Spring 2014

Direction of the Play: Buried Child

Kevin Wayne Loomer
Central Washington University

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Direction of the Play: *Buried Child*

A Project Report
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

by
Kevin Wayne Loomer
March 1, 2014
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Graduate Studies

We hereby approve the project report of

Kevin Wayne Loomer

Candidate for the degree of Master of Arts:

Theatre Production

APPROVED FOR THE GRADUATE FACULTY

3/3/14
Date of Signature

__________________________
Professor Michael Smith
Committee Chair

3/3/14
Date of Signature

__________________________
Professor Marc Haniuk

3/3/14
Date of Signature

__________________________
Professor Scott Robinson

Please note: The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
ABSTRACT

PROJECT REPORT

Buried Child

Walla Walla Community College

Directed by
Kevin Wayne Loomer

November, 2013

This project entailed the selection, background research and documentation, casting, direction, and post-production analysis of Walla Walla Community College’s production of Sam Shepard’s Buried Child. Documentation includes research and analysis of the play and an evaluation of the play as a production vehicle for the department of Theatre Arts at Central Washington University. The analysis also includes a discussion as to the directorial vision of this production.
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
Graduate Studies

Final Examination of
Kevin Wayne Loomer
B.A. Whitman College, 1984
for the Degree of
Master of Arts
Theatre Production

Committee in Charge
Professor Michael Smith
Professor Marc Haniuk
Professor Scott Robinson

McConnell Hall
Room 117
Saturday, March 1, 2014
1:30 PM
Kevin Wayne Loomer

Courses presented for the Master’s degree

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Total Credit Requirements - 56
This course of study form is to be completed before the student has accumulated twenty-five (25) quarter credits leading to a master’s degree; however, it may be required prior to that for Financial Aid purposes.

Submit the original of this form, signed by an advisor and the department chair to the Office of Graduate Studies and Research (Barge 305M). Approved copies will be emailed to the advisor, department, and the student. Unless the advisor and department chair approve substitutions or revisions, the Graduate Office will require completion of, or enrollment in, all courses listed below before the student may be advanced to candidacy for the degree.

If credit from another institution is included on this Course of Study, designate such course(s) with an asterisk (*) and name the institution from which credit is transferred.

An official copy of the transcript showing this credit must be on file with the Office of Graduate Studies and Research.

Student Name: Kevin Loomer
Birth Date: ____________
Mailing Address: __________________________
City, State, Zipcode: __________________________
Email: kevin.________
Admitted to the Master’s Program: Summer (Quarter) 2010 (Year)

Required Background Courses (not to count toward degree credits)

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TOTAL CREDITS: 58

Please note: The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Kevin Wayne Loomer

Undergraduate Study:

B.A. Whitman College, 1980-1984

Graduate Study:

University of Oregon, Fall 1986
M.A. Central Washington University, 2010-2014

Professional Experience:

Pastor:

Community Baptist Church (ABC-USA), 1992-1997

College Professor:

Communications and Drama, Walla Walla Community College: 1998-Present
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MASTER'S THESIS PROJECT
PLAYSCRIPT APPROVAL FORM

(PLEASE MAKE SURE THAT YOU HAVE READ THE PLAY SELECTION CRITERIA SECTION IN YOUR GRADUATE HANDBOOK)

Student Name_---_Kevin Loomer_---_Anticipated Production Dates_---_Nov. 21-Dec. 1, 2013_

SCRIPT TITLE_---_Buried Child

PLAYWRIGHT(S) [If musical, list lyricist/composer]_---_Sam Shepard

NUMBER OF ACTS_3_ APPROXIMATE TOTAL PLAYING TIME_2 HOURS _15 MIN.

CAST (fill in with the appropriate numbers)

MEN_5_ WOMEN_2_ CHILDREN_0_ OVER 40_2

ROLES REQUIRING PEOPLE OF COLOR_0_ ROLES COULD DOUBLE_0

TOTAL NUMBER OF CAST_7

OTHER CASTING CONCERNS: If I could find a one-legged actor that would be ideal, but a tad improbable.

ARTISTIC STAFF (check those needed for this play or production idea) double click on grey box; select checked to mark or use a pen

☐ MUSICAL DIRECTOR ☐ DANCE CHOREOGRAPHER ☐ FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHER

☒ DIALECT COACH ☐ SPECIALTY HIRE (specify what kind)

☐ ORCHESTRA/BAND (specify what size)

Will you be fulfilling any of the above? If so, which?

Will a guest artist be fulfilling any of the above? Yes If so, which? Dialect Coach will be Mark Raddatz. (Note: I will be learning the dialect as well for further work.)

SCENERY/PROPS (check those needed for this play or your concept of the play)

UNIT SET? ☒ YES ☐ NO

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS_1

HISTORICAL PERIOD_1970's_ GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION_Rural Midwestern America (Illinois suggested)

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

* See attached

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF PROPS_30 PERIOD_1970's or earlier

DIFFICULT OR UNUSUAL PROPS? ☒ YES ☐ NO

DESCRIBE: Live produce. I have talked with a local farmer about getting corn. Still working on carrots.

Wooden, prosthetic leg. I have already talked with local medical professionals who can supply this.

Large, folding, hunting knife. A former student says he knows where to get one.

Decomposed, infant corpse. We will fashion this in our shop.

WEAPONS OR FIREARMS? ☒ YES ☐ NO

DESCRIBE: Large, folding, hunting knife
COSTUMES (CHECK THOSE NEEDED FOR THIS PLAY OR YOUR CONCEPT OF THE PLAY)

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF COSTUMES PER CHARACTER 1, with the exception of Halie who has 2.

HISTORICAL PERIOD: 1970's in Rural America  SEASON: Harvest, late summer – early fall. Script calls for rain/sunshine

SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS: Dodge gets his hair cut (Wig?)
Both Tilden and Bradley come in wet/muddy.
Stereotypical Clergy attire (w/ collar) for Father Dewis.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CHOICE OF SCRIPT

HAVE YOU SEEN THIS SCRIPT PRODUCED? □ YES □ NO

HAVE YOU DONE THIS PLAY BEFORE? BRIEFLY DESCRIBE YOUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE PRODUCTION:

No.
I read/researched the script in my Drama Lit. class the first year of graduate school and decided to use this play for my Creative Project. I wrote a 10 page paper on it in that class. I also wrote 3 smaller discussions on it in Analysis and Criticism the following year. I also designed a set for this show in my Scenic Methods class. But I have yet to do this play.

WHY SHOULD YOUR ORGANIZATION PRODUCE THIS SCRIPT?

First, the play has great literary and educational merit. It is a Pulitzer prizewinner. But beyond this, it is an opportunity for select students to stretch their theatrical limits. We have no degree program at Walla Walla Community College, and most of my students take a class or two or participate in one show for "fun" elective credits and then move on. However, I always have a very small few who take theatre seriously. For these I try to choose a smaller cast show that has some "meat" to it to accommodate their desire to grow as performers. The past three years I produced Deborah Brevort's The Women of Lockerbie, William Gibson's Goodly Creatures, and Beth Henley's Crimes of the Heart. Each of these shows are not the average "entertaining" fair that Walla Walla was raised on. However, all three have been well received, and many audience members have praised our program for taking risks and breaking new ground. This show is one more risk that will stretch actors and further educate audiences.

WHAT ARE THE DRAWBACKS (IF ANY) TO DOING THIS PRODUCTION AT YOUR SCHOOL?

First, the ages of the characters do not match up with most available actors in a college setting. I have already asked a local guest artist to play Dodge. He is a semi-retired professional actor who will raise the bar for those working with him. I always seem to have a good character actress or two come into the program from year to year. I have held off on asking a guest to play Halie until I know more about the students who will be available at the time of the show. I know the Community Theatre pool quite well, and there are several older females who would volunteer on short notice if asked.

PLEASE GIVE A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT ON A SEPARATE SHEET OF PAPER AND ATTACH.

PLEASE INCLUDE A COPY OF THE SCRIPT FOR THE THESIS COMMITTEE TO REVIEW.

SUBMITTED BY: (Printed Name) KEVIN LOOMER  Date Submitted: 6/26/12
(Signature)

Thesis Chair Approval: Michael Smith  Date Approved: 6/26/12
Thesis Committee Members Approval: Marc Haniuk  Date Approved: 6/24/12
Brenda Hubbard

Graduate Coordinator Approval: Scott Robinson  Date Approved: 6/28/12

Please note:
The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.
* A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF SET CONCERNS OR SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS:

The set design as laid out in the script is pretty specific and does not present too many surprises for the designer. However, in my concept of the show three features will require careful planning/consideration.

First, there will be exposed layers of decay on the walls of this farmhouse living room (wallpaper, drywall, plaster, lath, brick, exterior wood, etc.). It is my hope to shine light in the final moments of the drama through cracks in the walls that will spill/focus on key elements/locations in the room. This will take some planning and discussing with the designers involved.

Secondly, the script makes mention of the “shapes of dark elm trees” behind the farmhouse. I hope to create the appearance of two large trees that will loom over the set giving the appearance of hands “burying” the family within. This may be tricky given the relatively low grid we have in our acting space (15’- 6”).

Finally, in the third act Vince cuts through the porch screen with a knife. What this “screen” material will be and how it will function has yet to be determined.
BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE SCRIPT:

The following synopsis of Sam Shepard's Buried Child comes directly from the back of the script supplied by Dramatist's Play Service, Inc.

The setting is a squalid farm home occupied by a family filled with suppressed violence and an unease born of deep-seated unhappiness. The characters are a ranting alcoholic grandfather; a sanctimonious grandmother who goes on drinking bouts with the local minister; and their sons, Tilden, an All-American footballer now a hulking semi-idiot; and Bradley, who has lost one leg to a chain saw. Into their midst comes Vince, a grandson none of them recognizes or remembers, and his girlfriend, Shelly, who cannot comprehend the madness to which she is suddenly introduced. The family harbors a dark secret—years earlier the grandfather, Dodge, had buried an unwanted newborn baby in an undisclosed spot, creating a cloud of guilt which is dispelled only when Tilden unearths the child's mummified remains and carries it upstairs to his mother. His act purges the family, at last, of its infamy and suggests the perhaps slim possibility of a new beginning under Vince, whose estrangement from the others has spared him the taint of their sin.
GRADUATE COMMITTEE AND OPTION APPROVAL FORM
CENTRAL WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
(Submit the original)

Note: This form is to be completed as soon as the student has formed a committee and selected an option from the list below. Submit original to the Office of Graduate Studies in Barge 305.

Name: Kevin Loomer
Birth Date: __________
Address: __________
Student ID: __________
Email: kevinloomer@wwu.edu

Check option: □ Written Exam* □ Project □ Creative Project □ Studio Project □ Portfolio Review □ Thesis (standard) □ Thesis (journal-ready)

Indicate credits to be received for the thesis or option:

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*Students taking written exam option may omit items 1-5 below.

1. Proposed Title (and title of targeted journal if appropriate):
   Direction of the production Buried Child by Sam Shepard.

2. Purpose of Study:
The Direction of Sam Shepard's Buried Child at Walla Walla Community College serves as the culminating practicum in Theatre Production graduate studies.

3. Scope of Study:
   Documentation based upon the preparation of preproduction research, post-production evaluation, the direction of (including casting and rehearsal of actors, preparation for the Director's Production Binder, and oral examination) will benefit both the student and the Theatre Arts department.

4. Procedure to be used:
   Three phases of study will be included: 1) Pre-production Research and Thesis Documentation in MLA style, 2) Rehearsal and direction of the production, 3) Post-Production Evaluation and Documentation.

5. Does the procedure involve collection of data obtained from
   Human Subjects (including use of surveys)? Yes** □ No ☑
   Use of Animals? Yes** □ No ☑

** If yes, your procedures must be approved in writing by the Human Subjects Committee or the Animal Care and Use Committee before you initiate your research.

Approved by: Scott Robinson
Dept Chair/Designee* (signature) 6/26/12
Approved by: Holly Crawford
Dean of Graduate Studies (signature) 8/23/12

Please note: The signatures have been redacted due to security reasons.

*In the case of interdisciplinary programs, this form should be signed by the relevant Program Director/Co-Director AND relevant Dept Chair. In cases where they cannot agree to sign for approval, the approval will be made or denied by the relevant interdisciplinary program advisory
September 10, 2012

Scott Robinson, Director of Summer Institutes
Theatre Arts Department
Central Washington University
400 E. University Way.
Ellensburg, WA 98926-7460

Dear Scott:

Kevin Loomer has administrative approval to continue with his planned production of Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* scheduled to be shown at Walla Walla Community College from November 21-December 1, 2013. I understand that this production is part of his Master's Thesis Project for Central Washington University and fulfills partial fulfillment for his M.A. from CWU. Kevin has permission to use the college's facilities to complete this endeavor. Kevin also has permission to include activities for the project in the curriculum of his Theatre classes at Walla Walla Community College. Please let me know if I need to send further information to document the college's support of Kevin's efforts. Thank you.

Best regards,

Marleen Ramsey, Ph.D.
Vice President of Instruction
College

Please note:
This signature has been redacted due to security reasons.
Evaluation of *Buried Child* as a Production Vehicle

The community that comes to see Walla Walla Community College's plays tend to be a rather predictable crowd of students, faculty members, and friends of the program from the community at large. For most of the theatre department's existence over the past 35 years these audiences have been treated to a rather light fare of material. They tend to enjoy their comedies and farces in this town. Easily digestible entertainments usually bring the biggest crowds. However, since my appointment as a faculty member we have made it a point to attempt a broader range of offerings. The past three seasons have seen such dramas as Deborah Brevort's *The Women of Lockerbie*, a play that explores issues of forgiveness surrounding the Lockerbie bombing event of 1988. We also attempted an obscure but powerful drama by William Gibson, *Goodly Creatures*, which looks at the life of Anne Hutchinson and exposes some of the atrocities of early American colonists under the guise of religious purity. The theatre saw its first Shakespeare play in the spring of 2012 and was very well received. In fact, in the past four seasons audiences have increased, and for the most part appear to appreciate the level of theatricality we have been able to achieve during this time.

Additionally, the students have probably grown closer as a theatrical community when they have tackled more challenging vehicles. To be honest, when I first read *Buried Child* in my Drama Lit. class in 2010, while I was drawn to its powerful imagery and scathing commentary on the lie of an ideal American dream, and while I almost immediately decided to make this a creative project vehicle, I did have my doubts about how it might be received by students. However, for the most part, students have been surprisingly receptive to these "meatier" plays. A select handful of those who might be still be among the active student body when it is produced have shown an eagerness to be a part of this project.
*Buried Child* is a Pulitzer prize-winning play that has been nominated for Tony Awards and has proven itself on the legitimate stage. While there are those naysayers who decry the work of Sam Shepard, many find his work compelling and relevant. This particular piece will put students and designers alike through the paces and for that reason it is a great educational tool. The archetypal characters bring ample opportunity for discussions on issues of the myths of rugged individualism and the American dream. *Buried Child*’s postmodern themes speak fairly well to many of the attitudes and questions raised by these students in other settings. Table work and further character exploration will raise dramaturgical questions that will become fodder for research and exploration into America’s not so distant history. The keeping of secrets and the depth of subtext in many of this play’s characters will create an opportunity for these students to stretch as performing artists.

It could easily be admitted that there is some risk involved, but it can also be said that this is part of the educational process. When we attempted *Zoot Suit* in the spring of 2011, many said that there was no way we could pull off a project of that magnitude. Quite frankly, there was a moment or two during the process that I questioned whether I had been unwise in my exuberance to choose that vehicle. But the students surprised me and the audiences came. It was a huge success. Rising to big challenges is one of the best lessons we can bring students. Admittedly, encouraging them to reach beyond their potential brings risk. However, it also brings an opportunity for a success that they might never otherwise know.

I have already anticipated that I will probably not have a student who can embody the maturity level needed to play a convincing/effective Dodge. I have already contracted with a local, semi-professional actor, Todd Oleson, to play the role. This is the only the second time we have brought in a community “ringer” since my appointment as the director of the program. The
first was Spring 2012 for *Twelfth Night or What You Will*. Mark Raddatz, another local artist who has been part of the professional business, played Malvolio. The student response to working alongside a performer of his caliber was, to say the least, positive. Many at the auditions begged me to cast him, and in post-show evaluations there was an overwhelming desire to work with more “professionals” in the future. We all know how “raising the bar” brings the best out of our students.

While a couple minor set challenges are anticipated, for the most part the space is ideal for this show. The China Pavilion is a hybrid proscenium/thrust space that is quite intimate and very adaptable to a variety of configurations. I believe this will help keep an audience engaged in the action of the play. Comments are often made about how much audiences appreciate how close they feel to the work in this space.
Project Parameters

*Buried Child*, pending any unforeseen complications, will be performed in the fall of 2013 on the stage in WWCC’s China Pavilion. Since having been purchased from Spokane in 1975, the China Pavilion has served as the college’s main theatrical venue. Originally an exhibit in the 1974 World Expo, the Pavilion (or “Pav” as it is referred to by theatre students) was not built to be a true “theatre” space. While modifications such as a raised stage platform and a substantial light grid have been made over the years, the Pav is not without its challenges.

The stage space is a hybrid proscenium-thrust approximately 40 feet wide and 22 feet deep 15'-6” high. The audience wraps around the apron somewhat, but not enough to be fully on three sides of the playing area. There is ample wing space, but this can be almost fully viewed from the extreme side seats. Methods for hiding the “backstage” areas are always a challenge and vary from show to show. The design concept anticipated for *Buried Child* will “float” a unit set of sorts in the middle of this space and will require some creative masking solutions. However, we have recently built side stages where some of the offending audience seats were originally located. The remaining 155 seats are essentially on one side, or proscenium style. I think I will leave the theatre in this configuration for a while, so it may be present when *Buried Child* goes up.

The seats are those that came with the original building. They are orange, fiberglass, pedestal style seats that have no arm rests and they swivel. These seats are always the main contention audience members have with this space. Though novel, as well as ergonomically advantageous when utilized correctly, they were built for watching a twenty-minute exhibit and not a feature-length theatrical production. The administration will not spend money or expend the energy to have them replaced.
The dimmer system is old and has been repaired several times. We have some 80 circuits, over 100 working instruments of a variety of types, but only 22 working dimmers, so we still have to be creative in the way we distribute energy for any given show.

I am the only full-time theatre faculty member. In addition to teaching, advising, producing and directing, I tend to do most of the set/properties design/construction. Stage managers are usually students with no working knowledge of what the job entails. Brian Hatley is the only other paid employee in the department. Brian works with lights and sound and is limited to 19 hours a week on a part-time contract. Our costumer will change from quarter to quarter depending on who I can sweet talk into volunteering. Because the college has a fairly substantial Cosmetology program, I always seem to have a student who knows quite a bit about hair and makeup. My wife, Connie, who also works at the college as a part-time communications instructor, helps with publicity. We also have a small stipend to pay one student worker. However, being a 2-year college, student workers rotate out almost as soon as they are ready to work unsupervised.

On a positive note, the shop, under my care over the past ten years, is now well equipped and organized. We have a large selection of stock materials from hinges to platforms to power tools to tie lines. I have turned every available corner into storage space. Our costume collection is finally on racks and not in bins. I work very hard to design sets that can be "taken" rather than "torn" apart. We are finally seeing the advantages of all of this.

The actor pool has grown over the last four years, but still tends to be students 25 years or younger. We have the occasional mature adult. At present I know of three active students who will most likely be on the campus at the time of the performance. I plan on actively recruiting in the academic year prior to the performance of this show. I also have contracted with Todd
Oleson, a mature, local, retired professional actor to play Dodge.

Our budget for this show is approximately $5000.00. This usually is enough to suit the needs of our productions. I tend to be a great problem-solver when it comes to money saving solutions. We have not raised ticket prices since my appointment as a faculty member, and I want to keep it that way as long as I can. An adult ticket is $8.00, students/seniors are $6.00 and WWCC students are free. Faculty and staff get a break on season tickets. For me this is an artistic rather than a commercial enterprise.

The audiences will be primarily regular friends of the theatre that come from the community. Family members are a given. We have also begun to see more student interest over the past few years. A handful of faculty show up on a regular basis. I'm hoping to woo more by selling this as my thesis show.

The majority of students who traffic the stage at the Pav have very little, if any, former acting experience. I have seen soccer players, auto mechanics, nursing students, and a young man with autism attempt theatre for the very first time. Many have found a measure of success that has caused them either to return or go on and try this some more in other venues. While I will attempt to hand pick this cast, there is a good possibility that I may find a novice who needs a shot at this to find a change of perspective. I make no apologies for this, and both audiences and students have expressed appreciation for my philosophy. We are ultimately a teaching facility. The process is more important than the product. This is not an excuse for slipshod work, but rather an opportunity for every student who walks through our door to do something they have never done before.

Finally, the Pav has my spirit in it. I know this is an intangible, but the space is a safe place. I have worked hard over the past years to hold to the philosophy that theatre's ultimate
aim is to heal. Even when biting commentary or political upheaval comes from the playwright’s hand, the aim is that something will get better because of it. The China Pavilion is for me a sanctuary. I welcome everyone who comes through the door with love and honor every honest opinion they bring with them. I hope those who visit will feel this as they watch *Buried Child.*
Buried Child Project/Production/Rehearsal Schedule

2012:
9/21 Project must be approved by this date.

2013:
4/21 Draft of SECTION I must be submitted to Project Chair for proofing by this date.
5/21 SECTION I must be completed and submitted by this date.
    Register for 2 summer credits of TH 700
9/23 Draft of SECTION II must be submitted to Project Chair for proofing by this date.
9/27 SECTION II must be completed and submitted by this date.
    Arrange accommodations for the Project Chair’s visit to see the production.
    Register for 2 fall credits of TH 700
A journal will be kept documenting the actual production process along with reflections on that process. It is also important that solid arrangements be made with the Media department for 2 professional quality recordings that will be taken at the final dress rehearsal without an audience, and an actual performance before a live audience.
9/26 Auditions 3:00 p.m. at the China Pavilion
9/27 Auditions 3:00 p.m. at the China Pavilion
Note: All rehearsals are from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in the China Pavilion unless otherwise noted on the rehearsal schedule.
10/1 First Read Through
10/2 Table Work Act I
10/3 Table Work Act II
10/4 Table Work Act III
10/7 Blocking Act I
10/8 Blocking Act II Pages 23-35 (Everyone for Head Shots)
10/9   Blocking Act II  pages 36-50
10/10  Blocking Act III  pages 51-62
10/11  Blocking Act III  pages 63-74
10/14  Review Blocking Acts I & II
10/15  Review Blocking Act III
10/16  Work Act I  pages 5-14
10/17  Work Act I  pages 15-23
10/18  Review Act I
10/21  Work Act II  pages 23-35
10/22  Work Act II  pages 36-50
10/23  Review Act II
10/24  Work Act III  pages 51-62
10/25  Work Act III  pages 63-74
10/28  Review Act III
10/29  Work Act I
10/30  Work Act II
10/31  Work Act III
11/1   Stumble Through Whole Show
11/4   Work Act I  (off book, call for lines)
11/5   Work Act II  (off book, call for lines)
11/6   Work Act III  (off book, call for lines)
11/7   Run Whole Show  (off book, call for lines)
11/8   Special Problems (TBA)
11/11  No Rehearsal - Veteran's Day
11/12  Polish Act I  (off book, no more calling for lines)
11/13 Polish Act II (off book, no more calling for lines)
11/14 Polish Act III (off book, no more calling for lines)
11/15 Run Whole Show (off book, no more calling for lines)
11/18 Run Show with all props/costumes for Photo’s
11/19 Run Act I twice (all props, some tech)
11/20 Run Act II twice (all props, some tech)
11/21 Run Act III twice (all props, some tech)
11/22 Run Whole Show
11/25 Final Tech Rehearsal
11/26 Full Dress, No Audience 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain (Arrange for Recording)
11/27 Full Dress, Preview Audience 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain
11/28 No Rehearsal - Thanksgiving
11/29 “Opening Night” 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain
11/30 Evening Performance 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain (Arrange for Recording)
12/1 Matinee Performance 12:30 Call, 2:00 Curtain
12/4 Pickup Rehearsal at 3:00 p.m.
12/5 Evening Performance 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain
12/6 Evening Performance 5:30 Call, 7:00 Curtain
12/7 Matinee Performance 12:30 Call, 2:00 Curtain (Strike following the performance)
12/29
Register for 2 winter credits of TH 700

2014:

1/21 Draft of SECTION III must be submitted to Project Chair for proofing, completed, and submitted by this date.

2/25 Submit project notebook for final check no later than this date. Receive a permit, get the
permit signed, submit 4 copies of the brief, and submit my finished copy of the Project Documentation in time to take my orals on March 1.

3/1 Orals

Finish any possible final editing if necessary.

Apply and pay for the degree.
# Production and Rehearsal Plan for *Buried Child* (Opening November 29, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PERFORMANCE</th>
<th>TECHNICAL</th>
<th>MARKETING</th>
<th>FACILITIES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>August/September</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Auditions will be held the First week of classes on Thursday/Friday, September 26/27.</td>
<td>Talk to Klickers about corn. Directors/Designers meet one on one in the third week in August. Ideas due the second week in September so we can establish a list of technical needs by the first week in September. Revisions will be made the next two weeks and final ground plans/working drawings/models/renderings/etc. are due when we start up production on September 30.</td>
<td>Talk to graphics early in September about creating a marketing image and audition announcements. (Audition announcements will be posted the first day of school in September) Begin a rough press release. Set up photo shoots with David Walk.</td>
<td>Be sure to talk to Denise Marr and have her fill out the necessary facilities release forms prior to production. (This will probably have been done at the end of the prior academic year.)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 1 Sept. 30 - Oct. 4</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>First read through, table work, character analysis</td>
<td>Spike stage. Take measurements of actors for costumes. Construction drawings and modified prop list are due by the end of the week.</td>
<td>Check on poster design with Jessica Hockett. Remind David about head shots on Monday. Finish press release.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hand out Bio forms (Due next Monday, Sept. 30)</td>
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<td>Remind actors about head shots on Monday.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Week 2 Oct. 7 - 11</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Collect Bios Head shots Table work/Blocking</td>
<td>Begin the building phase (Sets/Lights/Props/Costumes) Start gathering rehearsal props. Be sure to get any rehearsal costuming gathered/distributed.</td>
<td>Collect Bios and give them to Connie Loomer for proofing/editing. Head shots to Jessica for program. Send out press release.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Setup photo shoots with David Walk.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 3 Oct 14 – 18</th>
<th>Schedule a production meeting this week. Continue building phase.</th>
<th>Poster should be ready for distribution (Connie). Begin to compile other program information.</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continue blocking</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Poster should be</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 4 Oct 21 - 25</td>
<td>Continue the building phase</td>
<td>Most program info to Jessica this week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Begin working</td>
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<tr>
<td>rehearsals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 5 Oct. 28 -</td>
<td>Continue the building phase. All furniture, benches, platforms</td>
<td>Talk to Jim Bock about a live radio interview at KUJ. Program info should be nearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 1</td>
<td>should be on the stage by the end of this week. Would like most</td>
<td>complete (sans final thank yous).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Continue working</td>
<td>props (sans live produce) collected by the end of this week.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>rehearsals. Remind</td>
<td>The actors should also have some of their costume pieces to work</td>
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<tr>
<td>actors to be off</td>
<td>work with.</td>
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<tr>
<td>book by the end of</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>next week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 6 Nov. 4 - 8</td>
<td>Schedule a production meeting this week. Continue the building/painting phase. Lights hung and focused by the end of this week.</td>
<td>Remind David about photo shoot and Recording a rehearsal next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Continue working</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>rehearsals. No scripts after Oct 30.</td>
<td>Schedule a production meeting this week. Continue the building/painting phase. Lights hung and focused by the end of this week.</td>
<td>Remind David about photo shoot and Recording a rehearsal next week.</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHOTOS next Friday.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 7 Nov. 11 - 15</td>
<td>Continue the building/painting phase. All props and costumes need</td>
<td>Photos Friday. Connie will proof the program and complete thank you list.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start Polishing</td>
<td>to be ready by next Monday for photo shoot (including some live produce). Paint floor this weekend.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calling for lines is still allowed this week.</td>
<td>Schedule a production meeting this week. Continue the building/painting phase. Lights hung and focused by the end of this week.</td>
<td>Remind facilities people of upcoming performance dates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remind actors about being in costumes on Friday for PHOTOS.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Week 8 Nov. 18 - 22</td>
<td>Schedule a production meeting this week. Paper tech this week. Final Focus.</td>
<td>Develop the lobby photos with Jessica.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Finish Polishing. There will be no calling for lines this week. Begin running through the show.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week 9 Nov. 25 ff.</th>
<th>Final tech.</th>
<th>Pick up programs and lobby photos, and donor/thank you boards. Talk to Sue Clark about box office and concessions. Pick up opening night thank you gifts. Remind David to Record performances.</th>
<th>Remind facilities people of upcoming performance dates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production “Hell” week. Tech Rehearsal Monday Dress Rehearsal Tuesday Preview Wednesday Thanksgiving Thursday Opening Night Friday Performance Saturday Matinee Sunday</td>
<td>Showtime!!!</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week Dec 4 ff.</th>
<th>Strike Sunday. Schedule an evaluation meeting for next week.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pick up Wednesday Performances Thursday, Friday, Saturday. Matinee Sunday followed by a strike.</td>
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Note to self: Remember to schedule two recording sessions (one rehearsal, one performance) of this show.
Concept Statement for *Buried Child*

Robert Woodruff, director of the premier performance of *Buried Child*, admits in an interview with Robert Coe, "We had difficulty in figuring out what kind of play this was. A mystery, a comedy, gothic horror, or what?" (154) Since the time of its inception much has been written about this enigmatic play. The observations and definitions are seemingly endless and quite varied. "Naturalistic," (Hart 75) "Oedipal," (Derose 99) "mythical," (Putzel 109) and "Postmodern" (Hooti 76) are just a few of the terms those observing Shepard have offered. Some of the more creative offerings include "an optical illusion," (Shewey 121) a "three-act realistic drama for a post-absurdist age," (Marranca 108) "more conventional and more fantastic than its predecessors," (Taav 49) "a species of theatrical realism," (Herman 4) and my personal favorite "a Möbius strip of contradictory memories and realities." (Derose 199)

While diverse, a thread running through all these observations seems to be a grappling with a mixture of what appears to be very real moments invaded by jarring moments of symbolism that seem magical. The audience wants to believe what they are seeing is a true story, but the real is intertwined with so many surreal images and conflicting statements that it often appears far-fetched and unbelievable, much like a man demonstrating the size of the fish that got away. The event may have indeed happened. The fish may have indeed been caught, played, and eventually lost from the line. However, the length of the fish may be over-demonstrated to correctly portray the recalled angst of the loss, and thus the whole story is called into question.

