



27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays

Tennessee Williams

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They are full of the perception of life as it is, and the passion for life as it ought to be, which have made *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* classics of the American theater.

Only one of these plays (*The Purification*) is written in verse, but in all of them the approach to character is by way of poetic revelation. Whether Williams is writing of derelict roomers in a New Orleans boarding house (*The Lady of Larkspur Lotion*) or the memories of a venerable traveling salesman (*The Last of My Solid Gold Watches*) or of delinquent children (*This Property is Condemned*), his insight into human nature is that of the poet. He can compress the basic meaning of life—its pathos or its tragedy, its bravery or the quality of its love—into one small scene or a few moments of dialogue.

Mr. Williams's views on the role of the little theater in American culture are contained in a stimulating essay, "Something wild...", which serves as an introduction to this collection.

27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays Details

Date : Published January 17th 1966 by New Directions (first published 1945)

ISBN : 9780811202251

Author : Tennessee Williams

Format : Paperback 238 pages

Genre : Plays, Drama, Theatre, American, Southern, Fiction

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From Reader Review 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and Other Plays for online ebook

Allison says

Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen is another of my favorite plays of all time. Love it.

j_ay says

27 Wagons Full of Cotton, The Purification, The Lady of Larkspur, Lotion, The Last of My Solid Gold Watches, Portrait of a Madonna, Auto-Da-Fe, Lord Byron's Love Letter, The Strangest Kind of Romance, The Long Good-bye, Hello from Bertha, This Property Is Condemned, Talk to Me Like the Rain..., Something Unspoken, The Unsatisfactory Supper, Steps Must be Gentle, The Demolition Downtown

Poly says

Me encantó, me encanta Flora... me encanta todo ><

Drew says

You want some dreamers? You've got it: "The Lady of Larkspur Lotion." How about a doomed romance? You've got that, too: "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen." You need sadism? mendacity? Southern gothic crassness? There's the titular play for all of that and more. In short, every one of Williams' signature elements appears here in short form via a one-act play. In a way, it's like a collection of snackable versions of his masterpieces plus a couple of oddballs to boot.

Michelle says

Contains This Property is Condemned.

Joe says

I played Vicarro in a stage version. One of my favorites.

Xavier says

The first time I read this book I was in high school and it has stayed with me ever since. One play in particular, "Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen." As a Williams play, it's subtext is thick and weighty, it's nameless protagonist desperate like the rest of them.

Ananya Ghosh says

I've previously read and loved Tennessee Williams' work, so when I saw this interesting title, I knew I had to pick it up. But this being a library issue, I couldn't finish it. I could only read the first 7 out of the 13 plays, but I loved most of them, and think it deserves 3.8★

This is a book of small plays, mostly one act ones, divided into various scenes. Most of the plays are characteristically poetic, however quite varied in subject and have been united only on the basis of being one act plays, perhaps, because I found no other connecting thread.

All these plays are woven around only a handful of characters, sometimes, only 2-3 of them, and sometimes include more in secondary roles and hence are very character driven.

1. 27 Wagons full of cotton- it is the first and title play of the collection and has some of the strength of A Streetcar named Desire. It tells the story of a cotton gin owner who commits arson on a factory to get more consignment and how his wife has to pay for that crime. I loved the writing and execution, I just didn't like the fact that the play ends without the husband coming to know of his wife's battery.
2. The Purification- it is a very lyrical and musical play centred on a family ravaged by incestuous passions, leading to the murder of the daughter of the family by her husband who cannot stand her brother's and hers passion for each other. The play constitutes a community trial of the husband and while the verdict is given, it appears that he evades it. The ending is quite unclear, actually.
3. The Lady of Larkspur Lotion- it reminded me of O. Henry's short stories with its conception and execution, with the high handed, emotional and dreamy use of language by the character of the aspiring author. It talks about dreamy characters who escape the realities of their lives by addiction and continue to dwell in poverty.
4. The Last of My Solid Gold Watches- it is a sad tale about a man's glorious career and life coming to an end and his inability to cope with that. But it also critiques the old generation's criticism of the new.
5. Portrait of a Madonna- it is centred on a senile, old spinster who fancies herself to have been? raped by a former lover. It again throws light on the difficulties of old age and is a good creation.
6. Auto-Da-Fé- it is the story of a mother and son, both ravaged by nervous problems, to which a mysterious letter with lewd pictures, a possibility of lawful conviction etc are added, leading to the nervous breakdown of the son, bringing doom to the household.
7. Lord Byron's Love Letter- it is about two women, a grandmother and her granddaughter, living in an old family residence that houses a love letter written by Lord Byron to the grandmother that they display to public on request, for a charge. It is hilarious in some parts, with the older woman's behaviour and a little

disheartening as the couple to come to see the letter leave without paying. But the end reveals the letter to be just by her grandfather.

