

A WEEKEND AT LILLIAN ALDWINKLE'S: AN ADAPTATION OF
TEXT, A DISCOVERY OF SELF

by

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This thesis depicts the journey of adapting Aldous Huxley's novel *Those Barren Leaves* into the play *A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle's*. This thesis provides the necessary history to contextualize what went into this adaptation, which includes research around Victorian and Edwardian theater and Aldous Huxley's practice of mysticism. Additionally, this thesis touches on adaptation theory and provides insight as to why and how *Those Barren Leaves* was selected for adaptation. Finally, this thesis includes a draft-by-draft summary of the writing process. Providing insight into personal creative practice, these honest, personal anecdotes reveal not only the process of adapting a play but also a journey of personal growth and discovery.

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Introduction

My Journey

I started my time at the University of Oregon as a psychology student, completely rejecting the idea of getting a degree in the arts. My plan was to get a “practical degree.” After taking a few theatre classes “for fun,” I decided to declare a theatre minor, and over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic that turned into a theatre major. As my time in the theatre major progressed, I felt as though I was interested in pursuing some type of writing project for my thesis. I was initially interested in writing a play or using my then double major in psychology to explore how mental health is portrayed in the theater.

At the beginning of my 3rd year, I was cast in a production of *A Christmas Carol* adapted by John Schmor. Here I discovered the benefits of working with a director who had adapted the material that was performed. As an actor, I was able to gain valuable insight into the intention that was put into writing the adaptation. For example, when my character was giving a monologue to help transition a scene into a rougher part of town, I was able to get feedback from John about why specific words were chosen, and how he felt they connected to the present. This feedback felt valuable to me as an actor and really improved my performance. Being a part of this project sparked my interest in adaptation. For my project, I thought that it might be interesting to adapt something and try to direct it.

This thesis illustrates my process of adapting Aldous Huxley’s novel *Those Barren Leaves* into the play *A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle’s*. Pulling from both academic sources and personal anecdotes, this thesis aims to provide: the historical context behind my adaptation, my journey as a first-time adaptor, and most importantly, my own self-discovery through this process.

Selection of Work

Originally, I was drawn to the process of adaptation through the idea of writing the Nancy Drew series into a staged play aimed at children and young teens. I grew up reading Nancy Drew. I believed that turning such a popular series into a play would be an interesting way to introduce more children to theatre while simultaneously providing myself with material that I felt passionate about. I also felt a desire to update Nancy Drew for a more modern audience.

Although the stories told in Nancy Drew are a perfect combination of fun and mystery, some of the characters and ideas expressed through the characters do not hold up today.

I wanted to find ways to make the stories visually theatrical and thus engaging for children. I thought about puppet shows, shadow plays, and singing, and I felt excited by all the ideas I had. In the end, though, I was unable to get the rights to adapt the Nancy Drew series, and my search continued. What I knew was that I wanted a project I felt passionate about. This initial spark of interest in Nancy Drew helped me frame the qualities I looked for when selecting a piece to adapt.

I knew at this point that I'd be smart to look at pieces in the public domain, available for use by anyone. As a rule of thumb, a novel is in the public domain if it has been over 100 years since the original publication date or 70 years since the author's death. Despite this general rule, there are many exceptions. Whether a piece is in public domain can depend on the country of publication, the specific year of publication, whether the novel was published with a copyright notice, and whether the copyright on the novel was renewed before it expired (Belmont, 1). Learning the basics of public domain was not a significant part of my selection process, but it took up a surprising amount of time. To streamline this process, I used a flowchart from Belmont University (see Appendix 2).

There was also the issue of popular books coming into the public domain and then being adapted almost immediately and licensed through large drama publishing companies. I wanted to work on something that wouldn't be influenced by what had come before. When you adapt something that is well-known, you must factor in the audience's expectation of the show they believe they will see (Hutcheon, 121); there is more risk associated with taking creative liberties in the process. Initially, anything by Agatha Christie was on the table, as were the works of Sherlock Holmes. Either author would quench my desire to adapt a mystery. The downside was that both authors had already been thoroughly adapted for television and cinema. I soon realized that the expectations surrounding works by these authors would inhibit my ability to take creative risks, so I turned my focus in a different direction.

I searched for a novel for adaptation for longer than I wanted to. "Just pick one," I thought. "Why can't you just pick?" But how do you "just pick"? It's not so easy when you're about to devote an entire year of your life to the project. For guidance, I turned to my mom and my dad, who both had backgrounds in literature. Together, we scoured the internet looking for possibilities. Finally, my dad read this Goodreads description aloud:

Aldous Huxley spares no one in his ironic, piercing portrayal of a group gathered in an Italian palace by the socially ambitious and self-professed lover of art, Mrs. Aldwinkle. Here, Mrs. Aldwinkle yearns to recapture the glories of the Italian Renaissance, but her guests ultimately fail to fulfill her naive expectations. Among her entourage are: a suffering poet and reluctant editor of the "Rabbit Fanciers' Gazette" who silently bears the widowed Mrs. Aldwinkle's desperate advances; a popular novelist who records every detail of her affair with another guest, the amorous Calamy, for future literary endeavors; and an aging sensualist philosopher who pursues a wealthy yet mentally-disabled heiress. Stripping the houseguests of their pretensions, Huxley reveals the superficiality of the cultural elite. Deliciously satirical, *Those Barren Leaves* bites the hands of those who dare to posture or feign sophistication and is as comically fresh today as when first published. (Goodreads).

After I heard this description, *Those Barren Leaves* immediately went onto my list for potential adaptation materials. I read the first chapter later that afternoon and fell in love with it. I found it

funny and reasonably accessible. *Those Barren Leaves* is a novel made up of five parts that are in and of themselves miniature stories all sharing the same characters, with connecting plotlines. I felt at the time that I would need to adapt only part 1, the most entertaining and accessible of the five. On the surface, this was all true.

Adaptation

Linda Hutcheon, author of *A Theory of Adaptation*, defines adaptation under three categories: formal entity or product, process, or creation, and finally, process of reception (7). Through these three categories, Hutcheon summarizes that adaptation is, “an acknowledged transcription of recognizable other work, a creative and interpretive act, and an extended intertextual engagement” (8). Additionally, Hutcheon discusses that an adaptation is a repetition of the work, but not a replication of the work (7). Under this theory, a writer would stick closely to the literal word “adapt” – i.e., to make something more suitable for the space it needs to inhabit or the viewers it needs to speak to.

Martin Puchner also writes in detail about the constraints surrounding adaptation. Relating to the third of three proposed models within a new theory around the relationship between the dramatic text and performance (the first being the dramatic text as a set of instructions and the second being dramatic text as an incomplete artwork), he notes that an adaptation must be created to suit the original text, context of the adaptation, conditions of the production and theater, nature of the actors, and the ideas surrounding theater at the time of the adaptation. He defines an adaptation as the entity between the original text and the performance. Puchner states that, “it is the adaptors who make the adaptation, but not as they please” (296).

Specifically writing about creating plays from literature, Vincent Murphy illuminates the importance of adaptation as an artistic medium. Murphy first describes the elevated significance that content found in literature can have when it is adapted for the stage. He notes that, “adaptation takes a story, and makes it life-size on the stage” (5). Puchner also underscores the challenge of adapting as reason enough to adapt a play; I’d have to say that I agree. I feel that the process of adapting art to fit another medium is challenging, yet vital to the story-telling process.

Finally, Puchner outlines six elements that are essential to writing an effective adaptation: theme, dialogue, character, imagery, storyline, and action (10). As I wrote my adaptation, I kept these key elements in the back of my mind.

Ironically, *Those Barren Leaves* is an adaptation itself, as the title of the book is derived from the poem “The Tables Turned” by William Woodsworth (Intra). The poem ends with the phrase:

Enough of Science and of Art.
Close up those barren leaves.
Come Forth, and bring with you a heart.
That Watches and Receives

While it is difficult to find sources of Huxley talking about the process of writing the novel, I would argue that along with the title of the novel, the content of *Those Barren Leaves* is an effective loose adaptation of *The Tables Turned*. As will be discussed later, Huxley was a big proponent of mysticism and the abandonment of material items and attitudes. We can see this idea around the abandonment of material things reflected in the lines, “enough of science and of art.” In his novel, Huxley blends his own ideas about self-actualization with the basis provided by the poem. While not what we would traditionally consider an adaptation, it is evident that there is a relationship between the two.

Edwardian and Victorian Theatre

The terms “Edwardian” and “Victorian” are sometimes thought of interchangeably when talking about the period around the turn of the 19th century. Despite this, there is a difference between these two periods. The first, and most obvious distinction is the time periods themselves, all of which are connected to the British monarchy. The Victorian era, which is named after the rule of Queen Victoria, begins with the queen’s coronation in 1837 and ends with her death in 1901. The Edwardian period begins with the coronation of King Edward VII in 1901 and ends with his death in 1910. There are also notable distinctions to be made in architecture styles, fashion, and in social opinions.

Regarding theatre, there is not as much of a difference, especially in the later part of the Victorian era, around the turn of century. In fact, most of the literature about this period of theatre does categorize the periods together, and largely focuses on the turn of the century. *The Cambridge Companion to Victorian and Edwardian Theatre* illustrates the fallacy in this approach, stating that, “The theatre is generally, and wrongly, dismissed as sub-canonical, at least until the 1890’s, when the self-conscious literacy of Wilde and Shaw elevated it to the verbal sophistication that would become (known as) Edwardian drama” (Auerbach, 3). Additionally, defining this period of theatre by genre proved to be difficult as well. Michael Booth notes that, “potentially tragic and pathetic material is so often mingled in the same play with low and eccentric comedy” (129). If Edwardian and Victorian theatre were to be categorized into three broad categories, they would be: comedy and farce, melodrama, and music hall entertainment (Powell).

Not only was Victorian and Edwardian theatre a mix of genres, but it was also accessible to many different social classes throughout London. One of the larger aims of the Victorian and

Edwardian theatre was to create literature that reflected society at the time. Nina Auerbach states that, “(Edwardian theatre) was not democratic but did come as close as any art could to creating an experience that felt both topical and universal” (6). One might argue that reflecting the ideals of the times is a common theme of most theatre genres, but this was especially true of Edwardian theatre, allowing it to have a broad reach and an aura of universality (Auerbach, 4). Both Edwardian and Victorian theatre audiences were immensely diverse, varying from theatre to theatre (Davis and Emeljanow, 93).

Another notable element of the Victorian and Edwardian period of theatre was that of the role of women in the theatre. Women have had a variable role in theatre over the course of history and have not always been part of the picture. However, in the frame of Victorian and Edwardian theatre, they were present as playwrights and actresses. Julie Holledge notes that the presence of women as Victorian and Edwardian playwrights was due in part to their, “struggle to improve the political and legal status of women, while freeing them from the domestic tyranny of men” (1). She establishes that it is difficult to classify women in Edwardian theatre without contextualizing suffrage activism. Female stars of this era also dominated the theatrical scene. For example, Sarah Bernhardt was a French actress who toured the continents with her theatrical works, bringing audiences in America to standing ovation despite them not understanding the language she was speaking (Altschuler). Ellen Terry was a highly regarded figure in the theatre and had a career that spanned from the time she was eight years old to her death at the age of 81 in 1928 (Howland). Despite this presence in the industry, women in the male-dominated Victorian and Edwardian theatre scene struggled to find success. Susan Carlson and Kerry Powell note that there was widespread prejudice against women dramatists, much of which was institutionalized in the theatre itself (240).

Mary Thriplow

This unique connection between women and Edwardian theatre, as well as my own identity as a woman, made me want to strengthen the portrayal of women in *Those Barren Leaves*. While the novel is largely an ensemble piece, as is my adaptation, I wanted to give the character of Mary Thriplow a more central plot and develop an ending for her that felt meaningful. In the original novel, Huxley allows Thriplow to delve into mysticism alongside her romantic interest Calamy (Lin, 859). Her ending in the novel is that of becoming more mystical herself. Thriplow and Calamy ultimately do part ways, but she is much more in touch with herself than she was at the beginning of the story. While I liked that she grew as a person, it often felt like one of her main assets as a character was to be broken up with. I felt that Mary Thriplow should have had a much more interesting end to her story.

For my adaptation, I wanted to use Mary Thriplow's writing to convey both her movement into mysticism and growth into a better, more successful writer. In the novel, Mary Thriplow is a budding author and often writes about her cousin, Jim. However, her growth as a person is shown in her relationship with Calamy. I decided that to update her, she needed to be shown as successful even after experiencing great heartbreak. In my adaptation, Thriplow not only grows mystically, but she also becomes a successful writer. This is shown through two similar monologues that she has written. These changes reflect her growth.

Anxieties of the Edwardian Era and the Remedies that Followed

Another prominent feature of the Edwardian and Victorian eras were various anxieties that penetrated society. With the industrial revolution, working conditions changed drastically. With the introduction of the telegraph in 1844, there was suddenly a way for someone to receive

information at a much faster pace than before (Shuttleworth). The Victorian era also brought with it the popularization of evolutionary science, and specimens from all over the world (Lightman). These new discoveries were accompanied by fear. Such fears are apparent in late Victorian literature such as Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. In this novel, Stevenson presents the idea that science can lead to creation but can also lead to destruction (Falk, 25).

These anxieties only progressed further in the Edwardian era, and as a result, many interesting remedies emerged. The Edwardian era is marked particularly by a boom in art with the Arts and Crafts movement. Responding to fears about the rapid industrialization occurring around them, artists from the Arts and Crafts movement sought to improve the standards of decorative design, which they believed to have been hurt by mechanization (Obniski). In the upper class, practices in spiritualism and mysticism emerged. Spiritualism was the idea that the living and dead can converse with each other and that people can understand what has happened to the departed (Byrne). Spiritualism was particularly popular with privileged women (Cook, 335). On the other side, mysticism focused inward on personal enlightenment. George M Johnson notes that, "(mysticism) did not lead to detachment or indifference, but to renewal of engagement of life" (17). Many prominent figures took interest in mysticism, including Aldous Huxley.

Aldous Huxley, Mysticism, and *Those Barren Leaves*

In an article about Aldous Huxley's influence on mysticism in America, Hal Bridges defines the term mysticism in relation to Huxley as such, "A selfless, direct, transcendent experience of God or ultimate reality and the interpretation of that experience" (342). India was very influential in the spreading of Hindu mysticism practices throughout the US in the early 1930s. (Bridges, 342). Huxley took part in this exploration of mysticism in the 1930s, approaching his study through the study of Vedanta, a religious philosophy that was brought to the United States starting in the 1890s. When he and his wife moved to Los Angeles in 1937, they continued to follow mystic practices.

