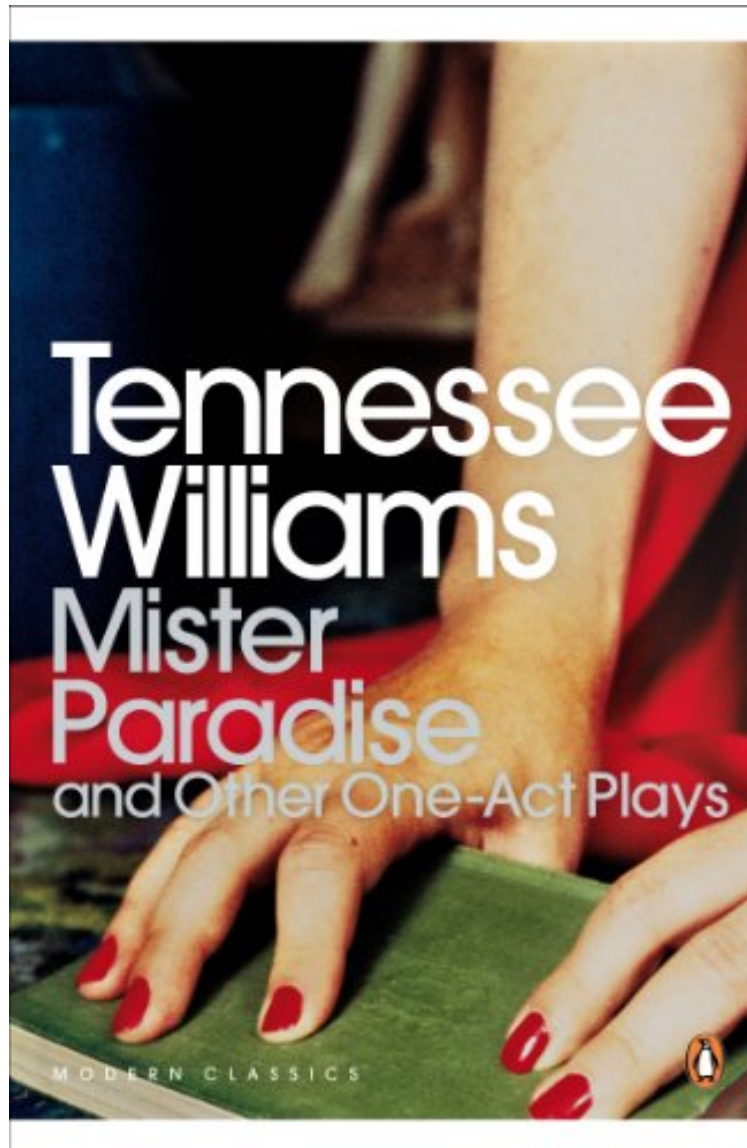


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Tennessee Williams

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Paradise And Other One Act Plays (Penguin Modern Classics):

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. For a paperBy Dame de DramaAll the Tennessee Williams books

have been purchased for a dissertation. I have bought anything on him. Yadah, Yadah, Yadah to fulfill the stupid word count restrictions

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Thirteen one-act plays by Tennessee Williams published for the first time

