

The Relationship between Art
and Life as seen through
Tennessee Williams

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

By

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PREFACE

For me, Spring break 1983 was marred by the news of Tennessee Williams' death. It had been the previous summer when I had discovered the plays of Tennessee and his absolute genius. Therefore, it was with great enthusiasm that I approached the prospect of further examining this man and his works.

Today, few people who are familiar with Tennessee do not know about his homosexual lifestyle. It would be hard to imagine him not utilizing this part of his existence in his plays. It was this aspect that I decided to explore.

In an attempt to reach this goal, I have presented a brief overview of the homosexuality in both Tennessee's life and his plays. Of course, this theory can be extended to more of his plays. Lastly, I examined the relationship between his life and his plays.

I hope the reader of this paper can begin to understand Tennessee Williams and his true intelligence. His plays have always meant a great deal to me and I am usually left with a profound feeling after I have finished one of them. If I have been able to extend this appreciation to others, I will feel like I've accomplished something of worth.

I.

The private life of Tennessee Williams has, through the years, lost its sense of privacy. During countless interviews and in writing his autobiography, his world has been exposed for all to view. His revelation of a homosexual lifestyle was received with shock from some and as an eventual confirmation for others.

But to Mr. Williams the writing of his book, Memoirs, was not a revelation as much as a recounting of his daily routine. In an interview for the New York Times printed after the appearance of his autobiography, he clearly stated his attitude toward his life:

I never felt my life was scandalous; it was quite ordinary to me. I think as long as a person observes certain rules, there's nothing disreputable about it. My life is no different from anyone else's except sometimes the . . . pronouns are different. But what's in a pronoun?¹

To someone outside of the homosexual community a brief observance of Mr. Williams' affairs would seem far from "ordinary." And, it is true that during his lifetime, Tennessee was exposed to almost every aspect of the gay world. However, the common thread of all relationships, both hetero- and homosexual, the need for total acceptance and admiration of another human being, runs throughout. Hence, as evident with Mr. Williams' quoted inquiry, the

homosexual does not perceive his quest for another as unusual because of the gender of the person involved.

Tennessee's introduction to the gay world came while he was attending the University of Missouri. His first living quarters were confined to a room in a boardinghouse which he shared with another student. His bed was invaded by this other student one evening but Tennessee's shock and naivete quickly pushed him out, never to return again. Through his father's interventions, Tennessee quickly became a pledge and a house member for the Alpha Tau Omega fraternity.

While there, an attachment with a fraternity brother arose. For some time this relationship was kept to light horseplay with very little sexual connotations. In reality, the most to which this haphazard affair ever progressed was sleeping in the same bed while in each other's arms. Tennessee would later state his regret that this "crazily sweet love-affair" never materialized.² There can be no doubt that by this time Tennessee had realized his attraction to men would be lifelong.

For the remainder of his time at the university, Tennessee continued to have close friendships with both males and females. At a time when his sexual experimentation ran high, Tennessee was known to make love to all those who accepted his advances, or made them.

However, he was made to see with increasing urgency that the emotion of caring for those he was with was confined to the men of the group.

His exposure to the gay world also increased with great speed. After moving on from the university to New Orleans and then New York, Tennessee experienced some of the unpleasant aspects of his lifestyle. In his Memoirs, he discusses the repeated cruisings of Times Square with a friend. This blatant search for sexual partners without regard for emotion was successful as often as not. It was not without violence though. Once, the pick-ups became abusive and severely beat Tennessee and his friend back in their apartments. On a positive side, Tennessee felt exposure to the dark side of life and such cruelty helped him to more fully appreciate the gentleness and caring he was to experience later in life.³

The object of Tennessee's first love was a young man named Kip whom he met during the summer of 1940 in Provincetown. This seaside Massachusetts community has long been known as a gathering spot for homosexuals. During the summer, their relationship blossomed into a cherished memory that Tennessee was never to forget. A person's first love usually defines the bounds for all that follow and Tennessee's was no exception. In Tennessee's case this created a great image that would be hard to recreate since his admiration for Kip was nothing short of worship.