Huxley was not only a follower of mysticism, but a scholar of it as well. In 1945 Huxley wrote the book *The Perennial Philosophy*, which was a comparative study of eastern and western religions. *The Perennial Philosophy* was Huxley's written response to the Second World War. "Perennial Philosophy" refers to a phrase created by humanist Agostino Steuco in 1540, which argues that many, if not all religions contain a shared, universal wisdom, and that this wisdom is synthesized into a transcultural philosophy (Evans). Huxley argued that this was correct and that the common goals were to overcome ego and awaken to reality. Huxley would later use psychedelics to try and broaden his experiences with mysticism as well (Evans).

Huxley's broad interest in mysticism would also expand to his writing practice. In fact, many would argue that he went on a lifelong journey of self-discovery, trying to remedy the problems facing western society (Lin, 855). Lots of scholars advocate that Huxley's opinions around mysticism, materialism, and false intelligence show greatest in his later novels, particularly in the period that he wrote novels like *Point Counter Point* and his most famous: *A*

Brave New World (Enroth, 123). Despite this belief, Huxley shows a budding interest in his earlier novels, including *Those Barren Leaves*.

In *Those Barren Leaves*, Huxley explores the idea of mysticism through many characters. Most relevant to the plot of my adaptation is Calamy, the “mystic hero” (Lin, 856). With the reputation of being a Casanova preceding him, Calamy returns to Lillian Aldwinkle’s villa after his worldly travels, desiring to leave behind older traditions of materialism and society. Much to his dismay, he learns that others at the villa (the social elitists) have not moved away from these concepts. He entertains one last romantic exchange with Mary Thriplow but soon realizes that his indulgence in these pleasures is a hinderance to his spiritual life (Ramamurty, 138). At the end of the novel, Calamy returns to the hills to, “seek a life of mystical contemplation” (Birnbaum, 50).

Many of these characters display this idea of moving away from worldly concerns and possessions and toward a deeper spiritual existence. The satire in *Those Barren Leaves* comes from how out of touch many of these characters are with their own reality. Viewing the world through a materialistic lens, Lin notes that these characters, “pursue a life that seems meaningless and superficial to the narrator. Their underdeveloped humanity makes them akin to ill-grown tree leaves, as symbolized by the novel’s title” (857). Bringing awareness to Huxley’s contemporary ideas around mysticism, self, and fulfillment was a guiding element of my adaptation process, and one that I knew I wanted to drive the play.

Development of the Adaptation

The First Draft

The task of adapting such a long (344 pages) and complex book into a play to go on stage is a rather daunting one, but at this point, I was only adapting the first section of this book. I began my process by sitting down with a hard copy of the book and highlighting all the dialogue, hoping that I could rely on that as the main structure for my adaptation. This method was wonderful until I read the dinner scene. In the book, this is the scene where we see all the guests together for the first time. Huxley uses this part of the book to introduce the reader to the characters via complex dialogue and dense description. Here, we can tell exactly who the character Mr. Falx is and what he thinks of the character Mr. Cardan:

Mr. Falx, whose moral ideas were simple and orthodox, shook his head; he didn't like that sort of thing. Mr. Cardan, moreover, puzzled him. 'Well,' he pronounced 'all that I can say is this: when we've been in power for a little there won't be any parasites of Mr. Cardan's kind for the simple reason that there won't be any parasites of any kind. They'll all be doing their bit. (*Those Barren Leaves*, 35).

Besides Mary Thriplow, Lillian Aldwinkle, Calamy, and Irene, the reader has not met these characters previously; they are suddenly just there. This introduction to Falx and Cardan is great in the context of a novel but makes no sense in the context of a staged play.

I am convinced that this specific scene in the book is what began my first period of writer's block. First was the issue of the dialogue. A lot of the book's dialogue consists of long monologues that took up around a page of space, if not more. While this dialogue helped the reader's perception of the characters, it did not move the plot forward. The full scene that included the language I reference above took more than 40 minutes for me to read, which means that if it had been written into my adaptation, it would have taken much longer to be performed. I didn't feel this was going to engage the audience. Sandwiched in between these large chunks of

dialogue were these even longer descriptions of characters. While these descriptions aided me in learning about the characters, they would not have been helpful to audiences watching the show. This is when I began to truly understand the challenges of adaptation; I began to feel scared.

After some additional hesitation, I approached the adaptation again, this time with the intention of mapping out the plot of the first part of the novel and using that to guide the dialogue. I hoped that in doing this, I would be able to pull dialogue from the text to fit the plot. I read the plot outline, trying to make heads or tails of what was going on for each character so I could determine the “arc of the show.” I began to realize that the plots of these characters did not feel final by the end of the novel. What I realized eventually was that the arc of the characters (understandably) took place over the course of the entire novel, rather than in one part. This revelation was both a relief and stressful. I would need to cram 300 pages of text into a show that had to run under 90 minutes as per the regulations of the Pocket Playhouse, the company that I was planning on working with to produce the show.

This meant the entire novel needed my full attention. As I read, plot lines became more unclear, and I had less of a sense about what was going on for these characters. Sure, I could understand what was happening, but what was the point? What made this novel so “deliciously satirical,” as Goodreads had put it? I finally realized that standing alone, this book wouldn’t translate well into a play because it was far too complex, and there were far too many characters and locations. I realized this play would only work if I rewrote some of the plot. Taking from Hutcheon’s theory of adaptation, I realized that the challenge in adapting this novel would be in making sure that although the plot was rewritten, Huxley’s ideas and true characters were honored. Once I figured this out, things got somewhat easier, but not necessarily better.

I then began the long process of trying to conceptualize what I wanted to do with these characters. How could I honor their arcs in the book while trying to merge over 300 pages of dense action and dialogue into a play that needed to run under 90 minutes and be done in a smaller theatre? Also, I had only a very faint outline of what happened in the other four parts. As I began reading more, the plot of the book became very dense, and much harder for me to read. At one point, I tried moving far away from the original source material and completely devising my own plot. From this, I realized that while I had an idea of who these characters were on the surface, my analysis of the text was not deep enough to really create a plot or an adaptation.

A vicious bout of writer's block followed this predicament. I would try to read the chapters for analysis and immediately get overwhelmed by how much content there was. I felt so stressed that I couldn't truly absorb what was going on in the book. I would start reading and instead of taking notes I would try and force myself to mentally adapt what I was reading in the scene at that moment. I wasn't doing this consciously; at the time I believed this was just what adaptation was like. What I didn't realize was that I was feeding a cycle of self-destruction. I would have an idea and beat it up before it even got a chance to walk onto the page of my adaptation, and then I would feel terrible, filling my head with thoughts of doubt and frustration. In hindsight, this feels like a ridiculous cycle to engage with, but at the time, I wasn't allowing myself to entertain the possibility of doing anything else.

Then, I gave up. I wrote John Schmor an email, asking to switch thesis projects. I had decided to write my own play, and completely forgo the adaptation process. I had convinced myself that it had gotten too difficult and that the project would never come together. None of the ideas I had were worth entertaining, so what was the point? I reluctantly drafted an email asking to switch to writing a play instead of adapting one. In hindsight, writing my own play

would not have given me the structure I was so desperately seeking at the time. John wrote back and encouraged me to keep going. One sentiment from the response stuck with me. It was something along the lines of this: “That’s the difficulty of adapting, you are taking something that was originally one thing and forcing it to be another.” I trust John, so, I kept going.

Using the character analysis of Raj and Ganeshram as a jumping off point, I began to dive deeper and deeper into the plot of the novel and of my adaptation. I would do my own analysis later, but I needed something to help get the ball rolling, and this was an effective method. I also did brief research into the types of comedies that were popular during that era. I stumbled upon the Edwardian Musical Comedy and adopted its plot structure as a loose outline. I adapted the loose shell of “a misunderstanding in the middle, and a wedding at the end” (Mander) and applied it to my characters. I took index cards and wrote plot events of both the novel and things that I found interesting from my perspective as a writer, and jotted them down, giving each card its own plot event. I arranged these on my wall and then rearranged them over and over until I had a plot that felt manageable. After this, I typed out a plot outline for the entire show (see appendix), detailing what needed to happen in each scene, what I was going for, etc. I used this as a shell to begin to write the actual script. Although I had structure, I still fought feelings of self-doubt, but this time I pushed through, feeling closer than ever to meeting my goal of a rough draft, which I proudly turned in on September 1st.

The Second Draft

Despite this success, A few months passed, and I wrote absolutely nothing. There was some comfort in submitting a rough draft that I knew didn’t need to be perfect and didn’t need to require a strong plot. It was secure. The expectation of a second draft felt less so. Fleshing out a

very loose plot frame felt terrifying. I felt myself begin the writer's block cycle again, thinking of an idea and spitting it out immediately, yet this time feeling even more trapped because it was too late to change thesis topics. An idea for a scene would turn into a plot point that I then instantly had to fit into the rest of the show, which turned into the issue of figuring out how to make sure the audience saw this idea explained to them clearly. I was unknowingly trapping myself by using the necessity of explanation to prevent myself from putting new material into my adaptation.

I once again met with John Schmor to talk about my thesis and the fact that I was fully avoiding the project; I will forever be grateful for his supportive yet firm approach to guiding me through this process. He introduced me to the playwright Sarah Ruhl and advised me to try reading some Oscar Wilde to get a stylistic feel for the period. We also talked about using a narrator to gain an outside perspective on the show's plot. I felt this was necessary in draft one but wasn't sure which character that would be. I was advised to read the play *The Skin of Our Teeth* by Thornton Wilder because the character Sabina serves a similar role in that plot, bringing the audience in and out of awareness that they are watching a play.

I read Sarah Ruhl's *100 Essays I Don't Have Time to Write* to validate my own writing process, as doubt was my biggest barrier. I also read Ruhl's plays, *In the Next Room, or the Vibrator Play*, and *Stage Kiss*. I primarily read these plays to understand how Ruhl uses stage directions in her writing. At the time, I was approaching stage directions from the perspective of someone who wanted blocking in the show as well. I soon realized that although it felt important to me from a creative perspective to map out exactly what each character was doing, it wasn't beneficial to the play as a standalone entity. I began to take influence from Ruhl's more open-ended stage directions, like the ones below:

They Kiss.
He makes a face like he's going to eat her:
She pulls away. (Ruhl, 41)

Notice here that Ruhl does not tell the actor or the director what this “face” should look like, nor what “she’s” reaction is. The stage directions could say:

They Kiss.
He makes a face like he's going to eat her, by closing his eyes and opening wide,
She pulls away in disgust, gasping a little.

In the simplicity of Ruhl’s stage direction, more is left to the creative liberties of that specific production. When I thought deeply about which I’d prefer, it was the more open-ended direction.

The play that really unlocked my second draft was *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. I was initially intimidated by Wilde, as a lot of my reading experience has been in contemporary plays. I felt shocked when I read this play and found it so approachable and so timelessly entertaining. Despite being over 100 years old, the humor and absurdity of *The Importance of Being Earnest* holds up remarkably well. I was intrigued by the notion that in this type of theatre, things can happen in the plot without explanation. For example, Wilde introduces two female characters who are intent on marrying someone who has the name Earnest. This concept is a central plot element of the play, yet the audience is never given a clear expectation as to why marrying someone named Earnest is so important to these women. In contemporary theatre, we might see one of these characters give a monologue alluding to a deeper reason that such things are important to them, which would then connect to the overall theme of the play.

After being exposed to Wilde, I began to let go of the “rules” that I had created for myself around playwrighting. It turns out that writing with fewer rules is way more fun. Suddenly my play came alive. I integrated the character of “Mailboy” further into the plot. He became an omniscient entity, serving both a point in the play's world and a role as a narrator to the audience.

The Mailboy character added a new layer to the script, bringing comedic awareness to the audience. It was interesting to play with a narrator who also had personal stakes invested in the world of the play. This meant that if I needed someone to cause chaos in a scene, I could give the Mailboy a reason to do so. Following Wilde, I decided to make choices in my script that the audience would just have to accept as the truth.

Additionally, I let go of my personal desire to direct this show as part of my thesis project, which meant that I also let go of some of the space and time related restraints that I was using in the first draft. Originally, I was planning on directing this show in the Pocket Playhouse, a 72-seat theatre in the theatre arts building. This idea came with many constraints. The first is that shows in the Pocket are only allowed to run for 90 minutes and because of this often don't have an intermission. Additionally, the Pocket space is rather small, and budgets for shows are minimal. While they seem minimal, these rules that I had set for myself were affecting my process. When I lifted the constraints, my adaptation became much stronger. This draft is a product of freedom from myself.

Coupled with a more in-depth character analysis, and a significant number of added scenes and dialogue, my second draft began to feel and look like a show that could go onto the stage. More importantly, it was the first time in my writing process that I felt proud of what I had done.

The Third Draft

My third draft was informed by my desire to implement additional research I had done on the topics of mysticism. While I would not have necessarily argued that my first or second draft reflected themes of mysticism, my third and final draft does. In this draft, I focused a lot on

expanding dialogue throughout the scenes to make the ideas of the characters clearer. A lot of this process included going back to dialogue that sounded clunky and thinking about what the character was really wanting to say in that moment. Because I had done more research into mysticism, and in particular mysticism in *Those Barren Leaves*, I was able to tie a lot of what characters were saying to the ideas that Huxley was trying to convey in the original novel. This was a difficult process, because I had to put these ideas into spoken word, whereas they were narration and description in the novel. Some of these descriptions were quite lovely:

Calamy watched them go, watched them till they were out of sight round a bend in the road. A profound melancholy settled over him. With them, he felt had gone all his old familiar life. He was left quite alone with something new and strange. What was to come of this parting? Or perhaps, he reflected, he had only been a fool. The cottage was in the shadow now. Looking up the slope he could see a clump of trees still glittering as though prepared for a festival above the rising flood of darkness. And at the head of the valley, like an immense precious stone, glowing with its own inward fire, the limestone crags reached up through the clouds into the pale sky. Perhaps he has been a fool, thought Calamy. But looking at the shining peak, he was somehow reassured. (*Those Barren Leaves*, 344).

Luckily, I was able to give the Mailboy a monologue at the end to ensure that I could include this passage from the novel:

As Calamy walked away from the villa, down the hill, he glanced behind his shoulder every now and then until Lillian Aldwinkle's villa disappeared round a bend in the road. A profound melancholy settled around him as he wandered off into the mountains. With the villa, he had left his old, familiar life. He was left quite alone with something new and strange. What was to come of this parting? Perhaps he had only been a fool. (*A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle's*).