By A Reader This is a collection of one-act plays by Tennessee Williams, most from the 1930s and 1940s, all appearing in print for the first time and now beginning to be performed. Many would fall in the category of "minor works," but if you enjoy Williams, you will want to read these as examples of his development as a young writer. The early one-acts show his ability to write beautifully, to address the human dilemma, and to reproduce the voices he heard around him, believably and authentically ("Thank You, Kind Spirit"). There are typical Williams themes, such as the overbearing mother and frustrated children ("Why Do You Smoke So Much, Lily?" and "Summer at the Lake"). "These Are the Stairs You Got to Watch" dramatizes the same situation as the stories "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio" and "Hard Candy," although perhaps not as successfully. "Adam and Eve on a Ferry," about D. H. Lawrence, is a humorous companion piece to "I Rise in Flame, Cried the Phoenix." With their small numbers of characters and minimal staging requirements, these plays would be good for student drama groups and amateur and small theaters. Although it is a short play, "The Municipal Abattoir" (1966) is very effective--and terrifying. The setting is an unspecified Latin American dictatorship, only slightly unreal. The theme is the destruction and murder of the individual, body and soul, by an oppressive government/state apparatus. This play belongs to a certain strain in Williams' work and resembles earlier and later stories and plays like "The Knightly Quest," "The Red Devil Battery Sign," and "The Chalky White Substance." The last play in the collection, written between 1957 and 1962, "And Tell Sad Stories of the Deaths of Queens..." is excellent. The times have since caught up with Williams and audiences today, or at least some audiences, will be able to watch this play about a New Orleans drag queen and a rough merchant seaman without prejudice or discomfort and be able to see it as an exploration of character and situation. The relationship between the two main characters somewhat resembles that between Blanche and Stanley in "A Streetcar Named Desire." The editors have provided an informative introduction and meticulous notes to the plays. They are conscientious about making clear all their reconstruction efforts, including a certain degree of interpretation, for texts that are not complete or exist in variants. While it may not be worth publishing everything that Tennessee Williams ever wrote, this volume shows that there is still material in the archives for consideration, and there may be more in store for us. Thanks to New Directions and the editors for their work in bringing out this volume and promoting the full rediscovery of this extraordinary writer.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. From tiny acorns... By krebsman Although Tennessee Williams provided the world theatre with nearly a dozen full-length plays that are still continually done, from the very beginning until the end of his life he also worked in the one-act form. "This Property Is Condemned" and "Twenty-seven Wagons Full of Cotton" are classics of the genre. The short plays collected in this volume were mostly discovered after his death and have been published posthumously. The first few selections would probably be more aptly classified as juvenilia and are really more vignettes than actual plays. And to tell the truth, we probably wouldn't be interested in them at all if their author were not Tennessee Williams. However, their author WAS Tennessee Williams and for that reason they command our attention. We can see the small seeds that later blossomed into more fully realized work. "These Are the Stairs You Got to Watch," set in a run-down movie theatre where unsavory acts are performed by audience members in the balcony brings to mind the short stories, "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio" and "Hard Candy." "Mr. Paradise" has echoes of "Lord Byron's Love Letter" and "Auto-Da-Fe." "The Palooka" and "Escape" show traces of NOT ABOUT NIGHTINGALES and "Why Do You Smoke So Much, Lily?" and "Summer at the Lake" foreshadow THE GLASS MENAGERIE. "The Pink Bedroom" and "The Fat Man's Wife" are more fully developed and could truly be called plays. These are both bittersweet comedies about adultery and could provide good material for actors looking for scenes to perform in acting classes. The other plays are somewhat more profound. "Thank You Kind Sprit" is a sad play about faith. It deals with an ancient Negress who conducts spiritualist meetings in New Orleans' French Quarter. Her session is interrupted by boorish people who denounce her as a phony and destroy her "temple," leaving her bereft of everything except for a crippled child who still believes in her. (This one would make a good television film, I think.) "The Municipal Abattoir" deals with people living in a totalitarian regime and has a lot in common with some of Caryl Churchill's work. "Adam and Eve on a Ferry," like another Williams short play, "I Rise in Flame Cried the Phoenix," deals with D.H. Lawrence. The best of the plays in this volume is "And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens..." This play was one he worked on sporadically for decades and provides insight into the mind of Williams like none of the other one-acts. Set in The French Quarter, it deals with a lonely transvestite who has been jilted and now seeks new love from men who are unable and unwilling to give it to "her." But it has a layer of symbolism that is equal to SUDDENLY, LAST SUMMER. None of these plays could be called an undiscovered masterpiece, but for Williams scholars, they provide a valuable source of insight into the major works. I also think these plays could be inspirational to beginning playwrights simply because they are so primitive. This is how Tennessee Williams started and look how much he developed. It shows the power of persistence and the value of continuing to write even if the early results are not all that great. This volume includes a breezy introduction by actors Anne Jackson and Eli Wallach as well as some excellent notes by the editors, Nicholas Moschovakis and David Roessel.

The greatest playwright of the American South, Tennessee Williams used his talent throughout his life to create brief plays exploring many of the themes that dominated his best-known works. Here, thirteen never-before-published one-act dramas reveal some of his most poignant and hilarious characters. From the indefatigable, witty and tough drag queens of *And Tell Sad Stories of the Death of Queens* to the disheartened poet *Mister Paradise*, and the extravagant mistress in *The Pink Bedroom*, these are tales of isolated figures struggling against a cruel world, who refuse to lose sight of their dreams.