It was also during this summer that Tennessee was to experience one of life's tragedies; his loved one was removed from his life. One afternoon, during a bike ride back from the beach, Kip informed Tennessee he had been urged to leave their relationship. An intruding girl had informed Kip that Tennessee was turning him into a homosexual and, knowing enough of that world, Kip had decided he must resist.

Tennessee was not to see Kip again until the latter was confined to his deathbed at the age of twenty-six. Upon hearing this, Tennessee immediately returned to him with a renewed sense of lost love. It can be clearly seen that Tennessee did not hold Kip responsible for his pain that summer, but only remembered the joy and knowledge he had gained from him.⁴

The next relationship of any importance was not to begin until many years later, with a Sicilian named Frank Merlo. Before this meeting occurred, Tennessee was to realize a few important facts. During the winter of 1944-45, while in Chicago with The Glass Menagerie, Tennessee became frustrated with one night stands. "It was about this time", he wrote in his Memoirs, "that I began to look for more permanent, I mean relatively permanent, relations with young men."⁵ This search was to last for three more years when, at that time, he was to begin his first continuing relationship with Frank Merlo. Actually, the two had been introduced a year prior and had spent the

evening in bed together. An accidental re-encounter was to bring them into this lasting affair.

Tennessee admits to being wary of anything permanent and asked Frank to, at first, only spend every other night at his apartment. A trip home to St. Louis was to make Tennessee realize how deeply he had fallen for Frank:

And it was while I was there under the maternal roof that it became unmistakably clear to me that my heart, too long accustomed to transitory attachments, had found in the young Sicilian a home at last.⁶

Upon returning to his apartment in New York he found Frank asleep in his bed, which was to be his place for fourteen years.

Theirs was not to be a perfect relationship. They experienced all the emotions involved when two people are in love and spend every day together. There was jealousy on both parts as soon as a suspected third party entered the scene. However, it is widely believed that during this time they remained faithful to each other.

Merlo was not only Tennessee's lover but a friend and companion, and he was the one to keep order in their lives. He was paid, as a personal secretary, throughout the fourteen years and was taken care of even after their eventual split. His duties included taking care of whichever residence they happened to be using, making the business appointments and reminding Mr. Williams to keep them.

This is probably the one relationship that held any meaning for Tennessee. If Kip was Tennessee's only true

love, then Frank Merlo, through his undying commitment and time, was to become his only true lover. During their relationship they were never apart from one another for any significant length of time. Their relationship was comparable to, if not better than, most heterosexual marriages.

In the early 1960's, they had reached a trying time for both. Tennessee's professional life had been weak for some time and was a source of anguish. Also, Frank was becoming physically weak due to cancer. As Tennessee became increasingly irritable and restless, Frank was just not strong enough to deal with such things on a continual basis. Finally, after fourteen years, Frank Merlo moved out from under the roof of playwright Tennessee Williams.

A short time later, Tennessee was informed that his longtime companion was actually on the verge of death. Once again, Tennessee was faced with losing a loved one permanently. It became his concern to provide as much comfort for Frank as possible. During Frank's health decline, Tennessee moved him from the Key West home to the one in New York to a location in Nantucket, wherever Frank felt the most comfortable. Through the entire span of the illness, the doctor's bills were also covered by Tennessee.⁷

After Frank's death Tennessee was to fall into a seven-year depression. He turned to drugs and alcohol to fill the void in his life that had been created by the

death of Frank. His career sagged greatly during this period and many of the plays written during the sixties are considered by many to be substandard.

This was not to be Tennessee's last relationship however. He again returned to a life and attitude similar to his time before Merlo. After growing accustomed to having someone around to handle his business, a few of these passing affairs stayed a short period and filled in, somewhat, as a personal secretary.