This is what I believe *Buried Child* to be: a distorted reconstruction in which certain items can be taken at face value, while others require us to probe a bit deeper to understand why they have been included. Certain images may be magnified. Certain words may be remembered out of context. Certain individuals may only display those qualities that left the greatest
impression. In addition, some memories may be repressed until recalled and jarred loose. Lynda Hart reminds us that Shepard blends forms to create what Jack Richardson calls, "... the quality of lucid dreams." (Hart 75) The exhaustive textual research of Frederick J. Perry led him to the same conclusion. It is his opinion that "... a manner of producing *Buried Child* which would make the plays inconsistencies intelligible. . ." can best be achieved by producing it as "... a surreal dream which occurs in the mind of Vince." (123) For this reason I will be producing *Buried Child* as a flawed memory play. Much like Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*, in which Tom Wingfield recalls events revolving around the lives of Amanda and Laura, I will portray Vince as the "dreamer" or "rememberer" of the unfolding events of "*Buried Child.*" These memories are of the patriarch Dodge and his family in the farm-belt of Illinois. This family has buried dark secrets in an attempt to conform to the myths of the American dream, and now find themselves rotting beneath layers of a crumbling façade that cannot be maintained.

*Buried Child* is a play about digging up the truth and coming face to face with dead remains. The myth of the American dream and rugged individualism did not create a culture of heroes. It only created stories about them while wrongdoing was kept in secret. An opportunity for healing only comes when these truths are exhumed and embraced. This is a play about confession and atonement,

The acting style will be for the most part representational and realistic. However, in keeping with those moments when Shepard's text waxes poetic/ritualistic, it will contain stylized/presentational elements.

The setting will represent bits and pieces of a traditional farmhouse interior with sporadic but markedly contrasting signs of wear and decay. Strategic areas of the walls will have what I call "gashes and sores." Exposed layers of wallpaper, plaster, lath, brick, and rotting wood will
peek through an otherwise pleasant facade. The home will have one large crack down the middle. There will be no doubt that something is wrong beneath the surface.

Stylized lighting effects will be used from time to time. Unlike in a traditional "lights up - lights down" style drama, attention will be drawn to dialogue/actions by "spotlighting" specifically chosen moments in the play.

The clothing of the adult men of the family will be contemporaneous with a Midwestern farming culture. As suggested in the script, clothing will be faded, dirty, and worn, including mud and rain on those who have weathered the elements. Father Dewis will indeed be symbolic of a representative of the Christian clergy, complete with white collar. The women will be similarly costumed in line with the stage directions offered by Shepard, including the stark contrast of Halie's mourning black dress in Act 1 and her sunny yellow dress in Act 3.

The sound of rain will indeed be continual throughout the first two acts. The sun and sound of birds will return slowly in Act 3 as the deeper truths are revealed. Strategically placed underscoring will set moods and evoke memories. Primitive music will enhance some of the more ancient, ritualistic actions. Benny Goodman, mentioned in Dodge's will, may find a place.

Please understand, my aim is not to shy away from what Shepard intends from his plays: not to vent demons, but rather "... shake hands with them." (Shewey 168) In an interview with Amy Lippman, Shepard says, "I think it's a cheap trick to resolve things." (Dugdale 60)

In creating the flawed memory scenario I am not attempting to tie a bow around otherwise difficult truths. There are no quick fixes for Shepard. Audiences should, and probably will, walk out with unanswered questions. The truth should continue to resonate and perhaps sting a bit. However, my hope is to offer Shepard's symbolic pastiche through a lens that will help the audience receive it more readily, and benefit from it all the more.
Initial Action/Conflict Analysis

Because this play is memory, and to some extent the unraveling of a mystery, to understand its structure one must go back to the very beginning of the story. Frederick Perry asserts that "Dodge and Halie's story actually begins twenty years before the play opens." (116) While I could not find evidence in the text to support "twenty years," I am in agreement that to correctly outline the structure of the story one must include evidence of previous action contained in the dialogue. Embellishing upon Perry's outline, (116-17) the following dramatic structure is offered suggesting Dodge as the protagonist of the play.

Balance/Stasis:

Dodge and Haile have a "well-established" farm and three grown boys: Tilden, Bradley, and Ansel. In Dodge's words, "Everything was settled with us. All we had to do was ride it out." (71)

Inciting Incident/Point of Attack:

Halie becomes unexpectedly pregnant with a child not fathered by Dodge. Dodge says, "Everything was canceled out by this one mistake. This one weakness." (71)

Climax:

Dodge drowns and buries the child. (71)

Resolution Leading to New Imbalance:

Burying the child does not restore order but rather creates greater disorder.

- No crops have been planted. (12)
- Ansel died at the hands of the Mob. (17)
- Bradley has sawn off his leg. (17)
- Tilden left home, went to jail, "lost his marbles," and has recently returned home
a helpless case.

- Vince headed east in the opposite direction of his father.
- Dodge has deteriorated "You sit here day and night, festering away . . . Hacking your head off til all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say. You've become an evil man. You used to be a good man." (20)

Second Inciting Incident/Point of Attack:

This is where the play begins. Like Oedipus, Dodge is confronted with a plague in Thebes, if you will. Unlike Oedipus, he is not seeking the truth. The truth seeks him out. While Dodge would rather be left alone and comfortably numb with his whiskey bottle and television, he is visited by characters that provoke him toward the decision to confess his wrongdoing and purge the family of the curse he has brought upon it.

Climax:

Dodge confesses the drowning of the child. (71)

Resolution:

Dodge puts his affairs in order and dies. Vince clears out the house and takes his place as the new heir to the family farm. (77) Concurrently, Tilden exhumes the dead body of the child and returns it to its mother. (78)
Given Circumstances

Francis Hodge in his definitive work on play directing reminds the reader, "Dialogue is the only reliable source of given circumstances." (16) Hodge further asserts, "When you study the given circumstances of a play, you must strictly avoid reading anything into the play. . . . Above all, do not try to reconstruct your own idea of historical fact surrounding a play; if it is not in the play, it does not exist." (Emphasis Hodge, 17) Similarly, Frederick J. Perry in A Reconstruction-analysis of Buried Child by Playwright Sam Shepard reminds his readers, "Working on the playscript in isolation creates a sense of purity by guarding against the influence of what others have written about this play." (2-3) This is the methodology I have tried to adhere to in unpacking Buried Child.

That said, a couple of caveats must be stated. First, there are two versions of the script. One was published in 1979. The second was revised by Sam Shepard and published in 1997. In an interview with Stephanie Coen in 1996, Shepard shared that he revised the script to bring more insight into the character of Vince. He also makes it clear that Tilden is indeed the father of the child Dodge drowned and buried. Shepard has sought to clear up many issues that were complicated/problematic in his earlier text. I will be working from the early text because I like some of the questions it leaves unanswered, and, quite frankly, most of the available research covers this text. However, I also want to attempt to honor Shepard's intentions by using information in the newer version to inform some of the unspoken mysteries of the original if needed.

Secondly, when comparing the stage directions to the dialogue, three general observations can be made. 1) The dialogue makes some setting descriptions and stage directions redundant, 2) some specific details are only mentioned in the stage directions, and 3) there are
occasions when the stage directions and dialogue conflict. I have chosen to handle the material according to the following guidelines. Where the dialogue and directions agree I feel I have an obvious "green light." Where the stage directions give details that are not easily discerned in the dialogue I will take them to heart, but reserve the right to take artistic license. Where there is a contradiction I will give more weight to the dialogue than the stage directions, and honor Hodge's advice and to hold most of what Shepard has allowed in the stage directions at a distance. Working within these parameters, the following observations are offered.

Geography:

There is plenty of dialogue to suggest that we are in a farmhouse located on a rather large expanse of farming property in rural Illinois.

- Both Dodge and Tilden state that they are in Illinois. (18-19)
- Early in the Act 1 Dodge points out that he has not had trouble with the neighbors for "fifty-seven years," both establishing the length of time lived in this home as well as suggesting a measure of remoteness in terms of the family's proximity to others around them. (13)
- A large "pasture" where Tilden used to walk with the now buried infant is mentioned in Act 3. (73)
- Dodge also tells Shelly in Act 3 that he told Halie that where they were going to settle "...wasn't going to be the city." (59)
- Tilden's says in Act 2, "Back yard's full of carrots, Corn. Potatoes." suggesting many crops can be grown on this property. (38)
- In Act 3 Shelly describes one of photos she saw in Halie's room by saying, "There's a picture of a farm. A big farm. A bull. Wheat. Corn." (58)
• Dodge tells Shelly that at one time the farm was "Well-established." He continues, "The farm was producing enough milk to fill Lake Michigan twice over." (71) While a tad hyperbolic, there is a sense that there were quite a few milking cows on this property at one time, suggesting a need for considerable grazing room.

• In Dodge's final monologue he lists quite a substantial assortment of farming tools and machinery. (75-6)

The layout of the home and room in which the action of the play takes place is a bit harder to discern from the dialogue alone. We do know that there are at least two stories in this farmhouse because in the opening conversation in Act 1 Halie says, "You should see it coming down up here," and "I'm coming down there in about five minutes if you don't answer me." (6) There is also the oft repeated "What?" in the conversation suggesting a distance between Dodge and Halie that makes it difficult to hear each other.

The very opening stage directions go into great detail about the run-down nature of the room. Words like "old," "frayed," "faded," and the image of a "sofa with stuffing coming out in spots" would lead the reader to believe that this home has been declining for quite some time. (5) While this seems to be what has dictated many designs I looked at online, the dialogue would suggest that while the home may have been around for some time, a measure of concern for its appearance still exists among some family members. When Halie first discovers the corn husks strewn about she is rather incensed. She also mentions that Bradley "... can't stand it when one thing is out of place." (20) As each new act begins, the mess from the previous act has been cleared. Bradley would be the logical character on site to do this. Shelly's first impression of the home at the opening of Act 2 is, "It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something." (27) Old fashioned perhaps, with Tilden working from Dodge's "old milking stool," (24) but in no way
completely fallen apart.

The climate is rainy for the first two acts. Not only are we told it is raining in the stage directions, but dialogue is liberally sprinkled (pardon the pun) with references to the rain. Shelly says in the opening moments of Act 3 "I'm glad it stopped raining." (56) This statement corresponds with the stage directions that say "Morning. Bright sun. No sound of rain." (55)

Day, Time, Season, Year:

The action of the play takes place in about a 24-hour period from Sunday morning to Monday morning. In Act 1 when Halie accuses Dodge of watching horse racing on T.V., Dodge responds, "They don't race on Sundays." From this point the action of the play suggests that while there may be gaps of several hours between acts, no more than one day has passed from start to finish.

Halie gives us a clue to the season in her closing monologue when she states that the corn is "Tall as a man already. This early in the season." (77) Through interviews with local farmers I learned that corn harvest usually occurs from late August to early September. I am assuming by early in the season Halie is not speaking of a time that is outside of normal harvest range, but rather on the early end of it. That would place the action of the play in the early to mid-August range.

While the year is a little harder to pinpoint from the dialogue, we can be sure it must be no earlier than 1965. Both Dodge and Halie remind Tilden that no corn has been planted on the property since 1935. (13) Halie later asserts "we haven't had corn here for over thirty years." Based on this textual evidence I would like to believe that the action of the play takes place not too many years beyond 1965. Of note, Sam Shepard was born on November 5, 1943 in Fort Sheridan, Illinois, (Shewey 13) which would make him almost 22 in August of 1965.
Economic Environment:

Evidence in the dialogue suggests that at one time this family had a thriving and prosperous farm, but now they have fallen on hard times.

- Halie, referencing Tilden in Act 1 says, "If we had lots of money we could send him away. But we don't. We never will. That's why we have to stay healthy. Nobody's going to look after us." (16)
- Halie also laments the death of Ansel and states, "He could have earned lots of money. Lots and lots of money. He would've took care of us, too. He would've seen to it that we were repaid." (17)
- A little later in Act 1 Dodge states that Tilden also has no money. (19)
- Bradley is of no help as well because of his self-inflicted disability.
- In Act 2 Vince is told to buy whiskey with nothing but what seems to be Dodge's last two bucks. Dodge says, "Two bucks is two bucks. Don't sneer." (45)
- Shelly states in Act 3 that she believes there was a farm. One gets the sense that as Shelly looked at the photos in Halie's room she perceived a disconnect between these images of the past and what she is experiencing in the present. To say "I know there was a farm." (58 emphasis mine) would suggest that what she is experiencing now is less of a farm than it once was.
- In Act 3 Dodge himself admits that at one time this family was "Well-established" but then continues to discuss relational issues that sent the family into a downward spiral which affected, among other things, their financial prosperity.

Political Environment:
Not much is stated in the text about the political environment, but there are two offerings that are of interest. First, in the opening conversation between Dodge and Halie we find out that Halie is surprised that legislation forbidding horse racing on Sundays is still in place. She goes on to say, "I would've thought these days they'd be racing on Christmas eve." (7 emphasis mine) In the words "these days" there is a sense that a once conservative political agenda is beginning to give way to more liberal ideas and practices.

However, we also see Halie make a telling statement in Act 1. "I'm going to have lunch with Father Dewis. I'm going to ask him about a monument. A statue. At least a plaque." (20) What is of interest in these words is that Halie goes to a religious leader rather than a political leader for help in what seems a civic matter. Why not go to the Mayor or the City Council? While one wants not to read too much into this action, there is a sense that Halie sees the religious community as having a measure of influence in political decisions. While she recognizes a liberal wave rising, there remains a vestige of hope that the old conservative structures may still be in place.

Social Environment:

The action of the play takes place within a social environment that stands in stark contrast to false cultural constructs of American myth. By portraying a family that has lived in the corn-belt of America during the first half of the 1900's, Shepard hopes to summon clichéd assumptions much like those Shelly voices when she first arrives at this middle-American farmhouse.

SHELLY: This is the house?

VINCE: This is the house.

SHELLY: I don't believe it!
VINCE: How come?

SHELLY: It's like a Norman Rockwell cover or something.

VINCE: What's a matter with that? It's American.

SHELLY: Where's the milkman and the little dog? What's the little dog's name? Spot. Spot and Jane. Dick and Jane and Spot. (27)

As Shelly rehearses the language of "Dick and Jane" she is brought to laughter. When Vince steps inside and calls out "Grandma," Shelly again cannot contain her laughter because it is such a stereotypically iconic moment. Shepard wants us to be sure that a community that looks something like Mayberry is merely archetypal and altogether unrealistic. Within moments of her arrival Shelly will come face to face with a dysfunctional world that is far from what she expected. The Rockwellian ideal is a myth of the past and indeed laughable in the present. This family's failed attempts to live up to this myth have planted the seeds of their present dysfunctions. "Mom's apple pie and the American way" does not exist in Shepard's understanding of the world.

Woven throughout the play are moments when characters portray through word, if not deed, their understanding of these mythical social expectations. Examples in the text are myriad. Just focusing on the dialogue of Dodge and Hailey gives a most sufficient, if not exhaustive list.

• Dodge's statements:
  o Grown men should be independent. "I never went back to my parents, Never. Never even had the urge. I was independent. Always independent. Always found a way." (22)
  o A man needs to "forge ahead." (22)
  o Baseball is a great sport. (25)
  o "Persistence, fortitude, and determination" are the three virtues. (44)
Faith and hope don't bring results. Hard work does. (56)

"There's nothing a man can't do." (57)

• Halie's statements:
  - Taking a "pill" will make things better. (6)
  - One should seek answers in Christianity. (6)
  - Sunday and Christmas are sacred. (7)
  - Appearances matter. People should dress nice. "Everyone was dressed to the nines. Not like today. Not like they dress today." (8)
  - Drinking alcohol is bad. (16)
  - Prowess at athletics and war are the American measure of manliness "A big, tall statue with a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other." (17)
  - Catholics/Italians are bad and Catholic women are the "Devil incarnate." (17)
  - Families should look out for each other. (21)
  - We should be good hosts to company. (62)
  - The old days were more civilized. "... nowadays they play a different brand of basketball. More vicious ... There's blood all over the court. Savages ... They allow themselves to run amuck. Drugs and women." (64-5)
  - The present generation is moving in the wrong direction. "It's just a reflection of the times ... A sort of bad omen. Our youth becoming monsters." (65)
  - It's important to believe in "certain basic things." (65)
  - We do not air our dirty laundry. We keep our sins to ourselves. "Dodge, if you tell this thing--if you tell this you'll be dead to me. You'll be just as good as dead." (70)
  - Men should act like men. "Where are the men!" (72)
However, the actions of this family speak far louder than their words. In fact, it is the words, the platitudes and false declarations, that finally lead Shelly to declare "I don't need any more words from you." She continues to share that it is words which have set her up to be so horrified at what she now is experiencing.

Every time he'd tell me a name, I'd see the person. In fact, each of you was so clear in my mind that I actually believed it was you. I really believed that when I walked through that door that the people who lived here would turn out to be the same people in my imagination. But I don't recognize any of you. Not one. Not even the slightest resemblance. (69)

As Thomas Adler sums it up, "... Shepard steadily undercuts such mythicizations of the American nuclear family as it appears in popular culture by showing the disparity between the real and the imagined. For this is a family in denial, inhabiting a fetid atmosphere." (114) The social forces acting on this family only exist in myth. There exist master narratives so real and so demanding that they cannot be lived up to. The evidence of failure must be destroyed and buried.

Religious Environment:

There are many evidences that this family is aware of the cultural construct of the Protestant Christian religion. Halie, more than any of the other family members exemplifies an adherence, albeit hypocritically, to cultural Christian ideology.

- Referring to Dodge taking a pill she says, "It's not Christian, but it works." (6)
- She says, "Well they shouldn't race on Sundays." (7) It is of note that while she appears to look down her nose at horse race gambling as less than holy, she tells of a time when she enjoyed the company of an "escort" at the races where they won "bookoos of
money." (8)

- She has a relationship with Father Dewis (more than likely an Episcopal priest given Shepard's family history) and uses his religious influence to help her gain her own civic objectives. "He even recommended to the City Council that they put up a statue of Ansel." (17)

- She holds a strong anti-Catholic bias, associating them with the "Mob." (17)

- According to Shelly her room is filled with "crosses." (58)

- She seeks advice from Father Dewis asking him, "What would be the Christian thing?" but immediately dismisses his hesitant response and finds her own answer in "whiskey," (63) a substance she condemned in Act 1. (16)

In almost every instance of Halie's reference to her Christian faith, we find actions that belie her declarations. Her words do not issue forth in Christian living. They are shown to be platitudes that have no power to transform her lifestyle.

In the actions of Father Dewis, we find Christian religion to be ineffective and irrelevant. He is introduced in Act 3 entering with Hailey in a slightly inebriated state and confides that God is essentially impotent.

**HALIE:** Oh Father! That's terrible! That's absolutely terrible! Aren't you afraid of being punished?

*She giggles*

**DEWIS:** Not by the Italians. They're too busy punishing each other.

*They both break out in giggles.*

**HALIE:** What about God?

**DEWIS:** Well, prayerfully, God only hears what he wants to. That's just between you and me of course. In our heart of hearts we know we're every bit as wicked as the Catholics.
They giggle again and reach the stage right door.

HALIE: Father, I never heard you talk like this in Sunday sermon.

DEWIS: Well, I save all my best jokes for private company. Pearls before swine you know. (61)

Throughout the scene, we see in the words and actions of Father Dewis just how ineffectual organized Christian religion is when it comes to dealing with real life issues. While Dewis reminds Halie that he wouldn't be in ministry if he "couldn't face real life." (62), no action he takes from that point forward suggests that he can.

- Halie seeks advice and he responds, "Oh, well ... I ... I really-" (63)
- He says he can't take action because his hands are full. (64)
- When asked for his opinion on social matters he responds noncommittally with "I suppose so, yes." (65)
- He says rather vaguely that, "it's important to believe in certain things." (65)
- When the situation of the family gets tense he suggests to Hailey that this might not be the "right time for a visit" and attempts to excuse himself from the situation. (67)
- When Shelly gets near the truth he finally takes charge, but his advice is the opposite of what this family needs. He states that leaving them in peace is an act of mercy when quite the opposite is true. (70)
- Finally he escapes the situation. (75)

In Dewis' words and actions we again see a disconnect between what Christianity purports to be and what it actually is. Another American myth is exposed and found wanting.

One final evidence of religion's influence on this family comes from a statement made by Vince in the Act 2. Unable to get his family to recognize him, he questions what he may have done to cause this to happen and asks, "Have I committed an unpardonable offense?" The only
two sins he can come up with are that he is not married and has "... been known to have plunged into sinful infatuation with the Alto Saxophone. Sucking on number 5 reeds deep into the wee hours." (42) The fact that he relates his present dilemma to a possible un-confessed sin of the past shows the influence that his religious upbringing has had on him. But at the same time we see that the sins he lists are not really sins at all and we sense that it is silly to think one might incur some kind of curse because of them. Another commentary about the negative influence of religious ideas is being made in this moment of dialogue.
Previous Action List

In working with the dialogue to shape the reality of the past, one must take into account the revealed character of those speaking the words to determine if what they are saying is completely true. While some of the characters say things about both the past and their present situation, often these perceptions may be distorted/colored by an individual understanding of their present needs. For example, Halie may believe Ansel to be a hero in an attempt to romanticize or redeem the past when indeed Ansel’s past actions seem to suggest otherwise. Bradley says Ansel never played basketball, but then again Bradley lies about not having put his fingers in Shelly’s mouth. Bradley also belittles those once deemed better than him in an attempt to bolster his own self-esteem. Dodge never agrees with Halie about Ansel, but then again he tends to be contrary about most things throughout the play.

Francis Hodge alerts the would-be director to this phenomenon. Using the work of Pirandello as a premiere example, he asserts that as a trend in many postmodern realistic dramas “... a group of characters (not unlike people in real life) may have different memories or interpretations of what happened in the past with these differences feeding the present action and thus the dramatic action in a profound way.” Interestingly, as Hodge continues with this caveat he specifically mentions Buried Child as a play in which “... explicit explication of the previous action may be minimal on certain key points, lending a certain mystery to the basic situation the characters find themselves in, much as sometimes happens in life...” (18)

Armed with this knowledge, I have made a list of previous actions. From time to time it will be noted that certain of these actions were mentioned by characters but that the validity of each will have to be left up to the viewer. In these cases it will be indicated that a character says it happened rather than being assumed to have actually happened by the director.
• Halie says the rain has made Dodge sick in the past.

• Halie says she had a date at the racetracks in with a horse breeder before she and Dodge were married and they won a lot of money.

• Halie says the races were on New Year’s in Florida or California (she can’t remember).

• Halie does not confirm or deny that her escort “laid a finger” on her.

• Dodge has rarely been out of the house for some time.

• Tilden has recently gone out unbeknownst to Halie.

• Bradley cut Dodge’s hair while he was sleeping over two weeks ago which Dodge says left him almost bald.

• Dodge insists that Halie put Bradley up to cutting his hair to make him presentable for company.

• Tilden “picked” a large armload of corn from out back while he was out.

• Dodge and Halie both believe the last time Dodge planted corn was in 1935.

• Dodge says he has not had trouble with his neighbors for 57 years.

• Tilden had a little trouble back in New Mexico and returned “home.”
• Dodge knows about Tilden’s trouble because Halie told him. This may infer that Tilden told Halie but not Dodge.

• Tilden says that Dodge planted the corn he now possesses.

Pg.15

• Dodge says he didn’t worry about Tilden when he was in New Mexico.

• Tilden was lonely in New Mexico.

• There is a sense that Dodge believes to some extent that he has been keeping his drinking a secret from the family.

• Dodge says he hasn't heard or seen Tilden in twenty years. (This is important because if Dodge's memory is correct, we know that the infant child was drowned and buried at least twenty years ago. It does create a little mystery as to how Vince, who is "about-twenty two" fits into the timeframe.)

Pg.16

• Tilden used to be able to look after himself, but something has changed that.

• Bradley lost his leg. He “chopped it off with a chainsaw.” (The stage directions say "left" leg. The dialogue makes no distinction).

• By his own admission, Tilden played football as a fullback.

Pg.17

• Halie put her hopes in Ansel as her other sons deteriorated.

• Tilden has been in jail.

• Ansel died in a motel room, not “in action.”

• Ansel may have been a soldier. (The line can also be read as a wish Halie had for Ansel's future).
• Halie has talked to Father Dewis about putting up a plaque for Ansel.

• According to Halie, Father Dewis knew Ansel when Ansel played basketball. “Went to every game. Ansel was his favorite player. He even recommended to the City Council that they put up a statue of Ansel . . . That’s how much he thinks of Ansel.”

• Ansel married into an Italian-Catholic family.

• Halie knew Ansel would die when she kissed him just before his honeymoon. (She had kissed him several times in the past and this one felt different.)

• Halie also says she saw murder in the eyes of Ansel’s new bride.

• Halie believes she let Ansel go to his death.

Pg. 19

• Again it is reemphasized that this family has not had corn for over thirty years.

• Tilden says, “The whole back lot’s full of corn.”

• Halie has not seen the corn from her upstairs window perch.

• Tilden found himself standing in a stand of corn while enjoying being out in the rain and mud.

• Tilden was kicked out of New Mexico.

Pg. 20

• Halie believes that Bradley tends to get upset when the house is in disarray.

• Dodge says, “Bradley doesn’t even live here.”

• Halie says, Bradley was “born in this house.”

• Halie says Dodge used to be a good man.

• Dodge’s flesh and blood is “buried in the back yard.”

Pg. 21
• Dodge says that everybody in the family knows what happened in the past, but they have forgotten.

• Tilden says that Halie has not forgotten.

Pg. 22

• Dodge never went back to his parents. He was "independent."

Pg. 25

• Dodge caught a fly ball in the stands when he was a kid. He had to fight for it and would not give it up. (He mentions Pee Wee Reese and Stan Musial, but the historic timeline in the world of the play is somewhat disrupted by this.)

Pg. 30

• Vince has not seen his family for over six years.

Pg. 31

• Vince has been back east, an assumption from the direction he is travelling (through Illinois on his way to New Mexico.)

• Vince has had a recent change of heart about his relationship with his family. "... Vince has this thing about his family now. I guess it's a new thing with him."

• Vince believes his father is still in New Mexico.

Pg. 33

• Vince has created a positive expectation of what his family will be like.

Pg. 35

• Shelly was originally from L.A.

• Dodge boasts of having had brief relationships in his youth with women he considered
“fireballs.”

Pg. 38

- Tilden says, “I had a son once but we buried him.”
- Tilden says the back yard is full of carrots, corn, and potatoes.

Pg. 40-41

- Vince used to bend his thumb behind his knuckles, drum on his teeth, and make his belly button talk to entertain his family.

Pg. 42

- Vince has never been married.
- Vince plays the alto sax.

Pg. 44

- Dodge says, “Tilden’s lost his marbles” suggesting that at one time Tilden had his marbles.

Pg. 46

- Tilden hasn’t seen Vince for six years.
- Shelly has only known Vince for a few months.

Pg. 47

- Vince has not shared everything about his family with Shelly, but he has confided a few private thoughts with her.

Pg. 49-50

- Tilden once had a car that he loved to drive everywhere, sometimes for long stretches and through all kinds of weather. “There was nothing I loved more. Nothing I dreamed of was better than driving.” For him it was “adventure.”
Tilden says, "We had a baby." Then he motions to Dodge and says, "He did. Dodge did."

Tilden says Dodge killed the baby by drowning it.

Tilden says Dodge never told anyone about the drowning of the baby, but Tilden knows.

Nobody ever found the baby's body.

"Finally everybody just gave up. Just stopped looking. Everybody had a different answer. Kidnap. Murder. Accident. Some kind of accident."

Dodge said he had his reasons that went a long way back, but never told anyone.

Dodge buried the baby and is the only one who knows where the baby is buried.

Dodge has never told anyone why he killed the baby.

Bradley reiterates that Tilden used to be an All American football player. He says that Tilden used to "... be a big deal. Wore letterman's sweaters. Had medals hanging all around his neck. Real purty. Big deal."

Bradley says Tilden was always scared to death of him.

When Shelly tells Bradley to shut up, Bradley tells Shelly, "There was a time when I had to take that tone a' voice from pretty near everyone," especially Dodge and Tilden.

Bradley indicates that something turned that around.

Shelly describes past images in Halie's collection of photographs. "There was a big farm."
A bull. Wheat. Corn... kids... A baby in a woman's arms...

Pg. 59

- Shelly thinks the woman (presumably Halie) looks lost. "Like she doesn't know how she got there."
- Dodge says that he gave Halie plenty of warning that "it wasn't going to be the city."
- Shelly insinuates that it looks like the baby in the photo does not belong to the woman holding it.
- Dodge says he has spawned "Grand kids and Great Grand kids and Great Great Grand kids after them."
- Halie traced her family tree all the way back to "the grave."

Pg. 60

- Dodge says there is no one in his past ancestral line who is still alive. "There's not a living soul behind me."

Pg. 64

- Bradley says that Ansel never played basketball. Halie insists that he did. She also recalls a time when they played basketball less viciously than they do now.

Pg. 66

- Shelly shares that she warned Vince that it was stupid to come back to the homestead and that no one would really care about seeing him. She also shared that Vince did not heed her warning, but rather stopped in at several other old haunts before coming to the farmhouse.

Pg. 67

- Shelly says, "I don't like being ignored. I don't like being treated like I'm not here. I didn't
like it when I was a kid and I still don't like it."

Pg. 69

- Vince spoke of his family in such a way that Shelly had a clear picture of who they all were before she met them. However, the images Vince shared were far different from what she has encountered in the present.

Pg. 70

- Bradley says that a pact was made not to tell the secret. (Dodge has no recollection of a pact).

Pg. 71

- In a lengthy monologue Dodge spills the beans about the baby and its death. In this monologue certain facts are outlined:
  - The family had a well-established farm.
  - The boys were grown.
  - Dodge and Halie were middle aged.
  - Halie got pregnant.
  - Dodge had not been sleeping with her for about six years.
  - The baby was a boy.
  - Halie birthed it alone without the aid of doctors.
  - Tilden knew that Dodge was not the baby's father.
  - Tilden cared for the child.
  - Dodge considered the baby a huge "mistake" and a blot on the family name.
  - Dodge killed the baby by drowning it.