In addition to dialogue, I focused on tying up any loose ends that I had left in my second draft. For example, I had a few scenes where I had a character entering a scene but not exiting. I also had references that were made early in the writing process but not carried through into the next draft, and they also had to be resolved. What was interesting to me about this process was just how much my plot had changed from my first to last draft. I had a scene in the first act

where Irene finds the rings that Mary Thriplow throws of the window and gives them to Lord Hovenden as a promise of love. When I wrote my first draft, I thought that this plot point was genius. Later on, when I was revising the plot, I realized that this exchange no longer made sense in the context of the play. I removed it, and the scene instantly got stronger.

The significant markers of this draft were that I felt more connected than ever to the text, and that I allowed myself to let go of plot points if they were hurting flow of the show.

What I Would Have Done Differently if I Had Another Go

If I had this process to do over, knowing what I know now about adaptation and playwriting, there are many things that I would have done differently. To start, I would have used a casebook to approach the annotation process of this novel. A casebook is a tool used by dramaturgs or directors to help with the analysis of a show. Often the production of a casebook involves some form of cutting and pasting the pages of a book into a sketchbook or a notebook. The idea is that the user can analyze the text in a visual way. It can start with basic analysis, but can also become a diary, sketchbook, and a place to compile additional research. A casebook provides a physical thing for someone to create, thus building a stronger connection to the text it contains. I stumbled across casebooks halfway through my process, during Michael Najjar's dramaturgy class, and immediately thought of my thesis.

Additionally, I wish I would have put more trust in myself and the creative practice. This process was not only an adaptation turned playwriting project but also an exploration of self. I spent so much time worrying about the big picture, the goal all the way at the end of the road, that I overwhelmed myself. Of course, hindsight is 20/20, but I think that breaking the process down to smaller parts would have been a significant help to me earlier on. I felt like I picked up

the pace in the second draft, and I know why. I picked up pace because I had let go of my fear of creating something dumb, and I embraced the unknown and the uncertainty that comes with an artistic endeavor.

Finally, I wish that I had done a live reading of my play at some point in the process. Looking back, I was too caught up in the process of trying to write to be able to entertain the idea of sharing my work with others, but I think that it would have been a good choice. Doing a reading would have allowed me to get feedback via hearing real people read my words aloud. This experience would have helped me to understand if the dialogue I was writing felt natural as well. Writing dialogue that sounded natural was a particularly difficult part of this process for me, and I believe that workshopping with actors may have been insightful to my additional drafts. If I were to continue this process down the road, this would be a solid next step.

Concluding Thoughts

After a year of writing *A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle's*, I have learned so much about theatre, adaptation, and myself. I started this process as someone who had never adapted or even explored the area of playwrighting. After doing this process, I feel that I understand so much more about myself as an artist, specifically, about how I operate in the creative process in times of uncertainty. I have always felt weighed down by my anxieties around large creative endeavors, but this process has taught me ways to tackle those insecurities, to ensure that I can keep going. I can honestly say that I never had a time where I pushed through my writer's block and didn't find something interesting or fun on the other side.

This project sparked an interest in writing for me. I've always enjoyed reading plays, but never pictured myself as someone who could write them. From this process alone, I already feel inspired to write more for theatre. I have another adaptation that I would like to work on, and a few ideas for plays. While I haven't had the time to really explore these ideas, I feel passionate about them, and want to make time for them in the future. I know that because of this process, I will be able to work through the creative practice effectively. I now know how to tackle writing another adaptation and have strategies that I can use to ensure that it would be written in a productive way.

Additionally, I feel like I understand the need for using historical research to back my work, which was something that I had never fully incorporated before writing this adaptation. I had done some research before writing drafts 1 and 2, but I did the bulk of my historical work in the time before draft 3 and felt that it significantly informed what I produced next. Dramaturgical research is applicable to any area of theatre and is necessary to creating art that historically and

stylistically fits into the same world. In any future project I take on, research will consistently be an element that I incorporate into my creative process.

Finally, I learned to love the text that I was working on. Yes, I did initially find *Those Barren Leaves* funny when I read it, but for adaptation, it is necessary that you love the text. It wasn't until my second draft, when I began to pull more from the text, that I moved beyond finding the text funny. For me, the text became beautiful. It was also monumental to learn more about Aldous Huxley's life and what he practiced. It's a difficult sensation to describe, but I almost felt myself able to empathize with Huxley while I was working with his text, which created the ability for me to really care about the characters that he had created. Whenever I had a moment of doubt in my process, I would return to my annotated copy of *Those Barren Leaves* and trust it to guide me through.

Appendix A: Final Script for A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle's:

Completed May 8th, 2023

A Weekend at Lillian Aldwinkle's

Adapted from *Those Barren Leaves* by Aldous Huxley

By Annie Craven

Characters

Lillian Aldwinkle – Lives alone in a large villa overlooking a village in Italy. Passionate, dramatic, blissfully ignorant. 65.

Mary Thriplow – A burgeoning writer ashamed of her intelligence. Longs to be more of the ingénue. Late 20s, early 30s.

Calamy – Just returned from traveling the world. Charismatic, charming, and purposefully vain. A bit of a Casanova. 33.

Irene – Lillian Aldwinkle’s niece. Repressed, quiet, but growing up. 18.

Lord Hovenden – Aldwinkle has known him since he was a baby. Shy, but has a deep, rumbling laugh. In love with Irene. 20.

Francis Chelfier – A sailor who has seen the world for many years. Kind, gentle, curious. Looks just like the subject of Lillian Aldwinkle’s favorite piece of artwork. Late 60s.

Mr. Cardan – An old flame of Lillian Aldwinkle’s. He has pulled himself up by the bootstraps. A little pessimistic and stuck in the past. 70.

Mailboy – Delivers the mail every day. Hates Lillian Aldwinkle’s house because it is at the top of the hill. Wishes he didn’t have to work so hard; loves tips. 19.

Butler – A servant at Lillian Aldwinkle’s villa. Quiet and out of sight. 30s, 40s, 50s, etc.

Setting

A large villa atop a large hill, overlooking a coastal town in Italy. It is summer. The year is 1906, or any year in which the story may be relevant.

Accents

It should be very clear through the dialect that none of the characters is Italian. All characters are British, except for Francis Chelfier, who is French. Accents should reflect this.

ACT 1, SCENE 1

Outside Lillian Aldwinkle's estate. This is established by a door. We can see the sitting room behind the door. The sitting room is ornate and full of things – relics from Mrs. Aldwinkle's "worldly" experiences.

The MAILBOY enters from the house, clearly exhausted. He has been walking up the hill (as he does each day) to deliver a telegraph to Lillian Aldwinkle, an older woman who resides in a grand villa overlooking a beautiful village in Italy. He knocks on the door, almost falling over from exhaustion. A BUTLER opens the door.

MAILBOY

Not home?

The Butler shakes their head, and hands the Mailboy a notably small tip. The Mailboy sighs and begrudgingly heads back down the hill, taking the door with him. We are now inside the house.

MARY THRIFLOW sits in the sitting room, feverishly working on her novel at a typewriter of some sort. The Butler brings the telegram to her.

THRIFLOW

(to the butler)

It's from Mr. Calamy. He says he's coming by soon and will walk up. I suppose you had better have his room ready for him when he gets here.

The Butler nods and leaves. Thriplow moves to an armchair and lights a cigarette.

A few moments later Thriplow gets out of the armchair, extinguishing the cigarette in an ashtray. She goes to a window. She uses a pair of binoculars to look out the window, over the valley.

THRIFLOW

Calamy!

She sets the binoculars down with a look of shock. He's much earlier than she thought he'd be! She looks around frantically for ways to make herself appear more dressed up. She finds her bag and pulls out a makeup compact, powdering her face and putting on lipstick. This is not enough. She begins to look through many of the items that are cluttering the sitting room. She assembles an outfit consisting of a scarf she has pulled off a mannequin and some jewelry she found in a drawer. She finds a ribbon and ties up her hair. She looks in the compact again and takes the ribbon out (it looks terrible).

CALAMY enters and walks past the window. Thriplow sees this and begins panicking, as she is not yet ready for him to see her. She looks frantically around the room for anything that may help her. Her eyes fall on the remaining jewelry.

THRILOW

(as if discovering a long-lost treasure)

Ahhh!

Thriplow quickly shoves on a considerable amount of extra jewelry just as Calamy is knocking. She has just enough time to position herself properly in the armchair.

Calamy enters the sitting room. Thriplow stares in awe at him.

(beat)

THRILOW

You're Mr. Calamy! My name is Mary Thriplow. Everybody else is out. I shall do my best to entertain you.

CALAMY

I've heard a great deal about you from Lillian Aldwinkle. And a lot of other people. Not to mention your writing.

THRILOW

Let's not talk of those.

(Doing her best to be studious)

They're irrelevant – one's old books – irrelevant because they're written by someone who has ceased to exist. Let the dead bury their dead. The only book that counts is the one one's writing now. And by the time it's published, and other people have begun to read it, it too has become irrelevant. So that there never is a book of one's own that is interesting to talk about.

(beat)

Let's talk of something more interesting.

CALAMY

(sincerely)

The weather!

THRILOW

Why not?

CALAMY

Well, it's a subject. About which, as a matter of fact, I can speak now with interest, I might almost say with warmth. Such an inferno as those dusty roads in the plain. I must confess that sometimes in this Italian glare, I pine for the glooms of London, the parasol of smoke that takes the edge off a building a hundred yards away.

THRILOW

(On the spot)

I remember meeting this Sicilian poet going by the name of (insert name of famous- non-Sicilian poet here). He said just the same. Only he preferred Manchester. "*Bellissima Manchester!*" he would say.

(Saying a name that he will recognize)

He was a specimen in that glorious menagerie one meets at Lady Trunnion's.

CALAMY

(in disgust)

And does that *frightful* woman still continue to function? You must understand I've been away for a year.

Thriplow is taken aback. This is not the comment she was expecting.

THRILOW

(quickly)

But she's nothing to do with Lady Gilbert, is she? For real horrors you must go to her. Why, her house is positively a *mauvais lieu*.

(She dramatically moves her hands around, showing off the jewelry she has put on her fingers.)

CALAMY

(disregarding the jewelry)

Vulgar, perhaps, at the Gilberts', but not worse.

Thriplow notices this and stares at her fingers in confusion.

(She looks away)

After having been away, as I have for a year or so, to come back to civilization and find the same old people doing the same idiotic things – it’s astonishing.

Thriplow sees an opportunity and begins to remove a few bits of jewelry. She soon realizes that there is no place to hide these.

One expects everything to be quite different. But everything is the same. The gilet, the trunion, and let’s be frank, our hostess—though I’m honestly very fond of poor dear Lillian. There’s not the slightest change, which is more than astonishing. It’s positively terrifying.

(He turns around).

THRIFLOW

(quickly shoving her hands under herself)

Terrifying! Yes, that’s exactly the word. Those things *are* terrifying. The size of the footmen! The diameter of strawberries! The inanity of the lion hunters!

Turning away and leaning forward to hide her hands, she continues to take off rings. They sit in a pile in her lap.

(dramatically)

What rot the lions do roar!

She tries to put a ring down her dress but decides against it. Her eyes settle on the couch cushion. It’s perfect.

(Shoving rings in couch cushion)

I suppose it’s awfully innocent of me, but I always imagined that celebrated people must be more interesting than other people!

(With the final ring hidden)

They’re not!

(She sits back in relief).

CALAMY

I remember making the same discovery myself. It's rather painful at first. One feels as if one has somehow been swindled and done in. One has a right to expect celebrated people to live up to their reputations; they *ought* to be interesting.

THRILOW

I know lots of obscure little people who are much more interesting and much more genuine, one somehow feels, than the celebrated ones.

(Staring at Calamy)

It's genuineness that counts, isn't it?

I think it's difficult to be genuine if one's a celebrity, or public figure, or anything of that sort.

(sighing)

I get quite frightened when I see my name in the papers, and photographers want to take pictures of me, and people ask me out to dinner. I'm afraid of losing my obscurity. Genuineness only thrives in the dark. Like celery.

CALAMY

I'm delighted to hear you saying all this. If only all writers felt as you do.

THRILOW

(declining the compliment)

I'm like Jehovah. I just am that I am. That's all. Why should I make believe I'm somebody else? Though I confess that I was intimidated by your reputation into pretending that I was more mondain than I really am. I imagined you being so tremendously worldly and intelligent. It's a great relief to find you're not.

CALAMY

(slightly offended)

Intelligent?

THRILOW

You sounded so dazzlingly social from Mrs. Aldwinkle's accounts.

CALAMY

(laughing)

Perhaps I was that sort of imbecile once. But now – well, I hope all that’s over.

THRILOW

I pictured you, I pictured you as one of those people in the sketch “walking in the park with a friend” – you know, a friend who would turn out to at least be a duchess or a distinguished novelist. Can you wonder that I was nervous?

Lights on the stage change, revealing the passage of time. Calamy and Thriplow move in and out of different positions on stage. As it gets later and later in the day, Calamy and Thriplow grow closer and closer.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

The same room, later in the evening. Calamy and Thriplow have been talking since he arrived.

Sound of a car horn off stage

THRILOW

There they are!

CALAMY

I rather wish they weren't. It's like heaving a great stone into a calm pool – all this noise, I mean.

(Thriplow takes this as a compliment, moving closer to Calamy.)

THRILOW

What smashings of crystal one must put up with. Every other moment if one's sensitive.

ALDWINKLE

(from off stage)

Calamy, Calamy!

Lillian *ALDWINKLE* bursts through the door to the sitting room, interrupting the two.

There you are!

(Running over to meet him)

Dear Calamy! I must kiss you. It's such ages since I saw you!

(Aldwinkle grabs Calamy's face and kisses both cheeks aggressively – in a smothering way.)

(Aldwinkle looks accusingly at Thriplow.)

How long has he been here?

THRILOW

(Pleasantly)

Since before tea.

ALDWINKLE

Before tea?

(To Thriplow)

You seem to have made yourself extremely smart for the occasion.

(to Calamy)

Well now, I must show you everything.

CALAMY

Miss Thriplow's already very kindly been doing that.

ALDWINKLE

(Slightly offended)

But she can't have shown you everything because she doesn't know what there is to show. And besides, Miss Thriplow knows nothing about the history of the estate or the *artists* who worked on this place. *(She moves to look at a particular piece of art.)*

CALAMY

In any case, I've seen enough already to make me think the place perfectly lovely.

Calamy turns to go with Thriplow

ALDWINKLE

In complete disregard

The cypress makes such a wonderful contrast with the olives.

She looks back at Calamy until he gets up to go examine the art.

And now! Now we must look at the house!