I'm just waiting to get my hands on it again so that I can devour the rest of the plays. Recommend it to everyone interested in drama.

Roland says

Obviously with a collection of short plays there's gonna be some hits and misses, but there's enough good stuff in this that I highly recommend it. *This Property is Condemned* is heartbreaking, *27 Wagons* is disturbing, and *The Demolition Downtown* was a big surprise, since it felt almost sci fi. I wasn't wild about *The Last of My Solid Gold Watches* or *Steps Must be Gentle*, but the writing was interesting enough that I stayed engaged throughout.

Ali says

[illegible]

David Castro says

27 Wagons is my absolute favorite Williams peice. It is dark, sad and desperate. What more southern drama do you need? Oh and the female lead is called Babydoll. Need I say more.

Buscando Un camino says

Interesante obra de teatro corta del mismo autor de un tranvía llamado deseo. Como no he leído mucho este generó he preferido empezar con algo corto y la verdad es que la experiencia me ha gustado. No descarto embarcarme en algo de mayor envergadura ;)

Temu says

Short plays which are occasionally a bit more sketches than I would prefer, but there's still some quite strong writing involved. The best of the bunch are the stories 27 Wagons Full of Cotton and The Last of My Solid

Gold Watches. Have to think about the rest.

These short plays have Tennessee Williams' name written all around them. Very recognizable, the atmosphere is there all right.

Asa Merritt says

"This Property is Condemned" is my all-time favorite short.

Sannie Hald says

Only 'Portrait of a Madonna'

Isadora Wagner says

This is a great collection of short one-act plays from the early portion of Tennessee Williams' career. Stunning in its range and the vibrancy (as always) of characters.

Duffy Pratt says

Think of all the oddly placed Shakespeare adaptations -- Richard III in a 1930s Fascist state; Romeo and Juliet in a modern day South Beach, or on NY's upper west side; The Tempest in space (Forbidden Planet); Macbeth in feudal Japan (Throne of Blood). And that doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of odd off-Broadway productions where the director had an "idea." Many of these are truly awful, but for some reason it's tremendously easy to imagine Shakespeare in other places and at other times.

Which gets me to Tennessee Williams. I tend to like him. But reading these one act plays, for some reason it struck me how bound they seem to be to the American South in the blues/jazz era. That's how particular his work seems to me. When I think of his plays, I feel sweat. I see beads of water rolling down the outside of a glass with some sickly sweet liquor in it. Everything is both languid and intense. His characters tend to cry out for more shade.

The plays here are one acts. They came across to me as sketches, usually character sketches. And there's nothing wrong with that. There were at least three, and maybe more, takes on Blanche Dubois, refracted in different ways. For the most part, these plays seemed more like character reveals than truly dramatic. I may have been missing something, and might think differently about them if I saw them performed. But I didn't see all that much in the way of motion or momentum in the majority of them. And the characters, for the most part, seemed to me like revamps of characters I had already seen in his other plays. Thus, reading them didn't do all that much for me. But then again, reading really is a bad way to get introduced to plays. The sad thing is that there is basically little, or no, opportunity to see any of these things performed. That I would probably like.

Jaime says

27 Wagons, The Lady of Larkspur Lotion, The Strangest Kind of Romance and Something Unspoken are must-reads.

Megan says

A collection of 13 one-act plays, including some of Williams' most famous, such as "The Last of my Solid Gold Watches" and the titular "27 Wagons Full of Cotton"

"Talk to Me Like the Rain and Let Me Listen" is a favorite as well, but I especially like "The Purification"

Tennessee Williams is fantastic and his plays are just as engaging to read as to see performed, which definitely cannot be said of all playwrights.

The collection has an introduction by Williams' that is a short essay on his views about contemporary grass roots theater in America; he seems to be espousing that a sort of careless creative freedom is more necessary in socially potent art than high production values.

R.K. Cowles says

3 1/2 stars