Pg. 74-75
• Halie says that Vince was "the sweetest little boy." She continues,

There wasn't a mean bone in his body. Everyone loved Vincent. Everyone. He was the perfect baby... He used to sing in his sleep. He'd sing. In the middle of the night. The sweetest voice. Like an angel. I used to lie awake listening to it. I used to lie awake thinking it was all right if I died. Because Vincent was an angel. A guardian angel. He'd watch over us. He'd watch over all of us.

• Dodge says the house has been a "pain in the neck ever since the first mortgage."

• Dodge has amassed a large assortment of tools and farming equipment.
Polar Attitudes

Halie:

Halie's dialogue is bookended with references to the rain. In her opening lines she credits the rain with being responsible for Dodge's illness. "You know what it is, don't you? It's the rain . . . Every time you get like this it's the rain." (5) In her closing lines the rain is the cause of more positive results. "A miracle. I've never seen it like this. Maybe the rain did something. Maybe it was the rain. Good hard rain. Takes everything straight down deep to the roots. The rest takes care of itself." (77-8) In the beginning of the play we find Halie to be a woman romanticizing about the past to cope with the broken realities of her present situation which she blames on the men of her family. She will not admit her own fault nor the part she plays in the creation of this broken home. In her final statements however, we see a renewed sense of a bright future. Having been confronted with her own culpability for her present situation, Halie's eyes have been opened to new possibilities for the future. In her words, "I've never seen a crop like this in my whole life." (78)

Dodge:

As the play opens Dodge is drunk. By the end he is sober. Simply put, Dodge begins the play hoping to escape his responsibilities by numbing his mind and sitting in solitude. The past for Dodge is something to escape, not something to remember or reflect on. By the end of the play, having been confronted by the events of the day, Dodge faces the events of the past and tells the truth. This allows him the freedom to finally put his affairs in order.

Tilden:

Tilden enters in each act with something in his hands. First he brings corn, then carrots, and then the dead remains of the buried child. Throughout the play Tilden is looking for
something in the back yard, something he will not give up on until he finds it. The truth. The exhumed child in his hands is this truth.

Bradley:

Bradley goes from menacing to menaced. In his words to Shelly "There was a time when I had to take that tone a' voice from pretty near everyone . . . They don't talk to me like that now. Not anymore. Everything's turned around now." (53) However, while we witness him exert his power over Dodge, Tilden and Shelly throughout the play, in the final moments he is led out of the home by Vince, crawling after his artificial leg and whimpering. (77) Everything is turned around once again.

Shelly:

Shelly is apprehensive but somewhat excited to meet Vince's family at the time of her first entrance in Act 2. While she makes fun of the iconic scene she thinks she will encounter, she does enter the home having some sense that things will be inviting. In her monologue in Act 3 she tells the family that she expected to see something more idyllic as described by Vince. "He made all of you sound familiar to me. Every one of you. For every name, I had an image." (69) By the end of the play these images have been shattered by the reality of what she has experienced. Shelly has no reason to stay with Vince because his understanding of his heritage has drawn him back into this broken home. Shelly has no choice but to leave.

Vince:

Like Shelly, Vince is equally apprehensive but excited to revisit his old homestead. While he too encounters something foreign from the images of his past, he comes to the conclusion that he can't escape. He attempts to, but is drawn back by a vision that awakens in him the realization that he is somehow mystically tied to his family. When he returns he is not
the same man who went out to get Dodge some whiskey. He has been transformed. He looks
more like the thing he sought to run from and unlike Shelly, he can't escape it. In fact, he has no
choice but to stay.

Father Dewis:

    Father Dewis is only on stage for a portion of Act 3, but still he makes a slight attitude
shift. When he first enters the home Halie apologizes that things are not in order, to which he
replies, "Oh, no apologies please. I wouldn't be in ministry if I couldn't face real life." (62) Then
real life suddenly presents itself to him as the sins of this family are exposed. Father Dewis has
no answers for this real life family. Thus his exit line lacks the bravado of his original
statements. "I don't know what to do. I don't know what my position is. I just came in for some
tea. I had no idea there was any trouble. No idea at all." (77) Like Dodge's family, Father Dewis
has a revelation and must come to grips with his shortcomings.
Analysis of the Dialogue

Both Informal and Formal Dialogue:

The dialogue in *Buried Child* is for the most part informal and conversational. The text is filled with interchanges involving short prosaic/colloquial phrases. Good grammar is not a concern. This is for the most part the way "folks talk around here." Just a few examples from each character should suffice.

Halie:

- "You want a pill, Dodge?" (5)
- "We won bookoos of money that day." (8)
- "He would've took care of us too." (17)
- "Doesn't take brains to go to jail." (17)
- "Where'd you get that com?" (19)

Dodge:

- "That woulda' looked nice." (10)
- "Some kinda fancy hybrid?" (14)
- "Why'd you have to tell him that?" (19)
- "What'd'ya come back here for?" (22)
- "What're you doing . . . Don't take that offa me!" (24)

Tilden:

- "There's tons of corn." (13)
- "You shoulda worried about me then." (15)
- "You shouldn't a told her that." (21)
- "Why don't you lay down for a while?" (23)
Bradley:

- "Sonuvabitch! Sonuvagoddamnbitch!" (26)
- "You oughta'... Doesn't do a lick a' work. Doesn't raise a finger. Do ya?" (52)
- "Tilden! She with you?" (53)
- "You don't gotta be scared." (53)
- "Don't talk to me in that tone a' voice." (53)

Vince:

- "What's a matter with that?" (27)
- "What dya' expect?" (27)
- "Have some respect would ya'?" (28)
- "I just don't wanna go in there with you giggling your head off!" (28)

Shelly:

- "Oh brother!" (28)
- "You wanna know what's wrong with you?" (29)
- "You better get down here." (30)
- "Vince, maybe we oughta' go." (32)

The dialogue of Father Dewis has purposefully not been cited in the list above because he appears to speak more formally and with better grammar than all the other characters in the play. His language is slightly more elevated and appears in context to be a commentary on his sense of position. Shepard uses this positioning to set Father Dewis up for a fall at the end of the play.

From time to time each of the principal characters will speak monologues that have an unmistakable rhythm of poetry. The sentences are still short and for the most part informal, but they are carefully strung together to create rhythms that stand above the normal dialogue.
Shepard also repeats key words or phrases in these monologues to paint very specific pictures in the minds of the listeners. These monologue moments remind one of the Kerouacian poetry from the time of the "beat generation" that influenced much of Shepard's early writing. I will not reiterate every monologue here, but two short examples from the text should suffice.

Tilden rarely speaks in long phrases, but when he does there is a rhythm to his words. In Act 2 Tilden shares with Shelly about his love of driving when he was younger.

I had a car once! I had a white car! I drove. I went everywhere. I went to the mountains. I drove in the snow. . . I drove all day long sometimes. Across the desert. Way out across the desert. I drove past tiny towns. Anywhere. Past palm trees. Lightning. Anything. I would drive through it. I would drive through it and I would stop and I would look around and I would drive on. I would get back in and drive! I loved to drive. There was nothing I loved more. Nothing I dreamed of was better than driving. (49)

Similarly, Dodge's confession in Act 3 has a poetic rhythm to it that contrasts with the informal and guarded nature of the dialogue we hear from him throughout most of the play. Here is a small section.

Halie had this kid. This baby boy. She had it. I let her have it on her own. All the other boys I had had the best doctors, the best nurses, everything. This one I let her have by herself. This one hurt real bad. Almost killed her, but she had it anyway. It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family. It wanted to be just like us. It wanted to be part of us. It wanted to pretend that I was its father. She wanted me to believe in it. Even when everyone around us knew. Everyone. All our boys knew. Tilden knew. (71)
In these moments of poetry Shepard's voice can be heard quiet clearly. He offers in these monologues clues to what he would have the audience experience most deeply. While much of the dialogue, as will be discussed in a moment, is confusing and contradictory, these islands of poetry create a place to find one's bearings.

Contradictions:

Francis Hodge refers to dialogue as the "façade of the playscript." (21) This moniker is particularly apropos when examining Buried Child. This play is about the crumbling façade of the American myth and thus there are huge cracks in the dialogue. The words and declarations of these characters are often impossible to take at face value because of so much confusion about which words are true and which are simply useful for the moment. Characters are constantly contradicting themselves in what Michael Taav describes as "... a pattern of interaction which pervades the entire play in which family members not only contradict the declarations and memories of others, but often refute what they themselves have stated." (50) Sometimes this occurs in almost the same breath. While the text is riddled with such contradictory dialogue that must be sorted out, only a few examples will be cited here.

- Dodge says that his son Bradley was "born in a hog wallow." (20) Later in Act 3 he says that all the boys apart from the buried child "had had the best doctors, the best nurses, everything." (71)

- Dodge says that Tilden won't protect him from Bradley declaring, "Tilden can't even protect himself." However, almost immediately he is calling Tilden to his side. (11)

- Halie assures Dodge, "Tilden will look out for you." (11) Later she reminds Dodge that Tilden "... can't look after himself anymore, so we have to do it." (16)

- After telling Dodge about the rain in great detail at the beginning of the play, and with the
sound of rain still present, Halie tells Dodge, "It's not raining." (18) Then, a few moments later, she looks outside and says, "Still raining." (21)

- Dodge asserts quite forcefully, "I never went back to my parents. Never. Never had the urge. I was independent. Always independent." (22) Yet when Tilden starts to leave the house Dodge tells him, "You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them." When Tilden asks what he needs Dodge says, "I don't need anything! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute!" (23) This constant switching between statements about wanting to be left alone and needing someone to stay with him happens often with Dodge throughout the play.

- When Vince first arrives in Act 2 his family does not seem to know him. When he returns in Act 3 they all know him.

- In Act 2 Dodge angrily declares, "I'm nobody's Grandpa!" (35) In Act 3 he tells Shelly, "You know how many kids I've spawned? Not to mention Grand kids and Great-Grand kids and Great-Great-Grand kids after them?" (59) I might add that there is no evidence in the script that Dodge has anything more than Grand kids.

- Halie indicts the present world as having deteriorated while remaining distant from the deterioration of her own past. (65)

- Bradley flat out lies when he tells Halie he did not stick his fingers in Shelly's mouth. (67)

- In Act 2 Dodge claims several times to have placed people and events out of his memory, but in Act 3 when he makes his confession he says, "I remember the whole thing from start to finish." (71)

These and many other contradictions that mar the façade of the dialogue of *Buried Child*
stand as reminders that every word spoken must be evaluated in its context. Shepard forces the reader to find a subtext that will make sense of the contradictions.

Repeated Words and Ideas:

Even a cursory reading of *Buried Child* reveals the repetition of certain key words and ideas woven into the façade of dialogue.

- References to the weather. Particularly the rain and sun (both negative and positive aspects of it).
- References to family and generational relationships, including a handful of moments I call "face language" which includes facial anatomy. "face inside a face." (46) "Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose." (76)
- References to traits often associated with "great men" we would stereotypically think of as positive role models. These references include brave, strong, rich, heroic, All-American, good, independent, soldier, decorated for valor, honest, married, not divorced, persistent, trustworthy, responsible, grown up, "lettermen's sweaters" and "medals," important, Christian, righteous, and whole.
- References to bottles, whiskey, and the drinking of alcohol. Dodge says bottle 35 times.
- All the memory language including such words as remember, recognize, know, forget/forgot, past, and the word memory itself. This is probably the most prevalent language of this play. Most of the major monologues are words describing memories.
- References to things that grow, including various types of vegetation and babies.

Many of these repeated words will be discussed later in the exploration of the ideas of the play.
Analysis of the Action

ACT 1

SCENE:

UNIT 1. A FUTILE ATTEMPT AT NUMBING THE PAIN

Dodge desires to be left alone and to avoid reality of this present situation of his own making. But like the constant drip, drip, drip of the rain on the roof, this reality will torment him, each new drop becoming louder than the last.

Day. Old wooden staircase down left with pale, frayed carpet laid down on the steps. The stairs lead offstage left up into the wings with no landing. Up right is an old, dark green sofa with the stuffing coming out in spots. Stage right of the sofa is an upright lamp with a faded yellow shade and a small night table with several small bottles of pills on it. Down right of the sofa, with the screen facing the sofa, is a large old-fashioned brown T.V. A flickering blue light comes from the screen, but no image, no sound. In the dark, the light of the lamp and the T.V. slowly brighten in the black space. The space behind the sofa, upstage, is a large, screened in porch with a board floor. A solid interior door to stage right of the sofa, leading into the room on stage; and another screen door up left, leading from the porch to the outside. Beyond that are the shapes of dark elm trees. Gradually the form of DODGE is made out, sitting on the couch, facing the T.V., the blue light flickering on his face. He wears a well-worn T-shirt, suspenders, khaki work pants, and brown slippers. He's covered himself in an old brown blanket. He's very thin and sickly looking, in his late seventies. He just stares at the T.V. More light fills the stage softly. The sound of light rain. DODGE slowly tilts his head back and stares at the ceiling, for a while, listening to the rain. He lowers his head again and stares at the T.V. He turns his head slowly to the left and stares at the cushion of the sofa next to the one he's sitting on. He pulls his left arm from under the blanket, slides his hand under the cushion, and pulls out a bottle of whiskey. He looks down left toward the staircase, listens, then uncaps the bottle, takes a long swig and caps it again. He puts the bottle back under the cushion and stares at the T.V. He starts to cough slowly and softly. The coughing gradually builds. He holds one hand to his mouth and tries to stifle it. The coughing gets louder, then suddenly stops when he hears the sound of his wife's voice coming from the top of the staircase.

UNIT 2. A SUGGESTION FOR TREATING THE SYMPTOMS

Halie is also not interested in addressing the real issues because of her shared culpability for the present situation. She therefore comes up with solutions that only mask the pain rather than cure the disease. Dodge's coughing bothers her and she would like it to stop.

HALIE'S VOICE: (intrudes) Dodge?

DODGE just stares at the T.V. Long pause. He stifles two short coughs.
HALIE'S VOICE: (steers) Dodge! You want a pill, Dodge?

He doesn't answer. Takes the bottle out again and takes another long swig. Puts the bottle back, stares at T. V., pulls blanket up around his neck.

HALIE'S VOICE: (baits) You know what it is, don't you? It's the rain! Weather. That's it. Every time. Every time you get like this, it's the rain. No sooner does the rain start then you start. (pause) (checks the line) Dodge?

He makes no reply. Pulls a pack of cigarettes out from his sweater and lights one. Stares at T. V. Pause.

HALIE'S VOICE: (engages) You should see it coming down up here. Just coming down in sheets. Blue sheets. The bridge is pretty near flooded. What's it like down there? Dodge?

DODGE turns his head back over his left shoulder and takes a look out through the porch. He turns back to the T. V.

DODGE: (to himself) (dismisses) Catastrophic.

HALIE'S VOICE: (entrap) What? What'd you say, Dodge?

DODGE: (louder) (stifles) It looks like rain to me! Plain old rain!

HALIE'S VOICE: (misdiagnoses) Rain? Of course it's rain! Are you having a seizure or something! Dodge? (pause) (forewarns) I'm coming down there in about five minutes if you don't answer me!

DODGE: (prays) Don't come down.

HALIE's VOICE: (verifies) What!

DODGE: (louder) (prohibits) Don't come down!

He has another coughing attack. Stops.

HALIE'S VOICE: (urges) You should take a pill for that! I don't see why you just don't take a pill. Be done with it once and for all. Put a stop to it.

He takes bottle out again. Another swig. Returns bottle.

HALIE's VOICE: (moralizes, justifies) It's not Christian, but it works. It's not necessarily Christian, that is. A pill. We don't know. We're not in a position to answer something like that. There's some things the ministers can't even answer. I, personally, can't see anything wrong with it. Pain is pain. Pure and simple. Suffering is a different matter. That's entirely different. A pill
seems as good an answer as any. (scrutinizes) Dodge? (pause) Dodge, are you watching baseball?

DODGE: (brushes off) No.

HALIE'S VOICE: (confirms) What?

DODGE: (louder) (clarifies) No!

HALIE'S VOICE: (indicts) What're you watching? You shouldn't be watching anything that'll get you excited! No horse racing!

DODGE: (ridicules) They don't race on Sundays.

HALIE'S VOICE: (doubts) What?

DODGE: (louder) (rebuffs) They don't race on Sundays!

HALIE'S VOICE: (redresses) Well they shouldn't race on Sundays.

DODGE: (sets the record straight) Well they don't!

HALIE'S VOICE: (deflects) Good. I'm amazed they still have that kind of legislation. That's amazing.

DODGE: (jeers) Yeah, it's amazing.

HALIE'S VOICE: (inquires) What?

DODGE: (louder) (mocks) It is amazing!

HALIE'S VOICE: (provokes) It is. It truly is. I would've thought these days they'd be racing on Christmas even. A big flashing Christmas tree right down at the finish line.

DODGE: (shakes his head) (scoffs) No.

HALIE'S VOICE: (sways) They used to race on New Year's! I remember that.

DODGE: (derides) They never raced on New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE: (overrules) Sometimes they did.

DODGE: (challenges) They never did!

HALIE'S VOICE: (hushes up) Before we were married they did!
DODGE waves his hand in disgust at the staircase. Leans back in sofa. Stares at T.V.

UNIT 3. SPRINKLING A LITTLE SALT IN THE WOUNDS

Upset by Dodge's contrary attitude Halie begins two passive aggressive maneuvers designed to injure Dodge by pointing up his present lack of manhood.

Tactic A. Halie relates the story of her day at the races with an escort. This story is quite possibly fabricated. Dodge begins to catch wind of inconsistencies and toys with Haile incredulously. This moment ends abruptly when Dodge implies that Halie is promiscuous. This marks the first clue to the events of the past.

HALIE'S VOICE: (digs) I went once. With a man.

DODGE: (mimicking her) (apes) Oh, a "man."

HALIE'S VOICE: (provokes) What?

DODGE: (burrows) Nothing!

HALIE'S VOICE: (pursues) A wonderful man. A breeder.

DODGE: (resurfaces) A what?

HALIE'S VOICE: (incites) A breeder! A horse breeder! Thoroughbreds.

DODGE: (plays it cool) Oh, Thoroughbreds. Wonderful.

HALIE'S VOICE: (aggravates) That's right. He knew everything there was to know.

DODGE: (impugns) I bet he taught you a thing or two huh? Gave you a good turn around the old stable!

HALIE'S VOICE: (rubs it in) Knew everything there was to know about horses. We won bookoos of money that day.

DODGE: (suspects) What?

HALIE'S VOICE: (brags) Money! We won every race I think.

DODGE: (investigates) Bookoos?

HALIE'S VOICE: (prates) Every single race.

DODGE: (double checks) Bookoos of money?
HALIE'S VOICE: (crows) It was one of those kind of days.

DODGE: (toys with) New Year's!

HALIE'S VOICE: (gloats) Yes! It might've been Florida. Or California! One of those two.

DODGE: (incriminates) Can I take my pick?

HALIE'S VOICE: (amends) It was Florida!

DODGE: (calls in to question) Aha!

HALIE'S VOICE: (embellishes) Wonderful! Absolutely wonderful! The sun was just gleaming. Flamingos. Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

DODGE: (to himself mimicking her) (parrots) Bougainvilleas. Palm trees.

HALIE'S VOICE: (lauds) Everything was dancing with life! There were all kinds of people from everywhere. Everyone was dressed to the nines. (reproaches) Not like today. Not like they dress today.

DODGE: (prods) When was this anyway?

HALIE'S VOICE: (jabs) This was long before I knew you.

DODGE: (nettles) Must've been.

HALIE'S VOICE: (stings) Long before. I was escorted.

DODGE: (ruffles) To Florida?

HALIE'S VOICE: (covers tracks) Yes. Or it might've been California. I'm not sure which.

DODGE: (corners) All that way you were escorted?

HALIE'S VOICE: (resists) Yes.

DODGE: (finishes off) And he never laid a finger on you I suppose? (long silence) (fishes) Halie?

No answer. Long pause.

Tactic B. Halie reminds Dodge that he is helpless to take care of himself. She introduces their two sons as caregivers. Both are crippled. One physically, the other mentally. One terrorizes him and the other can't protect him. This again is an indictment of Dodge's lack of manhood.
HALIE'S VOICE: (bites) Are you going out today?

DODGE: (gesturing toward rain) (discredits) In this?

HALIE'S VOICE: (gnaws) I'm just asking a simple question.

DODGE: (derides) I rarely go out in the bright sunshine, why would I go out in this?

HALIE'S VOICE: (needles) I'm just asking because I'm not doing any shopping today. And if you need anything you should ask Tilden.

DODGE: (chides) Tilden's not here!

HALIE'S VOICE: (corrects) He's in the kitchen.

DODGE looks toward stage left, then back toward T.V.

DODGE: (concedes) All right.

HALIE'S VOICE: (prods) What?

DODGE: (louder) (lashes) All right!

HALIE'S VOICE: (reprimands) Don't scream. It'll only get your coughing started.

DODGE: (adjourns) All right.

HALIE'S VOICE: (coddles) Just tell Tilden what you want and he'll get it. (pause) (apprises) Bradley should be over later.

DODGE: (impedes) Bradley?

HALIE'S VOICE: (reminds) Yes. To cut your hair.

DODGE: (nixes) My hair? I don't need my hair cut!

HALIE'S VOICE: (sneers) It won't hurt!

DODGE: (hinders) I don't need it!

HALIE'S VOICE: (calls attention to) It's been more than two weeks Dodge.

DODGE: (obstructs) I don't need it!

HALIE'S VOICE: (drops) I have to meet Father Dewis for lunch.
DODGE: *(forbids)* You tell Bradley that if he shows up here with those clippers, I'll kill him!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(ignores)* I won't be very late. No later than four at the very latest.

DODGE: *(demands)* You tell him! Last time he left me near bald! And I wasn't even awake! I was sleeping! I woke up and he'd already left!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(sidesteps)* That's not my fault!

DODGE: *(rattle)* You put him up to it!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(disregards)* I never did!

DODGE: *(charges)* You did too! You had some fancy, stupid meeting planned! Time to dress up the corpse for company! Lower the ears a little! Put up a little front! Surprised you didn't tape a pipe to my mouth while you were at it! That woulda' looked nice! Huh? A pipe? Maybe a bowler hat! Maybe a copy of the Wall Street Journal casually placed on my lap!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(pities)* You always imagine the worst things of people!

DODGE: *(apprises)* That's not the worst! That's the least of the worst!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(halts)* I don't need to hear it! All day long I hear things like that and I don't need to hear more.

DODGE: *(warns)* You better tell him!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(chastises)* You tell him yourself! He's your own son. You should be able to talk to your own son.

DODGE: *(impeach)* Not while I'm sleeping! He cut my hair while I was sleeping!

HALIE'S VOICE: *(influences)* Well he won't do it again.

DODGE: *(parries)* There's no guarantee.

HALIE'S VOICE: *(thrusts)* I promise he won't do it without your consent.

DODGE: *(after pause) (reopens)* There's no reason for him to even come over here.

HALIE'S VOICE: *(disqualifies)* He feels responsible.

DODGE: *(cross-examines)* For my hair?

HALIE'S VOICE: *(pacifies)* For your appearance.
DODGE: (resists) My appearance is out of his domain! It's even out of mine! In fact, it's disappeared! I'm an invisible man!

HALIE'S VOICE: (restricts) Don't be ridiculous.

DODGE: (cautions) He better not try it. That's all I've got to say.

HALIE'S VOICE: (appeases) Tilden will watch out for you.

DODGE: (resists) Tilden won't protect me from Bradley!

HALIE'S VOICE: (chastens) Tilden's the oldest. He'll protect you.

DODGE: (broadcasts) Tilden can't even protect himself!

HALIE'S VOICE: (suppress) Not so loud! He'll hear you. He's right in the kitchen.

UNIT 4. A CRY FOR HELP

In desperation Dodge opts for what he considers to be the lesser of two evils. He reasserts his position and calls Tilden to his side to protect him from Bradley.

DODGE: (yelling off left) (tests) Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE: (curbs) Dodge, what are you trying to do?

DODGE: (yelling off left) (barks) Tilden, get in here!

HALIE'S VOICE: (injures) Why do you enjoy stirring things up?

DODGE: (floors) I don't enjoy anything!

HALIE'S VOICE: (censors) That's a terrible thing to say.

DODGE: (commands) Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE: (undermines) That's the kind of statement that leads people right to the end of their rope.

DODGE: (enjoins) Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE: (shames) It's no wonder people turn from Christ!

DODGE: (supplicates) TILDEN!!
HALIE'S VOICE: (tops) It's no wonder the messengers of God's word are shouted down in public places.

DODGE: (summons) TILDEN!!!!

UNIT 5: VITAL SIGNS: FINDING A PULSE

Tilden brings in living vegetation from a seemingly barren field. There should be no life but there is. With his entrance the mood shifts to a calmer one. This seemingly irrational act should appear to be more sensible than what we have seen thus far. Tilden is completely convinced there is corn and because of this there is. As much as Dodge wants to deny it, he must own up to the fact that something miraculous is going on. The truth is resurfacing.

DODGE goes into a violent, spasmodic coughing attack as TILDEN enters from stage left, his arms loaded with fresh ears of corn. TILDEN is DODGE's oldest son, late forties, wears heavy construction boots covered with mud, dark green work pants, a plaid shirt and a faded brown windbreaker. He has a butch haircut, wet from the rain. Something about him is profoundly burned-out and displaced. He stops center stage with the ears of corn in his arms and just stares at DODGE until he slowly finishes his coughing attack. DODGE looks up at him slowly. DODGE stares at the corn. Long pause as they watch each other.

HALIE'S VOICE: (lures) Dodge, if you don't take that pill nobody's going to force you.

The two men ignore the voice.

DODGE: (to TILDEN) (enjoins) Where'd you get that?

TILDEN: (updates) Picked it.

DODGE: (discredits) You picked all that?

TILDEN nods.

DODGE: (demeans) You expecting company?

TILDEN: (states) No.

DODGE: (nails) Where'd you pick it from?

TILDEN: (testifies) Right out back.

DODGE: (put the screws to) Out back where!

TILDEN: (condescends) Right out in back.
DODGE: (dismantles) There's nothing out there.

TILDEN: (abides by) There's corn.

DODGE: (disillusions) There hasn't been corn out there since about nineteen thirty-five! That's the last time I planted corn out there!

TILDEN: (maintains) It's out there now.

DODGE: (yelling at stairs) (musters) Halie!

HALIE'S VOICE: (answers) Yes dear!

DODGE: (mobilizes) Tilden's brought a whole bunch of corn in here! There's no corn out back is there?

TILDEN: (to himself) (assures) There's tons of corn.

HALIE'S VOICE: (recollects) Not that I know oft

DODGE: (gloats) That's what I thought.

HALIE'S VOICE: (ratifies) Not since about nineteen thirty-five!

DODGE (to TILDEN) (concepts) That's right. Nineteen thirty-five.

TILDEN: (avers) It's out there now.

DODGE: (admonishes) You go and take that corn back to wherever you got it from!

TILDEN (After pause, staring at DODGE) (instructs) It's picked. I picked it all in the rain. Once it's picked you can't put it back.

DODGE: (lectures) I haven't had trouble with the neighbors here for fifty-seven years. I don't even know who the neighbors are! And I don't wanna know! Now go put that corn back where it came from!

TILDEN stares at DODGE then walks slowly over to him and dumps all the corn on DODGE'S lap and steps back. DODGE stares at the corn then back to TILDEN. Long pause.

DODGE: (examines) Are you having trouble here, Tilden? Are you in some kind of trouble again?

TILDEN: (conceals) I'm not in any trouble.
DODGE: (presses) You can tell me if you are. I'm still your father.

TILDEN: (concedes) I know you're still my father.

DODGE: (endears) I know you had a little trouble back there in New Mexico. That's why you came out here.

TILDEN: (balks) I never had any trouble.

DODGE: (corners) Tilden, your mother told me all about it.

TILDEN: (plays it cool) What'd she tell you?

TILDEN pulls some chewing tobacco out of his jacket and bites off a plug.

DODGE: (dodges) I don't have to repeat what she told me! She told me all about it!

TILDEN: (redirects) Can I bring my chair in from the kitchen?

DODGE: (seeks clarification) What?

TILDEN: (talks down to) Can I bring in my chair from the kitchen?

DODGE: (dismisses) Sure. Bring your chair in.

TILDEN exits left. DODGE pushes all the corn off of his lap onto the floor. He pulls the blanket off angrily and tosses it at one end of the sofa, pulls out the bottle and takes another swig. Tilden enters again from left with a milking stool and a pail. DODGE hides the bottle quickly under the cushion before TILDEN sees it. TILDEN sets the stool down by the sofa, sits on it, puts the pail in front of him on the floor. TILDEN starts picking up the ears of corn one at a time and husking them. He throws the husks and silk in the center of the stage and drops the ears into the pail each time he cleans one. He repeats this process as they talk.

DODGE (after pause) (befriends) Sure is nice looking corn.

TILDEN: (states) It's the best.

DODGE: (cajole) Hybrid?

TILDEN: (clarifies) What?

DODGE: (coaxes) Some kinda fancy hybrid?

TILDEN: (fends off) You planted it. I don't know what it is.
DODGE: (pause) (levels with) Tilden, look, you can't stay here forever. You know that, don't you?

TILDEN: (spits in spittoon) (veils) I'm not.

DODGE: (pacifies) I know you're not. I'm not worried about that. That's not the reason I brought it up.

TILDEN: (tests) What's the reason?

DODGE: (entreats) The reason is I'm wondering what you're gonna do.

TILDEN: (hedges) You're not worried about me, are you?

DODGE: (plays down) I'm not worried about you.

TILDEN: (expose) You weren't worried about me when I wasn't here. When I was in New Mexico.

DODGE: (scoffs) No, I wasn't worried about you then either.

TILDEN: (concerns) You shoulda worried about me then.

DODGE: (implicates) Why's that? You didn't do anything down there, did you?

TILDEN: (denies) I didn't do anything.

DODGE: (probes) Then why should I have worried about you?

TILDEN: (admits) Because I was lonely.

DODGE: (sneers) Because you were lonely?

TILDEN: (spills) Yeah. I was more lonely than I've ever been before.

DODGE: (inquires) Why was that?

UNIT 6. POINTING OUT A WEAKNESS

Tilden, along with the rest of the family, is well aware that Dodge drinks. By asking for Dodge's whiskey Tilden makes it clear that Dodge has a problem with alcohol. Dodge should begin here to understand that he is fooling no one. Whether he admits it or not, he has been exposed.