(Leading the group through a door and out into the house)

This part of the villa dates from about 1630. A very fine specimen of early baroque. What remains of the old castle, with the tower, constitutes the east wing of the present house. Most of the paintings are by Pasqual de Montecatini. A great painter –*dreadfully* underrated.

The group has made their way back into the sitting room where they encounter IRENE. She is sitting but gets up to greet Calamy.

CALAMY

I suppose that I ought to tell you that you've grown up tremendously since the time I saw you last. But the truth is that I don't think you have at all.

IRENE

wistfully

I can't help my appearance, but inside –

ALDWINKLE

(Quickly moving the attention back to her)

I want you to look at this ceiling.

(Irene turns away and goes to sit back down. She does not care about the art that much)

And the rustic work with the group of marine deities. So delightfully *senecio*.

While this is happening, Irene has been picking at the cushion of the same seat Mary Thriplow was sitting in earlier, trying to smooth it down. In frustration, she moves the cushion out of the way, revealing all the jewelry that Thriplow had discarded.

THRILOW

dramatically

All that walking has exhausted me. I feel quite nauseous.

She grabs the cushion from Irene, quickly placing it back on the seat. She sits down on top of the jewels.

CALAMY

Reaching for her hand

Let me help you up to get some cold water!

THRILOW

pulling hand back

Dear Calamy, you are quite a gentleman, but I really need only a moment.

CALAMY

(Still holding hand)

I insist.

THRILOW

taking hand back forcefully

No, that's quite all right. All I really need is some fresh air.

She moves toward the window, hiding the jewelry behind her back; she throws the jewelry out the window.

Shall we go to dinner?

ACT 1, SCENE 3

MAILBOY

It had been Mrs. Aldwinkle's ambition, ever since she bought the villa, to revive the world's ancient glories. She saw herself unofficially a princess, surrounded by a court of poets, philosophers, and artists. It was for this reason alone that Mrs. Aldwinkle continued to invite guests to her villa weekend after weekend, and tonight was no exception.

Mr. Cardan arrived at 5 p.m. sharp, carrying with him a simple satchel containing exactly the correct amount of clothes that he would need to stay the weekend, a bottle of fragrance, a toothbrush, and a gift for the hostess, whom he considered to be lovely.

CARDAN enters carrying a simple bag with the described in it. He is greeted by the Butler and Aldwinkle. He is led offstage by the Butler.

Lord Hovenden, whom Mrs. Aldwinkle had known since he was merely an infant, arrived carrying a much larger suitcase with him.

HOVENDEN enters.

It contained mostly everything he needed for a weekend, along with a slingshot, a travel clockwork train set, and a well-loved copy of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. A picky eater, he brought some extra refreshments in case of an emergency. Despite almost missing dinner, he was greeted in a warm embrace.

Aldwinkle embraces Hovenden. She and Hovenden depart toward the dining room, leaving Irene alone on stage. She stares at Hovenden as he leaves.

A non-verbal expression of romantic feelings. It could be exciting, it could be awkward, it could be completely quiet.

After living in that feeling for a moment. Irene exits. Time for dinner.

ACT 1 SCENE 4

The Grand Saloon. All guests sit around the table eating a large dinner. Calamy sits on the right of Aldwinkle, Cardan is on the left. One place is set, but empty. Hovenden picks at his meal.

ALDWINKLE

You can imagine the splendor of the scene, the innumerable candles, the silks, the jewels. And all the crowd maneuvering in the stateliest manner according to the rules of etiquette.

CALAMY

It would have been very fine. Certainly, from the point of view of picturesqueness, we've lost by the passing of etiquette. One wonders how much further informality will go. In fact, I can't help but notice that the standard of my appearance has changed dramatically over the years. I used to have short, trimmed hair, but now, I have let it grow a little, and it has become smooth and wavy.

ALDWINKLE

You still look quite dashing, Mr. Calamy.

CARDAN

You've broached a very interesting subject. Very interesting.

He folds and unfolds his napkin a few times.

A very interesting subject.

Suddenly, a knock at the door.

ALDWINKLE

I suppose that must be dear Mr. Falx. He's always running behind schedule.

The Butler enters with the Mailboy, who hands a telegram to Aldwinkle.

The Mailboy lingers, as if expecting a tip.

ALDWINKLE

It is from Mr. Falx. It says that his car got stuck in a muddy patch, and he must stop for the night in the nearest town. He is very sorry he can't be here with us tonight.

I suppose we will just need to carry on, then. Hopefully he will still be here for some of the weekend.

(To the Mailboy)

I see that you are still here. Do run along now.

The Mailboy exits. The group eats in silence for a moment.

CALAMY

It certainly is quite nice here – very *romantic*, wouldn't you say, Miss. Thriplow?

THRIFLOW

Why yes, I especially love that statue. Something about the way he looks off into the distance is so captivating.

(She gestures to the statue of a sailor).

I can't help but feel hypnotized by –

Aldwinkle cuts her off. Mary is revealing too much about Aldwinkle's favorite art piece. She is stealing Aldwinkle's thunder.

ALDWINKLE

Esteemed guests, I must draw all our attention to this unique masterpiece by Francois Falx, for it is the shining jewel in all my collection. Examine the curves and marvel in the splendor of the troubled sailor!

She gestures to the sailor.

It was carved out of the finest granite; they say that Michelangelo himself selected the stone before giving it to his apprentice. I can't help but marvel at the eyes of the sailor, they just invite you in. The sailor is so captivating, isn't that so, Irene?

Irene takes a breath as if about to speak.

Of course, you wouldn't know much about this statue. If only you'd spent more time understanding the art that surrounds you instead of putzing about the gardens and mending your clothing. It really is no matter, however. Not everyone is capable of the capacity to truly feel and understand a figure as complicated as the troubled sailor. Who is he longing for? Who are we all longing for?

Calamy and Thriplow exchange a look. Aldwinkle sees this.

Calamy, what do you long for?

Before he can say anything, he is cut off by Cardan.

CARDAN

I long for dessert. Lillian, is there any dessert tonight?

ALDWINKLE

I have planned something much grander. Tonight, we shall look at the stars, quite the refreshment after a grand dinner such as this. Shall we all go out to the garden?

All guests but Irene and Hovenden get up and exit. Hovenden motions for Irene to sit next to him. She pretends not to see him. He sits closer. She quietly stares at him for a bit and then meekly goes to sit by him.

HOVENDEN

Hello.

Irene twists her hair and stares.

He stares back at her

There is quite a bit of staring.

I'm Lord - I'm not sure if you remember who I –

IRENE

Of course, I remember who you are! How could I ever forget that summer we spent together in Manchester! I was only 10.

HOVENDEN

And I only 11. Your aunt is still the same as she was all those years ago.

IRENE

My first summer with her. How could I ever forget?

HOVENDEN

You are so much more grown up now.

IRENE

It was eight years ago. You put a frog in my hair and did that ridiculous laugh of yours.

HOVENDEN

It was pretty clever.

He laughs. It is low and rumbling.

IRENE

Yes! That's the one.

Hovenden laughs even harder.

They laugh together. They share a moment. Is it romantic? Neither one is sure.

HOVENDEN

I suppose we should join the others out in the garden before anyone notices we're missing.

IRENE

I suppose.

They exit together.

ACT 1 SCENE 5

Outside the villa, it is a very starry night.

ALDWINKLE

How bright they are! And how they twinkle! How they palpitate! As though they were alive! They're never like this in England – are they, Calamy?

Calamy shakes his head no.

IRENE

Do you know of any more constellations, Auntie Lillian?

ALDWINKLE

Why of course I do (*she does not*) There is of course the um ... the uhhhh, and then of course the umm ... yes!

... and how clearly one sees the great bear. Such a strange and beautiful shape, isn't it?

CALAMY

Very strange.

THRILOW

They might be Italian tenors. Tremoring away like that so passionately in the sky. No wonder, with those stars overhead, no wonder life tends to become a bit operatic in this country at times.

ALDWINKLE

How can you *blaspheme* like that against the stars?

Besides, it's such a *cheap* joke about the tenors. After all, this is the only country where *belcanto* is still.... And you remember how much Wagner admired what's his name.

IRENE

Bellini.

ALDWINKLE

Bellini. Besides, life isn't operatic in Italy. It's genuinely passionate.

THRILOW

Yes, Bellini. What a wonderful gift of melody! “Casta Diva,” do you remember that?

(singing)

What a lovely line the melody traces out! Like the lines of the hills against the sky. Even in nature Italy is like a work of art.

ALDWINKLE

(in shock)

That’s very true.

(To Calamy)

Nights like this ... make one understand the passion of the south.

CALAMY

... Quite, quite!

ALDWINKLE

In this horrible bourgeois age, it's only *southern people* who understand, or even feel, passion.

CARDAN

You’re quite right.

Quite right. It’s the climate, of course. The warmth has a double effect on the inhabitants, direct and indirect. The direct effect needs no explaining; warmth calls to warmth. It’s obvious. But the indirect is fully as important. In a hot country one doesn’t care to work too hard. One works enough to keep oneself alive (and it’s tolerably easy to keep alive under these stars) and one cultivates long leisures.

Now, It’s sufficiently obvious that practically the only thing that anyone who is not a philosopher can do in his leisure is to make love. No serious hard-working man has the time, the spare energy, or the inclination to abandon himself to passion. Passion can only flourish among the well-fed unemployed. Consequently, except among women and men of the leisured class, passion in all its luxuriant intricacy hardly exists in the hard working north. It is only among those whose desires and whose native idleness are fostered by the cherishing southern heat that it has flourished, and continues to flourish, as you rightly point out, my dear Lilian, even in this bourgeois age.

ALDWINKLE

It's easy to talk like that, but it doesn't make any difference to the grandeur of passion, to its purity and beauty.

IRENE

Wasn't it Bousset

Wasn't it Bousset who said that there was something of the infinite in passion?

CARDAN

Splendid, Irene!

IRENE

But I think Bousset's quite right. I think he's absolutely right.

CARDAN

Well if you think he's right, Irene, why then there's nothing for me to do but retire from the argument. I must bow before superior authority.

IRENE

Now you're teasing me!

ALDWINKLE

I won't let you tease her, Cardan. She's the only one of you all who has a real feeling for what is noble and fine and grand.

CARDAN

Oh, I know, that I'm nothing but an old capripede.

They all laugh.

It is getting rather cold.

ALDWINKLE

Nonsense!

THRILOW

(Looking at Calamy)

I think I may go inside for the evening as well. Lillian, it is nearly midnight; it surely must be time for at least some of us to go to sleep.

ALDWINKLE

What type of hostess would I be if I allowed my guests to talk and putter about while I lie *dead* in the tomb of sleep?

CALAMY

I think I will also head inside, at least to warm up by the fire.

Cardan, Calamy, and Thriplow move inside.

CARDAN

I know Lillian, she'll sit out there under the stars feeling romantic and getting colder and colder for hours. There's nothing to be done, I assure you. Tomorrow she'll have rheumatism. We can only resign ourselves and try to bear her suffering patiently.

He sits down

That's better.

THRILOW

Don't you think I'd better bring her a shawl?

CARDAN

She'd only be annoyed. If Lillian has said that it's warm enough to sit outdoors, then it *is* warm enough. We've already proved ourselves fools by wanting to go indoors. If we brought her a shawl, we should become something worse than fools: we should be rude and impertinent.

The scene shifts; we are back outside. Irene and Hovenden sitting with Aunt Lillian as she talks. It has gotten rather cold at this point.

ALDWINKLE

Art's the great thing, the thing that really makes life worth living and justifies one's existence. It's the highest life. It's the only life. Haven't you sometimes longed to be an artist yourself, Hovenden?

HOVENDEN

(He laughs jarringly)

Me?!

ALDWINKLE

I don't know why you should find the idea so impossibly comic.

IRENE

Perhaps he has other work to do, more important work?

ALDWINKLE

More important? But can anything be more important? When one thinks of Flaubert...

She notices Irene shivering.

Do stop. It's only a stupid habit. Like a little dog that shivers even in front of the fire.

HOVENDEN

All the same, it is getting rather cold.

ALDWINKLE

(Overwhelming sarcasm)

Well if you find it so, you'd better go in and ask them to light a fire.

He goes inside. Aldwinkle and Irene sit in silence for a moment. It really has gotten quite cold.

IRENE

We really must think about turning in soon, Auntie.

ALDWINKLE

It simply isn't time yet. Every time I say good-night, I pronounce death on another day, and I pronounce death temporarily on myself as well. What I might miss in those eight hours while I lie dead between the sheets! Imagine someone reveals the secret of the universe. And to think that I may have missed it because I had said good night? They'd say "what a pity poor Lillian should have gone to bed. She would have loved to hear it." It's as if you are parting with a shy lover who has not yet revealed himself.

She sees how tired Irene is.

I do suppose that now there is no one else to talk to, it may be the hour in which to finally turn in.

They walk inside.

ALDWINKLE

You must all come to bed soon, you know. I simply won't allow you, Cardan, to keep these poor young men out of their beds at all hours of the night. Poor Calamy has been traveling all day, and at Hovenden's age he needs all the sleep he can get. Poor Calamy!

CARDAN

Yes, poor Calamy! Out of pure sympathy I was suggesting that we should drink a pint or two of red wine before we go to bed. There's nothing like it for making one sleep.

ALDWINKLE

(To Cardan and Calamy)

Do come. Do.

CALAMY

We shan't be long. The time to drink a glass of wine, that's all. I'm not a bit tired, you know. And Cardan's suggestion of Chianti is very tempting.

ALDWINKLE

If you prefer a glass of wine...

CALAMY

(to Cardan) If I prefer a glass of wine? Prefer it to what? She made it sound as if I had to choose between her and wine and chose the wine.

CARDAN

Ah, but then you don't know Lillian as well as I do. *(to the rest of the group)* And now, let's go hunt out that flask and some glasses in the dining room.

The group exits.

ACT 1, SCENE 6

Thriplow, Aldwinkle, and Irene are in the hallway.

ALDWINKLE

What a queer fellow Calamy is, don't you think? What did you think of him, Mary?

THRIFLOW

Very intelligent.

ALDWINKLE

Oh of course, of course. But one hears old stories of his amorous tastes, you know.

(mysteriously) Perhaps that was one of the reasons he went traveling all that time – right away from civilization.

Aldwinkle and Irene go into her room quickly, closing the door behind them. Thriplow exits.

Back downstairs the men are drinking wine now.

CARDAN

Bored, you're just bored. That's all it is. You haven't met anyone of late who took your fancy, that's all. Unless of course it's a case of catarrh in the bile ducts.