Tennessee Williams was a highly sexually charged man and he probably kept someone around until the day he died. Kenneth Tyman had his own thoughts about Tennessee's search for love and his subsequent relationships:

He longs for intimacy but shrinks from its responsibilities. Somewhere in the past, before he became famous, lies the one perfect passion; its object parted from him and afterward died of cancer. Since then, too cautious to spoil perfection by trying to repeat it, he has kept all emotional relationships deliberately casual. He will incur no more emotional debts, nor extend any more emotional credit.⁸

Since this appeared in print in 1956, it clearly does not hold true for his relationship with Merlo; however, that could easily prove to have been the only exception.

From the corners of Times Square to a fourteen-year relationship, Tennessee Williams had seen all sides of the homosexual world. He was one to learn from each experience and never forgot his feelings of the time. His thoughts about the two extremes:

There's nothing emptier, nothing more embarrassing than a street-corner pickup. Usually you get crabs and you're lucky if you don't get the clap and each time a little bit of your heart is chipped off and thrown into the gutter.⁹

And:

As long as Frank was well, I was happy. He had a gift for creating a life and, when he ceased to be alive, I couldn't create a life for myself.¹⁰

Through all this Tennessee still considered his an ordinary life. Even to many homosexuals some of his experiences are not to be known. But thanks to his honesty and straightforward attitude about his existence we can at least be aware of his experiences and further appreciate the playwright because of it.

II.

In many of Tennessee Williams' plays he introduces a homosexual character, a role he could well understand. This character is rarely one of the most prominent and sometimes is never seen. Never wanting to limit his audience, Tennessee used these characters to show their interaction among other homosexuals and heterosexuals alike. In this way we can view them with an open mind and hopefully learn to understand them. A closer look at the homosexuals in some of his plays will help to illustrate this point.

In one of Tennessee's most renowned plays, A Streetcar Named Desire, we are shown a homosexual character. When one thinks of this award-winning drama, the character of Blanche DuBois is probably first to come to mind. The fragile, Southern belle whose tragic insanity becomes apparent is one of Tennessee Williams' most talked about women. At the base of Blanche's problems is her ill-fated marriage to a homosexual.

In Scene Six, Blanche relates to a new admirer the story of her early marriage. When both she and Alan Grey were very young they ran off and married. For her it was her first love, for him it was a desperate plea for help. He felt Blanche was the type of kind, considerate person who could understand his problem and hopefully help him through it. However, he could not vocalize this to Blanche and she discovered his secret by accident.

One afternoon Blanche entered a room which she thought was empty but, in actuality, held her husband and an older man, a longtime friend of his. Pretending nothing was wrong, the three of them went to a party that evening. While dancing with Alan, Blanche unconsciously let her true feelings out. Without thinking she blurted out, "I saw! I know! You disgust me . . ." ¹¹ Upon hearing these words Alan ran from the casino and shot himself.

As a result, Blanche must now live with the fact that the one thing she truly loved was cast away by her. To help her cope, she has in turn cast away the bad memories. She remembers Alan as the beautiful young poet she once knew whose love letters to her she still treasures. Her lack of understanding and compassion has thrown her into the world she now inhabits, that of the Elysian Fields.

To physically arrive at her sister's flat she has had to ride two streetcars, one named Desire and then the one named Cemeteries. These correspond to her trip through life. After her marriage to Alan, she searched for "love" wherever it could be found. In doing so, she has slept with many men, including a young boy she taught. All of these were crude substitutes for her departed husband. Her antics with such people have led to her eventual demise.

When Blanche's brother-in-law, Stanley Kowalski, learns the truth about her past, he is quick to inform his wife that her sister has been less than honest with them. Stella refuses to listen to his accusations, but she does have an

explanation if they might prove to be true. We should be able to forgive Blanche because, after all, she was once married to someone who could not return her love. Stella continues to say, "This beautiful and talented young man was a degenerate."¹²

In another of his earlier plays, Tennessee uses the suggestion of homosexuality to explain a marriage gone awry. In Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, one of the main circumstances examined is the farce that the marriage of Brick and Maggie has become. It is suggested that the reason for Brick's abstention might be his homosexual feelings toward a deceased friend.