TILDEN: (pause) (sidesteps) Could I have some of that whiskey you've got?

TILDEN: (confronts) You've got some under the sofa.

DODGE: (confounds) I haven't got anything under the sofa! Now mind your own damn business! Judas Priest, you come into the house outa the middle of nowhere, haven't heard or seen you in twenty years and suddenly you're making accusations.

TILDEN: (contests) I'm not making accusations.

DODGE: (condemns) You're accusing me of hoarding whiskey under the sofa!

TILDEN: (tussles) I'm not accusing you.

DODGE: (reminds) You just got through telling me that I had whiskey under the sofa!

HALIE'S VOICE: (inspects) Dodge?

DODGE: (to TILDEN) (cowers) Now she knows about it!

TILDEN: (assures) She doesn't know about it.

HALIE'S VOICE: (reproves) Dodge, are you talking to yourself down there?

DODGE: (inhibits) I'm talking to Tilden!

HALIE'S VOICE: (presses in) Tilden's down there?

DODGE: (obstructs) He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE: (clarifies) What?

DODGE: (louder) (storms) He's right here!

HALIE'S VOICE: (accuses) What's he doing?

DODGE: (to TILDEN) (warns) Don't answer her.

TILDEN: (to DODGE) (defends) I'm not doing anything wrong.

DODGE: (placates) I know you're not.

HALIE'S VOICE: (demands) What's he doing down there!

DODGE: (to TILDEN) (orders) Don't answer.
HALIE'S VOICE: (summons) Dodge!

_The men sit in silence. DODGE lights a cigarette. TILDEN keeps husking corn, spits tobacco now and then in spittoon._

**UNIT 7. REVIEWING THE CHARTS**

In this lengthy monologue, Hailey recites an annotated history of the family for Dodges benefit. All the consequences that have befallen their children as a result of past events are rehearsed. While many of her memories are romanticized, the realities are still contained in them. The mood is mournful, emphasized all the more by Halie's black attire.

HALIE'S VOICE: (moralizes) Dodge! He's not drinking anything, is he? You see to it that he doesn't drink anything! You've gotta watch out for him. It's our responsibility. He can't look after himself anymore, so we have to do it. Nobody else will do it. We can't just send him away somewhere. (bemoans) If we had lots of money we could send him away. But we don't. We never will. That's why we have to stay healthy. You and me. Nobody's going to look after us. Bradley can't look after us. Bradley can hardly look after himself. I was always hoping that Tilden would look out for Bradley when they got older. After Bradley lost his leg. Tilden's the oldest. I always thought he'd be the one to take responsibility. I had no idea in the world that Tilden would be so much trouble. Who would've dreamed. (reminds) Tilden was an All-American, don't forget. Don't forget that. Fullback. Or quarterback. I forget which.

HALIE'S VOICE: (to himself) (rectifies) Fullback. (still husking)

HALIE'S VOICE: (regrets) Then when Tilden turned out to be so much trouble, I put all my hopes on Ansel. (justifies) Of course Ansel wasn't as handsome, but he was smart. He was the smartest probably. I think he probably was. Smarter than Bradley, that's for sure. Didn't go and chop his leg off with a chain saw. Smart enough not to go and do that. I think he was smarter than Tilden too. Especially after Tilden got in all that trouble. Doesn't take brains to go to jail. Anybody knows that. (laments) Course then when Ansel died that left us all alone. Same as being alone. No different. Same as if they'd all died. He was the smartest. He could've earned lots of money. Lots and lots of money.

HALIE enters slowly from the top of the staircase as she continues talking. Just her feet are seen at first as she makes her way down the stairs a step at a time. She appears dressed completely in black, as though in mourning. Black handbag, hat with a veil, and pulling on elbow-length black gloves. She is about sixty-five with pure white hair. She remains absorbed in what she's saying as she descends the stairs and doesn't really notice the two men who continue sitting there as they were before she came down, smoking and husking.

HALIE: (romanticizes) He would've took care of us, too. He would've seen to it that we were repaid. He was like that. He was a hero. Don't forget that. A genuine hero. Brave. Strong. And
very intelligent. Ansel could've been a great man. One of the greatest. I only regret that he didn't
die in action. It's not fitting for a man like that to die in a motel room. A soldier. He could've won
a medal. He could've been decorated for valor. (glamourizes) I've talked to Father Dewis about
putting up a plaque for Ansel. He thinks it's a good idea. He agrees. He knew Ansel when he
used to play basketball. Went to every game. Ansel was his favorite player. He even
recommended to the City Council that they put up a statue of Ansel. A big, tall statue with a
basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other. That's how much he thinks of Ansel.

HALIE reaches the stage and begins to wander around still absorbed in pulling on her
gloves, brushing lint off her dress and continuously talking to herself as the men just sit.

HALIE: (rationalizes) Of course, he'd still be alive today if he hadn't married into the Catholics.
The Mob. How in the world he never opened his eyes to that is beyond me. Just beyond me.
Everyone around him could see the truth. Even Tilden. Tilden told him time and again. Catholic
women are the Devil incarnate. He wouldn't listen. He was blind with love. Blind. I knew.
Everyone knew. The wedding was more like a funeral. (enlists) You remember? All those
Italians. All that horrible black, greasy hair. The smell of cheap cologne. I think even the priest
was wearing a pistol. When he gave her the ring I knew he was a dead man. I knew it. As soon as
he gave her the ring. (churns) But then it was the honeymoon that killed him. The honeymoon. I
knew he'd never come back from the honeymoon. I kissed him and he felt like a corpse. All
white. Icy blue lips. He never used to kiss like that. Never before. I knew that she'd cursed
him. Taken his soul. I saw it in her eyes. She smiled at me with that Catholic sneer of hers. She
told me with her eyes that she'd murder him in his bed. Murder my son. She told me. And there
was nothing I could do. Absolutely nothing. He was going with her, thinking he was free.
Thinking it was love. (grasps) What could I do? I couldn’t tell him she was a witch, I couldn’t
tell him that. He’d have turned on me. Hated me. I couldn’t stand him hating me and then dying
before he ever saw me again. Hating me in his death bed. Hating me and loving her! How could I
do that? I had to let him go. I had to. (clings) I watched him leave. I watched him throw
gardenias as he helped her into the limousine. I watched his face disappear behind the glass.

She stops abruptly and stares at the corn husks. She looks around the space as though
just waking up. She turns hard and looks hard at TILDEN and DODGE who continue
sitting calmly. She looks again at the corn husks.

UNIT 8. BREACHING THE SURFACE

Tilden's "miracle" corn continues to stir up old feelings among those who encounter it.
Discussions lead to a moment that portends a possible turnaround for this family. Halie
exposes her bitter feelings toward Dodge. Dodge lashes back and makes the first reference
of the play to something buried in the backyard. This is the tensest moment of this act. The
secret has peaked through.

HALIE: (pointing to the husks) (upbraids) What's this in my house! (kicks husks) What's all
this!

TILDEN stops husking and stares at her.
HALIE: (to DODGE) (berates) And you encourage him!

    DODGE pulls blanket over himself again.

DODGE: (chides) You're going out in the rain?

HALIE: (pooh poohs) It's not raining.

    TILDEN starts husking again.

DODGE: (mocks) Not in Florida it's not.

HALIE: (disparages) We're not in Florida!

DODGE: (taunts) It's not raining at the racetrack.

HALIE: (distorts) Have you been taking those pills? Those pills always make you talk crazy. Tilden, has he been taking those pills?

TILDEN: (defends) He hasn't took anything.

HALIE: (to DODGE) (accuses) What've you been taking?

DODGE: (torments) It's not raining in California or Florida or at the racetrack. Only in Illinois. This is the only place it's raining. All over the rest of the world it's bright golden sunshine.

    HALIE goes to the night table next to the sofa and checks the bottle of pills.

HALIE: (pushes) Which ones did you take? Tilden, you must've seen him take something.

TILDEN: (shields) He never took a thing.

HALIE: (presses) Then why's he talking crazy?

TILDEN: (fends off) I've been here the whole time.

HALIE: (demeans) Then you've both been taking something!

TILDEN: (saves face) I've just been husking the corn.

HALIE: (implicates) Where'd you get that corn anyway? Why is the house suddenly full of corn?

DODGE: (irks) Bumper crop!

HALIE: (moving center) (indicts) We haven't had corn here for over thirty years.
TILDEN: (bolsters) The whole back lot's full of corn. Far as the eye can see.

DODGE: (to HALIE) (belittles) Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't stop just because you're upstairs. Corn keeps growing. Rain keeps raining.

HALIE: (acquaints) I'm not unaware of the world around me! Thank you very much. It so happens that I have an overall view from the upstairs. The backyard's in plain view of my window. And there's no corn to speak of. Absolutely none!

DODGE: (diminishes) Tilden wouldn't lie. If he says there's corn, there's corn.

HALIE: (interrogates) What's the meaning of this corn Tilden!

TILDEN: (offers a straight answer) It's a mystery to me. I was out in back there. And the rain was coming down. And I didn't feel like coming back inside. I didn't feel the cold so much. I didn't mind the wet. So I was just walking. I was muddy but I didn't mind the mud so much. And I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact I was standing in it. So, I was standing in it.

HALIE: (grills) There isn't any corn outside Tilden! There's no corn! Now, you must've either stolen this corn or you bought it.

DODGE: (steps in) He doesn't have any money.

HALIE: (to TILDEN) (charges) So you stole it!

TILDEN: (pleads) I didn't steal it. I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois. I was kicked out of New Mexico and I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois.

HALIE: (threatens) You're going to get kicked out of this house, Tilden, if you don't tell me where you got that corn!

TILDEN starts crying softly to himself but keeps husking corn. Pause.

DODGE: (to HALIE) (chastises) Why'd you have to tell him that? Who cares where he got the corn? Why'd you have to go and tell him that?

HALIE: (to DODGE) (shifts blame) It's your fault you know! You're the one that's behind all of this! I suppose you thought it'd be funny! Some joke! Cover the house with corn husks. You better get this cleaned up before Bradley sees it.

DODGE: (puts foot down) Bradley's not getting in the front door!

HALIE: (kicking husks, striding back and forth) (disquiets) Bradley's going to be very upset when he sees this. He doesn't like to see the house in disarray. He can't stand it when one thing is out of place. The slightest thing. You know how he gets.
DODGE: (rejects) Bradley doesn't even live here!

HALIE: (counters) It's his home as much as ours. He was born in this house!

DODGE: (wounds) He was born in a hog wallow.

HALIE: (takes umbrage) Don't you say that! Don't you ever say that!

DODGE: (advances) He was born in a goddamned hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house!

HALIE: (she stops) (bites back) I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. I don't know what in the world's come over you. You've become an evil man. You used to be a good man.

DODGE: (sloughs off) Six of one, a half-dozen of another.

HALIE: (emasculates) You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off till all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

DODGE: (cuts) He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's buried in the backyard!

*They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.*

UNIT 9. BANDAGING UP THE HOLE

Halie and Dodge, realizing how dangerously close they came to leaking too much information in front of Tilden now redouble their resolve to avoid another slipup. Halie escapes to meet with Father Dewis, but before going makes sure Dodge will keep Tilden from finding any more evidence. Tilden tries to get Dodge to talk more, but Dodge ignores Tilden's pleas.

HALIE: (quietly) (seethes) That's enough, Dodge. That's quite enough. I'm going out now. I'm going to have lunch with Father Dewis. I'm going to ask him about a monument. A statue. At least a plaque.

*She crosses to the door up right. She stops.*

HALIE: (stews) If you need anything, ask Tilden. He's the oldest. I've left some money on the kitchen table.

DODGE: (banishes) I don't need anything.

HALIE: (snubs) No, I suppose not. (she opens the door and looks out through porch) (broods) Still raining. I love the smell just after it stops. The ground. I won't be too late.
She goes out door and closes it. She's still visible on the porch as she crosses toward stage left screen door. She stops in the middle of the porch, speaks to DODGE but doesn't turn to him.

HALIE: (warns) Dodge, tell Tilden not to go out in the back lot anymore. I don't want him back there in the rain.

DODGE: (dodges) You tell him. He's sitting right here.

HALIE: (portends) He never listens to me Dodge. He's never listened to me in the past.

DODGE: (ameliorates) I'll tell him.

HALIE: (prophesizes) We have to watch him just like we used to now. Just like we always have. He's still a child.

DODGE: (assures) I'll watch him.

HALIE: (cautions) Good.

She crosses to screen door, left, takes an umbrella off a hook and goes out the door. The door slams behind her. Long pause. TILDEN husks corn, stares at pail. DODGE lights a cigarette, stares at T.V.

TILDEN: (still husking) (advises) You shouldn't a told her that.

DODGE: (staring at T.V.) (plays dumb) What?

TILDEN: (draws out) What you told her. You know.

DODGE: (sandbags) What do you know about it?

TILDEN: (buttonholes) I know. I know all about it. We all know.

DODGE: (avoids) So what difference does it make? Everybody knows, everybody's forgot.

TILDEN: (challenges) She hasn't forgot.

DODGE: (justifies) She should've forgot.

TILDEN: (disputes) It's different for a woman. She couldn't forget that. How could she forget that?

DODGE: (burrows) I don't want to talk about it!

TILDEN: (pursues) What do you want to talk about?
DODGE: (bunkers) I don't want to talk about anything! I don't want to talk about troubles or what happened fifty years ago or thirty years ago or the racetrack or Florida or the last time I seeded the corn! I don't want to talk.

TILDEN: (chides) You don't wanna die do you?

DODGE: (caves) No, I don't wanna die either.

TILDEN: (emphasizes) Well, you gotta talk or you'll die.

DODGE: (rejects) Who told you that?

TILDEN: (convinces) That's what I know. I found that out in New Mexico. I thought I was dying but I just lost my voice.

DODGE: (undermines) Were you with somebody?

TILDEN: (advances) I was alone. I thought I was dead.

DODGE: (insults) Might as well have been. What'd you come back here for?

TILDEN: (apologizes) I didn't know where to go.

DODGE: (chastises) You're a grown man. You shouldn't be needing your parents at your age. It's un-natural. There's nothing we can do for you now anyway. Couldn't you make a living down there? Couldn't you find some way to make a living? Support yourself? What'd'ya come back here for? You expect us to feed you forever?

TILDEN: (excuses) I didn't know where else to go.

DODGE: (pontificates) I never went back to my parents. Never. Never even had the urge. I was independent. Always independent. Always found a way.

TILDEN: (rationalizes) I didn't know what to do. I couldn't figure anything out.

DODGE: (sermonizes) There's nothing to figure out. You just forge ahead. What's there to figure out?

TILDEN stands.

UNIT 10: TRYING TO PROTECT THE WOUND

Dodge attempts to keep his promise to Halie to keep Tilden from going outside, but eventually, aided by sedatives, he falls asleep. Tilden leaves and resumes his search.

TILDEN: (avoids) I don't know.
DODGE: (interrupts) Where are you going?

TILDEN: (attempts to escape) Out back.

DODGE: (prosecutes) You're not supposed to go out there. You heard what she said. Don't play deaf with me!

TILDEN: (legitimizes) I like it out there.

DODGE: (hinders) In the rain?

TILDEN: (maintains) Especially in the rain. I like the feeling of it. Feels like it always did.

DODGE: (admonishes) You're supposed to watch out for me. Get me things when I need them.

TILDEN: (calls his bluff) What do you need?

DODGE: (backpedals) I don't need anything! But I might. I might need something any second. Any second now. I can't be left alone for a minute!

DODGE starts to cough.

TILDEN: (mitigates) I'll be right outside. You can just yell.

DODGE: (between coughs) (pleads) No! It's too far! You can't go out there! It's too far! You might not even hear me!

TILDEN: (moving to pills) (tranquilizes) Why don't you take a pill? You want a pill?

DODGE coughs more violently, throws himself back against the sofa, clutches his throat. TILDEN stands by helplessly.

DODGE: (manipulates) Water! Get me some water!

TILDEN rushes off left. DODGE reaches out for the pills, knocking some bottles to the floor, coughing in spasms. He grabs a small bottle, takes out pills and swallows them. TILDEN rushes back on with a glass of water. DODGE takes it and drinks, his coughing subsides.

TILDEN: (soothes) You all right now?

DODGE nods. Drinks more water. TILDEN moves in closer to him. DODGE sets glass of water on the night table. His coughing is almost gone.

TILDEN: (lulls) Why don't you lay down for a while? Just rest a little.
TILDEN helps DODGE lie down on the sofa, Covers him with blanket.

DODGE: (finagles) You're not going outside are you?

TILDEN: (hushes) No.

DODGE: (leans on) I don't want to wake up and find you not here.

TILDEN: (satisfies) I'll be here.

TILDEN tucks blanket around DODGE.

DODGE: (cements) You'll stay right here?

TILDEN: (confirms) I'll stay in my chair.

DODGE: (corrects) That's not a chair. That's my old milking stool.

TILDEN: (panders) I know.

DODGE: (orders) Don't call it a chair.

TILDEN: (strokes) I won't.

TILDEN tries to take DODGE'S baseball cap off.

DODGE: (chastizes) What're you doing! Leave that on me! Don't take that offa me! That's my cap!

TILDEN leaves the cap on DODGE.

TILDEN: (bows) I know.

DODGE: (reminds) Bradley'll shave my head if I don't have that on. That's my cap.

TILDEN: (mollifies) I know it is.

DODGE: (obligates) Don't take my cap off.

TILDEN: (pacifies) I won't.

DODGE: (maneuvers) You stay right here now.

TILDEN: (sits on stool) (conciliates) I will.

DODGE: (cements) Don't go outside There's nothing out there.
TILDEN: (reassures) I won't.

DODGE: (confirms) Everything's in here. Everything you need. Money's on the table. (exploits) T.V. Is the T.V. on?

TILDEN: (indulges) Yeah.

DODGE: (commands) Turn it off! Turn the damn thing off! What's it doing on?

TILDEN: (shuts off t.v., light goes out) (pins) You left it on.

DODGE: (directs) Well turn it off.

TILDEN: (sits on stool again) (informs) It's off.

DODGE: (saves face) Leave it off.

TILDEN: (relaxes) I will.

DODGE: (allows) When I fall asleep you can turn it on.

TILDEN: (steadies) Okay.

DODGE: (invites) You can watch the ball game. Red Sox. You like the Red Sox don't you?

TILDEN: (steers) Yeah.

DODGE: (offers) You can watch the Red Sox. Pee Wee Reese. Pee Wee Reese. You remember Pee Wee Reese?

TILDEN: (calms) No.

DODGE: (checks) Was he with the Red Sox?

TILDEN: (sedates) I don't know.

DODGE: (daydreams) Pee Wee Reese. (falling asleep) You can watch the Cardinals. You remember Stan Musial.

TILDEN: (aches) No.

DODGE: (relives) Stan Musial (falling into sleep) Bases loaded. Top a' the sixth. Bases loaded. Runner on first and third. Big fat knuckle ball. Floater. Big as a blimp. Cracko! Ball just took off like a rocket. Just pulverized. I marked it. Marked it with my eyes. Straight between the clock and the Burma Shave ad. I was the first kid out there. First kid. I had to fight hard for that ball. I wouldn't give it up. They almost tore the ears right off me. But I wouldn't give it up.
UNIT 11: CHANGING SHIFTS:

Fast asleep and with Tilden gone, Dodge is now at the mercy of Bradley, the son he fears.

Dodge falls into deep sleep. Tilden just sits staring at him for a while. Slowly he leans toward the sofa, checking to see if Dodge is well asleep. He reaches slowly under the cushion and pulls out the bottle of booze. Dodge sleeps soundly. Tilden stands quietly, staring at Dodge as he uncaps the bottle and takes a long drink. He caps the bottle and sticks it in his hip pocket. He looks around at the husks on the floor and then back to Dodge. He moves center stage and gathers an armload of corn husks then crosses back to the sofa. He stands holding the husks over Dodge and looking down at him as he gently spreads the corn husks over the whole length of Dodge's body. He stands back and looks at Dodge. Pulls out bottle, takes another drink returns bottle to his hip pocket. He looks around at the husks on the floor and then back to Dodge. He gathers more husks and repeats the procedure until the floor is clean of corn husks and Dodge is completely covered in them except for his head. Tilden takes another long drink stares at Dodge sleeping then quietly exits stage left. Long pause as the sound of rain continues.

Dodge sleeps on

The figure of Bradley appears up left, outside the screen porch door. He holds a wet newspaper over his head as a protection from the rain. He seems to be struggling with the door then slips and almost falls to the ground. Dodge sleeps on, undisturbed.

Bradley: (vents) Sonuvabitch! Sonuvagoddamnbitch!

Bradley recovers his footing and makes it through the screen door onto the porch. He throws the newspaper down, shakes the water out of his hair, and brushes the rain off his shoulders. He is a big man dressed in a gray sweatshirt, black suspenders, baggy dark blue pants, and black janitor's shoes. His left leg is wooden, having been amputated above the knee. He moves with an exaggerated, almost mechanical limp. The squeaking sounds of leather accompany his walk corning from the harness and hinges of the false leg. His arms and shoulders are extremely powerful and muscular due to a lifetime of dependency on the upper torso doing all the work for the legs. He is about five years younger than Tilden. He moves laboriously to the stage right door and enters, closing the door behind him. He doesn't notice Dodge at first. He moves laboriously to the stage right door and enters, closing the door behind him. He doesn't notice Dodge at first. He moves toward the staircase.

Bradley: (calling to upstairs) (ascertains) Mom!


Bradley: (decries) What in the hell is this?

He looks at Dodge's sleeping face and shakes his head in disgust. He pulls out a pair of black electric hair clippers from his pocket. Unwinds the cord and crosses to the lamp. He jabs his wooden leg behind the knee, causing it to bend at the joint and awkwardly kneels to plug the cord into a floor outlet. He pulls himself to his feet again by using the
sofa as leverage. He moves to DODGE'S head and again jabs his false leg. Goes down on one knee. He violently knocks away some of the corn husks then jerks off DODGE'S baseball cap and throws it down center stage. DODGE stays asleep. BRADLEY switches on the clippers. Lights start dimming. BRADLEY cuts DODGE'S hair while he sleeps. Lights dim slowly to black with the sound of clippers and rain.
Character Analysis

Dodge:

Dodge is the elder patriarch of the family and the protagonist of *Buried Child*. He admits late in the action of the play to having drowned and buried the infant to which Halie gave birth. There is a measure of action on his part prior to this confession that suggests this is not a confession that was easy to offer up. Dodge appears to be a very private man who would rather be left alone and—as far as it is possible—to forget every event of the past. However, the events of this day will compel him to admit the truth of his actions.

When we first encounter Dodge he is reclining alone on a sofa in the living area of his farm home. He is watching T.V., furtively taking swigs of whiskey, and attempting to stifle the sound of occasional, spasmodic coughing which he can't control. One gets the notion from the dialogue of the play that at one time Dodge was a strong, rugged, and in his own words, "independent" man who ran a large, thriving farmstead. But now he is sickly, drunk, isolated, and confined to this room, too weak to leave.

When Halie finally attempts to engage him with the sound of her offstage voice, he first attempts to ignore her. Finally he begins to respond with sardonic, incredulous, obstreperous, and for the most part negative statements. This pattern of language is the norm for Dodge throughout the action of the play.

It is obvious that he does not want the secret of the buried child to be revealed. Unfortunately, when Halie, in a fit of anger, attempts to emasculate him by calling him an "evil man" and continues to indict him with, "You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body," then the old feelings rise in him as he reminds her that his "flesh and blood's buried in the back yard!" (20) The truth is in him and
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his unwillingness to admit it or to allow others to talk about it is the major cause of his and his family's present state.

Some things he reveals about himself include:

- "I'm an invisible man." (11) He is aware of his present state
- "I haven't had trouble with the neighbors here since 1957." (13) A reference to his somewhat isolated rural existence. He also sneers on page 15 when Tilden relates being lonely in New Mexico. Loneliness does not appear to bother Dodge.
- "I'm still your father." (13) This is in contrast to all the talk about how Tilden should grow up and live independently. Heritage and position, apart from other statements to the contrary still creep into Dodge's conversation. On page 22 Dodge makes "back in my day" style statements about never going back to his parents. On page
- "I don't need anything." (20) This is a repeated idea in Dodge's dialogue, but his actions often belie this statement. This is one of the lies of rugged individualism that he would like to believe is true.
- "Everybody's forgot."(21) He has worked to convince himself that the buried child event is not that significant. Later he tells Shelly, "You never seen a bitch eat her puppies?" (59) Dodge works hard to justify and dismiss the murder as a necessary evil.
- "I don't want to talk about it! . . . I don't want to talk about anything! I don't want to talk about troubles or what happened fifty years ago or thirty years ago or the racetrack or Florida or the last time I seeded the corn! I don't want to talk." (21-2) This is the main cause of Dodge's present state.
- "There's nothing to figure out. You just forge ahead." Again, a justification for whatever decision he cares or cared to make at the time.
- Dodge has a vivid memory of a baseball event on page 25, but the timeline is confusing. Still we know he enjoys and is familiar with baseball lingo.

- "You don't know anything? . . . Well that's good. That's good. It's much better not to know anything. Much, much, better." (32) This statement expresses both Dodge's desire to keep secrets hidden as well as his own torment as a man who knows too much.

- "She's a fireball isn't she? Regular fireball. I had some of them in my day." (35) Throughout the play Dodge makes statements like this. He flirts with Shelly in an effort to reassert his manhood/virility. His age and weakened state make these attempts seem pitiable and pathetic.

- From pages 36 - 45 Dodge goes on a mad rampage to recover his lost whiskey. This emphasizes his obsession and dependence on alcohol to numb him to the reality of his present situation. He finds it hard to cope without it.

- "Well I hope you all remember this when you get up in years. When you find yourselves immobilized. Dependent on the whims of others." (42) We see Dodge's manipulative side as he uses age and weakened state as leverage to get someone to get him a bottle of whiskey.

- "Persistence, fortitude and determination. Those are the three virtues." (44) This says much about how entrenched Dodge is in the creedal understanding of the American Dream.

- "Your all alike you hopers." (56) Dodge fully believes that the only hope lies in hard work. One can't wait for a way to open up. A man must make his own path. A page later he tells Shelly, "There's nothing a man can't do. You dream it up and he can do it. Anything" There is a bit of irony that this statement comes from the lips of a man who is
now weak and leaning against his T. V., but still it emphasizes a philosophy that asserts that if it is going to get done, it will be because men worked for it.

- On page 58 Dodge makes reference to Halie's photographs and lets Shelly know that he has chosen to forget the past that they represent. Halie can keep records, but he wants to put it out of his mind. He continues to make similar statements for the next two pages. "What's to remember?" (59) "Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?" (60)

- "Outside? Is Tilden outside? He shouldn't be out there in the rain." (60) This is one of a handful of a type of statement Dodge makes that expresses a measure of paranoia about being found out.

- "I need somebody here with me." (61) This statement is made by Dodge as Haile returns home. He is sober and does not want to be left alone with Halie so he pleads for Shelly to stay with him. While drunk in Act 1 he could hold his own with Halie, now sober in Act 3 her presence frightens him. As a side note, Bradley frightened him when he was drunk, now sober he shows a measure of bravado in regards to Bradley.

- "I remember the whole thing from start to finish." Dodge makes it clear in this statement that the only reason for the event of the child's death being kept secret is one of volition. Lack of memory has nothing to do with it. Social pressure may play a role, but at any time the dysfunctions of this family can be dealt with by a choice made on the part of the keeper of the memory. This is the act that will change this family forever. Finally Dodge takes a step toward healing. Even as it seems he is implicating his family, he is in fact turning their lives around for the better. In his last few moments of dialogue Dodge transforms into a character we have not observed to this point.

- "Go ahead! Take over the house . . . It's been a pain in the neck ever since the very first
mortality." (75) Again, a revelation that the new Dodge has let go his hold on a life he now knows was destroying all he had hoped to accomplish.

Halie:

One of the biggest clues to understanding Halie is a line by Shelly in Act 3. Referring to an early photograph of Halie and her sons standing in the corn Shelly notes that Hailey "... looks lost standing out there. Like she doesn't know how she got there." Dodge responds with, "She knows! I told her a hundred times it wasn't going to be the city! I gave her plenty of warning." (59) Halie married into a family that she had little or no desire to be a part of. This life is not for her. She resorts to romanticizing about her early globetrotting days, going to the races on New Year's with horse breeding escorts in a way that is reminiscent of Amanda in The Glass Menagerie telling Laura about the day "seventeen gentlemen callers" came to visit. Whether the stories are true or not does not really matter. What matters is that they represent a life that Halie believes she missed out on when she came to live on a farmstead in Illinois. Dodge re-emphasizes her dissatisfaction with this life when he shares that she often leaves for town and returns when she pleases. In his words, "Don't worry about her. She won't be back for days. She says she'll be back but she won't be. There's life in the old girl yet." (32)

She wanted a husband who would love and satisfy her, but he eventually stopped sleeping in her bed. This drove her to look elsewhere. We know from the evidence in the text that she had sexual relations with at least one of her sons, Tilden, and became pregnant with his child. The way she describes her love for Ansel in Act 1 makes their relationship suspect as well. She wanted strong boys to take care of her as she grew older, but they all were all eventually incapacitated or killed. One of these sons was the infant that is now hidden in the pasture. So while we may want to indict her for her present hypocritical and philandering lifestyle, we can't
help but sympathize with her somewhat. She is a victim of a way of life that is hard on women. Shepard would have us know that the place of females in the early 1900's was nothing to be envious of. However, this does not exonerate her in any way. She is painted as equally culpable as Dodge for the injury in this family. Like Dodge, she too has a strong desire to keep the secret buried. Appearances are everything to her. In fact, she is the main antagonist of this play. It is her influence that helps cement Dodge's resolve to stay silent, when we know as an audience the healing requires a confession.

When Dodge lashes out in Act 1 with "My flesh and blood's buried out in the backyard!" (20) and the secret slips for the first time, Halie is quick to remind Dodge that Tilden is "... not to go out in the back lot anymore." (21) Similarly, when Dodge begins to confess in Act 3 it is Halie who threatens, "Dodge, if you tell this thing--if you tell this, you'll be dead to me." Halie, as much as Dodge, maybe more, does not want the story told.

