a poetry contest. "27 Wagons Full of Cotton" is later adapted into two plays and a film.
 Begins his literary association with Clark Mills. Receives an acceptance letter from Harriet Monroe of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* for "My Love Was Light," a poem. This is the first hint of a national career in the making.
- 1937 First full-length plays are produced, *Candles to the Sun* and *Fugitive Kind*, by the amateur group the Mummies in St. Louis, whose director, Willard Holland, became another early influence of Williams. Transfers to the University of Iowa, where he studies playwriting and production. Has several short plays produced.
- 1938 *August* Graduates with BA degree in English from the University of Iowa.
- 1939 Lives briefly in several places in the Midwest, South, and West, including New Orleans in the French Quarter, and it may have

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- been here that he has his first extended homosexual experience. First uses the name “Tennessee” as the author of “The Field of Blue Children,” published in *Story* magazine.
 Four plays under the title *American Blues* win \$100 in a contest organized by the Group Theatre. His plays are sent to literary agent Audrey Wood. Travels to Taos, New Mexico, where he visits Frieda Lawrence, and returns to St. Louis, where he works on *Battle of Angels*.
September First meeting with Audrey Wood, who becomes his agent.
December Awarded a Rockefeller Foundation grant of \$1,000.
- 1940 *January* Moves to New York to enroll in an advanced playwriting seminar taught by John Gassner at The New School for Social Research. In February, students stage his one-act play *The Long Goodbye*, the first of his plays to be seen in New York. Leaves New York for travels to Memphis and Provincetown, on Cape Cod, where he has his first sustained homosexual affair.
30 December *Battle of Angels* opens in Boston but quickly closes after a censorship controversy; is revised as *Orpheus Descending* in 1957.
- 1941–42 Lives in a variety of locations, including Key West, Florida, and New Orleans, and works at a variety of jobs. Starts the story “Portrait of a Girl in Glass,” which will be developed into *The Glass Menagerie*.
- 1943 *Spring* Returns to St. Louis. His sister Rose is institutionalized for schizophrenia and undergoes prefrontal lobotomy.
April Audrey Wood gets him a job as a scriptwriter for MGM and he moves to California.
May While writing a film script for Lana Turner, develops “Portrait of a Girl in Glass” into a screenplay, “The Gentleman Caller.”
October Loses his Hollywood job. *You Touched Me!* opens in Cleveland.
- 1944 *6 January* Grandmother dies.
April Awarded \$1,000 by the National Institute of Arts and Letters for *Battle of Angels*.

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- July* *The Purification* is produced in Pasadena, California, under the direction of Margo Jones.
26 December *The Glass Menagerie* premieres in Chicago.
- 1945 *January or February* Starts working on *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
31 March *The Glass Menagerie* opens on Broadway and wins the New York Drama Critics' Circle, Donaldson, and Sidney Howard Memorial awards.
25 September *You Touched Me!* opens in New York.
- 1946 *27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays* published.
January or February Starts living with Pancho Rodriguez y Gonzalez.
Summer Beginning of friendship with Southern novelist Carson McCullers. May begins work on *Summer and Smoke*.
October May begins drafting *Camino Real*.
- 1947 *8 July* *Summer and Smoke* opens in Dallas.
3 December *A Streetcar Named Desire* opens in New York starring Jessica Tandy, Marlon Brando, Karl Malden, and Kim Stanley. It wins the Pulitzer Prize for drama and the Donaldson and New York Drama Critics' Circle awards, the first work ever to win all three.
 Meets Frank Merlo.
- 1948 Visits Europe, including London, where John Gielgud is preparing a production of *The Glass Menagerie*. A first collection of fiction, *One Arm and Other Stories* and *American Blues: Five Short Plays*, published.
6 October *Summer and Smoke* opens in New York. This same month, Frank Merlo moves in with him, the beginning of a fourteen-year relationship. He moves Rose to a private clinic.
 Meets Maria Britneva, the Lady St. Just.
- 1949 *April* Goes to London, where *A Streetcar Named Desire* is about to open.
Winter Works on *The Rose Tattoo*.
- 1950 A novel, *The Roman Spring of Mrs. Stone* is published, and the film of *The Glass Menagerie* is released.
29 December *The Rose Tattoo* opens in Chicago.

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- 1951 3 February *The Rose Tattoo* opens in New York, and wins a Tony award. Film version of *A Streetcar Named Desire* released.
- 1952 *A Streetcar Named Desire* film version wins the New York Film Critics' Circle Award. Elected to the National Institute of Arts and Letters.
- 1953 19 March *Camino Real* opens in New York.
Works on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.
- 1954 Publishes *Hard Candy: A Book of Stories* and continues working on *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*.
October Starts filming *The Rose Tattoo*.
- 1955 14 February Maternal grandfather dies.
24 March *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opens in New York, where it runs for 694 performances, winning the Pulitzer Prize, and the New York Drama Critics' Circle and Donaldson awards.
Film version of *The Rose Tattoo* is released.
- 1956 Film *Baby Doll* opens in New York. A first collection of poems, *In the Winter of Cities*, published.
Spring Relationship with Frank Merlo deteriorating.
Summer In Rome, verging on a nervous breakdown.
- 1957 21 March *Orpheus Descending* opens in New York.
May Father dies.
June Starts psychoanalysis with Dr. Lawrence Kubie.
- 1958 7 January *Garden District (Suddenly Last Summer and Something Unspoken)* opens off-Broadway and (16 September) in London.
30 January *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* opens in London. The film version starring Elizabeth Taylor and Paul Newman is released.
June Breaks off analysis with Dr. Kubie and leaves for Europe.
29 December *Period of Adjustment* opens in Miami.
- 1959 15 January *The Rose Tattoo* opens in London.
10 March *Sweet Bird of Youth* opens in New York.
April Goes to Cuba, where he meets Ernest Hemingway and Fidel Castro.