Oddly enough, the playwright denies that Brick is homosexual. In an article for Theatre Arts, Tennessee had this to say:

It is his bitterness at Skipper's tragedy that has caused Brick to turn against his wife and find solace in drink, rather than any personal involvement. Although I do suggest that, at least at some time in his life, there have been unrealized abnormal tendencies.¹³

However, during the course of the play, the mystery behind Brick's feelings is a major factor and those as close to him as his wife and father confront him with the possibility of a homosexual yearning.

If there is mystery behind Brick, the feelings of Skipper, his best friend, become quite obvious. Maggie confesses to an affair she had with Skipper. She describes the act as follows, "And we both made love to each other to dream it was you, both of us."¹⁴ It was also Maggie who

verbally forced Skipper to realize his true feelings for Brick. This realization eventually destroyed Skipper, and consequently Brick.

The last time Brick heard from Skipper was a phone conversation, "in which he made a drunken confession to me and on which I hung up."¹⁵ Hung up because he was afraid of his true feelings? At any rate, Brick has had to live with the knowledge that he turned away his best friend when he possibly needed him most.

These two men were trapped in a relationship that was too extraordinary for most people. As Brick explained to Big Daddy, "Normal? No!--it was too rare to be normal, any true thing between two people is too rare to be normal."¹⁶ If Brick would just have been strong enough to help his friend through a difficult time, he could still have both a friend and a wife. But, as we are shown, he has neither. And since, because of death, he can no longer have his friend, he is less willing to take back his wife.

In both Streetcar and Cat we have witnessed the homosexual during a plea for help, maybe for salvation from a wretched life. And in both cases the hoped for savior, Blanche and Brick, could not handle the situation. In Brick's silence we can almost hear Blanche's harsh words. Neither character contained the quality of compassion which would have carried them through the ordeal.

As social values were altered during the Sixties Tennessee became more bold and allowed his homosexual

characters to become more visible. The personal thoughts and feelings of these characters could now be examined. The focus of their presence had changed from how they affected others to a reflection of their own lives.

Small Craft Warnings is a play which views the lives of a select group of patrons of a small California seaside bar. We not only are exposed to these misfits individually but as a unified whole. One by one, each character delivers a soliloquy during which the audience learns his or her innermost thoughts.

One of the more tragic figures in this play is a young woman named Leona. She has had to watch the deterioration and eventual death of her younger brother who suffered from pernicious anemia. Having lost him at such a young age she has tended to idolize her brother. She seems to have been his only family and cared for him as he grew increasingly ill.

Having such a close relationship with her brother, she was exposed to his homosexual lifestyle. As a way of explanation she states:

. . . a disease, a condition like that
would make any boy too weak to go with a
woman, but he was so full of love he had
to give it to someone like his music.¹⁷

Obviously she feels her brother's sexuality was not a matter of choice. However, in examining her idealistic words, she obviously knows very little. How much less demanding and exhausting is it to love a man than a woman?

She later expresses her thankfulness that her brother has been spared a long life of such activity. As she mentions, "I know the gay scene . . . I know how full it is of sickness and sadness. . ."18 We are never informed as to specifics but are at least privy to her true feelings about homosexuality. It is a cruel world that her brother was trapped into and, in her mind, probably had a hand in his premature death.

Later in the play we are introduced to two characters who represent to Leona the brother she remembers and the person she's afraid he might have become. Bobby, a young Iowan on his first trip west, is overwhelmed by the charm of life. Everything is such a wonderful experience and his naivete radiates from him. He has allowed himself to be picked up by this older man because he thought him to be helpful.

Quentin is a hardened homosexual who has become cynical about everything. He expresses some regret when he says:

There's a coarseness, a deadening coarseness, in the experience of most homosexuals. The experiences are quick, and hard, and brutal, and the pattern of them is practically unchanging.¹⁹

We hear a possible regret of having nothing permanent, tender or worthy to show for his travel through time.