Other revelations of Halie in the text include:

- Christian sensibilities in word if not in action:
  - "It's not Christian but it works." (6) She is possibly referring to suicide.
  - "They shouldn't race on Sundays." (7) She later admits having gone to the races
  - References to "Christ" and "God" (11-12)
  - "He's not drinking anything, is he?" (16) She drinks in Act 3
  - Negative references to Catholics (17)
  - Stealing is wrong (19)
  - "What would be the Christian thing?" (63) She opts for serving whiskey.
  - "Language! I won't have that language in my house!" (67)

- Halie considers Ansel to be a hero. She is set on getting him memorialized throughout the
play. While she would settle for a plaque, she prefers a "... big, tall statue with a basketball in one hand and a rifle in the other." (17)

- Tilden says, "She hasn't forgot." (21)

- When she enters the scene in Act three we see just how concerned with appearances she is. She immediately begins straightening/hiding items and apologizing for the disarray in her home ascribing blame to the "Devil." (62)

- She fiddles in Dewis' pockets, looking for a flask of that may still have plenty of whiskey in it. (64)

- She believes this present generation is worse than hers. In her words everything is "... running down hill." (65)

- She tells Shelly that it is "good to have a firm stand." (65) Again, we see the inherent hypocrisy in this statement coming from Halie's lips.

- On pages 69-71 Halie makes several statements that make it very clear she does not want the truth to come out. Her reputation is far more important than the healing of her family.

- Ironically, this woman we witness emasculate her husband and sons throughout the play shouts out "Where are the men!" (72) Sadly, she is unaware that Dodge's confession is the bravest act she could have witnessed. She sees it as weakness, not strength. Her image of what constitutes a man has been distorted by the culture in which she lives.

- In the final moments of the play Halie receives a revelation. She discovers that the rain actually did some good. For the first time in this play she quits dwelling on the glory of a romanticized past and looks to the future for a brighter day. But we have to take her words cautiously having seen her exaggerate the past. We must not fully embrace her vision of the future. It may be bright, but it will still require sacrifice.
Tilden:

Tilden is the oldest of Dodge and Halie's sons. The stage directions tell us he is in his "late forties" and that something about him is ". . . profoundly burned out and displaced." (12) An erstwhile All-American football player, Tilden is now a "slow-witted man-child" who has recently returned to live in his childhood home after running into trouble with the law. (McDonough 53) For much of the show he is not on stage. From the dialogue we are lead to believe that he is spending his time digging around in the pasture out back, as evidenced by his entrances with items he has harvested while out there. These include corn, carrots, and the dead carcass of the buried child. Unlike the other members of his family, Tilden wants to unearth the truth. In fact, he defies both his father and mother's admonitions in doing so. This is his main objective throughout the play.

In a conversation with Dodge in Act 1 he brings a most important clue to what will redeem this family when he says, "Well, you gotta talk or you'll die." He is the wise fool. Shelly, also is drawn to him, because she too wants to get to the truth. Sensing a bond with her, he shares in Act 2 some of what happened in the past. However, it is interesting that while what he shares implicates Dodge in the death of the child, he does not share much about his own part in the event. Tilden is the father of the buried child by an incestuous relationship with Halie. While the evidence given in the dialogue in this version of the text is circumstantial at best, we know Tilden is the father because Sam Shepard makes it clear in his revised text, and says as much in an interview with Stephanie Coen. One gets a strong sense, however, that this sexual act was due more to the manipulation of his mother than volition on his part. Nonetheless, he more than likely struggles with the guilt of this past act, and finding the remains and returning them to Halie will be his way of purging his own guilt.
A few things Tilden shares about himself include:

- "I never had any trouble." (13) In this reference to what happened to him during his 20 year escape to New Mexico we find that although Tilden appears for the most part guileless, he has a secretive side. There are some things about himself he wants not to share in order to avoid chastisement. When accused of stealing he cries, "I don't want to get kicked out of Illinois." (18) One could conjecture that this is a practice he learned from his family, particularly from Halie. He was probably told often not to share the bad things that happened, and threatened with dire consequences if he did. This is why in Act 2, after sharing about the infant's murder, he says to Shelly, "You probably want your coat back now." (52)

- "Could I have some of that whiskey you've got?" (15) This is Tilden's response to his father asking him why he was lonely in New Mexico. He avoids answering and asks for alcohol. Tilden has inherited this form of escape from his father.

- "I didn't feel like coming back inside." (19) The house is not a comfortable place for Tilden. This is another trait he shares with Shelly. Unfortunately for Tilden he has no other options. Later he tells Dodge that he came home because he could not function outside of this family system. "I didn't know where to go . . . I didn't know what to do. I couldn't figure anything out." (22) In a way similar to an ex-con who can't function properly outside of prison, Tilden has not developed skills sufficient to live outside of his prescribed role within this dysfunctional system. In Act 2 when asked when Dodge tells him to go get him a bottle he says, "I'm not going down there. Into town." (37) He also tells Shelly that he used to drive everywhere but "Now? Now? I don't drive now." (49) Like Vince in Act 3, Tilden has been drawn back home by a heritage he can't escape.
• Though Tilden barely recognizes Vince, Tilden nonetheless is Vince's father. (38-39) The
text is completely silent as to whom Vince's mother is.

Bradley:

From the stage directions we learn that Bradley is the second oldest son of Dodge and
Hailey, about five years younger than his elder brother Tilden, who at one time cut off his left leg
with a chainsaw. Now he has an artificial leg. Although his own personal dialogue is limited in
the first two acts, we gain a great deal of insight into his character in Act 2 when he says to
Shelly, "There was a time when I had to take that tone a' voice from pretty near everyone . . . Not
anymore. Everything's turned around now. Full circle. Isn't that funny?" Bradley is a character
with an inferiority complex and has one objective throughout the play which is to replace those
above him as the head of this family. His means are aggression and terror. Frederick Perry tells
us "Bradley is malicious and cruel. Virtually everything he does on stage is motivated by his
desire to harm others and see them suffer." (71)

The only person who frightens him is Halie. In Act 3 we see her constantly put him in his
place. He is in many ways her henchman. When he comes on stage to cut Dodge's hair in Act 1
he has only three lines of dialogue. One of them involves him calling "Mom!" upstairs. (26) This
could be interpreted many ways, but one intention may be to make sure the coast is clear before
inflicting Dodge with a haircut we discover cuts a bit too deep. Halie is still in control of
Bradley's actions.

We also learn from Dodge in Act 3 that without his prosthetic leg Bradley is powerless, a
secret that Shelly later uses to her advantage. If losing the limb can be a symbol of castration,
then so too can stealing the limb be seen as an emasculating act, a taking of his manhood, if you
will. This would serve Bradley right in light of the symbolic act of rape he inflicted on Shelly in
Act 2 by putting his fingers into her open mouth. Now there is a second woman who stands in the way of Bradley's objective to be top dog in this family.

A couple statements from Bradley in Act 2 and Act 3 reveal further insight into his character.

- "Women like that kind of thing don't they? . . . Importance. Importance in a man." (52-53) In this statement Bradley espouses an understanding that he has learned more from his mother than his father. Throughout the first act Halie makes all kinds of statements about what constitutes a real man and uses them to indict Dodge. Bradley has obviously been more influenced by her than he has by Dodge. Like Halie, Bradley's aim is to dominate Dodge and be the leader of this home by becoming a warped version of the man he believes Halie desires.

- "We could shoot him. We could drown him! What about drowning him?" (53) This dialogue aimed at Dodge is an obvious reference to the way Dodge killed the infant. Bradley is well aware of the murder. Like the rest of his family, Bradley is keeping the secret because in doing so power has shifted in his favor in this home. In Act 3, we see him fight to keep the truth buried. "I'm not telling her anything! Nothing's wrong here! Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's supposed to be. Nothing ever happened that's bad." (70) Bradley is desperate to keep his position on Dodge's sofa throne.

Shelly:

While the stage directions detail Shelly's age and appearance, there is very little else we learn about who she is and where she comes from. She does tell Dodge that she is originally from L.A. (35) She tells Tilden she loves vegetables. (39) She tells Halie that she doesn't drink.
She also reveals to the family "I don't like being ignored. I don't like being treated like I'm not here. I didn't like it as a kid and I still don't like it." (67)

Shelly's arrival along with Vince in Act 2 creates a stimulus in this family which will propel them toward confession of past wrongdoings. According to Lynda Hart "Shelly serves as an objective presence, an outsider with no familial ties whose point of view provides an audience with a perspective from which they can judge the reality of this family's life." (77-78) Similarly Putzel and Westfall call Shelly ". . . an internal model of response for the audience. . ." (111) and indeed, in Act 3 she asks the question on all our minds. "What's happened to this family anyway?" Jane Crum tells us that Shelly "serves as a mediator in the search for meaning and allows the audience an outlet for its frustrations as that meaning is continually denied." (76) According to Bruce Mann, "Shelly. . .performs a key role in the play's texture, because she serves as the audience's representative in this world, trying — just as the audience is — to figure out this family." (86). Perry calls her ". . . Dodge's foil . . . his contrasting companion to whom he reveals his life story and his problems." (100) She is a presence on stage that brings out the information we all want to hear, and ultimately the detective who solves the mystery.

It comes then as no surprise that the character she bonds with is Tilden. The two of them are on the same journey to unearth the truth. As Tilden digs in the back yard, Shelly digs in the house. Their reasons may differ, but their goal is quite similar: To help this family come to grips with the sins of their past.

One interesting feature of Shelly's dialogue is the way she keeps shifting between being calm and apprehensive, wanting to leave and then making a decision to stay, wanting to hear the truth and then not being sure about that decision. She tells Vince "I'm not scared." (33) and three pages later "I'm fuckin' terrified!" (36) While she asserts at one point "I'm leaving" (36), she
changes her tune when Tilden arrives. Shelly settles in to cut and prepare carrots for cooking, and Vince can't convince her otherwise. In Act 3 she finally gets Dodge to open up about the murder, but as the truth begins to unfold she is torn. First she says to Bradley, "I'm not sure I want to find out now," but almost immediately asserts "I'm not scared!" (70) Farther into the confession Dodge says, "She wants to hear this. Don't you?" to which Shelly replies "I don't know." (71)

With these shifts in attitude, Shelly helps guide the audience along the roller coaster ride that I sense Shepard intends for this play. She accurately represents those of us who stand outside of this family and observe not as individuals, but as a collective with a broad range of thoughts and emotions. The complexity of Shelly's character moves the story forward but creates the complication and suspense needed for good drama. She is a marvelous dramatic device. Hart shares,

The offering of such an objective viewpoint is a new technique for Shepard, whose method in the past has been to present a myriad of distorted consciousnesses, each equally unreliable, producing a chaotic effect by denying his audience the ability to identify with a character who sees the disordered action of the play from the outside. (78)

However, unlike some docent moving carefully through museum pieces and encouraging us to be careful of what we touch, Shelly fully engages us in the struggle of this family, encouraging us to experience a broad range of both intellectual and emotional responses right along with her.

Vince:

We learn from the stage directions that "VINCE is TILDEN's son, about twenty-two...."
(27) He and Shelly enter the action of the play at the beginning of Act 2 without warning. Nothing in Act 1 gives us a hint of Vince's existence in this family. We are not ever told who his mother is, nor are we ever given any indication of where he has come from. We can conjecture that he has been east of Illinois since it is on the way to his expressed destination of New Mexico. Shepard writes that he is coming from New York in the revised text. Because he is carrying a saxophone case and will later tell us that he does indeed play it "... deep into the wee hours" (42), we might associate Vince with the somewhat bohemian lifestyle exhibited by young nomadic artists that migrated to the big cities in the late 60's and early 70's.

When we first meet Vince his main objective is to reconnect with his father, whom he believes to be in New Mexico. The present visit in the action of the play is to be nothing more than a brief stopover at the old homestead of his grandparents. Shelly says in Act 3 that this is the sort of thing Vince has been doing all along the journey thus far. "We had to stop off at every tiny little meatball town that he remembered from his boyhood! Every stupid little donut shop he ever kissed a girl in. Every Drive-in. Every Drag strip. Every football field he ever broke a bone on." (66) In this statement we get the hint that this is the area in which Vince grew up. He was more than likely raised mostly by his grandparents while Tilden was struggling in New Mexico.

When Vince first comes on stage it is obvious that he is a little nervous about seeing his family after having been gone for six years. He wants to make sure Shelly won't do anything to embarrass him. Wherever life has taken him, his present disposition is that family is important. He tells Shelly to "Have some respect..." (28). Shelly observes that he is taking the situation "...too seriously." (29) Vince confirms her observation when he shares, "...this is a tense situation for me...I don't know what to expect." (30) Shelly later tells Dodge, "...Vince has this thing about his family now. I guess it's a new thing with him. I kind of find it hard to relate..."
to. But he feels it's important." (31) But what Vince discovers in the course of the play is that he will not bend his family to his expectations. In order to truly reconnect he will have to submit to a greater gravitational pull than he himself can produce. He is one individual against generations and generations that have gone before him.

Shepard actually shows us in Act 2 that Vince is more like his family than he knows. Some of his family's characteristics he exhibits in Act 2 include:

- Controlling violence: When Shelly attempts to leave Vince grabs her and holds her against her will.

  **SHELLY:** Let go of me!

  **VINCE:** You're not going anywhere! You're going to stay right here!

  **SHELLY:** Let go of me you sonuvabitch! I'm not your property! (36)

  Similarly he tries to keep Shelly from helping Shelly prepare Tilden's carrots.

  **VINCE:** Shelly put the carrots down will ya'! We gotta deal with the situation here! I'm gonna need your help.

  **SHELLY:** I'm helping.

  **VINCE:** You're only adding to the problem! You're making things worse! Put the carrots down!

  **VINCE** tries to knock the carrots out of her arms. She turns away from him, protecting the carrots.

  **SHELLY:** Get away from me! Stop it! (39-40)

- Escaping into solitude: Rather than face his present situation, Vince finds a way to leave.

  "I've got to go out for a while." (43) He does not take Shelly with him. He does not take his horn. He leaves alone fully intending to run away from everything.

- Lying: He assures Dodge he will return with his whiskey, but we discover in Act 3 that he fully intended to "... run and keep right on running." (76) When Vince goes into the
kitchen to get the money Dodge tells Shelly that Vince is untrustworthy. (45)

- Independence: This is the characteristic Dodge prides himself in having while lecturing Tilden Act I. He attributes it to Vince in Act 2.

  SHELLY: I wouldn't worry about Vince. He can take care of himself.
  DODGE: Oh he can, huh? Independent. (45)

- Keeping Secrets: When Tilden asks Shelly about Vince she says, "He doesn't tell me everything." (46)

Upon his entrance in Act 3, Vince has had what Bruce Mann describes as an "... abrupt and irrational transformation of Personality/Character ..." (91). Having had a revelatory vision while attempting to drive out of Illinois, he returns fully enveloped by the heritage he sought to escape. He has become the sum of a long line of generations that go back farther than history has even recorded. Vince has fully accepted his distant past even though that past has been less than stellar. Because of this he himself has become seemingly unreasonable, aggressive and violent, breaking beer bottles and threatening those inside the house. He has lost all manner of self-control, having become fully possessed by the family he sought to once escape.

In this he has done something that Dodge failed to do during the bulk of his lifetime. In a conversation earlier in Act 3, Dodge tells Shelly in no uncertain terms that the people he is related to both future and past mean nothing to him. He denies that they shape who he is.

  DODGE: Vince's friend! That's rich. That's real rich. "Vince"! "Mr. Vince"! "Mr. Thief" is more like it! His name doesn't mean a hoot in hell to me. Not a tinkle in the well. You know how many kids I've spawned? Not to mention Grand kids and Great-Grand kids and Great-Great-Grand kids after them?
  SHELLY: And you don't remember any of them?
DODGE: What's to remember? Halie's the one with the family album. She's the one you should talk to. She'll set you straight on the heritage if that's what you're interested in. She's traced it all the way back to the grave.

SHELLY: What do you mean?

DODGE: What do you think I mean? How far back can you go? A long line of corpses! There's not a living soul behind me. Not a one. Who's holding me in their memory? Who gives a damn about bones in the ground? (59)

However, Dodge does finally delve into the past and dig up dark family secrets. Vince enters on the heels of this confession and admits at age twenty-two what Dodge has only recently admitted as he nears death well into his seventies. Vince, like his grandfather says, "I am a murderer!" (73) In this admission lie the seeds of redemption and healing for this family's line. Vince, like his grandfather, shares the truth of what is inside him. Dodge, recognizing this gives him his inheritance and his rightful place on the "throne." Perry says that Vince's return to take over the house signals "... a new beginning and a time of rebirth for the family." (84)

Father Dewis:

Although referred to by Halie in Act 1, Father Dewis does not appear in the action of the play until Act 3. In Act 1 we learn simply that Halie has been in conversation with him in regards to memorializing her dead son Ansel in some way. However, given that Halie tends to exaggerate the truth, his involvement in her endeavors must be held in question until further proof is offered. For example, Halie says, "He knew Ansel when he used to play basketball. Went to every game. Ansel was his favorite player." (17) Yet, in Act 3 we discover in the dialogue that Father Dewis has a vague memory of Ansel at best. Father Dewis' main objective is to capitalize on Halie's adulterous advances even though he knows full well that she is only courting him for her own personal gain.
Father Dewis is what I like to call a straw clergyman. He enters the action a little drunk and flirting with a married Halie. Immediately our preconceived notions of a man of the cloth are undermined. Dewis has been set up by Shepard as a symbol of the ineffectual presence of organized religion. Three moments in Dewis' interaction with Dodge's family are quite telling in this regard. One occurs after Vince's rude entrance near the end of the act. Dewis boasted earlier "I wouldn't be in the ministry if I couldn't face real life." (62) Now amid the rising chaos, Halie seeks the Father's aid and puts his words to the test. His new response is filled with far less bravado.

HALIE: (to DEWIS) Father, why are you just standing around here when everything's falling apart? Can't you rectify this situation?

DODGE laughs, coughs.

DEWIS: I'm just a guest here, Halie I don't know what my position is exactly. This is outside my parish anyway. (73)

In this one line of dialogue Shepard indicts organized Christian religion as having few, if any answers for this decaying American family. The character of Father Dewis shows us quite transparently what Shepard has to say on this subject. Putzel and Westfall support this notion saying, "Father Dewis . . . is the antithesis of the traditional 'man of God.'" (115)

More telling than this is a moment that occurs just prior to Dodge's confession of the murder of the buried infant. Shelly confronts the family in an effort to draw the secret from them, a secret that if confessed will move them in the direction of healing. Father Dewis attempts to stop Shelly's pursuit of truth by saying, "Can't you see that these people want to be left in peace? Don't you have any mercy?" (70) With this one line of dialogue from Father Dewis, Shepard exposes a religion that has turned the truth around. Dewis cannot comprehend that the most
merciful thing Shelly could do is confront them until they admit the problem and find release to move forward.

Father Dewis' final statement as he leaves the home includes the confession "I don't know what to do." (77) Just as Dodge finally gives voice to his sins, so does Father Dewis. All secrets are revealed, and Dewis is not exempt. He is one more character stripped of his archetypal façade and exposed as wanting. Religion does not have answers for a broken American culture.
Ideas of the Play

On Christian Themes:

In *The Longman Anthology of Drama and Theatre* we are told that Sam Shepard uses elements of myth in *Buried Child* designed to “conjure archetypal images” (Greenwald, 1554). The text goes on to say that Shepard’s reason for such imagery is to “force audiences to confront the plague of modern civilization.” (1554) Whether or not Shepard intends to, by employing language designed to evoke the “invisible” (Dugdale 56), he touches on spiritual themes similar to those found in the scripture of the Christian faith. Bonnie Marranca in Alphabetical Shepard confirms this, listing *Buried Child* as one of several plays that “… allude to Christian themes.” (27) While on the surface of his text Sam Shepard openly indicts organized Christian religion, at the symbolic level he appears to point toward scriptural truths of that same faith. These truths are offered as a way to heal the ills of this archetypal family. There are at least three of these scriptural principles symbolized in *Buried Child*.

The Law of the Harvest:

In his letter to the churches of Galatia the apostle Paul attempts to encourage his readers to continue to do good and live in the liberty of their salvation. As part of this exhortation, Paul warns them of the consequences of turning from good works. “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh shall from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the spirit shall from the spirit reap eternal life.” ((New American Standard Bible, Galatians 6: 7-8)

In *Buried Child* one cannot help but see the corruption that has occurred in this family. Shepard’s depiction of Dodge and his sons are indicative of a degeneration that has taken place in this home. Dodge is said to be “very thin and sickly.” (5) His eldest son, Tilden, is described
as “profoundly burned out and displaced.” (12) Bradley is handicapped because he chopped off his own leg with a chainsaw (17) in an act which some scholars liken to a “symbolic castration.” (Glenn) A third son, Ansel, a so-called “hero” of the family, died suspiciously in his honeymoon motel room. (17)

The separation and isolation between Dodge and Halie add to the evidence that personalities and relationships in this home have broken down. This married couple holds a conversation from different rooms set on different levels of their home. Halie is also having what appears to be an affair of sorts with Father Dewis.

These images interwoven with the symbolic images of harvest rituals suggest strongly to the observer that there is a connection between what is happening to this family and the fallow ground from which crops are beginning to newly emerge. The crops that Tilden gathers have not existed for some time on this farm. Dodge stopped sowing in 1935, and we are led to understand through the events of the play that the reason he stopped sowing at that time is because he had sown something else in those fields. Not something living, but rather something quite corrupt. “Whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

Generational Curses:

Closely related to the principle of sowing and reaping is an understanding that generational consequences are afforded to the “sins of the fathers.” What a person does effects future generations either for good or ill. This is a theme which is repeated in several Old Testament passages. Interestingly, we first encounter this warning in the giving of the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20. I believe that it will benefit this discussion to set it in this context.

You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven
above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not
worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God,
visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth
generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to
those who love Me and keep My commandments. (Exodus 20:4-6, emphasis
mine)

Almost every time this warning or “curse,” if you will, appears in the text of scripture it is either
preceded or followed by the equivalent reminder of the blessing afforded to individuals, as
well as their larger community, when they view God as loving. As is the curse, so too is the
blessing generational. It effects more than the individual. It spreads to future generations.

Buried Child sits in a larger canon of five of Sam Shepard’s plays known as the “family
plays” or “the old man cycle” in which “. . .the specter of the ‘old man,’ whose sins weigh
heavily on his children . . .” is ever present (Greenwald 1553). Dodge, Tilden, and Vince, who
represent three generations of the family line, all have a moment when they rehearse some
statement that suggests a connection between generations. In Act 3, when confronted by
Shelly, Dodge goes into a tirade about how many kids he “spawned.” He continues, “Not to
mention Grand kids and Great-Grand kids and Great-Great-Grand kids after them.” (59) Dodge
speaks of future generations that have yet to be born as if they already exist. His statement is
prophetic in this regard. Shepard would have his audience understand that these future
generations come from Dodge's loins. For Shepard these “kids” are connected to Dodge now,
and will continue to be connected long after Dodge is gone.

More compelling is what I want to call the “face” language of the play. In Act 2 the
family fails to recognize Vince upon his arrival after a six year separation. But Tilden, Vince’s
father, does say to Shelly, "I thought I recognized him. I thought I recognized something about him...I thought I saw a face inside his face." (46) This statement foreshadows the revelation that Vince has in Act 3, a revelation so compelling that it turns him around and draws him back to the family he originally viewed as dysfunctional and dangerous.

I was gonna run last night. I was gonna run and keep right on running. I drove all night. Clear to the Iowa border. The old man's two bucks sitting right on the front seat beside me. It never stopped raining the whole time. Never stopped once. I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I saw his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield I saw him breathe as though he was frozen in time. And every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his grandfather's face. And it went on like that. Changing. Clear on back to faces I'd never seen before but still recognized. Still recognized the bones underneath. The eyes, the breath, the mouth. I followed my family clear into Iowa. Every last one. Straight into the Corn Belt and further. Straight back as far as they'd take me. Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved. (76)

These words should leave no doubt that for Shepard generational connections are inescapable. This is a common theme in Shepard's family plays. In *Curse of the Starving Class*, the first of Shepard's plays in this cycle, Ella rehearses a similar revelation.
Do you know what this is? It's a curse. I can feel it. It's invisible but it's there. It's always there. It comes onto us like nighttime. Every day I can feel it. Every day I can see it coming. And it always comes. Repeats itself. It comes even when you do everything to stop it from coming. Even when you try to change it. And it goes back. Deep. It goes back to tiny little cells and genes. To atoms. To tiny little swimming things making up their minds without us. Plotting in the womb. Before that even. In the air. We're surrounded with it. It's bigger than government even. It goes forward too. We spread it. We pass it on. We inherit it and pass it down, and then pass it down again. It goes on and on like that without us. (41)

In both the above examples of Shepard's understanding of generational connections he is sure to take the reader as far back as one can possibly go. For Ella it is simply stated as "Before that even." For Vince it goes to a place where any recognizable view of human existence is veiled, that place where "everything dissolved." In doing this Shepard asks us to understand that all of humanity is linked to some original, almost primordial, father. That not only do the sins of the fathers reach down through vertical family lines, but they branch horizontally as well, thus touching all of humanity.

*Buried Child* is not just about Dodge's family but every family who views it. Using archetypal imagery, Shepard implies that seemingly isolated actions are not solely the responsibility of the individual. Rather, Shepard creates a sense of collective culpability for the decay seen in his play. By showing us our interconnectedness through Vince's vision, every witness to the action is invited to see themselves as a contributor to the problem.

The Need for a Confession:

The final principle woven into the mythical imagery of *Buried Child* has to do with the
consequences of keeping secrets and, more importantly, the benefits of admitting the mistakes of the past. The connection between the family's decay and their inability to come clean about the past is undeniably evident in this play and reminds us of the biblical text that states,

If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:6-9)

This scriptural passage is often used by organized religion as a simple solution to the sin problem. We are often told to just admit the wrong and move on. While one can be certain that Shepard does not want us to think of the solution as simple, the text of *Buried Child* does suggests that the uncovering of dark secrets is an important step toward healing the ills of this family. Shepard has drawn both Tilden and Shelly as characters interested in digging up the truth of this family's secret. Through ritualistic action, Shepard unites Shelly and Tilden together in this quest for truth. In the safety of a new found relationship, Tilden confides in Shelly about the horrible events of the past and arms her for a confrontation with Dodge and his family in Act 3. “I know you’ve got a secret. You’ve all got a secret. It’s so secret in fact, you’re all convinced it never happened” (69). As painful as it may seem, admitting this secret will ultimately save this family. The sin will not go away, but they will be able to get beyond it and finally move forward.

While for Sam Shepard confession is not a magic pill that suddenly makes everything better, one senses that he views it as a starting point from which to begin repairing the mistakes
of the past, or at least living with the consequences of the present. In the final moments of *Buried Child* the presence of Vince, mirroring the posture of his dead grandfather on the old sofa, seems to portend that nothing much will change, and that the generational curse will continue. However, Tilden enters from the fields one final time, and we witness the ultimate confession in the exhumed body of the once buried child in his loving grasp. This is a somewhat unnerving image to be sure, and yet an image that somehow offers us a renewed sense of hope which Shepard echoes in Halie’s final words.

> You can’t force a thing to grow. You can’t interfere with it. It’s all hidden. It’s all unseen. You just gotta wait till it pops up out of the ground. Tiny little shoot. Tiny little white shoot. All hairy and fragile. Strong though. Strong enough to break the earth even. It’s a miracle . . . I’ve never seen a crop like this in my whole life. Maybe it’s the sun. Maybe that’s it. Maybe it’s the sun. (78)

By touching on biblical themes, whether consciously or unconsciously, Sam Shepard offers a positive direction for the injured American culture of which he is a part. In exhuming the buried secrets of a deteriorating family and connecting them to us through the symbols of myth, *Buried Child* creates a forum for reflection that just might lead us to expose our own secrets and move in a direction of healing.
Previous Reviews

One might be tempted to simply say that *Buried Child* won a Pulitzer Prize and leave it at that. However, prior to this award many reviewers dealt with productions of this text a bit more critically. I have chosen to confine my search to a handful of those reviews that came out prior to this taint of national recognition. I believe these observations to be more objective and freed from the sway that such acclaim may have on public opinion.

According to Susan Abbotson, the original production of *Buried Child* directed by Robert Woodruff had a six week run in San Francisco, beginning on June 27, 1978. It then played in New York for three weeks Off-Off-Broadway at Theatre for the New City and for four months Off-Broadway at the intimate Theatre de Lys before closing due to lack of audiences. This might have been the last we would have heard of this play had it not received a Pulitzer Prize the day after it closed. Reviews of the play during this period were for the most part positive.

According to Abbotson, both Jack Kroll and Clive Barnes gave Shepard fairly good mentions. I was unable to locate Kroll’s review, but Barnes called Shepard "one of the most brilliant' of America's young artists at that time." (Abbotson 169) And yet it seems that Barnes, along with many other reviewers did not give Shepard a complete thumbs up, but rather qualified their comments of the work. While Barnes praised *Buried Child* for having a "... certain clarity of construction and provenance to it that should secure it, at the very least, a useful place in the scholastic record," he also conceded that in his opinion it was probably not his best work. (169)

Edith Oliver had a similar qualified assessment of the work, calling Shepard a "virtuoso of dramatists," but reserving her praise of *Buried Child* for its "literary and theatrical" merits rather than its philosophical insights. In her words, "... we don't get much in the way of discovery or news of America." However she did continue, "Those spoken arias are as good as
any being written today, and the stage business, comic or frightening, is astonishing. The action, one feels, barely gleans his teeming brain." (151-52)

Harold Clurman admits as well to being somewhat perplexed and yet mesmerized by the enigmatic quality of Shepard's work.