CALAMY

It's neither.

CARDAN

Or perhaps it's the first great climacteric. You don't happen to be thirty-five, I suppose? Five times seven, a most formidable age. Though not quite so serious as sixty-three. That's the grand climacteric. Thank the lord I got past it without dying or joining the church of Rome, or getting married, but you?

CALAMY

I'm thirty-three.

CARDAN

A most harmless time of life. Then it's just boredom. You'll meet some little ravishment, and all the zest will return.

CALAMY

But I don't really want it to return. I don't want to succumb to any more little ravishments. It's too stupid, it's too childish. I used to think that there was something rather admirable and enviable about being an *homme a bonnes fortune*.

CARDAN

But do you know what you do like?

CALAMY

Not exactly.

Beat

I suppose I should say reading, and satisfying my curiosity about things, and thinking. But about what, I don't feel particularly certain. I don't like running after women, I don't like wasting my time in particularly futile social intercourse, or the pursuit of what is technically known as pleasure. And yet for some reason, and quite against my will, I find myself passing the greater part of my time immersed in precisely these occupations. It's an obscure kind of insanity.

HOVENDEN

I can't see what there is to prevent a man from doing what he wants to do. Except financial necessity.

CARDAN

And himself.

CALAMY

And that's what's most depressing of all. Is the feeling that one will go on like this forever, in the teeth of every effort to stop.

Beat

Shouldn't we think of going to bed?

The men nod in agreement.

ACT 1 SCENE 7

Lillian Aldwinkle's room, Irene is brushing Aldwinkle's hair.

ALDWINKLE

(Sighing)

I'm getting old, and yet, I always feel so young.

IRENE

That's all that really matters. That's nonsense anyway. You're not old –you don't look old.

ALDWINKLE

People don't like one anymore when they become old. Friends are terribly faithless. When I think of all the friends –

IRENE

(kissing Aldwinkle's forehead)

I think people are horrid.

ALDWINKLE

Why can't everybody be like my little Irene?

(beat)

What are you sighing about in that heart-breaking way?

IRENE

Oh, nothing.

ALDWINKLE

Nothing indeed? Why, it was the noise of the wind blowing through the cracks of a broken heart! And you're blushing like a peony. What is it?

IRENE

It's nothing, I tell you.

ALDWINKLE

I've never heard anything that sounded so lovesick. It was like a whale sighing. It must be a grand passion of the largest size. Who is it? Who is it? Who is it?

IRENE

It was nothing, I tell you.

As a matter of fact, I was only –

ALDWINKLE

But I'll guess who it is! I'm not such a stupid old auntie as you think. You imagine I haven't noticed, silly little Irene.

IRENE

But who are you talking about?

ALDWINKLE

Why, Hovenden! Who else should it be?

IRENE

Hovenden?

ALDWINKLE

Injured innocence! But it's sufficiently obvious, the boy follows you like a dog.

IRENE

Me?

ALDWINKLE

Now, don't pretend. It's so stupid pretending. Admit it now, you like him!

IRENE

Yes of course I like him, but not in any special way.

ALDWINKLE

What a goose you are, Irene! What a goose! I've always thought Hovenden an extremely nice boy.

IRENE

(Blushing)

Good-night, Aunt Lillian.

(Exit Irene)

Thriplow enters. She meets Calamy. They grab hands. She follows him into what would be his room.

All over the stage, lights go out one at a time, indicating that another member of the house is saying goodnight as well; Aldwinkle turns off her light. Finally, some quiet.

A beat

The mailboy enters the scene with a lit candle, a bit ominously.

MAILBOY

It was very characteristic for Lillian Aldwinkle to go to bed last, especially on such a clear night where the stars glowed in such a luminous way. However, she may have had second thoughts about turning in so late had she known of the violet storm that would come out of nowhere, shaking the stately villa to its core, and waking up each member of the household. In fact, there were many things she did not know about what was yet to come.

The Mailboy begins to tilt all the paintings on the walls at various angles; he may also mess up anything else in the villa that might become damaged after a storm.

She did not know, for example, that when she awoke next, each painting would hang at a peculiar angle, and that branches would lie all over her gardens. She did not know of the figure who was about to come knocking on her door, and everything that would transpire after. By no means did she know any of this as she drifted off to sleep, dreaming of her troubled sailor and what he might be like in person.

The clock chimes 3. A loud and dark storm begins. Things begin to shake. The Mailboy walks past the statue and pushes it over. He blows out his candle and exits through the front door.

INTERMISSION

ACT 2 SCENE 1

Inside Mrs. Aldwinkle's villa a few moments later. The storm has slowed down, but not completely stopped. The stage is mostly dark.

Calamy and Thriplow enter together. They pretend that they did not just come from the same room.

THRIPLLOW

Calamy, did you hear that noise?

CALAMY

I did. I can't possibly imagine what may have caused it.

Thriplow makes her way into the room and sees that no one else is there. She motions for him to join her.

THRIPLLOW

The whole place was shaking just moments ago! What could have possibly made that sound?

CALAMY

I am not sure but I – oh dear god.

Both see the statue on the ground. They spend a beat trying to put it back together.

They are interrupted by Aldwinkle and Irene, who are making their way down the stairs. Not wanting to be seen together, Calamy and Thriplow rush to a nearby closet and hide.

ALDWINKLE

I have been wrestled awake by fate itself.

Oh my goodness! The house was shaking, and there was that crash. I must go outside to make sure that nothing too terrible has happened in the front yard.

She makes her way over to the same closet Thriplow and Calamy are hiding in but is stopped in her tracks by the broken art piece.

(Shrieking) Not the sailor!

She kneels by the sailor, almost moved to tears. Irene, not sure of how to handle herself in this situation, joins her in trying to put the statue back together. Hovenden and Cardan run downstairs.

CARDAN

What on earth is going on down here?

ALDWINKLE

My beautiful sailor has been ruined by this treacherous storm. I simply can't go on.

Irene gets a chair for her to sit down on. Hovenden gets something for her to prop her feet on.

IRENE

Here, Auntie, rest your feet too. *(To Hovenden)* Could you fetch a cold towel? *(This is not her first time dealing with Aldwinkle's theatrics.)*

Irene moves Aldwinkle's feet onto the rest. Aldwinkle flops them off stubbornly, almost as if she is a toddler throwing a tantrum.

ALDWINKLE

It's no use. Silly Irene, you can't possibly understand the loss of passion, and the pain that I am enduring right now. Another bright star has died tonight.

Hovenden brings the wet towel. Aldwinkle blows her nose into it.

Suddenly there is a pounding at the door.

CARDAN

Who could that possibly be?

He moves to open the door

ALDWINKLE

Do be careful, Mr. Cardan. Who knows what the storm may have dragged in.

Cardan opens the door, revealing the Mailboy. He is drenched in water.

MAILBOY

(holding the telegram out in front of him)

A telegram for Mrs. Lillian Aldwinkle!

Cardan passes the telegram to Aldwinkle. The Mailboy remains in the doorway.

ALDWINKLE

Now who could this possibly be from?

Ah, it is from Mr. Falx. It says: I am sending my regrets, stop. There are trees in the road, stop. I cannot reach your house because it is too stormy, stop. A terrible storm is headed your way, stop. Please take caution, stop.

Now what on earth has caused him to send a telegram at this hour of the morning?

CARDAN

Mr. Falx has always been right on the nose about details, although he was a bit late this time around.

(To the Mailboy) Thank you.

The Mailboy stands there.

Have a good evening.

*The Mailboy stays. Cardan closes the door.
A moment or two, then pounding on the door.*

Cardan opens the door. FRANCIS CHELFIER leans up against the doorway, exhausted. He wears a sailing jacket that has seen better days. He looks just like the sailor from the statue. Everyone immediately notices this.

CHELFIER

Please help me!

CARDAN

Now why should we do that? Who's to say that we let just anyone in at this time of the morning?

CHELFIER

Please help me. I have been lost at sea for such a great amount of time. Did you know that if one spends enough time at sea they begin to experience large bouts of nausea, swelling as the waves do on the sea? I can almost still hear the waves crashing now as they have for so long.

In the middle of this sentence (he does not need to say the whole thing), Chelfier's speech slurs and he falls over in the doorway. In an act of dramatic recovery, Aldwinkle gets up and pushes Cardan out of the way, kneeling by the side of the sailor. She puts her cold towel on his forehead. She begins to push on his chest. She motions as if she is about to try and give terrible mouth to mouth

HOVENDEN

Lillian, how could that possibly work –

Before he can finish this sentence, and before Aldwinkle can give the mouth to mouth, Chelfier coughs loudly. He wakes up. He and Aldwinkle share a moment of eye contact.

ALDWINKLE

He's alive! *(To Hovenden)* If you would kindly help me.

Together, they help Chelfier off the ground and into the chair Aldwinkle was just using.

CHELFIER

Thank you so much. To think that I would end my voyages in the eye of a storm darker than I ever saw at sea.

ALDWINKLE

You were at sea? What for? Please tell us.

CARDAN

Lillian, while I would love to hear all about the voyages of this sailor, I do want to call all our collective attention to the notion that it is only 4 in the morning, and *some* of us did not get to bed until around 1.

ALDWINKLE

And that is certainly not any fault of my own. How can we possibly sleep when we have been gifted such a divine guest? *(to the sailor)* What is your name?

CHELFIER

I am Francis Chelfier.

ALDWINKLE

Mr. Chelfier, won't you please indulge us with the story of how you came to be here?

CHELFIER

It's the least I can do.

I grew up around art – in North Oxford, to be exact. I remember watching the Morris dancing with my parents. Now my mother is a widow. She donates to charitable causes and owns many cats and dogs. My father was wonderful. He had a face like a Greek philosopher, full of depth and intelligence.

I began my journey as a writer. (*Aldwinkle's face lights up*) I revived the Rabbit Fancier's Gazette by incorporating a new section about goats. The paper was of course incorporated into the Mouse Breeder Record later. You may have heard of it.

I am now writing a series of poems, but they prove to be quite stubborn.

I met the love of my life (*Aldwinkle sighs in defeat*), Barbara Walters, on a trip to the river. She was the image of beauty –

ALDWINKLE

Was?

CHELFIER

She became self-centered and left me heartbroken.

CARDAN

(*oh well*) That's too bad. I suppose we should all be going to bed now.

CHELFIER

I was thinking about all of this as I was drifting out to sea on the Mediterranean. It was a clear day with a wonderfully blue sky. Suddenly, I was hit by a fast-moving sailboat. My boat sank, I nearly drowned. I washed ashore. I was woken by the sounds of thunder. I ran and ran until I found the only place with a light on. I knocked on the door, and here I am. (*To Aldwinkle*) You saved me.

ALDWINKLE

(unsure of what to say) Would you like to stay? We have plenty of room.

CHELFIER

If you'd have me.

ALDWINKLE

Here, let me take your jacket.

Aldwinkle takes his jacket and opens the closet. Thriplow and Calamy are together, but immediately separate out of shock. They get out of the closet.

CARDAN

Please let us all go to bed.

Similar to the last time they all went to bed, lights go out all over the stage. As each light goes out, a person says goodnight, by yelling across the house.

IRENE

Goodnight, Auntie!

ALDWINKLE

Goodnight Irene!

HOVENDEN

Goodnight Irene!

IRENE

Goodnight Hovenden!

THRILOW

Goodnight Calamy! Goodnight Lillian!

CHELFIER

Hello? Is anyone there?

We hear a door open and slam shut. Aldwinkle comes back into the room, and hands Chelfier a set of sheets, she guides him out of the room. We hear several doors open and close. All the lights that turned off are back on. The sequence starts again.

ALDWINKLE

Goodnight Irene!

IRENE

Goodnight, Auntie!

HOVENDEN

Goodnight Irene!

IRENE

Goodnight Hovenden!

THRILOW

Goodnight Calamy! Goodnight Lillian!

CARDAN

Won't you all be quiet!?

Quickly all the lights go off and the house is silent.

ACT 2, SCENE 2

Before breakfast. Aldwinkle catches Irene in the hallway.

ALDWINKLE

I want to know what he thinks of me.

IRENE

Who?

ALDWINKLE

Chelfier, of course. What does he say about me?

IRENE

I've never heard him say anything at all. It is only the next morning.

ALDWINKLE

Then you must listen. You must keep your ears open.

IRENE

Perhaps he likes Mary. I thought I saw him looking at her last night in a sort of special way.

ALDWINKLE

Well, she did fall out of that closet in the arms of that Calamy.

IRENE

Aunt Lillian, he just got here last night I'm sure he doesn't-

ALDWINKLE

I saved his life. There he was on my doorstep, dragged in by the storm, wrapped in a sailor's jacket, nearly dead. I called him back to life and brought him to a haven of peace where he should gather new strength and new inspiration for his poetry. His poetry which he shall write in my presence. That extraordinary creature.

IRENE

I suppose it would be against the laws of your being for you to not fall in love with this person.

ALDWINKLE

I do hope that means that you are saying yes, Irene.

IRENE

Anything for you.

Elsewhere in the villa, Thriplow is talking, and Calamy is listening.

THRILOW

Life is so wonderful. Always, so gay, so rich. This morning, for instance, I woke up, and the first thing I saw was a pigeon sitting on the windowsill - a big fat gray pigeon with a captive rainbow. Pinned to his stomach. And then high up on the wall above the washstand there was a little black scorpion standing tail upwards, looking quite unreal, like something out of the signs on the zodiac. Life is so generous, so copious.

CALAMY

Generous! Yes, I should think it was. Pigeons before breakfast. And at breakfast it offers you.

THRILOW

As if I were boiled kipper.

They laugh for a moment. Then, another thought.

I can never understand how it is that everyone isn't always happy- I mean fundamentally happy. Underneath, there is of course suffering and pain, there's a thousand reasons why one can't be consciously happy, on the top if you see what I mean. But fundamentally happy, underneath - how can anyone help being that? Life's so extraordinary. Rich and beautiful - there's no excuse for not loving it always, even when one's considerably miserable. Don't you think so?

CALAMY

I agree. It's always worth living, even at the worst of times. And if one happens to be in love, it's really intoxicating.

THRILOW

I don't believe you've ever been in love.

CALAMY

I can't remember having ever been out of it.

THRILOW

Which is not really the same thing as saying that you've never really been in. Not really.

CALAMY

And you?

(Beat)

(Beat)

(Beat)

THRILOW

What are you thinking about?

CALAMY

You.

THRILOW

Tiens!

CALAMY

What would you say if I told you I was in love with you?

THRILOW

I should say I didn't believe you.

CALAMY

Do you want me to compel you to believe?

THRILOW

I'd be most interested to know, at any rate, how you proposed to set about it.