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- Screen version of *Suddenly Last Summer* starring Elizabeth Taylor, Katherine Hepburn, and Montgomery Clift, is released.
- 1960 10 November *Period of Adjustment* opens in New York. *The Fugitive Kind* (the movie of *Orpheus Descending*) is released.
- 1961 28 December *The Night of the Iguana* premieres, and he later wins his fourth New York Drama Critics' Circle Award.
- 1962 11 July *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* opens at the Spoleto Festival in Italy. Film versions of *Sweet Bird of Youth* and *Period of Adjustment* released.
- 1963 16 January *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* opens in New York. September Frank Merlo dies of cancer. Williams enters period of depression.
- 1964 Film version of *The Night of the Iguana* released.
- 1965 Receives Brandeis University Creative Arts Award.
- 1966 22 February *Slapstick Tragedy (The Mutilated and The Gnädiges Fräulein)* opens in New York. *The Knightly Quest: A Novella and Four Short Stories* published.
- 1967 First version of *The Two-Character Play* produced in London.
- 1968 27 March *Kingdom of Earth (The Seven Descents of Myrtle)* opens in New York. *Boom!*, the film version of *The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore* opens.
- 1969 January Baptized as a Roman Catholic in Key West. 11 May *In the Bar of a Tokyo Hotel* opens in New York. September–December Enters Barnes Hospital, St. Louis, for psychiatric care.

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- 1970 *Dragon Country: A Book of Plays* published. Interviewed on “The David Frost Show.”
- 1971 First volume of *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams* published by New Directions. Second version of *The Two-Character Play* (titled *Out Cry*) revived in Chicago. Audrey Wood, Williams’s literary agent for thirty-two years, is replaced by Bill Barnes. *March* *Summer and Smoke* (opera by Lanford Wilson and Lee Hoiby). *November* *The Eccentricities of a Nightingale* produced in New York.
- 1972 *April* *Small Craft Warnings* opens for a successful run off-Broadway. Williams makes his acting debut as Doc.
- 1973 1 *March* Third version of *The Two-Character Play, Out Cry*, has its New York premiere. Awarded the first Centennial Medal of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. Notorious *Playboy* interview appears in April.
- 1974 *Eight Mortal Ladies Possessed: A Book of Stories* published. *May* *The Latter Days of a Celebrated Soubrette*, a reworking of *The Gnädiges Fräulein* opens and closes after one off-Broadway performance. *July* Revival of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in Connecticut, and in September, on Broadway.
- 1975 Receives Medal of Honor for Literature, National Arts Club. A second novel, *Moise and the World of Reason*, and his autobiographical *Memoirs*, which deals openly with his homosexuality, are both published. *June* *The Red Devil Battery Sign* plays briefly in Boston and New York opening postponed; revised versions later produced in Vienna (1976) and London (1977). *August* *Out Cry* opens in New York. *September* Revival of *Summer and Smoke* in New York. *October* Revival of *Sweet Bird of Youth* in New York. *December* Revival of *The Glass Menagerie* in New York.
- 1976 16 *January* *This Is (An Entertainment)* opens in San Francisco. *Letters to Donald Windham 1940–1965* published. A second volume of poems, *Androgyne, Mon Amour*, is published.

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- 1977 11 May *Vieux Carré* opens in New York.
 June *The Red Devil Battery Sign* opens in London.
- 1978 June *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* opens in Charleston, South Carolina and at Spoleto Festival.
 Tiger Tale, stage version of the film *Baby Doll*, opens in Atlanta.
 Where I Live: Selected Essays published. Mitch Douglas becomes Williams's third literary agent.
- 1979 10 January *A Lovely Sunday for Creve Coeur* opens in New York.
 September *Kitche, Kutchen, und Kinder* opens in New York.
 December Honored at Kennedy Center by President Carter.
- 1980 24 January *Will Mr. Merriweather Return from Memphis?* inaugurates the Tennessee Williams Performing Arts Center, Key West.
 26 March *Clothes for a Summer Hotel* opens in New York.
 1 June Mother dies.
 Appointed Distinguished Writer-in-Residence at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver.
- 1981 Spring 1981/Spring 1982 *A House Not Meant to Stand* produced, Chicago. *The Notebook of Trigorin*, Williams's adaptation of Chekhov's *The Seagull*, produced at Vancouver Playhouse.
 24 August *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*, his last play to be produced in New York during his lifetime, opens. He, along with Harold Pinter, wins the prestigious Commonwealth Award, which carries an \$11,000 prize.
- 1982 Receives honorary doctorate from Harvard University.
- 1983 24 or 25 February Dies at the Hotel Elysee, New York City, from choking on a cap from a medicine bottle.
 5 March Funeral at St. Louis Cathedral.
- 1984 Publication of *Stopped Rocking and Other Screenplays*.
- 1986 New Directions publishes *Tennessee Williams: The Collected Stories*, with an introduction by Gore Vidal.

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- 1987 *Ten by Tennessee*, two evenings of one-act plays, produced in May in New York. *Conversations with Tennessee Williams*, a collection of interviews, is published.
- 1990 *Five O’Clock Angel, Letters of Tennessee Williams to Maria St. Just, 1948–1982* published.
- 1995 New Directions publishes *Something Cloudy, Something Clear*. Lyle Leverich’s *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams, volume 1*, which Williams authorized, is published. George Crandell’s *Tennessee Williams, A Descriptive Bibliography*, which documents every work by Williams, is published.
- 1996 *5 September The Notebooks of Trigorin* opens at Cincinnati Playhouse in the Park.