The appearance of the two men, especially together, is used to show the sharp contrast of time. It's almost as if everyone wanders into a homosexual life with wide-eyed enthusiasm and exits with cold misgivings. Bobby's reaction to his first sight of the Pacific Ocean has a morose effect on

Quentin, who realizes, ". . . this excitement of his reminded me of my having lost the ability to say: 'My God!' instead of just: 'Oh, well'."²⁰

In another of Tennessee's plays we are once again introduced to a group of unfortunate souls who seem to have gravitated toward a common ground. In Vieux Carre, this common ground is an apartment house owned and overlooked by a crazed woman, Mrs. Wire. Her boarders are less than admirable but, at this point in time, Mrs. Wire will accept anyone. She rarely receives payment for her rooms but always has someone around to hear her grievances.

"Yes, loneliness is an--affliction."²¹ And loneliness is what each character suffers. During the course of the play, each is trying in his own way to find a cure for this affliction. One such character is an artist called Nightingale. He is a man dying from tuberculosis who tries to hide his loneliness in bed with whomever. Because he is alone at a time when someone is most needed, we can be assured that for his whole life he has had nothing but random encounters that parted with the morning sun. This is confirmed when he states, "Love can happen like that. For one night only."²²

A writer who also lives in the apartment falls prey to Nightingale's advances. Never mentioned by name, The Writer has confessed to one homosexual experience. New to New Orleans from St. Louis, The Writer met a handsome paratrooper at a New Year's party, was satisfied by this man and, not uncommon after a first encounter, fell in love with him. It is this admission

that Nightingale uses when he approaches The Writer for his own enjoyment.

Having succumbed to Nightingale's tricks, The Writer becomes wary of him. The plywood partition that separates their beds becomes an impenetrable barrier. When later in the play Nightingale attempts to seduce him again, The Writer puts him off. Angered by this lack of tenderness, Nightingale warns The Writer:

And I don't want to catch yours, which is a cold in the heart, that's a hell of a lot more fatal to a boy with literary pretensions.²³

The Writer's heart is warmed again when he meets a newcomer to the apartment. Sky, a person as free as his name, has been detained briefly on his way west. He has left his fiancée close to their wedding day because he didn't feel ready. Sky is greatly admired by The Writer. The Writer realizes he is being trapped in this place and is elated when Sky extends an offer to join him. The relationship between the two men remains as friends for the time of the play. However, when Sky calls to leave, The Writer goes with him with a little apprehension. Who is to say what the future holds, but it seems The Writer has learned a valuable lesson while at the apartment house in the Vieux Carre. This is summed up in his remark, "You have to protect your heart."²⁴

These four plays present a wide range of homosexual characters. Having been one himself, Tennessee Williams could represent the group with a sense of honesty. In writing such works, Tennessee gave the public an adequate look at both the good and bad of such a lifestyle.

III.

Tennessee Williams--the writer, the homosexual. It would be hard to believe the experiences of one were removed from the other. But to what extent did they depend on each other? It is obvious that such a relationship existed when one considers the appearance of homosexual characters in his works. Being a member of the gay world, Tennessee would have an insight that, if ignored, would be a great injustice to his craft.

In most occupations, the private and professional aspects of life can be kept separate. When entering the office one's personal affairs can be left outside, to be resumed at the end of the day when business matters are forgotten. However, for a writer these two lives are intermingled and are quite difficult to separate. As Tennessee wrote in an article for the New York Times, "Perhaps no other occupation is more inclined to absorb the life of the man engaged in it than the writer's calling."²⁵ Again, in his Memoirs he questions, "What is my profession but living and putting it all down in stories and plays and now in this book?"²⁶

There is no doubt his first accepted work, The Glass Menagerie, is autobiographical in nature. He has even stated that the characters of Laura and her family are closely modeled after his own family. He uses attributes of his sister, Rose, his mother and himself to establish the roles in this play. The action of the play, however, has less of an autobiographical basis, if any. Hence, from the beginning of

his career Tennessee Williams used those people most familiar to him to create the characters of his plays. Thus, in examining the homosexuals in his works it should not be hard to believe that they too were drawn from people and experiences of his own life.