CALAMY

By force if necessary.

THRILOW

By force?

CALAMY

By force. Like this.

He kisses her forcefully. And again.

Do you believe me now?

THRILOW

(smiling)
You're insufferable.

ACT 2, SCENE 3

The Butler waits alone in the sitting room. Suddenly the doorbell rings. He goes to answer it, and sees that it is the Mailboy. The Mailboy offers him a sign which says "A day in the life at the villa of Lillian Aldwinkle." He looks very confused.

A beat

The Mailboy allows himself inside and brings the Butler to the lip of the stage. He points at the audience. There could be a moment where the Butler even moves into the audience and looks around for a bit. At some point he decides to get back onto the stage with the Mailboy.

The Mailboy shows the Butler how to hold up a sign. Every time the Butler starts to hold up the sign, fast paced music begins to play. This should scare him at first, but eventually he gains confidence and holds it up powerfully, thus starting the below sequence.

A montage mimicking that of an Edwardian side show. A complete transition out of the world we are in. Very fast paced and depicting the many attempts of Irene to talk to Chelfier, all which Hovenden sees. These are paired with other various interactions of guests throughout the day. Hovenden grows increasingly upset as each event occurs. There are three total events throughout this montage, occurring at different times of the day. They are broken up by the other interactions. As each time passes, the Butler or the Mailboy displays the time on a sign as if they are presenting an act at a circus. This montage is a choreographed comedic routine. The entire cast is involved in this. The idea here is that Hovenden is chasing Irene, who is chasing Chelfier, but not romantically.

Drumroll. The Butler addresses the crowd with the first sign saying, "A day in the life at the villa of Lillian Aldwinkle." Upbeat music starts. The Mailboy brings on the first sign, which says "9 a.m."

Thriplow and Chelfier are talking. Hovenden enters behind them. Irene enters from the other side of the stage, waving at the group. Hovenden thinks she is waving at him. Irene invites herself to go talk to the group.

Aldwinkle crosses the stage doing terrible vocal warmups. She is followed by the Mailboy, who is trying to give her mail. The Butler follows her with a sign that says "Noon."

Cardan and Chelfier are sitting, talking on a bench. Hovenden goes to join them. Suddenly, Calamy and the Butler move a huge painting across stage, blocking his path. When the painting is gone, Irene is sitting where Cardan was.

Calamy and Thriplow sneak around. They run into Aldwinkle, who is now being followed by the Mailboy, who has his hands out, asking for a tip. Upon seeing Aldwinkle, Thriplow

and Calamy part ways. Ignoring the Mailboy, Aldwinkle goes into a room, slamming the door in his face. The Mailboy is lost and doesn't know how to get out of the villa. He awkwardly looks around.

The Mailboy enters with a sign that says "3 p.m." Hovenden comes on stage with flowers. He knocks on Irene's door. Chelfier answers it. He gives the flowers to Chelfier and exits, clearly upset.

The Butler enters with a sign that says, "Dinner time." We are back in the grand saloon. The Mailboy stands awkwardly. When the set changed, his place on stage did not. It would be rude to leave during dinner, so he frantically looks around for a chair. Finally, he pulls a chair from one of the wings, and grants himself a spot at the table. It could be a foldable chair, or not. Once he sits down, the music stops. Suddenly we are back to regular time.

ACT 2, SCENE 4

All guests enter the dining area and sit, all lost in conversation. Hovenden sits next to Irene who is staring adamantly at Chelfier.

HOVENDEN

Why have you been so funny this last day?

IRENE

Funny?

HOVENDEN

You know, why do you suddenly avoid me?

Aldwinkle makes a noise indicating that a toast is coming.

ALDWINKLE

Before we begin, I just wanted to give a toast to our new guest, Mr. Chelfier, who by wonderful chance has joined us in our humble dwelling. It is an honor to have a true artist in the household. To you, Mr. Chelfier.

All guests raise their glasses.

ALDWINKLE

It is rather odd that we haven't heard from dear Mr. Falx this evening. I was hoping he'd be able to join us for dinner.

To the butler

Have we gotten any telegrams this evening?

He shakes his head no, and stares at the mailboy, who blankly looks back at him.

I see. Has anyone got a telegram from Mr. Falx? Anyone at all?

Begrudgingly, the Mailboy takes a telegram out of his coat pocket, sliding it across the table to Aldwinkle.

Ah, I see. That will be all, you may go.

The Mailboy stares in disbelief.

MAILBOY

My name is Hugh, you know!

He takes his glass of wine and drinks it quickly. Slamming it down on the table, he exits, followed by the Butler.

ALDWINKLE

That was certainly out of place.

Reading the telegraph

Ah yes, it says that he will not be joining us this evening. Fine thing that is. We shall have to carry on without once again.

IRENE

Have I been avoiding you?

HOVENDEN

You know that you have been.

IRENE

Yes, perhaps I did.

HOVENDEN

But why? Why?

IRENE

I don't know.

HOVENDEN

You don't know? Perhaps you were walking in your sleep the whole time?

IRENE

Don't be stupid!

HOVENDEN

At any rate, I'm not too stupid to see that you were running after vat fellow Chelfier!

IRENE

I have no interest at all in Chelfier.

HOVENDEN

That's not true at all

IRENE

Yes, it is

HOVENDEN

No, it isn't.

IRENE

Yes, it is, listen to me!

HOVENDEN

Then what is it?

Aldwinkle shoots Irene a look.

IRENE

Glancing at Aldwinkle, then at Hovenden, back and forth for a while.

Nothing that concerns you at all.

HOVENDEN

What is it?

Beat

And another

IRENE

Bursting

I was just spending time with him to understand how he felt about Auntie Lillian

She immediately covers her mouth

ALDWINKLE

That simply is not true, and I certainly do not approve of whatever is going on between the two of you; in fact, I do not permit it!

IRENE

There is nothing going on, Auntie!

HOVENDEN

There certainly is, and you know it!

He exits.

IRENE

You never let me do anything on my own.

ALDWINKLE

That simply isn't true, Irene.

IRENE

You live here, and act as if you know everything about art and culture when in fact you know virtually nothing. You act as if you somehow made it here on your own, to this place that you are right now, when in fact, you didn't. You can't even name the stars in the sky.

ALDWINKLE

I have done everything for you to make you become the artist you should be. I have surrounded you with the best possible environment and guided you away from the upsetting amount of time you spend fascinated with irrelevant things. You used to spend your time so grievously, Irene. I have spent the better part of your life sculpting you into a better version of yourself.

IRENE

You have forced me to become the version of myself that you want, not that I want. You can't help but feel angry that someone may want to accept me for the girl I am right now, not the girl you want me to become. I can't help that you have to produce a different version of yourself so that you can feel desirable.

This hits Aldwinkle. Irene exits.

CHELFIER

Lillian, I –

Aldwinkle leaves.

A long beat of awkward silence.

CHELFIER

(as if he heard something) Yes? Of course, I'll be right up!

He quickly runs out of the room, Cardan follows. Thriplow and Calamy are left in silence.

THRILOW

That was quite a spectacle. That Chelfier is quite queer, is he not?

CALAMY

Quite so, I almost wonder how it is that he can take a liking to Lillian.

THRILOW

How so?

CALAMY

He seems so quiet and so reserved. It's very clear to me why Lillian looks after him, but not as much he after her.

THRILOW

Do you think he looks after her in any special way?

CALAMY

But of course he does. Did you see the way he went running after her like that?

THRILOW

Yes, but even so, that doesn't tell that he's taken a certain type of liking to her.

CALAMY

One just happens to know these things, and I know.

THRILOW

I certainly can tell how Hovenden looks after Irene. I can just see the passion in his eyes when he talks to her.

CALAMY

Pray tell, what do you see?

THRILOW

Genuine passion. They are like two that I would write into a novel.

One is reserved, and quiet, the other loud and certain.

(She goes to another world)

They do a certain type of dance. He is strong and hunts; she sits and watches their children running in the yard. He paints, she sews. He laughs deeply, her lips turn up delicately at the sounds of a joke, which he tells so perfectly. They go out sometimes, and he always takes her by the arm and guides her along, around the many puddles of water that line the streets.

In the summer, they picnic along the banks of the river. She wears a hat to protect her face from the sun. He runs along the river's edge with his trousers rolled up, youthful as ever. Her complexion turns freckled. He kisses her on the nose.

(Who is this about?)

He reads a lot; she drinks tea and looks out the window while she writes. She writes and writes and writes.

They are simply perfect. And they do this day after day, month after month, year after year. There is no real ending for them, and that is exactly what they both want.

(Back to Calamy)

That just seems delightful, what they have, don't you agree?

CALAMY

I suppose so.

THRILOW

You suppose?

CALAMY

I mean, that can't be all there is to it, the same thing day after day. Surely as a writer you must know that.

THRILOW

But where is the fun in that? For the reader?

CALAMY

(relieved)

Well if we are only speaking in terms of the reader, that would be ok, then.

THRILOW

Only the reader.

She kisses him

ACT 2, SCENE 5

*The same moment, elsewhere in the villa. Irene and Hovenden, and then Aldwinkle and Chelfier.
Irene runs after Hovenden.*

IRENE

Please! Wait! I can explain everything!

HOVENDEN

Why should I wait? It has been nearly impossible to get you alone at all today! All day I have been trying to spend time with you, but you are always running off in that direction of that *creature* Chelfier! Why do you trot after him all day like a little dog?

IRENE

I don't. It's no business of yours either way.

HOVENDEN

Oh, it's no business of mine, is it? Thanks for the information.

IRENE

You know I don't take the slightest interest in Chelfier!

A very long beat of silence.

HOVENDEN

Look here. I'm afraid I've made a fool of myself. I said stupid things. Will you forgive me, Irene?

She takes his hand. They sit with themselves for a moment. Hovenden moves as if he is about to kiss her. Irene pulls away.

IRENE

No, please.

She pulls back. Hovenden realizes that she is crying.

Why did you spoil it again? We'd been so happy, such friends.

HOVENDEN

I'm a brute.

IRENE

(laughing)

No, you're not a brute. You're a dear, and I like you. So, so much. But you mustn't do that. I don't know why, but it spoils everything. I was a goose to cry. But somehow...

A beat

I like you so much, but not now, I can't. Someday, perhaps. Please don't spoil it again. Promise you won't.

HOVENDEN

This is about your aunt, isn't it? I knew that she didn't like me.

IRENE

It isn't.

HOVENDEN

Then what is it? Out with it!

IRENE

It's about me. I must spend some time with myself before I can spend that kind of time with you. But I do want to spend that kind of time with you.

You must not say anything, but I believe that I am going to spend some time away for a bit, to understand who I am. But I will come back for you.

HOVENDEN

And who is to say that you should spend that time alone?

IRENE

She laughs.

I'll miss you so much while I'm away.

HOVENDEN

So that settles it, just like that?

IRENE

Just like that.

A beat of acceptance

HOVENDEN

I will miss you so much while you are gone.

IRENE

Don't be such a goose, I'll only be away for a short while. Promise you'll wait for me?

HOVENDEN

Irene, I –

IRENE

Please.

HOVENDEN

I promise.

They sit together in happy silence.

The other side of the conversation. Aldwinkle and Chelfier are talking.

ALDWINKLE

I suppose I owe you an explanation for what went on in there.

CHELFIER

I would appreciate that.

ALDWINKLE

Ever since you came here, I have felt this prophetic connection between us. You looked like the sailor in this beautiful statue. It was the gem of my collection. The night of the storm it broke. With that, my dreams of having the finest art collection were shattered. And then you walked through the door. Almost as if I had been given a live version of the very thing I had lost. Can't you see how we are meant to be together?

CHELFIER

As if I put together the broken pieces of your statue.

ALDWINKLE

So, you do understand!

CHELFIER

Yes of course I do. I was lost at sea, and there was your villa, a beacon of light to guide me home.

ALDWINKLE

What a beautiful sentiment. Did you make that up just now?

CHELFIER

No.

ALDWINKLE

It's beautiful, full of passion.

CHELFIER

Just like you.

ALDWINKLE

You really were sent to me.

They sit together for a bit.

Should we go back to the others? It's getting rather late.

CHELFIER

Isn't it a bit early in the evening to say good night?

ALDWINKLE

Somehow, that doesn't scare me anymore.

ACT 2, SCENE 6

Calamy and Thriplow lie together in bed. It is the middle of the night. Calamy is holding his hand up into the moonlight.

THRILOW

What are you thinking of?

CALAMY

Nothing.

THRILOW

Yes, you were. You must have been thinking about something.

CALAMY

Nothing in particular.

THRILOW

Tell me. I want to know.

CALAMY

Well, if you really want to know/

THRILOW

/And why did you hold up your hand like that? (*Copying Calamy's gesture*) And spread out the fingers? I could see it, you know, against the window.

CALAMY

(*laughing*) Oh, you saw it, did you? The hand? Well as a matter of fact, it was precisely about my hand I was thinking.

THRILOW

About your hand? That seems a queer thing to think about.

CALAMY

But interesting if you think about it hard enough.

THRILOW

Your hands, when they touch me, I like you too much! Too much.

(beat)

That's all I think about your hand.

CALAMY

Yes, that's one way of thinking of my hand, that's one way in which it exists and is real. Certainly. And that was what I was thinking about, all the ways in which these five fingers have reality and exist. All the different ways.

If you think of that, even for five minutes, you find yourself plunged up to the eyes in the most portentous mysteries. And I believe that if one could stand the strain of thinking hard for several days, or weeks, or months, one might be able to burrow one's way right through the mystery and really get to something, some kind of truth, some explanation.

THRILOW

Why don't you think about me? Don't I bear thinking about?

(Calamy says nothing)

Don't I bear thinking about?

(Nothing)

Don't you like me?

CALAMY

Of course.

THRILOW

I could hate you, for making me like you so much.

CALAMY

And what about me? Haven't I got a right to hate, too?

THRILOW

No, because you don't love so much.

CALAMY

But that's not the question. One doesn't resent love for its own sake of what it interferes with.

THRILOW

Oh, I see. I'm sorry to have gotten in the way of your important occupations. Such as thinking about your hand.

Calamy says nothing and pulls the covers back over his head.

ACT 2 SCENE 7

Irene and Aldwinkle sit in Aldwinkle's room. Irene is brushing Aldwinkle's hair and seems to be brushing less carefully than usual. The tension in the room is painful.

Irene brushes too hard, Aldwinkle lets out a gasp, grabbing her hair.

IRENE

I feel quite cross with you right now, Aunt Lillian.

she brushes a bit more

And I need to say this now because I finally feel brave enough to say it. I think we may need to spend some time apart.