What strikes the ear and eye is comic, occasionally hilarious behavior and speech at which one laughs while remaining slightly puzzled and dismayed, (if not resentful), and perhaps indefinably saddened. ... I must confess that several of his plays have baffled me, and I may have misinterpreted some of them, but I am convinced that he is not only a genuinely gifted, but a meaningful writer. (622)

Richard Eder, who saw *Buried Child* performed at Theatre for the New City admits that this is a play that does not read as interestingly as some other works by Shepard. Eder was nonetheless quite taken by Woodruff's staging and interpretation of it. "Each character is played in such a way that the symbolic function grows out of a very concrete humanity. We do not always understand these figures but we are almost always affected by them." (61)

Not all pre-Pulitzer reviews were as positive. In a criticism titled "Sam Shepard--What's the Message?" Walter Kerr panned both Shepard as a playwright, and *Buried Child* as another of his senseless works. While he praised Shepard for being prolific, he had very little good to say about the myriad of works produced. Kerr accused reviewers for whom he usually has a healthy respect of unduly encouraging Shepard to continue to produce these types of works that pander to a limited "cult" following. Of a Theatre de Lys production Kerr said,

I am always at arms' length, elbowed away from the action, refused entry to the people--the flesh and blood--we hear so much about. I can see the outlines of what is being said and done: outlines in black coming down a steep flight of stairs
one step at a time, outlines dancing in shadow against a pane of glass, outlines
that may be physically closer to where I am sitting but that are once again made
remote by a nearly inarticulate grunt and stammer or by a muddied or bloodied
appearance that serves as a mask. (D3)

Kerr gets closer to the text itself when he opines, "If I were permitted to dig deeper into
the cloaked psyches confronting me, what would I find? I suspect I would find a posture that has
not yet grown into a cohesive play, a conceit congratulating itself on its own artful dodging."
(D3)

These initial receptions of Shepard's work make it clear that Buried Child may not be
readily accessible to everyone as a dramatic vehicle and should not be approached haphazardly
in its production. It presents a true challenge to even the most serious/talented artists. Great care
must be taken in order to ensure it is received by audiences. However, it would also suggest that
one need not be surprised if there are those who do not fully grasp what is presented. Still, one
senses it is at some level an important work and every effort must be made on the part of all
participants to see that it gains the measure of success it deserves on the stage.
Research on the Playwright

I don't know if you feel this or not, but I feel like there are territories within us that are totally unknown. Huge mysterious and dangerous territories. We think we know ourselves, when we really only know this little bitty part . . . We have all these galaxies inside of us. And if we don't enter those in art of one kind or another, whether it's playwriting, or painting, or music, or whatever, then I don't understand the point in doing anything. It's the reason I write. I try to get into parts of myself that are unknown . . . Catharsis is getting rid of something. I'm not looking to get rid of it; I'm looking to find it. I'm not doing this to vent demons. I want to shake hands with them. (From an interview with Amy Lippman, Quoted in Shewey 167-68)

The above quote exemplifies Shepard's life as a man in search for his true identity. Like Vince in *Buried Child*, Shepard lived his late adolescence and early twenties trying to find his identity in something other than his dysfunctional family. His father was a military man, an abusive alcoholic, and a strict disciplinarian who raised him to be Episcopalian. In Shepard's words, "... that was another kind of prison to get out of." (Chubb 208) Getting out, escaping, if you will, seems to be a theme of his early years.

As a child he would steal bikes and run away from home. He would escape to the Old West by watching Saturday afternoon movies and dreaming about being a cowboy. When tending sheep in Duarte got to him he would take amphetamines and win track medals, steal a car and joy-ride in Mexico, or get himself "arrested in Big Bear for making an obscene gesture at the Sheriff's wife." (Patraka 9). This need to escape made him the perfect candidate for the "beat generation." that fascinated him in the late 50's. (Chubb 189) So a few years later he left Mt. San
Antonio Jr. College and eventually drifted to New York's Lower East Side. He began to find his voice amid jazz musicians, artists, writers, and most importantly, a newly developing counterculture of experimental theatre in Off-Off Broadway. Influenced by post-modern writers like Samuel Beckett, Shepard's work was a strange mixture of avant-garde absurdism, abstract-expressionism, jazz, and distorted myths of the traditional American West. (Patraka 12) The work during these early years were not linear, plotline-driven plays but rather shorter conceptual works filled with recurring themes of the mythic Old West, Kerouacian styled poetic language, and of note, a more than occasional use of autobiographical material. Of this early writing Shepard freely admits

> When I first started, I didn’t really know how to structure a play. I could write dialogue, but I just sort of failed beyond that, and kind of went wherever I wanted to go, which is how I ended up with these shorter pieces. I didn’t venture into two-acts or three-acts until, I think, *La Turista* [1967]. So these things I was writing were all experiments of just tiptoeing into the waters of what it’s like to write a play. (Almereyda)

During his time in New York he wrote prolifically and won numerous Obies as critics began to "come to terms with his work." (Patraka 13) By the late seventies his plays were being performed on both coasts as well as in London and Sam Shepard would eventually be awarded a Pulitzer Prize for *Buried Child*. But somewhere in between the experimentation and the Pulitzer Prize his mind turned wholly toward family. While there was much about his earlier works that was autobiographical, Shepard admits

> *Curse* is the first time I've ever tried to deal with my family. Not really my family, just the--what do you call it--nuclear family. I've always been kind of scared of
that. Because if you could really understand that, understand the chemistry and the reactions that are going on there, I've had the feeling that you'd understand a lot. (Quoted in Shewey 107)

With *Curse of the Starving Class*, Shepard would embark upon a new journey that reminds one very much of Shelly's line to Dodge in Act I of *Buried Child*. "Vince has this thing about family now. I guess it's a new thing with him. I kind of find it hard to relate to. But he feels it's important. You know. I mean he feels he wants to get to know you again. After all this time."

(27) Shepard's style of writing would change dramatically. Don Shewey calls it a "... total dramatic departure--a three-act family drama written in a style much closer to the American realism of Eugene O'Neill or Arthur Miller than anything he'd done before." (106)

In the period between *Curse of the Starving Class* and *Buried Child*, Shewey tells us that Shepard went through a dark spell. "In the summer of 1977, one of his lowest points, Shepard made up a sort of Dewar's profile of himself for amusement, giving his age (33), height (6'1"), weight (160), etc., and listing as his ambition--salvation." Shewey asserts that a big step in the direction of that "salvation" would come by truly turning back toward the family and writing *Buried Child*. (118)

So many of Shepard's connections with his own past are woven into *Buried Child* that even a cursory comparison makes it obvious.

- The play takes place in Illinois which is Shepard's birthplace, and home to generations of deeply rooted ancestors after whom he was originally named Samuel Shepard Rogers VII. A name he was the first to break from.
- Dodge is a family name on his grandmother's side that connects him to a Civil War hero, Lemuel P. Dodge.
• Vince carries a saxophone and speaks of plunging into "sinful infatuation" (38) with said instrument paralleling Shepard's own fascination with jazz and his connection to the counter-cultural movement.

• Don Shewey describes a reminiscence of Shepard in which he met a girl on a train while heading out to visit his grandparents back in Illinois. While she did not continue all the way there as Shelly does in *Buried Child*, there is a detailed description of the family that sounds very familiar.

  His grandfather, a redneck and staunch Harry Truman fan fond of writing letters to the editor signed "Plain Dirt Farmer," was an invalid who sat shriveled up in front of the television watching the baseball game; when it was over, his grandmother would drop whatever she was doing and snap the set off. At night Steve (Shepard's childhood nickname) wandered around studying the pictures of his uncles on the wall: "The uncle who died in a motel room. His wife who died with him. The uncle who married into the Chicago Mafia. The uncle who lost a leg at the age of ten." (Shewey 22)

• Shepard's father was an abusive alcoholic. Alcohol plays a major role in the dysfunctions of Dodge's family.

• Father Dewis is an Episcopal priest, the religion Shepard as raised in.

These connections make it obviously clear that Vince's journey is Shepard's journey. I believe it is safe to conclude that the realization Vince comes to at the end of *Buried Child* is one Shepard found at the time he wrote his family plays, and *Buried Child* in particular. His search for self brought him back to his roots. Somehow Shepard felt tied to his ancestors. This connection, as I showed earlier, is a major theme of many of Shepard's works. While his search
is far from complete, in many ways his writing did in fact help him find himself and come to grips with the places from which he once sought to escape. In an interview with Pete Hamill he admitted that he now sometimes wishes he had not dropped Rogers from his name. "Now in a way I kind of regret it." Shepard adds, "Years later I found out that Steve Rogers was the original name of Captain America in the comics." (From interview with Hamill, Quoted in Shewey 25)

As exemplified by Shepard's journey, my hope for *Buried Child* is to communicate that no matter how painful, no matter what colorful characters we may find, no matter the demons we may discover, to search into our past is never a journey to be avoided. To dig up the truth of who we are and where we come from will always bring a measure of salvation.
Learning Goals

Below is a generic syllabus followed by a discussion of general aims of WWCC's Theatre Arts department and specific learning goals for those students who participate in Play Production and this performance of *Buried Child*.

**PLAY PRODUCTION I-II-III-IV-V-VI**

**FALL 2013**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Class Hours Per Week</th>
<th>Instructor Name</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>Campus Phone</th>
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<td>Varied</td>
<td>Kevin Loomer</td>
<td>Elective</td>
<td>527-4317</td>
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**Prerequisites:** Instructor permission

**General Ed. Core Class:** No

**Location:** CHINA PAVILION THEATRE

**Name of Textbooks:** Current script T.B.A.

**Course Topics:** All aspects of production work: acting, costumes, scenery, props, sound, lights. Students select which area(s) they would like to focus on.

**Course Description:** The current play is used as applied study in acting, stage lighting, costume construction, props construction, sound design. Students may be cast in the play, work backstage, or run lights or sound.

**Type of Instruction Used in This Course:** Lecture, demonstration, practical work, video examples, etc.

**Evaluation Devices:** Rehearsals and Production Work evaluated by instructor.

**Attendance & Grading Policy:** Those enrolled in both technical aspects of play production and those acting in the play will be excused for 1 or 2 absences. In this course students will perform acceptable work or be dropped.

Note: Students will meet with the instructor to discuss responsibilities and expectations. Students will establish a work schedule with the instructor and meet regularly during the quarter to evaluate progress toward goal achievement.

**Testing Policy:** Performances serve as evidence of production work.

**Homework Policy:** Memorization of lines and assigned tasks must be performed in a timely manner.
While *Buried Child* has a specific thematic bent, the Theatre Arts department at WWCC has always had general aims that are tied to all our Play Production events. Our overarching goal with all students who participate in any way with a given production at WWCC is to nurture a greater appreciation for the contribution live theatre has made in the culture in which it was created, as well as what it offers to the present culture in which they will perform.

As collaborative artists, we expect each student to understand that the success of any given production will only come about when everyone pulls their weight. We teach the necessity of personal responsibility and treat every participant, no matter how limited their contribution, as essential to achieving a positive outcome.

We expect constant improvement in their chosen, discipline-specific skills (Acting, Directing, Design, Stagecraft, etc.), and encourage increasingly daring/compelling artistic choices in all disciplines. We encourage experimentation and innovation as we seek to solve artistic "problems." We cultivate and nurture a safe environment in which to explore and take creative chances. In this safe environment, and in a spirit of trust and love, we attempt to say "Yes" to any and all creative impulses.

In this environment it is hoped that all participating Performing Artists will improve in their ability to:

- Analyze a script for given circumstances, objectives, actions, obstacles, and character relationships and apply that analysis to the creation of a character/performance.
- Apply vocal and physical technique to the creation of a character/performance.
- Demonstrate an understanding of concept, style, mood, tempo, pace etc.
- Apply skills of listening, articulation, awareness and collaboration through the creation of performance as a member of an ensemble.
It is hoped that those involved in the areas of Design and Technical Theatre will improve in their ability to:

- Analyze a script with the intention of better communicating design ideas to collaborators through research, language, and graphic skills.
- Participate in the collaborative creation of theatre through the application of design skills.
- Demonstrate understanding of the different technologies and techniques used in the creation of theatre through direct application in a given production.

It is also my hope that after participating specifically in this production of *Buried Child* that all students involved will improve in their ability to:

- Identify, analyze, perform, and better appreciate dramatic works from the post-modern era.
- Internalize and put into practice the important themes emphasized in the production, especially the idea of courageously admitting mistakes both past and present.

It should also be noted that all students and staff on the WWCC campus have been invited to submit poetry, essays, short stories, and artwork inspired by selected themes in *Buried Child*. A copy of the flyer that was sent campus wide is in the appendices section of this notebook. These artistic offerings will be on display in the lobby of the China Pavilion during the run of the show. We are planning to have a talkback session after the performance on Thursday, December 5th. Many of the faculty members have been quite supportive of this event.
Production Journal

Late August, 2013:

I went to Ron Klicker, a local farmer, and asked about buying 300 ears of unhusked corn which I was hoping to freeze until needed in rehearsal and performance. He did me one better. Corn was harvested early this year, but the stalks still contained several ears that he let me glean for free. It took some exploring, but within 3 hours I picked over 300 ears. I put half in a freezer in my basement and the other half in a corner of a large freezer that WWCC's culinary department has on campus. Collecting corn is crossed off my list. I hope it keeps until November.

September 8, 2013:

I contacted my Costume, Lighting, and Sound Designers, all of whom showed interest in the project last spring. My costumer, Julie Caton, is a local woman who has lovingly and professionally designed three previous shows for me on a purely volunteer basis. I was able to negotiate a small quarterly stipend for her, and now she will be with me for the whole 2013-2014 season. My light man, Brian Hatley, has a contract with the college. Last year he got paid for 19 hours a week. This year they cut him to 100 hours a quarter: a joke to those of us who do theatre. Luckily for me Brian loves to be involved with the theatre. My sound designer, Richard Haverinen, is a retired man who is returning to school for the fun of it. He has an extensive background in sound engineering and talked to me for the first time last spring about getting play production credit for doing what he loves. In his own words from an email he sent me "I'm a somewhat-old San Diego State Theater actor/techie minor and former broadcaster, now retired, and I have acquired a pile of equipment, software, and recorded SFX toward this end. I'm cautiously optimistic I can do the work in discrete four-channel (surround) sources in the house,
with an absolute guarantee of stereo sources." I feel quite fortunate to have all these folks with me. They are all very much on board and have begun to develop designs based on my input.

I have run into a couple snags. Life changed for the stage manager I believed I had lined up weeks ago. Outside commitments will not allow her to participate in this production and so I am searching to find a replacement. Also, I am in need of an individual to collect/design props.

September 9 - 20, 2013:

Back at school and working around compulsory faculty in-service events. Classes start in two weeks. Still no bites on a stage manager or properties manager.

September 10, 2013:

Spent my day in communication with the college's graphics department and arranged for production of season ticket brochures, audition flyers, and posters. Jessica Hockett is a terrific graphic designer and does an outstanding job for us once she understands the concept for a show. This one took quite a bit of discussion, as well as searching for online images that helped her visualize the direction I wanted the marketing image to go. In addition, I had to compose all the copy for the season ticket brochures and audition flyers. Added to this is a side piece we are doing this quarter. One of my students is directing a one-night-only staged radio broadcast of War of the Worlds which will perform on October 30th, the 75th anniversary of the original airing. Advertisement and audition notices for this production fell to me as well. It was a full day to say the least.

September 17, 2013:

Found a text titled A Reconstruction-Analysis of Buried Child by Sam Shepard by Frederick J. Perry. Read all 150 some pages of it in 2 hours and had a major mid-thesis epiphany. I had to scrap a great deal of what I had spent the last three weeks writing because of it. I called
Michael Smith a couple times and he talked me down (I can't say enough about what an encouragement Michael is each time we speak). I believe I now have a clearer sense of where I am going with this play.

September 20, 2013:

Audition flyers are up and waiting for students to view them on the first day of school. Faculty have been alerted by all campus email and I have asked them to announce auditions to students.

September 23, 2013:

Classes started at the Community College today. In addition to producing this play, I will be teaching a clustered Acting class, an Intro to Theatre class, and a class in Public Speaking.

I discovered today that most of my heavy hitters from last season have either graduated or have reprioritized their lives. I am starting with a virtually new slate. I announced auditions for *Buried Child* in my classes. A couple new students have shown interest and have taken perusal scripts. However, a majority of them have alerted me to the fact that work schedules and the like would probably take priority. I will continue to encourage involvement for the next three days and see what happens at auditions on the 26th.

I had a meeting with Julie Jones this afternoon. She is the Vocal Music instructor at WWCC and a good friend and collaborator from way back. She has an idea to create a wall of artwork, poetry, essays, etc. in the China Pavilion lobby with contributions from students of various disciplines based on some of the themes in *Buried Child*. She had hinted at this in the summer when we were working on *The Music Man* together. She also talked to my wife about it. What she told me was that the two of them would head this project up. She wanted to go to Scott Marsh, the Dean of Academic Education, and get permission to talk to other instructors about
giving credit to students for their contributions. Her hope was to make a kind of confession wall where students could express themselves, anonymously if desired, and say the things they felt a need to say. I encouraged her to go for it.

September 24, 2013:

I spoke with Jessica Hockett in graphics about how the poster design was coming along. She said she would show me drafts in about two weeks. I told her I would love them sooner if possible. She smiled at me.

Julie got permission from Dean Marsh. The project to create an expression wall in the theatre is a go. Julie and Connie will begin contacting faculty and staff next week.

September 26 - 27, 2013:

Good news: 10 males came out for auditions. I had a good number of men in the age ranges I need and fairly good talent. I can cast all the male roles comfortably. Bad news: No females came out for auditions. I have never had an audition without females before. Rehearsals start Tuesday, October 1. I've done this before so I am not in a panic. I have many folks in the community who love to work with me. I'll just breathe and recruit.

September 28, 2013:

I spent my Saturday morning attempting to recruit female actors. After hearing many apologies for scheduling conflicts, I found someone of appropriate age to play Halie. Her name is Patty Leeper, and she said she would be delighted to work with me. I drove to her home and hand delivered her a copy of the script. She called me later this evening and said something along the lines of "Wow, this is much heavier than I am used to doing." Patty is used to being in musical comedies. She does not picture herself as a "dramatic" actress. I knew this when I called her. Truth be told, she is not my ideal actor for this role, but my first choices were just not
available. I will have my work cut out for me.

The young women I contacted were otherwise engaged. Many of the younger women who perform in the local community have regular nine-to-five jobs and can only rehearse in the evenings. At the college we rehearse in the afternoons from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. This time works best for students. I tried once to change the schedule to accommodate conflicts and it was more trouble than it was worth.

On a positive note: my wife, Connie, has agreed to stage manage for me. This means that her best friend, Dianne Martin, will more than likely come and wrangle props.

September 29, 2013:

I am still searching for someone to play Shelly.

September 30, 2013:

I ran into a student, Sarah Fry, and was able to cajole her in to playing Shelly. I worked with her last winter and spring, and although she is still fairly new to performing in theatre, her instincts are great. Plus, she fits Shepard's description of Shelly perfectly. I will have to work a tiny bit around her class schedule, but she is a dedicated student and performer and I am positive she will do a terrific job. I have a complete cast. Rehearsals start tomorrow.

October 1, 2013:

We had our first read-through today. I heard Todd Oleson, our guest artist playing Dodge, read for the first time and he is a scream. He found a lot the comedy in this role and in this play. It made me rethink my perceptions of this play a tad. There are far more laughs than I thought there were. Most of the actors picked up on it, followed suit, and we had a great time. Nevertheless, I'll want to be careful of not letting things become flippant to the point of losing the depth of what Shepard wants to say. Still, I really feel like this is going to be a great rehearsal
process. I am so looking forward to table work tomorrow.

I asked Connie to work on scheduling a production meeting for Friday.

October 2, 2013:

First day of table work. It is my policy to have all cast members present for every session of table work whether they have dialogue or not. I love the collaborative energy of everyone in the cast, each making contributions and sharing in the growth of the whole project. Character discovery today was rich. The discussion was lively. Most of the actors are already asking great questions and making excellent choices. I am very encouraged.

This morning I knocked out a working timeline of all the past action revealed in the dialogue. I wrote it out visually on a white board and presented it to the cast. They were amazed at how much of this play takes place in the past. While I won't rehearse the whole timeline here, I will say that for the first time I realized that Dodge was born before the turn of the century somewhere around 1890. Todd, who has been looking at this script for three months now, also had not grasped this fact until today. It became a new part of his research to look backwards and explore the decades through which Dodge has lived.

Patty Leeper, who is playing Halie, has a little negative self-talk that I will have to work with. As she began to discuss Halie she kept saying things like, "I can't imagine behaving like Halie." and "I don't know how I can play a woman this evil." We had to have the talk about how no one is "evil." The cast was great about suggesting what kind of injuries may have led Halie to make the choices she did. But Patty still had her guard up at the end of this table session. She also requires very specific line reads to counteract her habit of stressing strange words. There is still a lot of rehearsal to go.

Dana is perfect for Tilden. I have done many shows with this very talented student and he
always finds characterizations quickly, but I have never seen a better role for him than this. He is really a smart actor. He is also history buff and a great asset at these table sessions. I have no doubt he will do a good job. His only downfall is a slight learning disability that makes it difficult for him to memorize lines. He is always the last one to let go of his script, and until he does he can't fully connect with other actors. However, he always makes it in the final tech week. I have no reason to doubt he will make it this time.

All the actor bios are in. I think this is the first time I have ever collected all the bios in the first week of rehearsal. My wife is a great stage manager.

October 3, 2013:

We had another great round of table work. These actors are already getting a firm grasp on the story and noticing contradictions/problems in their dialogue. For example, Dana, the actor playing Tilden, was stopped on a statement he makes to Shelly about the baby in Act 2. He says "We had a baby... He did. Dodge did." (50) Cast members were immediately confused as to why Tilden would say this if he knew full well the baby was his. Everyone posited their theories, but nothing was satisfactory. Finally I went to the revised text and guess what? Sam Shepard cut "He did. Dodge did." I chose to cut it as well. I am very encouraged at the instincts of this cast.

Sarah, playing Shelly, is my thinker. She is a very smart actor, but she stays inside her head a lot. She wants to figure everything out and know exactly what she is doing and why. As I mentioned, I have worked with her before and am well aware of this tendency. To be honest, it works to some extent for this character, but there are times when Shelly, rather than making calculated or reasonable decisions has to react instinctually from her guts. This is not as easy for Sarah. We spent some time today identifying those places when Shelly might just have these gut reactions ("I'm fuckin' terrified!"), or do things without thinking as well as those times Shelly
makes conscious decisions ("Do you want me to take those carrots for you?"). It was a very helpful exercise for Sarah.

Nathan has great instincts, but suffers from a tendency that has been developed from playing a number of character roles in high school. Like his father, he has played the old men. Thus, he tends to perform with a voice that is affectedly more mature sounding than his natural voice. I let him know that it was alright just to relax and read the lines in his natural voice. This is something I will pay attention to as we continue to rehearse.

Durant (Father Dewis) was not at rehearsal today. Apparently he is ill with a virus of some kind. I am hoping he will be better tomorrow when we work on Act 3.

The costumer took measurements today. She will begin pulling/constructing costumes this weekend. Because of individual scheduling problems we will probably not have a production meeting until next week, but I have been in contact with all the individual players. I would like to get us all in one room however. My stage manager is making arrangements with everyone and hopefully this will happen.

October 4, 2013:

Table work is done. It went extremely well. We had some excellent discussions. I usually do not take this much time at the table, but I felt it was necessary given the complexity of this text. I asked for feedback and was encouraged that all the actors present found this time of exploration quite helpful and beneficial.

We have only one glitch at this point. Durant is still sick apparently. I am only assuming this because he did not contact us to let us know his situation. Connie called him, but he did not answer nor respond to the voicemail she left. We hope he is all right. He will have a little catching up to do. He has no blocking until next Thursday which should give him plenty of time.
to get well. Everyone else seems healthy and ready to start blocking on Monday.

October 5 and 6, 2013:

I did some measuring and blue taped out my ground plan on the China Pavilion stage. As I knew I would, I made several dimensional changes from the ground plan I made in Marc Haniuk's Scenic Methods class (TH580) over two years ago. I needed far more room than I allowed myself on the ground plan. (I have included a second ground plan in the appendices of my project notebook that reflects all the changes made throughout the process, but on this day they were primarily dimensional.) I have decided to hold off on building until I see how blocking goes in the taped off space for the next few days.

October 7, 2013:

Blocked Act I. I think the ground plan will work. I'll know better tomorrow when we begin blocking Act II and I can see a bit more physical action in the space.

I have imagined an opening "prologue" for Vince which will mirror what Shepard has written for the closing moments of the play. I did not block it today but talked to the cast about it. I chose to wait until I fully see what we do at the end.

Blocking for this act was fairly easy because one actor sits on a sofa the whole time, another actor sits on a stool and husks corn for a long while and a third actor says her lines onstage for 11 pages. At one point I told the actor playing Dodge that I needed his head at the other end of the sofa. He joked about hoping he could remember it the next time we run the scene. I told him to write it down.

It is a little tricky blocking Halie when she enters the room because Sam Shepard calls for so little "playground" on the set. She has a long monologue and no place to park really. I added a hutch, but the other corner is pinned with only a T.V. on the floor. The sofa, being a symbolic
"throne" is off limits to everyone but Dodge. We chose to add a coat rack today to give her one more place of destination. Once Halie has props and costumes to futz with it will be easier to create business to keep her from looking so unanchored on stage. Corn husks should help as well. For today we focused on moving her to areas, details to come later.

It was a relatively stress free rehearsal today. We touched on a couple tempo related issues, but for the most part just put actors in their proper spaces. I am expecting things to get a touch more intricate in Vince's homecoming scene tomorrow.

We are still having a hard time scheduling a production meeting because of everybody's busy lives. However, I have spoken to all the designers individually and Connie takes great notes. I sense that all elements will go smoothly.

No one has heard from Durant since he called in sick last Thursday. We are all hoping he is all right.

On a very positive note, I had three female students talk to me today about hoping to learn something about hanging and running lights. I almost fainted. My light designer Brian Hatley has another full time job and can only work in the evenings. He does not like to hang and focus by himself which means I usually come in to help if there is no student interest. I eagerly collected these ladies' contact info and I will pass it on to Brian. This was very encouraging.

October 8, 2013:

Blocked the first half of Act 2. It went very smoothly until the moment when Dodge discovers his bottle is missing and Tilden makes an entrance with carrots. We had a tough time working out the blocking puzzle until I suddenly had a revelation. Although the lines in this section are written sequentially they need not be spoken that way. They can be spoken over the top of each other. Two conversations, or lines of thought, are going on simultaneously. This was
tricky to communicate and work out, but once discovered everything began to fall a bit more easily into place and the actors began to pick up the thought process and move accordingly. It is still a little rough, but we have time to smooth it out.

A second revelation we had was that there are times when Vince is in the action and times when he is an observer. This was really important to where we placed him on stage. Nathan picked this up really well.

Head shots were scheduled for today, but our photographer was not available. Neither was Durant. I asked Connie to reschedule.

Connie informed me that Dianne Martin will be handling props for me. She is my wife's best friend and the best properties manager I have worked with in this community.

I also talked with the head of the Art department, Lisa Rasmussen, about making the "child" that Tilden carries on at the end of the play. I gave her the specs and she agreed to man this project either personally or with a talented student.

October 9, 2013:

Blocked the second half of Act 2. What a great rehearsal today. First of all we had a great time with the moments where Vince tries to get his family to notice him with his "antics." Nathan can bend his thumb behind his knuckles, but he can't drum on his teeth with his fingernails, nor do I want him to. It hurts and seems dangerous to me as described online. I just opted for the playing on the cheeks thing. This meant a slight rewrite of the text. Now Dodge does not say "playing the piano on your teeth" (43) but rather "playing the samba on your face." But we had our greatest laughs with the talking belly button bit. My stage manager had to rein me in and remind me this was a blocking rehearsal. We moved on.

The conversation between Tilden and Shelly that includes the coat moment, the driving
monologue, and first revelation of the baby's death was easy to block. I made a decision to have Tilden sit on the back of the sofa and face upstage toward the screen that looks outside to deliver most of the driving monologue and Dana, my actor playing Tilden, bought it and made it work right there.

Bradley's scene was also easy to block so we were able to talk a bit about the "fingers in the mouth moment. I assured Sarah (Shelly) that he would only put his fingers in her mouth when she was ready. She warned me that when she gets frightened or uncomfortable she giggles as a reflexive defense mechanism. We will make sure that she feels safe while appearing terrified. For today we just said the moment will happen here by the stairs and left it at that.

Our sound man brought me an interesting prop today: a vintage Sunbeam electric horse clipper. It is huge and scary looking. He suggested that the hair trimming in Act I might seem a tad more ominous with these clippers, rather than a standard trimmer. I immediately dug it. We will use it in the next rehearsal of this scene. Additionally, he asked me questions about realism vs. surrealism in an effort to determine just how much soundscaping I wanted throughout the show. We had a lengthy discussion following rehearsal and I marked some places in the script where I was looking for specific sounds (Rain, birds, primitive drums, heartbeat, didgeridoo in the "burial" rituals, Benny Goodman music, etc.). He suggested a couple other ideas (intermittent house "groanings," Italian wedding music under Halie's monologue, saxophone music, driving sounds, etc.) I told him to find some stuff and let me listen. I so appreciate Richard's creativity and collaborative spirit and I want to encourage him.

Our light man has connected with the three students and all looks like it will work out well. Our costumer began pulling items and dressing people as they were available. Connie tried to call Durant to see if he was well and able to attend rehearsal tomorrow. She did not get
October 10, 2013:

Blocked the first half of Act 3. We had no Father Dewis and no word as to where he is. Nathan stood in for him and wrote his blocking down. The scene between Shelly and Dodge was fairly simple to block. When Halie and Father Dewis arrive the fun begins. Again, as in Act I, I discovered moments when characters top each other. We spent a little time working out and coming to an understanding where this occurred and then the blocking began to make sense.

Patty continues to have many unusual line reads. I had to quit correcting for the sake of time, but I want so much to break her of bad habits early. As is almost always the case, someone has to remind me that this is a blocking rehearsal. Hopefully I can work this stuff out in the working rehearsals. One thing at a time

Scott, my actor playing Bradley, had some questions about the missing leg. He said he would rather tie it up than hide it in the sofa. I agree but we want to be safe. I told him if we can costume it and be assured he will not be harmed physically that this is the way I would like to go. Scott is rather adventurous and does not see it being a problem. I have already talked to the costumer and she is sure a rigging of some sort can be created.

Jessica Hockett showed me a poster design. It included the old farmhouse, fallow pasture, ominous clouds, shaft of sunlight breaking through and hitting the earth in the foreground, but no infant hand breaking through the soil as I had suggested. Jessica said it looked too much like a cult zombie film. I asked her to add the hand which she quickly did on her computer. She was right. I decided to go without the hand. The design works. I told her to print the posters.

October 11, 2013:

Blocked the second half of Act 3. Durant showed up at rehearsal today and looked like
hell. As much as I wanted him to stay, we all agreed to send him home. Nathan again stood in as long as he could before his entrance and then I just told Connie where an imaginary Dewis was and she wrote it down. Kind of tough, but we got through the act. We spent quite a bit of time creating a very specific final moment so we could duplicate it for the prologue. We actually had time to review the whole of the day's work.

Scott reminded me that we have not taken head shots. Sarah asked what they were for and I told her I wanted to include them with the bios in the program. I have not done headshots for two seasons now and wanted to try and do it this season. Everyone said they would not be bummed if we didn't. We came to a group agreement that they were not necessary. Headshots are off the "to do" list.