ALDWINKLE

Irene, whatever has provoked you to say such a thing?

IRENE

Auntie, please just listen.

ALDWINKLE

OK.

IRENE

I think that I need to take some time alone to figure out who I am. I have so many interests that go beyond what you've taught me. Last night made me realize how much I rely on you in my life. I just think I need to be my own person for a while.

Beat

ALDWINKLE

If this is about that Hovenden -

IRENE

No, it is not about that at all. He said he will wait for me, h. He will wait for me to return.

ALDWINKLE

How lucky you are.

IRENE

I am.

a moment between the two

ALDWINKLE

I may have something that I need to apologize for as well.

IRENE

OK.

ALDWINKLE

For so long it's just been you and me, all these years. Sitting in this house that is so old, talking about the art, walking around the gardens. I knew that at some point you'd have to go off on your own, but I didn't believe it to be so soon. I knew as soon as you and Hovenden exchanged that first glance when he arrived that it was sooner than I'd thought. I shall be alone.

collecting herself

It may just be me and all this art filling the rooms, but that won't be of any matter. It's gathered dust over the years, but what's the harm in taking another look around.? Perhaps I can find comfort in them once again. Oh, how Bellini must have felt in that moment, perhaps I too can feel that way if I only look at them for a bit longer.

And then of course there's Chelfier, but who's to say that he won't wake up one morning and decide to embark on yet another journey? What will I do then, when I only have myself? I will become such a state.

For you to leave alone is so brave.

IRENE

You discredit yourself, Auntie. You aren't really that old. You still have much more time. Maybe it would do you good to leave alone, to be without all of this for a bit.

ADLWINKLE

Do you know how much I will always love you?

IRENE

Of course I do. I would never doubt that.

ALDWINKLE

That's all that really matters to me.

IRENE

Does this mean that I can go off on my own?

ALDWINKLE

That is no longer something I can decide.

IRENE

Thank you, Auntie.

They embrace.

ACT 2 SCENE 8

The sitting room, the next morning, where we first met Thriplow. Calamy heads for the door, packed as if he is going on a long trip with no intent of coming back. Cardan is sitting in a chair. He catches Calamy by surprise.

CARDAN

And where are you off to so early in the morning?

CALAMY

Just the village.

CARDAN

With all of that packed?

CALAMY

I'm going to the mountains.

CARDAN

For how long?

CALAMY

I'm not sure.

CARDAN

What about Miss Thriplow?

CALAMY

I wrote her a note explaining everything this morning. I know she will understand.

CARDAN

I don't understand.

CALAMY

Can't you see that there's more to be found in life than all of this?

CARDAN

What a luxury it is that you've realized this now about yourself. You have the chance now to go find what fulfills you. Some people never do.

CALAMY

When did you find what fulfilled you?

CARDAN

Some people never do.

Calamy understands this. He leaves.

ACT 2 SCENE 9 - EPILOGUE

Thriplow sits alone at a desk, in deep thought. She has only her typewriter.

THRIFLOW

They do a certain type of dance. He paints, she sews. He laughs deeply, her lips turn up delicately at the sounds of a joke, which he tells so perfectly. Then he steps on her toes, and trips. They go out sometimes, and he always takes her by the arm and guides her along, around the many puddles of water that line the streets. How they've walked along so many streets. Sometimes they grow tired. Incredibly tired.

In the summer, they go on picnics along the banks of the river. She wears a yellow hat to protect her face from the sun. He runs along the river's edge with his trousers rolled up, youthful as ever. Her complexion turns freckled. He kisses her on the nose. It feels nice.

Despite this, they aren't perfect. They have their quarrels, their differences. He leaves, she feels sad. And she waits. He goes far, far away.

He reads a lot; she drinks tea and looks out the window while she writes. She writes and writes and writes.

A transition to another part of the stage, Calamy enters, and moves off the stage into the house of the theater, bags in hand. The Mailboy follows behind, stopping to watch him trail off into the distance.

MAILBOY

As Calamy walked away from the villa, down the hill, he glanced behind his shoulder every now and then until Lillian Aldwinkle's villa disappeared round a bend in the road. A profound melancholy settled around him as he wandered off into the mountains. With the villa, he had left his old, familiar life. But, he was left quite alone with something new and strange. What was to come of this parting? Perhaps he had only been a fool.

The mailboy sits on the lip of the stage, there is a reflective quality to his presence.

Mr. Falx never arrived at Lillian Aldwinkle's Villa.

A beat

No, he didn't die. A telegram arrived at the villa the next day, describing some quaint inn that he had stumbled into on that rainy night just by the edge of the woods. He stayed there a few days, until the roads around him had dried enough that he could continue. But as we know, Mr. Falx did not continue. He instead, by some odd divine inclination decided that he should return home, but not by any route of convention. With his bags packed, Mr. Falx walked out the door and continued to walk until he reached the next small town, and the next and the next.

The Mailboy sighs and takes his hat off, counting the bills inside.

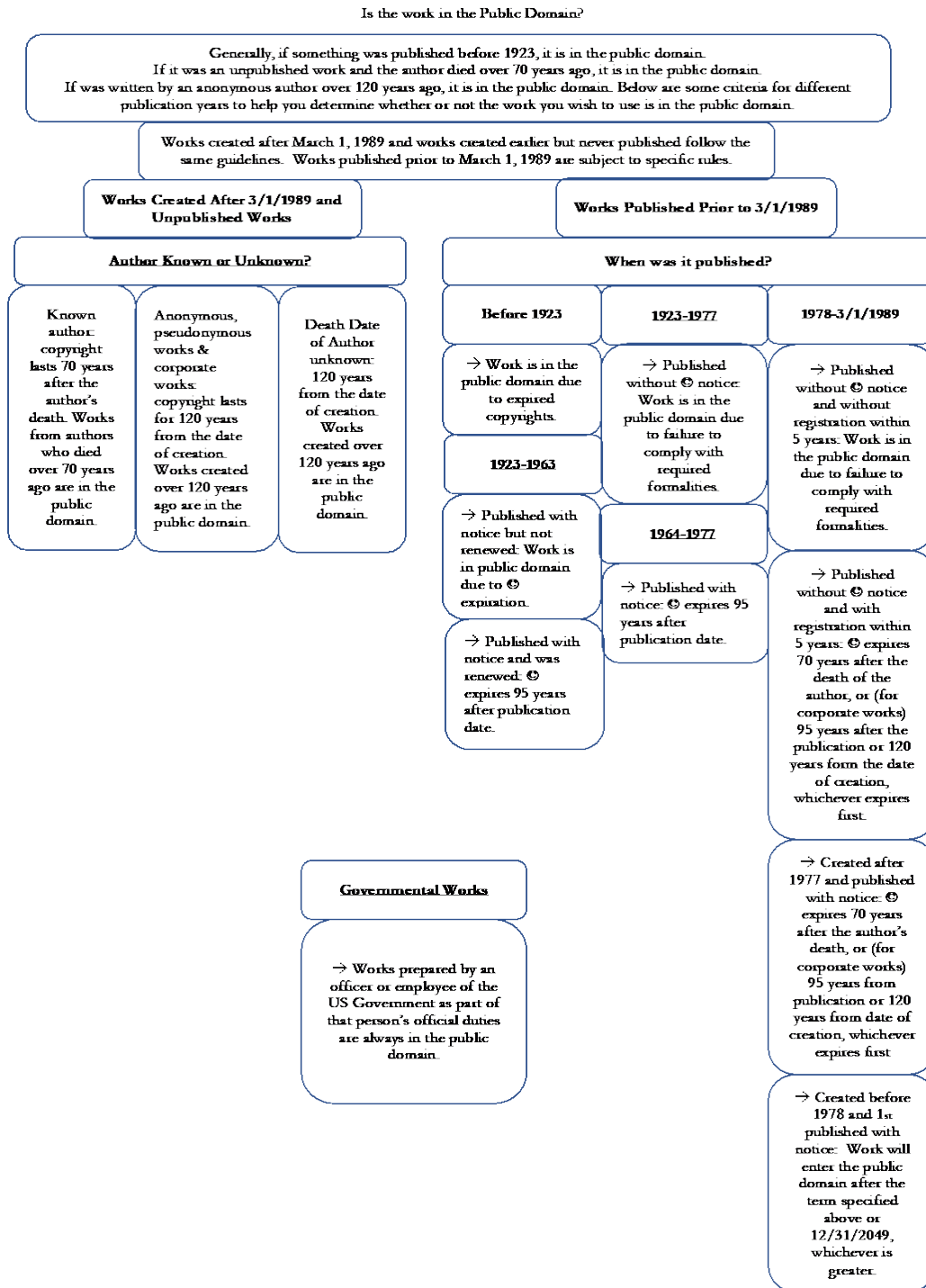
I think that I am going to take some time as well.

The Butler enters dressed in contemporary vacation apparel (flip flops, sunglasses, visor, fanny pack, sunscreen on the nose, etc.) As the Mailboy is talking, he also gradually changes into this apparel, which is provided by the Butler.

I don't just mean a break. I'm quitting, and I'm never looking back. We're going to start with a trip to the ocean, but then who knows where we will go from there. I want to move all over the world. For isn't there more to it than all (*gestures to house*) this? I certainly think so. I don't want to be akin to ill-growing leaves on a tree, hollow and without life. But perhaps I too, am just a fool.

END

Appendix B: Flowchart- Is the work in the Public Domain? (Belmont University)



Appendix C: Preliminary Character Research Notes, August 20th, 2022

Let's Read Some Articles!

Aldwinkle	Thriplow - central character of <u>AGAMA</u> . - wants to feel intellectual - tries to make herself feel	Calamy # loves power over Thriplow # millionaire who hates philosophy & finds uncertainty in the present era # quiet mystic
Irene	Hoeden	Cardan # loves \$\$ # escapes of poverty and death # lamenting loss of 19th century like # boomer # tired cynic
Falk # material socialist	* transform the raw emotions of humans and twist them into rational comments about human nature, depicting the most tangled and deprived human conditions. * the concepts mocked still may true * desire to be understood, accepted and respected * all characters are manifestations of common human flaws * egoism is target of the satire * Huxley: desirability for a set of standards	

Mr. Cardan is kind of like the boomers of the 21st century. He truly believes that his era was better. Through this, Huxley argues that a time in which there were standards of living was better.

Does he fear leaving his gen behind when he dies?

TBL

- * stress on the direct communication of ideas.
- * intellectual hierarchy among characters, top 3 characters defending well defined, clashing viewpoints.
- * themes of ageing, death and the absence of the meaning of life.

those who have something to say	nothing of their own
Chelifer, Cardan, Calamy	The rest
↓	↓
thinkers	make the plot, laughs, dramatic particular ideas
↓	
they defend someone's diff perspectives to answer someone's questions	

Plot Brainstorming →

Reality TV? → modern adaptation?
ideals of characters intact, updated language and context
social media

Cardan has such a pronounced fear of poverty and death that he somehow betrays Aldwinkle. He would do anything to make money.
↳ How does Elver factor into this?
↳ Elver = \$\$ at her death

A misunderstanding @ dinner

Thriplow change for others	Aldwinkle passionate loud taskless/inconsiderate
Cardan likes to shock frank	Irene - loves Lillian - spiritual conflict
Hoeden rich resents Aldwinkle enthusiastic passionate about social injustice persistent ambition to distinguish self above others	Falk # resembles Mr. X # Hoeden's spiritual helper # ridiculed by Cardan # doesn't agree w/ Ald way of life

viewpoints defended:
Chelifer: existentialism
most significant figure. Exceptionally well educated, disillusioned young man; unfavourable opinion of humanity keeps himself in the "heart of reality" avoiding escapism

Cardan: Materialism
materialist conception of ageing, death and the mind-body relationship. Self-deprecatory sense of humor. Under current of discontent and fear in his loquacity. death/dying fear assoc. w/ poverty

MONOLOGUE??: How will I die TBL 283

Calamy: Utilitarianism
should he devote his time to more than chasing women?

part I: An evening @ Mrs Aldwinkle's
one day; characters are introduced, they do not develop

part II: Fragment from the autobiography of FC
talks abt FC's life, and how he became a guest @ L.A.S.

pt 3: Love of the Parallels
Couples:
Irene and L. Hoeden
Aldwinkle and Chelifer
Calamy and Thriplow
Cardan and Mrs Elver
* relationships illustrate various issues

part 4: The Journey
a trip to Rome w/ all but Calamy and Thriplow. Relationships develop
Elver Dies.

part 5: conclusions
conclusions of the 3 thinkers

Calamy (cont'd)
whole affair w/ MT is a prolonged attempt to suppress knowledge of the world of quiet sleeper reality. Eventually goes to live in the mountains.
* Calamy has more options than Cardan, * because he is younger.

Appendix D: Stream of Conscious Character Writing (exercise), December 22nd, 2022

I used this exercise before writing my second draft. I realized that part of my writer's block was due to not having a complete grasp over who the characters were. To aid in their development, I spent 20 minutes with each character, writing without judgement about who I felt they were.

Lillian Aldwinkle is a little bit lonely; I think. She invited the people over to her house seeking connections, and I thinking some way she deeply wants a romantic connection. I do think it's interesting that she invited an old flame back, and then invites Calamy, who is someone that by normal standards, would be out of her league, or too young, too attractive, not interested in having the type of relationship that she would want, even though she is clearly pursuing him especially in the first act of the show. I think that a key component of her character is that she is lonely, and afraid of true vulnerability.

She covers this up by talking about passion through art, I think that maybe she might also do this because she views people who know about art as attractive and desirable and therefore she gives herself those traits as well, even though they are not really true to herself, I think that an interesting path for her might be to have her find someone, but this person is not into her because she has an interest in the arts.

So, what exactly is desirable about Lillian Aldwinkle? She didn't necessarily work for all that she has, there definitely are mentions of her using the people and the land for her own gain. I think that there is an element about Lillian Aldwinkle that has to do with charming obliviousness to real issues in the world. I'm not sure if this quite hits it on the nose, but I think there is some appeal in that she lives her life in this villa, away from everyone else, and most of the issues of the world, which are not ever discussed in the book or in my adaptation.

I think I also want to make her more overtly high maintenance and insecure.

Why does she like Chelfier? And is there an element of her being attracted to the idea of him rather than the actuality of him/ He does present himself looking just like the art piece that she claims to be her favorite. When they end up together is she happy? Or is it a situation where she likes him and then he betrays that love by showing his true colors which are maybe the complete opposite of what Aldwinkle think they are/ would want in a person? She is lonely, but maybe she realizes that she won't feel that was as much if she were to just embrace what is really going on around her.

Mary Thriplow is a younger person (late 20s) kind of at war with herself. She is conflicted internally with what she wants for her passions, and then with how she believes that she should act as a woman. Right now, I think that she is more on the intellectual side of things. She is very book smart. She has written three full books at this point in her life. She is a bit of a perfectionist, and really doesn't want to show her work to anyone unless she is sure that it is

ready and will be received well. I think that her books have been somewhat successful. She is known as a writer of deep passion, and that is why she was invited to Lilian Aldwinkle's villa for the weekend.

One genuine conflict she has is that she isn't very emotional or sensitive by nature. She has spent a lot of time learning about how she ought to feel, and has perfected the art of writing about this, even though she does not really feel this way herself. I think she might get dumped by Calamy because she's not smart enough? He wants someone with more intellect, and she dumbs herself down for him. Or does that experience finally make her feel enough to create something that really matters to her?

This is a huge conflict for her because the way that she behaves does not conform with the gender norms of the time. Back then, women were thought to have a natural aptitude for emotion and vulnerability, they were supposed to be frail and sensitive rather than intelligent, Thriplow longs for connection in this way, and internally believes that she must be more emotional to get this connection, to be desired.

Because of this, Thriplow strives to be the perfect ingenue. The right amount of conversation, the right amount of delicacy. I'm not sure if this involves going far to make herself appear less intelligent than she really is, but I do know that it involves trying super hard to make sure that others see how dainty she can be, and she intentionally tries not to talk about her writing, even though it is her greatest passion.

I think that this creates a similarity between her and Aldwinkle, they both are hiding their true personas for the sake of being pursued. I think it is natural for her to pursue Calamy, although I don't think that he is her true match. I think that she is into the idea of Calamy, much like Aldwinkle is into Chelfier. They both fit the mold of what the other believes that they want.

Calamy is a bit of a player. He is in his early 30's and has spent a good part of that time chasing after women. He has had a lot of meaningless mainly physical relationships, perhaps a few longer-term deep ones as well. He has been on a bit of a fling streak though. I think for now, I want to keep his reason for coming to be potentially making new connections. I am trying to think about what he does to support himself and am realizing that I need to think about that a little more.

My guess, and feeling is that he is invited over by Aldwinkle because he has been marked as a potential interest to her. I think that Calamy may have some old money, though he himself has not really grown up, and gotten a career. He definitely has a bachelor pad.

What is important to think about is that Calamy is about to hit a point where he realizes that he would like to take his life more seriously. I think that if I were to put Calamy into a modern context, that he would be a bit of a party boy, interested in designer drugs. He would own some type of luxury bachelor pad that he didn't pay for and would throw parties with women.

Given this I think that Calamy doesn't really have a clue what he wants in life and is more and more starting to feel the urge and the desire to slow down, now that he is getting closer and closer to 35. I'm not sure what it is about Thriplow that, makes him realize that this is his time to go runoff into the mountains, but I think that it is maybe that she lacks the intellect that he wants in a woman, He's definitely had his fair number of affairs.

In an ideal world, Calamy would see that Thriplow is smart, and is able to have the conversations that he desires. The two would be a good fit for each other, but Thriplow would need to be a bit more confident in her true self, and Calamy would need to be a bit more mature.

Is Calamy vain? That might be a bit of a stereotype, but I do think it could be a logical reason as to why he is unable to truly understand who Thriplow truly is. Like why can't he see through what she's doing and encourage her to be her true self? I mean, why are we unable to see what a person is really going through when they are acting weird? I think often because we are too focused on ourselves.

Cardan is defiantly the "boomer" type. I think that he's spent a lot of time doing good honest work and believes that everyone should be able to do whatever they want, just as long as they work hard for it. His arch comes in more at the end of the play when he reveals to Calamy that he. Has never been able to find his true passion in life. I think that maybe he's been working so long and hard that he never had the time to figure himself out?

Or maybe he doesn't need as significant of an arch as I want him to have? I think that the new mail boy character and him could really have some of the direct conflict in the show, as kind of a secondary plotline.

He is also oddly spiritual?? Like when he's talking about the great climacteric. Feels very out of left field for him. Did he used to be more artistic? Why did Lillian like him? They are old flames, and that's why he is invited here? Does he make Lilian feel better about herself, and that's why he comes back?

Mail boy Mostly acting as a narrator for the first half of the play, and then he is unwillingly brought into the house after the storm happens by Lillian Aldwinkle, who maybe is in a more giving mood after Chelfier arrives. I think that his mentality should be very gen-z, and I might even see if it works for him to speak in more contemporary language. He and Cardan should definitely have some conflict.

Appendix E: Preliminary plot outline of the first draft, August 27th, 2022

This plot outline was created before I wrote my first draft. At this point, I had written a lot of scenes with dialogue, but was really struggling with cohesive plot; I had no clue how to resolve plot lines. I wrote this outline to figure out how things were going to come together/ what scenes I needed to write to make sure that major plot points made sense. I later used this as a guide to write dialogue. Note that many of the scenes in the second act do not have numbers, as I was not sure what order they would need to go in.

Act 1 Scene 1

- A comedic intro into the world of Lilian Aldwinkle.
- A mail person drops off a note to the palace of Lilian Aldwinkle, she is not home.
- Inside we need Mary Thriplow an Author, who is awaiting the arrival home of Aldwinkle.
- Thriplow receives a telegram from Calamy, whom she has heard wonderful things about, speaking of his arrival to the villa later that afternoon.
- Thriplow goes to gaze out the window. She sees Calamy arriving earlier than expected.
- In a hurry to make herself appear more attractive and less intelligent to the man; she runs around trying to find ways to dress herself up.
- Calamy arrives
- Calamy and Thriplow get into conversation and Thriplow realizes that the rings aren't working. She hastily begins to take them off, hiding them.
- They continue their conversation

Act 1 Scene 2

- Lilian Aldwinkle arrives home
- Aldwinkle is aware that Thriplow has been talking to Calamy for a long time and does not like this at all.
- Aldwinkle takes the two on a tour of the palace
- The group comes back to the sitting room, to encounter Irene, the Niece of Lilian Aldwinkle.
- There is more conversation about the artistic intricacies of the villa.
- Irene attempts to smooth out the cushion Thriplow hid her jewels in, causing them to spill out.
- Thriplow quickly picks them up, sitting on top of them with her hands, saying that she feels faint.
- Calamy attempts to help her up to go freshen up, much to the dismay of Aldwinkle.
- Thriplow throws the jewels out the window.

Act 1 Scene 3

- Falx, Hovenden and Carden all arrive for dinner that evening.
- All guests arrive at different times, all carrying various types of luggage.
- There is no spoken Dialogue in this little montage.

- A look or. Exchange is shared between Hovenden and Irene, as they have not seen each other for a long time.
- There also is room for an exchange between Aldwinkle and Carden because they used to be in love.

Act 1 Scene 4

- This is the dinner scene.
- There is conversation and character intros here, but I'm really not sure what happens exactly.
- Mother, please help me
- I know here, that Aldwinkle will talk about her favorite art piece, which is either a statue or painting of a sailor at sea.
- I do know that I need Calamy and Thriplow to flirt even more with each other.
- At the end, Aldwinkle will announce that she wants to take the party out into the garden. All but Hovenden and Irene will go
- Irene and Hovenden have a conversation along the lines of "we knew each other when we were younger". It's mentioned that Aldwinkle has known Hovenden since he was a young boy, so it plausible that Irene and Hovenden have met before.
- In this conversation I want to establish that there is romantic interest and almost the idea that they are a thing, even though it is unspoken.

Act 1 Scene 5

- This is the after-dinner scene. And it takes place out in the garden and in the dining area
- Aldwinkle talks about the stars in her usual pseudo- artistic way.
- Irene asks her to name more, and she really can't, although she does try.
- Thriplow makes a very intelligent comment about the stars and of course Lillian retaliates a little bit.
- There are two groups: There is one outside, and one inside. Outside there is Aldwinkle. Hovenden and Irene and Mr. Falx. They talk about art more.
- Aldwinkle asks Hovenden if he wanted to be an artist, and Falx suggests that there are better things to be talking about.
- Hovenden gets cold and is told to go indie and tell the others to light a fire.
- Hovenden Joins Cardan, Calamy and Thriplow inside. They talk about how late it is, and that it is a well-known fact that Lillian Aldwinkle hates going to bed. Irene enforces this because she will do anything her aunt tells her to.
- Finally, Aldwinkle Decides that it is time for people to go to bed, but the men (Cardan, Calamy and Hovenden decide to stay up a bit longer to drink

Act 1 Scene 6

- There is a conversation happening with the party that is going to bed.
- Aldwinkle asks Thriplow what she thinks of Calamy
- She says he's very intelligent.
- They say good night
- The scene returns to the men who are downstairs

- They are having a conversation of sorts about love and aging. I want to flesh out more here, that Calamy has a history of dating around, Hovenden likes someone but won't say who (Irene) and that Cardan has a lot of interest in money.
- They decide to go to bed.
- Thriplow emerges from her room and meets Calamy. They both go into his room.

Act 1 Scene 7

- Irene and Aldwinkle are in Aldwinkle's room every night.
- Irene is brushing Aldwinkle's hair as they talk
- Aldwinkle makes a comment about how she is old
- Irene says that she doesn't think Aldwinkle is that old
- Aldwinkle Jokes with Irene and guesses that Irene is into Hovenden
- Irene denies this
- They say good night
- All the lights in the house go off one by one
- There are a few moments of quiet
- There is a loud and scary storm.
- The art piece falls and breaks

INTERMISSION

Act 2 Scene 1

- The house is silent, though a subtle storm is still going on
- Calamy and Thriplow come downstairs holding hands- it is the middle of the night.
- Aldwinkle and Irene wander downstairs
- Calamy and Thriplow hear them and run into the closet
- Aldwinkle and Irene do something that comes close to opening the closet, but do not.
- Someone bangs on the door
- Falx comes downstairs next to see what all the noise is
- Aldwinkle opens the door to discover Francis Chelfier, cold from the storm, we realize he looks just like the man in the art piece.
- Soon after Hovenden and Carden are downstairs as well
- Chelfier says that he has just washed ashore (will be getting more details from the book) and was caught in the storm.
- Seeing as its 5 am, and there is not more time to get back to sleep, Aldwinkle asks Chelfier to tell of his adventures
- He does so through a shadow show/puppet show (VERY abbreviated version of the autobiography of Frances Chelfier) ultimately, he reveals that he is a writer and a poet.
- Aldwinkle loves the idea that she has just saved a poet's life. She invites Chelfier to stay with the group. He agrees
- Aldwinkle offers to hang his wet jacket in the closet. She opens it and we see Thriplow and Calamy, who are clearly embarrassed.

- Everyone goes back to bed.

Act 2 Scene 2

- The next morning, before breakfast
- A moment in the hallway
- Aldwinkle subtly persuades Irene to figure out if Chelfier might be interested in her romantically.
- Irene of course agrees. What wouldn't she do for her aunt?

Act 2 Scene X

- A scene where Hovenden sees Irene trying to get the information out of Chelfier.
- He mistakes this for Irene having romantic interest in Chelfier, he is upset.
- Once everyone else in this scene is away, we can see Calamy and Thriplow doing something to resolidify that they are having an affair.

Act 2 Scene X

- Dinner scene part two
- The setting is already tense as Hovenden thinks that Irene is not into him anymore, which although not spoken, feels like she's betraying him.
- Dinner starts, and it is the usual banter about art with the addition of passive aggressive exchanged form Hovenden to Irene
- Finally, Irene loses it, and asks Hovenden what's gotten into him
- Hovenden tells Irene in front of everyone what he thinks is going on.
- Irene denies this
- Hovenden asks more questions
- Irene Finally blurts out what really going on, and that of course she likes Hovenden
- This upsets Aldwinkle, who then says that Hovenden and Irene cannot be together.
- Aldwinkle then starts to go off on one of her deflective tangents
- This could be a catalyst for Calamy wanting to end it with Thriplow: He realizes that there is more to life than what's going on here.
- At this point the scene is a mess of chaos, and ends with guests all storming out at different intervals
- Irene first – mad at her aunt
- Hovenden Second – Worried about Irene
- Aldwinkle Third- embarrassed
- Chelfier fourth – he has feelings for Aldwinkle, and feels awkward in the presence of Calamy and Thriplow alone
- Thriplow and Calamy are left

Act 2 Scene X

- Scene begins with Thriplow and Calamy recounting what just happened.
- This prompts a conversation about what they are romantically

- Calamy realizes that he doesn't know, and that maybe he doesn't feel fulfilled in this type of relationship
- Thriplow expresses that she hoped the relationship would evolve to more, and that she has deeper romantic feelings for him.
- Calamy says that he just doesn't see it being like that for him.
- He tells Thriplow this, leaving her alone on stage, sad and heartbroken

Act 2 Scene X

- The same moment, somewhere else
- A split conversation. On one side we have Hovenden and Irene, the other is Chelfier and Aldwinkle
- Irene and Hovenden first.
- They have a conversation about how they feel about each other, and how they want to be in each other's lives no matter what Aldwinkle thinks. Irene gives Hovenden one of her aunt Lillian's rings as a promise (the "engagement").
- On the other side of the conversation we have Aldwinkle and Chelfier having a much less serious conversation.
- Aldwinkle denies that she feels anything for him, but ultimately admits that she does
- He reveals that he feels the same way. He says something dumb about art and it's funny but cute.

Act 2 Scene X

- The next Morning
- A conversation between Aldwinkle and Irene
- Irene is initially mad and talks of about how she has decided that she needs to be her own person, free of what Aldwinkle thinks. She says this not only about her relationship, but also about her in general. She tells her aunt that she is going to go travel with Hovenden and see the world as an individual.
- Aldwinkle is hesitant about this, but ultimately agrees, apologizing for herself last night.
- She revealed that after hearing about what a fulfilled life Chelfier had, she began to realize how empty hers was. (Character Monologue)
- She decides that she's going to
- Irene and Aldwinkle Exit.
- Thriplow is on stage now, sad, she is writing
- Calamy finds her, with all his things packed.
- He apologizes for his immaturity the other evening.
- He reveals that being in a relationship with her helped him understand that he hadn't felt fulfilled because he hadn't done anything meaningful.
- He can recognize that Thriplow is doing something meaningful by writing books, he feels that he would like to be more like Chelfier, who has lived a life that's full.
- He tells Thriplow that he would never have been able to recognize this without her.

- He says that to do that he must go and be by himself for a while.
- Thriplow understands.
- She begins to draft a book titled “a weekend at Mrs. Aldwinkle’s.”

END

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