October 12, 2013:

Nathan and I worked all day building the stairs and escape platforms.

October 13, 2013:

I met with our light man in the theatre and talked through the show. I made marks on the stage floor where all the specials would be. Brian knows the space very well and does not work from a formal light plot. Usually a good conversation about concept and mood is all he needs. Brian is planning to do some hanging with the students next weekend. I stood a few flats up on the set to better define the acting space for him.

October 14, 2013:

Reviewed the blocking for Acts 1 & 2. It went great except for the fact that Patty (Halie) has a vertigo issue and needs rails on the stairs. Dana (Tilden) also told me that this will be an issue for him in Act 3. I told them I intend to have them built next weekend. Patty opted to end run around the stairs for her entrance onto the stage. Other than this we only had a few small
spots to clean up. We are ready to work these acts.

Dana (Tilden) is also directing "War of the Worlds" in the evenings this quarter and looked really tired. I jokingly told him it worked for his character and to try to remember a little of what it feels like. Dana, of course, revisited the story told by Dustin Hoffman about a conversation with Sir Lawrence Olivier who gave the young method actor this advice. "Try acting."

Richard brought me a few sounds and played them for me. He is really gung ho about this project, but may have to be reined in just a tad. Oh well, it is easier to trim a wick than light one. I told him that unfortunately I can only best judge some of this material when it plays out in production. What I suggested was that he may have to fully develop the sounds and then play them in rehearsals so I can hear them. But I was honest to let him know that I may cut some of them after he has put in the work. He was o.k. with that.

Connie called Durant and again got no answer/response. We are all hoping he is o.k. for rehearsal tomorrow. Connie and a couple cast members told me I probably should consider replacing him with another actor. If he does not show up for rehearsal tomorrow I will probably have to let him go. I have a local man, Mark Raddatz, who I know would play the role.

October 15, 2013:

I had intended to review the blocking for Act 3 today, but Durant did not show, nor has he made any effort to contact us. I had Connie call Mark Raddatz and ask him if he could come and play the role. He agreed, but informed us that he could not come until tomorrow. I told him that would be fine. Connie left a message with Durant that he had been replaced. Believe it or not, this is the first time I have ever let an actor go. I've had plenty drop out, but I have never made a conscious decision to replace someone.
We reviewed the blocking without an actor on stage and with Connie reading the lines, but we knew full well that we would go through it all again tomorrow with Mark. The rehearsal ended early.

October 16, 2013:

Today we were supposed to begin working Act 1, but instead we worked Mark into the blocking of Act 3. It went smoothly and we were able to block and review in the three hours allotted.

October 17, 2013:

We began working Act 1. We are now a day behind the published schedule, but we were only working the first nine pages, so I thought things would go smoothly. The reality is that Patty continues to read lines strangely. She emphasizes words that don't make proper sense of the text. I should have made a little more of this in the table work, but I thought it might have been just that she was new to the text. She apparently rehearses lines with the same emphasis every time, and it is hard to work it out of her. Often a quick explanation solves this problem, but today we had one moment that took far longer than it should have. In her monologue on page 18 Halie says, "Course then when Ansel died that left us all alone. Same as being alone." Patty stressed the word "being" in the second sentence when the operative word is obviously "Same." I had pointed this out to her in the table work, but today she stressed "being" again. For some reason she can't stop doing it. Connie diagrammed it on a chalkboard for her. I explained to her what she was saying through paraphrasing and having her say the sentence without the word "being" in it. She could not stop doing it. It got frustrating for her so I moved on. I have experienced this sort of thing with other actors, but usually a quick line read (which I hate to do) solves the problem. We will see what happens the next time we revisit this scene.
On the other hand, Todd and Dana are naturals. The slightest hint at what I am looking for and they pick it right up.

No rails on the stairs yet. I will not be able to get them up until the weekend.

October 18, 2013:

Worked the second half of Act 1. We concerned ourselves mainly with the tempo of the violent moment following Halie's monologue that leads to Dodge's outburst on page 20, "My flesh and blood's buried in the back yard!" Patty wanted to belabor the lines and I needed her to top Dodge and clip along until the scene came to a sudden stop. I explained that for the audience this is the first big hint at what the secret is and it should jar us. We ran this section several times and it began to feel good, not great. When the actors get more familiar with the lines it will hopefully smooth itself out and have the impact I'm looking for. The rest of the act went very well and Scott (Bradley) was a hoot in the final moments. We who were watching howled when he said "What the hell is this?" Good stuff.

Posters printed. I gave some to cast members to distribute. Our Drama Club will distribute the rest around town next week.

October 19, 2013:

Built a rail on the stairs and constructed a few more walls. Brian came in in the afternoon with his student helpers and began to hang a few lights, but with a lot of the structure left to build he did not do that much focusing.

October 20, 2013:

Puttered around the theatre a little and read some biographical material on Sam Shepard.

October 21, 2013:

Reviewed all we have done so far on Act 1. Patty is still forcing the lines. She often
reminds me that she has primarily done musical comedies and this "drama" stuff is all pretty new to her. I keep trying to remind her that she needs to quit telling herself she "can't." We are old friends and I can talk straight with her, so I do. She admitted to me that she really admires me and wants to do a good job for me, and that makes her really nervous. I told her to quit giving a damn and just breathe.

Todd had a major revelation during the "baseball" monologue on page 25, and sort of scared all of us. He started to cry uncontrollably and could not bring himself to stop for quite some time. While we never fully understood why, Todd said that he realized that this was the only positive memory Dodge expresses in the play. Apparently Todd had a genuinely empathetic moment with Dodge and others like him who lose their innocence and are swept up into the expectations of adulthood. It was quite powerful and changed the way he saw Dodge. It also made for a good discussion among the cast about how this play could affect people.

Dana had been playing Tilden sort of like a walking idiot which was working, but was not satisfying to him. Tilden is not like "Rainman," he said. Nor is he retarded or mentally challenged in some genetic way. He was an All-American who is now just burnt out. I agreed with him. He asked if he could try different things from rehearsal to rehearsal to find this guy. I told him it was perfectly fine as long as it didn't take too long to settle on a choice because his fellow actors need some sense of what to expect from him.

Richard played some drumbeat sounds on a small CD player as Dana mimed the corn husk burial moment. Even though not fully developed, I got excited for this moment.

Scott brought on the big clippers for the hair cutting moment and we all agreed that we like them.
October 22, 2013:

Worked the first half of Act 2. We spent some time trying to get Sarah to laugh. She is getting closer to what I want, but still overthinking it. We had to move on. We bogged down again in the moment when Dodge gets violent and Tilden enters with the carrots. This is mostly because actors are still on book and not familiar with their lines. The overlapping/topping of dialogue does not feel natural yet. Everyone is being too polite. We ran this moment several times. Everyone knows it should work and should clip along at a good pace. They all understand what should happen, but their old habits are still in the way just a tad. They assured me that when they get more familiar with their lines they could make it work.

Nathan is still sounding like an older man. I reminded him to relax and just use his normal voice. He got better as the rehearsal progressed.

October 23, 2013:

Worked the second half of Act 2. Dana tried a different approach to Tilden today, but it came out sounding calculated and a bit angry. I told him I wanted his conversation to be more innocent and hopeful. Maybe Shelly is someone to whom Tilden can finally open up. We found a very gentle side of Tilden that was really interesting to see in such a physically intimidating man. Dana is a big guy, so when he gets tender it is quite a contrast and quite effective. He and Sarah found some really nice stuff today and I was encouraged. I did let Dana have an explosive moment at the end of his monologue about what happened to the baby, but immediately had him pull it back. I think it will work. Additionally, the driving monologue spoken upstage works well.

As Tilden, Dana made a really cool choice when Bradley barked at him. The stage directions say "TILDEn suddenly bolts and runs off..." (53) Instead of running, Dana stood
there for a moment and looked as if he might confront Bradley, and then made a conscious decision not to injure him, but rather slowly retreat outside. Dana is much larger than Scott, and could in fact probably mop the floor with him in a confrontation. This was a great choice on Dana's part. I am now keeping my eyes open for other moments when Tilden consciously decides not to be sucked into the violence or dysfunctions of his family. I like the idea that Tilden is smarter than he looks. We are going to explore this more.

Sarah was not quite ready for Scott to put his fingers in her mouth. I had him touch her chin. I asked her if she might be ready the next time we work this act. She said she was pretty sure she would be.

Richard played the drums again for the moment when Bradley covers Dodge with the rabbit's fur coat. I like the drums.

The Drama Club has begun to distribute posters around the community.

October 24, 2013:

Reviewed the work we have done so far on Act 2. We actually were able to go through the whole act twice with notes between runs. It went swimmingly. The overlapping worked well but I voiced a concern that Dodge's violent outburst wherein he tears up the sofa would have to be intensified. Todd assured me he would work on it.

This reminds me, I need another sofa. The one we have been rehearsing with, though comfortable, is too nice and too modern. I'll ask Dianne and local folks on Facebook.

October 25, 2013:

Worked the first part of Act 3. The conversation between Dodge and Shelly is just lovely. These two actors work really well together. Patty is still struggling with interpretation and keeps fighting me when I suggest choices she is uncomfortable with. I want her to really snap at
Bradley but she insists on telling him to "Shut up" in that quiet tone of voice that people use when company is over. I am looking for the contrast between the good hostess and a bad mother. She does not want to be that violent. Again, I get excuses like, "I would never do that" or "It doesn't feel natural." I keep reminding her that this is why we call it "acting."

Conversely, there are moments I want her to pull back, but she continues to play them too big, too presentational. Patty is my biggest concern at the moment, and gets the bulk of the notes. I have to keep reminding myself that she did not audition, I asked her to be here. She was kind enough to say yes. I will continue to be patient and just keep chipping away at her insecurities.

Our costumer informed me that she will be out of town for the next two weeks, but assured me she was on top of everything and that the cast would have what they needed on time. I trust Julie and am in no panic about costumes at this point, except that we have to figure out what to do with Scott/Bradley's leg.

October 26 & 27, 2013:

I did not work on the set this weekend as I had originally planned. I had a performance both Friday and Saturday evenings of this week with the Blue Mountain Chorus. This is a local Sweet Adeline's chapter that I do a fund-raising gig with every year. I sing a few specialty numbers between sets of their choral pieces.

Additionally, this coming Wednesday evening the Drama Club is sponsoring a one night only, 75th anniversary, staged radio production of "War of the Worlds." This is being produced in our other performance space on campus. Dana Crist has taken the helm of this project and I have been almost hands free. I will however need to be present in the coming week. Nathan is also involved with this project.

However, I do need to start carving out more time around my teaching/directing schedule
for set construction. I have a couple students who want to help, but I need to be present to supervise and all I really have is late evenings and weekends. By the way, this is in no way unusual for me. My mentor, John "Jack" Freimann taught me that in the theatre "all the time you have is all the time you need." I work hard, but I rarely panic.

October 28, 2013:

Worked the second half of Act 3. Patty called in sick. Connie stood in, and I sort of wished I had asked her to play the role. Every note I have given to Patty was played out in her performance this afternoon. I asked Connie if she wouldn't mind having special rehearsal time with Patty. Connie thought Patty might feel singled out and that this would further fuel whatever insecurities she was having. I agreed and dropped the idea.

Sarah could be just a tad feistier. I let her know this and she assured me as soon as she gets her lines down and quits thinking about them so hard she will come out more. I've seen Sarah work and know this to be true.

Had a discussion with Scott about the difference between Act 2 Bradley who has his leg and no mom around and Act 3 Bradley who is legless and in the presence of mom. In Act 2 he has no need to raise his voice. He is top dog and in control. In Act 3 all he has is his voice. The louder he gets the more pathetic he becomes. He has no bite so all he can do is bark, and occasionally whimpers.

We had a discussion about why Bradley needs to defend the secret. I came to the conclusion that what is at stake for him is his position. The secret has created an imbalance in this home and has turned the power structure on its head. Bradley has risen to the top. If the secret gets out he loses his place in line for the "throne." He should be desperate to keep things quiet. Out of this discussion we came to a clearer realization that Act 3 really only works well if
everyone knows what is at stake. For each person the stakes must be high. Something makes Shelly say, "I'm not sure I want to find out now." (70) This is not prompted so much by what the truth itself is, but rather by the apparent fear the family exhibits as they get closer to its revelation. The revelation of this truth will bring this family face to face with what they have become in their fruitless attempts to keep dark secrets.

We solidified the closing moments of the play and chose the portion that we will replicate in Act 1 as a "prologue" to the action.

I found out only today that Durant Brown had withdrawn from all his classes at WWCC on October 10th. This would have been good to know a little sooner. Good thing I replaced him. October 29, 2013:

Reviewed Act 3. Patty was not at one hundred percent, but showed up because she did not want to fall behind. Things went well for the most part, but we did need to bring her up to speed, literally. Again, Patty tends to belabor lines and it bogs things down just a little in those areas where the scene demands a quick tempo.

I am not completely satisfied yet with the moments following Shelly's capture of Bradley's leg that lead up to the confession. It lacks the energy and tension that it needs. We addressed it today, but I had a hard time getting everyone to up the stakes. Patty and Scott still do not understand how important it is that the secret remain covered. Sarah could be a little feistier as well. She isn't quite coming out of her head enough yet. We will keep working at this.

Mark could use a tad more oomph as well. He is playing Dewis a bit too milk-toasty. I tried to explain to him that he can be more forceful at moments. His ineffectiveness as a religious leader does not mean he makes no attempts at asserting his religious authority, but rather, when he does, his platitudes fall on deaf ears. He appeared to understand what I was saying, but has yet
to produce what I am looking for.

October 30, 2013:

Ran Act 1 once and gave notes at the end. I had intended to go through the act twice, but we made a little discovery today when we introduced actual corn into the act for the first time. Dana had an allergic skin reaction to the husked corn. Who knew? He washed his hands well and all was fine. We have latex gloves that allowed him to continue to rehearse, but he will obviously not wear these in performance. Connie made a note to talk with our costumer when she gets back and discuss what kind of work gloves we can add to Dana's costume. Dana also reminded me that I would probably be difficult for him to get a pinch of chew with gloves on his hands. We might have to cut the spittoon bit suggested in the stage directions. Not my ideal scenario, but perhaps a necessity.

I have started coming into school at 6:00 a.m. to get a couple hours of set construction in before classes start. This is par for the course around here. I rise early anyway. The only bummer is that I had just started swimming laps about four weeks ago, and now I will be giving that up for a bit.

This morning I finished walling in the porch area of the set which included covering up open framing with muslin and sizing it with glue and water to stretch it on the frame. Now all of the basic, stock walls are built. I still have to create the cut-away edges and a crack down the middle of the house that I have chosen to build instead of leaving the room wide open to a view of the outside. Because the set has to hug the back wall of the theatre somewhat, there really is no room to effectively create a believable exterior scene. Brian was grateful for this change as well because it lessens a lot of lighting challenges for him as well. Now there is enough structure that the light people can begin to focus when they wish.
"War of the Worlds" performed this evening to a packed house and was a great success.

Now Dana and Nathan can fully concentrate on this production.

October 31, 2013:

Ran Act 2 twice with notes in between. Todd came early to rehearsal and warned me that he was going to try something different during the violent moment of this act. Instead of just tearing at the sofa he was going to throw cushions around the room. I said go for it. We purposely did not tell the other actors. It worked. The scene had energy and Nathan and Sarah looked genuinely freaked out. They got it. I hope they can keep it.

Nathan is sounding more natural. I'm really proud of the work he has put into this role.

Dana and Sarah have learned to take their time with their moments and these are lovely.

Today Scott put his fingers in Sarah's mouth for the first time. Everything went fine. Sarah did not giggle. This moment is going to be really creepy.

Scott has been researching how a person with a prosthetic leg walks and has been practicing this quite a bit outside of called rehearsals. I must say that I am most impressed with his walk. It looks very convincing.

This morning I came in at 6:00 and put up masking flats.

November 1, 2013:

Ran Act 3 twice with notes in between. Generally things went well, but there is still a tension that is missing as we near the confession. Both Scott and Patty have not fully grasped the stakes yet and this scene will not work as I would like until they do. Sarah and Todd need the energy of their fellow actors to make what they are doing work. As it stands, they still have nothing much to confront. I so want everyone to be off book.

Nathan threw beer bottles for the first time and guess what? They don't break as easily as
one might guess they would. About one out of every five he threw broke against the plywood walls I built into the porch. Mark suggested another material like steel or masonry, but nothing sounds as good as glass breaking on wood. Patty suggested that maybe we just need to score the bottles. She has a small portable tile cutter she will bring in this weekend. I'm going to give this a try.

Brian asked me today if I was going to have a light coming from the television in Act 1. I told him that I hoped to, but that I had not yet found a television cabinet I liked for this set. Dianne and I are both looking. But this has been a hard set piece to track down. I also still need a different sofa, many carrots with greenery, and many large ceramic coffee mugs that can be broken on the set.

This evening three students helped me build the crack in the middle of the set. As I mentioned above, this was originally going to be an open space looking out on an elm tree in the back yard, but wisdom is the better part of valor. My original design for this set actually included two trees whose branches were to hang over the house like hands, but the space, as well as the time and resources necessary did not support this concept so I abandoned it for something far simpler. The fracture in the home will be effective.

November 2 & 3, 2013:

I spent Saturday morning dumpster diving out behind many of our local drinking establishments. I collected 200 brown, long neck beer bottles. I also soaked and de-labeled them. I then scored each of them with the tile cutter Patty brought me and was able to break 15 of them against the plywood wall without one dud. Success!

I spent Saturday afternoon completing the cutaway edging on the entire set which involved taking a saber saw to many lengths of scrap 1x6 and then attaching the jagged lumber
to the edges of the stock material that was standing.

On Sunday my oldest son, Preston, helped me finish putting dutchman on all the remaining gaps in the walls of the set. It is ready for trim and painting. I plan to trim out the set this next week and have a paint party this coming Saturday. This was a very productive weekend.

Richard was also in the building this weekend. He has been stringing quite a bit of speaker wire around the space. He even strung some under the stage. He told me it was for the groaning/creaking noises he hopes to create inside the farmhouse. Richard has also brought in a lot of his own sound equipment. I appreciate his enthusiasm and industry on this project.

Dianne still cannot find a television cabinet that will work. I told her that if we have to we will create one.

November 4, 2013:

The cast stumbled through the whole show. It took two hours and thirty-five minutes. This is very good.

November 5, 2013:

Worked Act I off book today. The actors could call for lines if they wished. Dana, as is his habit, called for lines a lot. I trust he will be ready when the time comes. Todd did not call for lines but is paraphrasing quite a bit. I warned him that he needs to try to speak the words Shepard wrote. Shepard's turn of phrase is wonderful, and I would hate to muddy it with words he did not write. Patty did fairly well avoiding calling for lines, but she has a habit of backing up and repeating lines if she misses a word of phrase. It is also obvious that the text is right in front of her face. She sounds like she is reading rather than talking. She also continues to say, "Same as 'being' alone." I have given this note and others like it well over a dozen times now.

We got a deal today with Andy's Market, a local grocery store. They will sell us carrots
with the greenery still on them at a discount, and we will get them fresh weekly. Yay, that's off my list.

November 6, 2013:

Worked Act 2 off book today. The actors could call for lines if they wished. This act is probably the best of the three at the moment. Yes, Dana is calling for lines. Yes, Todd is paraphrasing, as in Act 1. However, the intentions are very well defined, and the tempos and moods are very well set.

November 7, 2013:

Worked Act 3 off book today. The actors could call for lines if they wished. This act is at present my least favorite, primarily those scenes between Halie's entrance and Vince's entrance. It also did not help that Patty was sick and did not make it to rehearsal today. I had Connie read her lines from the house. As I've mentioned above, I am most bothered by the lack of tension in the moment following Shelly's capture of Bradley's leg. Because of this I made a major blocking change today. I have had Shelly grab the leg and run into the center of the room while defending herself from her "attackers" on all sides. I made a decision to send Shelly briefly up to the landing on the stairs and take the high ground. It turned out to be a good decision. Something happened in Sarah/Shelly that I have been trying to coax for a while now. She finally found her power. Because she did, those in the room began to act more threatened by her presence. We began to find the energy that the scene needs.

It also helped that I let Sarah throw and break a ceramic mug for the first time. Vince also broke beer bottles. All of these things combined to create an energy that the cast has not experienced up to this point. The scene is finally becoming more visceral and gutsy.

Unfortunately, we still have to bring Patty up to speed when she returns. Hopefully the new
blocking will not throw her too much

Our costumer is back in town and I told her of Dana's need for gloves. She also pointed me to an appropriate sofa that was being given away at a local consignment store, so I went and picked it up this evening. It needs some distressing, but it will work.

November 8, 2013:

Ran whole show off book. This is the last day actors can call for lines.

I asked actors to come a bit early so we could review the new blocking in Act 3 and bring Patty up to speed. She picked up the changes quickly and easily. This moment looked much better in the actual run-through.

To be honest, there are quirky habits all the actors have, and I pointed them out, but I think the show is in good shape. Now I have to concentrate on the other production needs a bit more. I have really fallen behind on putting the set together. It is going to be a long three day weekend.

November 9 & 10, 2013:

Three students came in on Saturday and helped me put a base/primer coat of paint on the entire set. Now the fun begins.

On Sunday I painted all the trim with a rustic wood-grained look. My original plan for the set was to somewhat avoid the rundown look suggested by the script, but the new concept that includes a crack down the middle of the home made me change my mind a bit. The fractures in this home are not well hidden. The façade is not well established but rather obviously worn. Therefore I have chosen to show the wounds of this home for what they are. Shepard wants audiences to know that no observer is going to be fooled by a fresh coat of paint. This home is damaged, and we all know it.
November 11, 2013:

Veteran's day. I went to town on distressing the set, complete with exposed wounds in the walls. I worked from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. when my wife finally called me to find out if I was All right. I assured her I was and continued until midnight. The set looks great. I will be painting the floorboards next weekend.

November 12, 2013:

Ran Act 1 twice with notes in between. Actors are now completely off book and can no longer call for lines.

November 13, 2013:

Ran Act 2 twice with notes in between.

November 14, 2013:

Ran Act 3 twice with notes in between.

I delivered all the program information to Jessica Hockett.

November 15, 2013: We ran the whole show off book for the first time. We have almost all of our props, including a wonderful fake leg that Mark fashioned and brought in today for the first time. It looks great. I am still waiting on the "child" from Lisa. We decided not to use the corn today because Dana could not handle it comfortably with the thick leather work gloves Julie gave him. Julie will look for light cotton gardening gloves.

All in all, things went fairly well.

Dana jumbled up his lines a lot, but really has a handle on his character. Again, I am in no panic with Dana because I have seen his process many times and he always gets there when it counts.

Todd paraphrased a little less. Line notes are about all I have for him at this point. He has
really found Dodge. I could not be more pleased.

Patty still sounds wooden and had a number of line reads that seemed to come out of nowhere, like she was experimenting a little with something new. I had to remind her to stay on track with what we have been rehearsing.

Scott really settled into the second act and was more menacing than I have seen him to date. I would like to see a bit more of his frustration in the third act with his incapacitated state. However, he did have his leg bound up today for the first time and it works well. He assured me that he feels perfectly safe.

Nathan has relaxed nicely and his monologue in Act 3 was very haunting and cool today. He has really found stillness when he needs it. And boy he likes breaking those bottles. We also had him cut through a piece of screen material for the first time. He seemed to enjoy this as well.

Sarah is finding her feisty side and is getting out of her head more and more.

Mark is bringing Dewis more forward. I could still use a bit more from him.

Richard played sounds during the rehearsal and I had to ask him to cut some of them. The "groaning" sound was like being in Monstro's belly rather than like a creaking house. He also created the faint sound of a crow to apparently announce either Bradley or Halie's arrival from outside. He created a huge thunderclap for the end of Act 2 which made the moment too melodramatic. There were a few other sounds like this that I had to give the creative axe. He was actually very mature and gracious, and had no trouble taking the notes without argument. It was quite refreshing.

Julie put a few costumes on folks and they looked okay, except for the fact that she bought new items for Dana because he is a hard size and shape to fit with what we have in stock. I told Julie that all of these items will have to be severely distressed. Additionally, I collected
mud and put it in a small, plastic wading pool backstage so he could stomp around in it before his final moment. I want it to be obvious that he spent the night working to find the child.

Next week we are scheduled to run Acts 1, 2, and 3 over three days, but the cast decided they would rather start running the whole show and get notes afterwards. I reminded them that this would probably go past our 6:00 p.m. rehearsal time, but they decided by consensus that this would be all right.

November 16 & 17 2013:

I came in Saturday morning to paint the stage floor and discovered that our light man and his crew had a very productive Friday evening. They had, among other things, set some lights on a light tree behind the set. It was obvious to me that he was hoping to shine these through the crack in the closing moments of the show. I had thought about this, but had never voiced it to Brian. I was thrilled to find he had the same idea. I turned on the effect at the light board and further discovered that for the effect to work well I would have to mask those areas where these upwardly aimed instruments spilled unwanted light around the theatre. It took some effort and a great deal of black material, but I was able to get it done. I called Brian to let him know what was accomplished and he asked if he could try enhancing the effect further with the use of a hazer. I told him that if he could assure me it would not set the smoke alarms off he could give it a try. It looks like I will be painting the stage floor tomorrow.

On Sunday, in preparation for the photo shoot tomorrow, I painted floorboards, and replaced and distressed a new section of screen material on the porch. The screen is just one more item that is disposable in this show. I bought enough to replace it for the rest of the rehearsals and the run of the show. This was a bit of an expense.

I also created a television out of the rehearsal box we have been using from the beginning
of the rehearsal process. I attached the back of an actual set to it and painted the whole thing black. It is not ideal, but it will work. Brian already hung and focused a blue light just in case we did not come up with a cabinet to use as a light source. This should work just fine.

I hung a few more items for set dressing on the wall of the porch. As I was putting away some of the rehearsal props I found an old baseball bat. I thought back to the rehearsal when Todd got emotional about Dodge's memory of catching a fly ball. For some reason I felt a desire to set the bat on the stage somewhere. I wanted to convey to the audience that Dodge truly experienced baseball. That the memory was not made up and romanticized the way Halie often does. I just leaned it in the corner near the front door. I like it. As I sat back at the end of a hard day's work and looked at the completed set, I felt as if this whole show was going to work.

November 18, 2013:

We ran the whole show today with the costumes, props, lights, and sound so David Walk could take photographs. Lisa Rasmussen brought me the exhumed remains of the buried child. The child looked good but was kind of large. She said this is the size of a three year old child. I had told her it was a three month old child. Somehow the wires got crossed. She assured me she will have a new prop for me in two days. Luckily I have a stand-in prop that Tess Pohlhaus put in my care two summers ago. It is not as decayed as what I am looking for, but it will work for photos.

One other thing I did not notice until Dana was halfway through the husking event was that our costumer had supplied him with light cotton gloves, but they were both for the right hand. Dana was wearing one of them backward to make them work. The grip pattern was on the palm of his right hand and on the back of his left hand. This can be seen in some of the photos of the show. But we will have proper gloves for the performances.
As I knew it might, the photographer along with all the new technical elements threw the cast just a bit. The photos look good, but the rhythm of today's rehearsal was off. Folks were playing for the camera. Notes were simple. All I said essentially was, "I hope you got that out of your system." Then I sent folks home.

Jessica Hockett sent me a proof of the program today and informed me that the format left a couple pages blank. I spent my lunch hour typing up some director's notes and creating a bio page for Sam Shepard. I normally do not write director's notes, but the opportunity presented itself and I took it.

November 19 - 22, 2013:

We have just run the show every afternoon this week and I have given notes at the end. On the schedule it says that our final tech rehearsal is next Monday, but all the parties involved want to do their thing, so I have let them. We are ready. While Patty continues to be a tad unpredictable, as well as full of excuses every time I give her a note, the show looks good. We need an audience soon.

I talked to Brian about slowing many of the light fades down. I want the audience to be unaware that focus is shifting at times. This has always been hard for me to convince Brian of. My fades always tend to require twice as long as he prefers.

Lisa got the new "child" to me and it looks terrific. The lighting is low when Dana brings it on, so it looks a tad nondescript on stage, but it is obvious in context what it is.

The artwork and essays that have been collected from students were brought to the China Pavilion on Friday. Lisa and a couple of her art students arranged the material around the lobby. It is not quite as many items as I had anticipated, but it is interesting to look at and read nonetheless. There are so many varied responses to the themes of this show. Some of the essays
are very personal and quite powerful.

I reminded David Walk that we will be recording the final dress rehearsal without an audience. This is something I have been doing often for the past two months. David wears a lot of hats, and has been known to either forget, or schedule two simultaneous events with mine being the lower priority. He assured me he would be set up and ready to record at curtain time.

Connie asked me about how we handle the intermission events on stage. We have no curtain and the crew is required to clean up the mess from the previous act. Additionally, Todd has trouble maneuvering in the blackout to his spot, and similarly, Scott has to get to a sofa on one leg at the top of Act 3. I told Connie to tell the crew to unapologetically clean up in full view of the audience. I also told her to imagine the actors that have trouble getting on and off as if they were set pieces. We decided that they should always be accompanied (not carried) by a crew member when they either left or came onto the stage, as if the crew were "striking" or "setting" them as needed. This works well.

Jessica Hockett informed me that programs are ready to be printed as soon as I approve them. I did.

November 23 & 24, 2013:

I came in on Saturday and replaced disposable props and set pieces. Brian came in and talked to me about a hazer for the lighting effect. I'm not sure I want it but I want to give him a chance to try it. He will be setting it up tomorrow and running it at the tech rehearsal Monday.

There was nothing much to do on Sunday. I did distress Dana's gloves with dirt a little, and I added a little water to the mud pool, but I feel quite ready.

November 25, 2013:

We had a tech rehearsal today and everyone was more than ready. Things went very
smoothly except for all the chemical haze at the end of the show. The hazer will not work in its current application. Brian says we need it at least to fog behind the set to enhance the light coming through the large crack. I told him if he could keep the fog backstage I would allow it. He has assured me that he can.

November 26, 2013:

This evening we went to normal curtain time and recorded the final dress rehearsal without an audience. When I got to the China Pavilion at 5:30, David had the camera set in the middle of the back row as he usually does. However, when I looked at the viewing screen of the camera I noticed that the whole set was not in view. I had told David weeks ago that the camera was to be set up surveillance style and left to run. I also told him that the whole set should be in view. He assured me that this was doable from where he normally sets the camera. He was wrong. We moved the camera to the far left corner of the house and were able to get the whole stage. This is more than likely the location from which film the live performance as well.

The rehearsal went fairly well, but it was obvious that my musical theatre enthusiast was well aware she was being recorded. All we have done to make her less presentational sort of went out the window. I'm a little concerned as to how she will do in front of a live audience. We also had a couple freak prop events and some light cues that were timed oddly. I hope we got all the bugs worked out. Audience tomorrow night.

I replaced and distressed the screen material before I went home.

November 27, 2013:

Preview tonight. Small house of about twenty people. Their response to the piece was encouraging. While confused as to the story, they did recognize that this was a well-produced theatrical event. I have a friend, Carol Smith, who always comes to the preview and gives me
polite criticisms that she feels might improve the production for the average viewer. This always includes letting me know the actors she can't hear/understand. She was delighted to announce that she could hear everyone. She said this is one of the best performances she has seen me get out of actors. The show was not necessarily her cup of tea, but all the production elements were outstanding.

I replaced and distressed the screen material before I went home.

November 28, 2013:

Thanksgiving. This is the first day in two months I have not come in to the China Pavilion. The turkey was perfectly cooked, and I ate far too much stuffing.

November 29, 2013:

Opening night. The play was well received. The audience was not large, but they were very receptive. Again, not everyone "got" it. However, many of my peers in the local theatrical community said that it was powerful, and one of the best produced shows they have witnessed in this town. Local comments on Facebook this evening were glowing and encouraged others to come see the show. I feel very proud of this production.

One thing we experienced this evening, something we had kind of forgotten, was laughter. There was a great deal of it in our audience tonight. The actors told me at the first intermission that at first it threw them a little. Then, Todd told me, he found himself having to be very careful not to slip away from Dodge and just play for laughs. Todd is a very accomplished comic, character actor and knows how to get laughs. He cracks us up often in rehearsal. However, to do this in this show means not always being true to the character he has found. I appreciate his discipline to this end.

The show was not perfect, by any means. Lines were missed. Props were mishandled.
Patty still stresses strange words, and as I knew she would, started playing a little bigger for the audience. Nonetheless, I feel like I have accomplished a very important task. I can't wait to hear what questions the audience has at the talkback session next Thursday.

I replaced and distressed the screen material before I went home.

November 30, 2013:

I always have a greenroom moment before every performance where I ask, "What's the word on the street?" This is designed to give the actors and production staff an opportunity to share any positive comments they have heard about the show. Nathan had a number of his student peers in the audience last night. After the show they all congregated at a local eatery and spent the rest of the evening asking him questions about the show. It was all they wanted to talk about. I was thrilled to hear this. This was one of my primary aims. What was even more exciting was that my eighteen year old son was able to speak intelligently with his peers about a very difficult show to parse. He told me, "I felt so smart, like I was an expert on Sam Shepard or something."

Audiences were again, receptive and, for the most part positive.

I replaced and distressed the screen material before I went home.

December 1, 2013:

Michael Smith came and saw a matinee performance. I can say I was truly honored to have him in the audience. His guidance and friendship have been encouraging throughout this whole process. He is a peer that I respect, and I felt proud of what I had to show him. Today, more than any other performance I recognized that this was the product of a great deal of hard work, and that it was all worth it. This is a very good show. At no time did I feel like I had to apologize for any of it.
I'll replace and distress the screen material next week sometime.

December 4, 2013:

Pickup rehearsal/speed through. We went through the lines and blocking at double time. Rehearsal of the whole show took one hour and five minutes. It was a hoot.

December 5, 2013:

Tonight we had a talkback session following the performance. I have never done this before, but I just might include a night like this for every show I do in the China Pavilion from here on out. The show ended at roughly 9:30. We let those who needed to leave and began questions soon thereafter. It was around 11:00 when the last of the theatre patrons finally left to go home. They so wanted to ask questions. Yes, they asked who the father of the baby was, but they also asked about the process actors had to go through to play these characters. They asked what lessons we learned about our own lives and families as we dealt with the issues Sam Shepard raises. We talked about family dynamics and how we go about sharing the stories of our own brokenness.

More importantly, they asked me if we could have more theatre like this in our community. I had had my doubts about how well this play would be received. I wasn't sure it was what the traffic would allow. Granted, the house has not been full by any means, but I am impressed that there is a desire for more significant drama. I was very much blessed.

I replaced and distressed the screen material before I went home.

December 6, 2013:

David recorded this evening's performance. He set up three cameras so he could make an edited version of the play for our own archives with close-ups and such, but the recording that will accompany this thesis project will be a one camera full stage view. I believe he just started
the camera and let it run, intermission activity included. He was able to use the sound from a camera placed in the front row to enhance the audio. That front row camera can be seen in the project recording. My apologies.

The house was almost full tonight. Apparently the word has gotten out that this is a show worth seeing. The actors were stoked. They had a great performance. Todd had some line problems at the end of Act 3, but the actors all went right on.

I replaced and distressed the screen material for the last time before I went home.

December 7, 2013:

The house was full again tonight.

Something unfortunate happened in Act 3. Patty became a short-timer. She had probably the best Act 1 she has ever had, but by Act 3 she just gave up. The audience in their positive response to the performance appeared to have no idea that something was wrong, but everyone in the cast and crew could tell. Everything she did was just not right. Almost every line came out in the way we had heard them earlier in the rehearsal process. Every habit we had worked out of her returned. It was as if she was shedding the character before the show was over. Everyone handled it, but it made things just a tad tense. After the show, Patty quickly got dressed and went home. She did not join us for the meal we shared later this evening. No one really knew what caused it, but it felt like she was ready to be done. I hope to talk with her in the future to find out what happened.

However, the closing audience still spoke well of the show. The reviews were positive and the buzz in the lobby following the performance was lively.

We did not strike the set. Our jazz band will use the setting for a concert on Monday. Then I will work with paid work-study students to take it down over the holiday break. I always
believe we will strike in a traditional manner with everybody present following the closing performance, but this is not what usually happens.
On December 1, 2013, I attended a performance of *Buried Child*, which was presented by the Walla Walla Community College Theatre Arts Department and performed at Walla Walla Community College in Walla Walla, WA. This production was presented as partial fulfillment of Kevin Loomer’s Masters in Theatre Production. The second part of Mr. Loomer’s thesis assignment is the written documentation relating to *Buried Child*, and the third element will be his oral defense, which is scheduled for late February.

This venue is a converted black box. It has been converted into an 150-seat proscenium theatre. The SM/sound booth runs all the way across the back wall of the theatre, which makes it one of the largest booths I have seen in a venue this size. This is a very wide, not particularly deep rectangular space, and Kevin wisely opted not to use the side stages.

At half hour, the house opened. We were then treated to some sweet Benny Goodman jazz and other music from bygone eras. The set (designed by the director, Kevin Loomer) was a mostly realistic depiction of an old farm house. It included a kitchen door stage left, a staircase up center, a couch at stage right center (with a television downstage of and down right of it), a screened porch across the up center right area, and an entrance/exit door up right. The set was simple and effective. Due to the couch’s placement, it was both literally and figuratively at the center of the action for much of the play. The walls had a number of “wounds” (four, I believe), and a huge jagged gash running at a diagonal (UL to DC) from upstairs to downstairs, ending to the right of and below the staircase. These anomalies seemed to indicate that we were to witness a play rife with division and old injuries, both physical and psychological.

There did not seem to be any sightline issues, and I could see and hear the actors at all times. The costumes, designed by Julie Caton, were character-appropriate and mostly effective. I felt that Halie’s first dress was a trifle short for a woman her age, but perhaps this was a choice that bespoke of a woman at odds with her chronological age and awash with memories of a time when her figure was more fulsome than frumpy.

The furniture and props were mostly utilitarian but predominantly period-appropriate. The lighting was quite effective, offering a few well-chosen specials (such as the one during Halie’s angel speech) and being generally unobtrusive. There were several practical lights, and a cord for both the lamp and record player. There was no cord for the television, which initially bothered me, but I got over it.
Kevin cast an age-appropriate actor (Todd Oleson) in the role of Dodge. This was an inspired and fortuitous bit of casting, as Mr. Oleson was luminous in his role. The other actors had many lovely moments as well (especially Sarah Fry as Shelly), and Kevin’s directorial hand was firm, resolute, and confident throughout. It was crisply paced, and his actors rose to the challenge. Blocking in such a wide configuration is a challenge, but Kevin’s blocking was clean, creative, and did not call attention to itself. The articulation was uniformly excellent, although throughout the play - the delivery of Patty Leeper as Halie came across as somewhat forced and stilted.

All told, the production was interesting, well-conceived, and well-executed. Bravo to this small theatre program and to Kevin, who has championed it with courage, skill, dogged determination, and great passion.

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Final Self-evaluation

As I begin this section of my writing I realize that much of what I want to say here has been woven into the production journal. I spent this whole journey constantly evaluating every aspect of the project. For the most part I would say that "Buried Child" was a success. With the exception of what happened to Patty near the end of the run (I will address this in a moment), the actors are still speaking positively about their participation in this show and feel they grew a lot through the experience. I received a few written praises of the production from faculty and staff members which are included in the appendices of this notebook. Some locals have since encouraged the production of similar works in the future.

However, while one could simply say that "the proof is in the pudding" and leave it at that, I am aware that not everything went smoothly. No production is without its lessons to be learned. I would be remiss if I did not address the list of things I would do differently were I to tackle a project like this again in the future. Therefore I offer the following thoughts.

First, I realize now that I offered the role of Halie too quickly to the first viable taker because I was sucked in by my own time line. I told Connie that Patty was not ideal, but I really thought I could whip her into shape through the rehearsal process. The truth is that I have spent the last five years working with many students who are not ideal, and I have done a fairly good job getting them ready for performance. Patty, like the students who normally audition for me, was my best option at the time. If I had just breathed a bit after no women came to the auditions I may have been able to see that a window had opened for me to be a bit more selective. While I make it a policy to give students priority over community performers, this was an opportunity to recruit without guilt. I should have taken my time. I'm sure that if I had just made a couple more phone calls I would have found an actor better suited to the role.
Good drama occurs when the obstacles are big and the stakes are high. Patty played the antagonist in this play, and because she refused to understand her role as an obstacle, as well as the stakes involved in maintaining her position, the overall show suffered somewhat. Yes, the other actors could endow Halie with more power than Patty chose to exhibit on stage, but the reality is she did not fully offer them what they needed to make their reactions believable. I did what I could to convey this to her, but somehow it never got in.

Secondly, while I realize that this project involves far more paperwork than anything I have ever produced to date, and probably ever will produce in the future, I still should have had the writing done before I began. While I made it a point not to whine about it in my production journal, the reality is that woven throughout the process were many hours reading books and typing text. The ideas were all in my head and materialized in the production process, but the simple act of writing took time that could have been better spent.

Finally, while I am improving, I recognize that I often do a lot of work on my own. I need to do a better job of recruiting help and training others to do those things at which I have a measure of expertise. At the risk of sounding glib, I think that is the job of an educator. The reality is that I love theatre production, and to hand a job off to another person robs me of some of my own joy. Still, for as smoothly as I feel the production end of this project went, more educating could be going on. I need to trust students with tasks they may not be fully equipped to handle. The process must become as important to me as the product.

On the positive side, I simply want to share one final piece of anecdotal material that I purposely kept from the production journal. Because I consider it to be one of the most positive outcomes of this project I saved it for last. It involves one of the actors, Mark Raddatz, who has given me expressed permission to share his story.
About a week following the closing of the show I was approached by Mark. He told me he had a deep need to apologize to me for having come to rehearsals and performances while under the influence of alcohol. I have worked with Mark for years now, and I have always known that alcohol is a struggle for him, but he never talks about it. The other actors were also well aware, and Sarah had even spoken to him about her concerns. It has never affected his ability to perform, and quite frankly I did not want to make a big deal out of it. However, Mark was strongly convicted during the run of the show, prompted by the material that Shepard had written, that his behavior was having a negative effect on his life and the life of those around him.

He informed me that he has recently returned to regular AA meetings after about a 2 year absence, and for the first time as a truly repentant alcoholic. In his own words, "something is very different this time." Mark has been an atheist his whole life, but he told me that he cried out to something, he "didn't know what," for help, and sensed that "something or someone" heard him. He thanked me that circumstances fell out in such a way that he could be part of this project. He told me that he got "you gotta talk or you'll die" in a very big way.

For my part, that makes this whole journey towards my Master's degree worth every bit of sacrifice I have made. Shepard has made me struggle and the struggle has strengthened me in so many ways. I am now more convinced than ever that what we do as theatre artists, although often misunderstood, has great significance in the culture in which we live. I may never tackle another Shepard piece again, but having tackled him this once has shifted my paradigm. And for that I am blessed.
Works Cited


http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/sam-shepard/#


Shepard, Sam. *Buried Child*. New York: Urizen, 1979. Print. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the text of *Buried Child* will be from this edition. However, the page references will match those in the recreated word document contained in this notebook.


Works Consulted


• WWCC students are invited to submit poetry, essays, short stories and art inspired by themes from Sam Shepherd's *Buried Child*.

Submissions will be featured in the WWCC Theatre Arts production of *Buried Child*.

• Please use the following terms/themes to focus your creative work:
  
  Secrets  
  Brokenness  
  Family  
  Truth and Denial  

You are invited to sign your work or submit it anonymously.

Visual art or written work in any format is acceptable.

Deadline: Friday, November 22

Bring your work to Connie Loomer, Office #10 or Connie Loomer's mailbox, Information Desk.

Questions: Call Connie Loomer, 509-540-8011

• WWCC ACADEMIC “TALK-BACK” NIGHT For *Buried Child*
  
  Thursday, December 5th  
  7:00 p.m. China Pavilion  
  Instructors/Students Free Admission  

A post-show “talk-back” will give you an opportunity to meet with members of the artistic staff and cast. This will be a chance to ask any questions about the play, about the artistic process or gain more insight into the author’s work.
DRESS REHEARSAL

LIVE PERFORMANCE
IMITATING THE SET ACTUALLY USED IN AFTER MODIFICATIONS TO THE PREVIOUS WELL CONSTRUCTED.

LARGE GECKO

ESCAPE

BUNCH

BACKING FLATS

MASKING

CUTAWAY WALL

SIDE STAGE

18'-0" +

"BURIED CHILD" @ WWCC

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

APPROVED BY:

REVISED

DATE: 11-12-12

LEVIN LOOMER (DIRECTOR/DESIGNER)

DRAWING NUMBER
This is a ground plan in performance. It is original design with...
THIS IS THE DRAWING MADE IN CONSTRUCTION I DEEMED TO BE INADEQUATE SO MODIFIED IT AS WE BUILT.
This is the drawing I made in Marc Haniuk's scenic methods class (THS80). In construction I deemed the design problematic in several ways and so modified it as we built.
Rendering of original concept for "Buried Child" set before modifications were made.
Kevin,

I feel very lucky to have been able to attend “Buried Child”. This performance had some of the same tone as Greek Tragedy: bleak, spare, with some humor. A great play shows us the worst and the best of human action and I think we saw both manifested in this play.

Technically, the show was professional. The set with the huge crack in the house, and the plaster peeling off the walls immediately clued me into the fact that this is a house in disarray (“house” as in ancestral house, like the house of Atreus). The lighting and the sound was very subtle but buttressed the tone. The few times that I noticed colored spots were just perfect (maybe there were more, but I wasn’t noticing)—focused the action instead of getting in the way. The rain which was both life-giving and oppressive didn’t seem “fake” and the music coming out of the phonograph had directionality that seemed very real. The diction of the actors was excellent; as opposed to some college performances, I could hear every word, even when the voices were soft.

Finally, the direction of the play was magnificent. The contrast of the two brothers’ “episodes” was visceral and will be the images I remember: the one brother burying the father in corn husks and then the other brother stealing/raping the tongue of the young girl. I didn’t understand them in the moment, but they were memorable. Then at the last scene, when the mother remarks upon the things growing in the backyard, and it seemed to crystallize those episodes: the former episode is redemptive and the latter demonic. I don’t know if that is what you (Kevin) were aiming for, but it felt like I was led to an “aha” moment, and this elevated the play above simply watching a dysfunctional family disintegrate. The life force wins out in the end.

My only critique of the play is that I couldn’t see everything, especially since I sat in the back row. When the father was seated on the floor at the end, I couldn’t see his head and missed the fact that he had died (until he was covered up with the blanket.) This is more a critique of the theater seats themselves—the China Pavilion, as we all know, has its problems.

Otherwise, what a gift! I really appreciate theater that is edgy and challenging to the performers and the audience. Thanks for sharing your work with us.

Ruth Russo
Kevin,

This was my first exposure to a Sam Shepard play. Although I left a bit confused, the production of this play was exceptional. I found myself hanging on every word of the characters is an attempt to put the pieces together. Every actor delivered a believable performance. I really thought Dodge would need medical assistance before the show ended. The set was intriguing and certainly represented the theme of the play. Thank you for bringing this thought-provoking and challenging play to our campus.

Kudos to you,

Claudia Angus, Ph.D.
Coordinator of Disability Support Services
Walla Walla Community College
Review of *Buried Child* by Sam Shepard
Performed at Walla Walla Community College under the direction of Kevin Loomer

The performance of *Buried Child* that I saw was on Saturday, November 30, 2013. I knew most of the cast members personally, and have acted with many of them in other productions. Whether or not it is a good thing, I tend to be less critical of my friends when I see them in other productions. That said, I was totally taken into this production from the very first moment. The people on the stage were not my friends and acquaintances anymore. They BECAME the characters. I think this is due in large part to Kevin’s ability to coax highly charged and impassioned performances from his actors, and, of course, the actors’ innate ability as well.

By casting the actors he did, Kevin demonstrated another of his strengths. The cast was cohesive and seamlessly in tune with one another. There was not a single weak cast member; which is unusual in most productions I’ve seen or participated in.

Kevin’s choice of Shepard’s prize-winning play was bound to cause unease in many audience members. We, in Walla Walla, are used to light-hearted fare—musical comedies and farces. These are the productions that bring in the most money. However, Sam Shepard is one of my favorite playwrights; I like the way his material causes reflection, questioning, and yes, malaise in his audiences. I personally am glad Kevin had the courage to present this controversial production in this town—at this community college.

Without the masterful acting and the masterful directing, a play of this weight and substance would have fallen flat in this town. I was so impressed with what I saw that I made a Facebook post that very night urging everyone I knew to attend a performance.

It was just that good!

Terri Trick
*Buried Child*, although deeply disturbing, was yet another attestation to Kevin Loomer’s amazing ability as both an instructor and a director.

Although talents and experience of specific actors still vary, since Kevin has taken the helm, the individual cast members and performances have gone from canned to professional, believable and generally thought-provoking. Instead of sounding like puppets delivering memorized soliloquies that tie together to make the plot, you become a bystander in a scene that plays out like it is actually happening.

There is a place for escapism, farce and comedy, and I’m hopeful that each will continue to be included in upcoming productions as well. However, I very much appreciate Kevin’s bent for topics that inform, that stretch the mind, and open people’s eyes to events that happen (or could happen) in real life.

Danielle Reed
The best play you will get to go to this decade opens this Thanksgiving weekend at WWCC’s China Pavilion. Director Kevin Loomer shatters his Mr. Nice Guy persona with Sam Shepard’s Pulitzer prize winning Buried Child, a psychologically macabre epic of family disintegration.

Loomer’s directorial demand for detail, nuance and excellence has resulted in seven stunning performances of their lifetimes from his accomplished cast. These are not student performances. These are tour de force portrayals of the worst family reunion of which you could ever dream.

Todd Oleson rages. Patty Leeper cloys. Dana Crist towers. Sara Fry tantalizes. Nathan Loomer disintegrates. Scott Anderson terrifies. Mark Raddatz vexes. For ten years I have photographed, filmed and watched plays in Walla Walla. Nothing approaches the consummate skill of these performances. Each performer is superlative. Each actor leaves everything they have on stage. Everything!

The committee for the Tony Honors for Excellence in Theater rarely makes it off Broadway but in the case of this performance of Buried Child I’d suggest a covey of Lear Jets leaving JFK International right now. Locals should hire a limo or take a cab out into the low clouds of rime ice and step into this darkly gleaming and chilling show. At least designate a driver. The play starts at 7 on the November 29, 30, December 5, 6, 7 and at 2 PM on December 1st.

David Walk
Kevin,

On Friday, December 6th, I came to a performance of "Buried Child." I was left with chills and a fabulously unsettled feeling that can only come from a top-notch performance. The material in Buried Child was so intense and deep that it could have easily faltered, but the actors involved pulled it off in such an amazing way. I consider myself very lucky to have been able to view this play and I look forward to seeing more of your masterpieces in the future!

Melissa Harrison
Director of Public Relations
Walla Walla Community College
Walla Walla Community College Theatre Arts presents

**Buried Child**

by Sam Shepard

November 29-30

December 1, 5-7

2013
Walla Walla Community College Theatre Arts presents

Buried Child
A Pulitzer Prize-winning play by Sam Shepard

Produced by special arrangement with DRAMATISTS PLAY SERVICE, INC.

SETTING
The action of the play takes place in the living room of an Illinois farmhouse in August, c. 1965.

Act 1: Sunday
Act 2: Later that night
Act 3: The next morning

There will be two 10-15 minute intermissions.

As always, we would appreciate it if everyone would attend to anything that would cause a distraction to fellow audience members or the performers on stage.

Thank you.
Sam Shepard ranks as one of America's most celebrated dramatists. He has written nearly 50 plays and has seen his work produced across the nation, in venues ranging from Greenwich Village coffee shops to regional professional and community theatres, from college campuses to commercial Broadway houses. His plays are regularly anthologized, and theatre professors teach Sam Shepard as a canonical American author. Outside of his stage work, he has achieved fame as an actor, writer, and director in the film industry. With a career that now spans nearly 40 years, Sam Shepard has gained the critical regard, media attention, and iconic status enjoyed by only a rare few in American theatre. Throughout his career Shepard has amassed numerous grants, prizes, fellowships, and awards, including the Cannes Palme d'Or and the Pulitzer Prize. He has received abundant popular praise and critical adulation. While the assessment of Shepard's standing may evidence occasional hyperbole, there can be little doubt that he has spoken in a compelling way to American theatre audiences, and that his plays have found deep resonance in the nation's cultural imagination.
Have you heard?

the 2014 Summer Musical, brought to you by the WWCC Foundation, will be

**Fiddler on the Roof**

Keep up with news about auditions, tickets, and more at facebook.com/WWCCSummerMusical

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**Director's Notes**

... you gotta to talk or you'll die. -- Tilden from *Buried Child*

I normally don't write director's notes, but I felt a need to say something here. To those of you who are watching this performance I offer a hearty thank you. What you are about to witness is the result of well over three years of hard work. This is the final creative project of my Master's work at Central Washington University. During this time I have renewed my love for live theatre over and over and over again. What this medium has to offer our culture is like nothing else. It is in your face and very human. We are in the room together when it happens. A conversation is going on between actors and audience. Ideas are being shared and their acceptance, or lack thereof, is immediately felt in the room. We are in this together.

While *Buried Child* may not be a play that is your usual cup of tea, it comes from the pen of a man who understands the power that live theatre has to shape the way we think. Sam Shepard is not afraid to ask the hard questions about who we really are and where we really come from. These questions do not always lead to pleasant answers, but they must be asked if we are to move forward at all. And so I offer this gift to stimulate your minds. It is not a finished product, but rather a beginning for a conversation that will hopefully continue when you leave this place tonight, a conversation that should lead to greater revelation and further healing. If this evening's performance does nothing else, I hope it causes you to talk. Telling the truth will indeed set us free.

I have to thank so many people who have supported me on this journey, but a few stand out at this writing. First, I'm grateful for the Theatre Arts faculty at CWU. I am particularly blessed by the friendship of those I have chosen to sit on my committee. Marc Haniuk, who re-energizes my love of good theatrical design; Brenda Hubbard, who always asks the probing questions and makes me look that much deeper; and Michael J. Smith who gets me, and talks me down when my mind can't wrap itself around the big ideas inside it. I also need to thank my precious wife, Connie who put up with my absences in the summers and truly went the extra mile for the success of this project. I am madly in love with her. Finally, I thank my father and mother who both passed away as I was on this leg of my journey, but who are ever with me none-the-less. I am so grateful that we talked in the last few years of their lives and that when they went there was nothing more that needed to be said.
The WWCC Theatre Arts Department would like to thank the following businesses for advertising in our programs for the 2012-13 theatrical season. Their sponsorship will help students involved in the theatre program with their studies. We encourage you to give them your patronage throughout the year.

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Visit the Theatre Arts Department online at www.wwcc.edu/theater

We always welcome donations to provide opportunities to assist our students with their studies!

If you would like to make a donation to the WWCC Scholarship Fund, please contact:

Kevin Loomer
(509) 527-4317 kevin loomer@wwcc.edu
MEET THE CAST

Scott Anderson

Scott is a veteran of the China Pavilion stage. In fact, his first drama ever performed was Lost in Yonkers on this very stage. Recently, he was on the Summer Amphitheatre stage in The Music Man as Marcellus Washburn. While he is not on the stage, Scott is a photographer/videographer for the community college. He also enjoys baking and going on road trips.

Dana Crist

Dana is a veteran of the China Pavilion stage. While she is not on the stage, she enjoys baking and going on road trips.

Sarah Fry

Sarah was most recently seen last spring at WWCC in the production of All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten. Sarah lives in little cottage where she likes to watch things grow, including herself. Sarah loves to dance and finds most of her joy in the gift of nature and friendship.

Patty J. Leeper

The last play Patty performed in at WWCC was Godspell. Musical comedies are usually what you will see Patty in, but the dramatic quality of Buried Child caught her attention. Enjoy the show.

Nathan Loomer

Nathan is a veteran of the China Pavilion stage in The Music Man as Marcellus Washburn. While he is not on the stage, he enjoys baking and going on road trips.

Todd Oleson

After performing in theatre productions in Portland, Ashland, Louisville, and New York, Todd switched professions and traveled to Turkey and China teaching ESL in high schools and universities. Since returning to Walla Walla in 2008, he has appeared at the Little Theatre of Walla Walla. Todd is honored to be included in the cast of this remarkable play.

Mark Raddatz

Mark was born in Hollywood, California and first appeared on television when it was still powered by steam. He studied acting with Jeff Corey and has appeared with the Grand Canyon Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Sedona, The Southwest Shakespeare Company, and various other companies. Mark has performed many roles in his acting career and has also directed many plays, including the Arizona premiere of Sandra Deer's Sailing to Byzantium. Mark travels with a one-man show in which he portrays naturalist John Muir. You may remember Mark from his performance as Reverend Shaw Moore in Footloose at the WWCC Foundation summer musical. He has also been on the WWCC stage as Malvolio in Twelfth Night and Dr. Michael Emerson in Whose Life Is It Anyway? We are pleased to have him back.

THE DESIGN TEAM

Julie Caton

Julie graduated from Whitman College where she developed a love of sewing for the theater. She has designed costumes for Smash, Twelfth Night, and The Women of Lockerbie here at WWCC, and worked on costumes at Harper Joy Theater and the Powerhouse with Shakespeare Walla Walla. In high school she caught the theater bug and explored every avenue, including acting, directing, stage managing, dramaturgy, and more. She loves playing dress up as a member of Whitman's Renaissance Faire Committee.

Brian Hatley

Brian has been working on and off stage for almost 20 years. He is currently the Technical Director at the Little Theatre of Walla Walla and for the WWCC Drama program. On a larger community level, he is on the ArtWalla board and is Vice President of the Washington State Community Theatre Association. Recently he designed sound for The Music Man, lighting design for Entwine, co-directed (with his wife Becky) Into the Woods and White Christmas, and was last seen on stage as Hucklebee in The Fantastics.

Richard Haverinen

Richard's previous experience in educational theater was primarily at San Diego State University, a very, very, very long time ago, but what's a 33 year gap among friends? He has previously designed sound or lighting for The Investigator, A Beggar on Horseback, Bus Stop, Charley's Aunt, and All the King's Men. As an actor, he has been cast as Gandalf in The Hobbit, Haggler in Dark of the Moon, Felix in The Odd Couple, Hook in Peter Pan, and many other roles. As a broadcast and print journalist he can usually distinguish the meaning of the words, "their", "there", and "they're".
Thank you for coming!
Please enjoy the show.

All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten (Spring 2013)

Walla Walla Community College is committed to provide equal opportunity and non-discrimination for all educational and employment applicants as well as for its students and employed staff, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, including gender expression/identity, genetic information, mental status, age (over 40), the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability, the use of trained guide dog or service animal by a person with a disability, or status as a Vietnam veteran, National Guard member or reservist in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, the Federal Rehabilitation of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, and any other applicable Federal and Washington State laws against discrimination.

For further information or to request accommodation, contact WWCC’s Disabilities Support Services Office:
Walla Walla Campus (509) 527-4262 • Clarkston Campus (509) 758-1718 • TDD (509) 527-4412.

SPECIAL THANKS

Steve VanAusdle, Marleen Ramsey, Scott Marsh, Jim Peterson, Tim Toon and the WWCC Administration for their continual support of the WWCC Theatre Arts program.

The WWCC Custodial Staff and Plant Services

Sue Clark for all her administrative assistance and incredible support

Denise Larson, Amy White, and the WWCC Bookstore for coordinating ticket sales

Jessie Hockett and the WWCC Graphics Department for posters, flyers and programs

David Walk and the staff at WWCC Media Services for photography, publicity and video services

Gary Boone, Dean Isakson and the WWCC Purchasing Department

The Walla Walla Union Bulletin for news coverage

Lisa Rasmussen and her Art Students, plus all who created works for tonight’s lobby display.

Ron Klicker for letting us glean the corn used in tonight’s production.

Harper Joy Theatre at Whitman College for set furniture.

Daniel Forbes for his work on special props.

Julie Jones for her overwhelming love and support for this project.

Thank You!
WALLA WALLA COMMUNITY COLLEGE
THEATRE ARTS DEPARTMENT

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That's right, your sponsorship dollars go directly to scholarships. Many of our students could not take theater classes without partial or full scholarships. You can directly help more theater students with your sponsorship dollars at a “pre-cast” level, or write your own script and sponsor at any level you wish.

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Buryed Child
by Sam Shepard

November 29-30
December 1, 5-7
Sundays 2:00 PM
All Other 7:00 PM
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Tickets $8 • Student & Senior $6
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Open M-F 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM
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This play contains Mature Content
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