What was Tennessee trying to express with these characters? None of his plays are directed toward a homosexual audience; hence, the existence of gay theatre was not his motivation. The need for a release has been suggested by some to be his driving force. They propose that he wrote as a way of self-examination and of analyzing his own existence. Of this possibility Signi Falk wrote:

The relationship between Tennessee Williams' private life that has been so extensively exploited by himself, his friends, his interviewers, and his critics, and his writings with its autobiographical basis seems to be, as he has often admitted, a form of psychotherapy.²⁷

The view of homosexuality as an illness, a mental illness, that can be cured, has survived throughout many years. This outlook would support the classification of Tennessee's writing as psychotherapy. To some extent this was probably the case. Few of us go through life without learning from past experiences. Fewer still have the opportunity to write about them for others to read and heed. In an interview for the New York Times, Tennessee supported this idea:

There is, he insists, "very little" autobiography in his plays, except that they reflect somehow the particular psychological turmoil I was going through when I wrote them.²⁸

"In one sense his plays are a literary device, a camouflage; in another, a confession," stated Stephen Stanton.²⁹ Another common thought about the homosexual is his desire to confess his sexual preference. In living such a life in society one's identity is virtually hidden. The lack of understanding forces the homosexual to live a lie unless he is in private or somewhere that his lifestyle is accepted. This becomes more of a strain, and gradually most homosexuals do make a social confession, commonly referred to as coming out.

In another interview for the New York Times, Tennessee was asked about the influences in his writing, to which he replied:

The strongest influences in my life and my writing are always whomever I love. Whomever I love and am with most of the time, or whomever I remember most vividly.³⁰

Most of the loves in Tennessee's life were of a homosexual nature and hence another explanation for the homosexual's existence in his plays arises. As an example of this, Tennessee wrote in his Memoirs, "The Rose Tatoo was my love-play to the world. It was permeated with the happy young love for Frankie (Merlo). . ." ³¹

There are a number of explanations for Tennessee Williams' using the homosexual in his plays. Rarely is one explanation sufficient and most probably a combination of them all is needed. Most importantly his motivation was quite likely different for each character in each play. Whatever the reason, the relationship is more blatant but no less important

for understanding not only the plays but the playwright alike.

Signi Falk supported this by writing:

From the beginning, whatever Tennessee Williams wrote was a record of his own experience that is sometimes directly, sometimes obliquely stated . . . he believes in the "absolute one-ness" of the artist and his work.³²

One of the most devastating events in Tennessee's early life was the loss of his first love, Kip. After Kip was removed from his life, death made it certain he could never return. This theme is used in both Streetcar and Cat. Blanche's first love, Alan Grey, was removed by death from her life. The same was true of Brick with Skipper. Both Blanche and Brick have an enormous emotional burden to carry. They did not have to lose their loved ones. Tennessee, however, had no choice in his loss, the object of his affection was removed from him. Perhaps the longing for a choice in such matters, but rarely having one, was what Tennessee aimed to show us.

In both plays we also saw the homosexual possibly wishing for a release from his world. Tennessee seems to have no regrets about his life. But he also was aware of public reaction to the choice of such a lifestyle. Supposedly, the homosexual is not happy with his life and would do anything to change it. It was such an attitude that snatched Tennessee's love from him.

Tennessee expressed his wariness of a lasting relationship through Brick. Brick refuses to accept his friend's love as anything but friendly. Brick undoubtedly loves his friend, but most likely not in the same way.

Tennessee had a problem distinguishing his true feelings, also. It took many years before he was willing to accept his love and dedicate himself to someone.

In the latter two plays examined, as in his life, homosexuality became more visible. In interviews and in his autobiography, Tennessee at last discussed his life with candor. This was due in a large way to the changing of the times. It was no longer such a taboo to be truthful about a homosexual life. It was only slightly better understood and accepted, but Tennessee paved the way to truth in his plays. Thanks to him, audiences could see more openly the relationships and thoughts of homosexuals.

By this time in his life Tennessee had not only spent fourteen years with a lover but had watched that relationship deteriorate and die. The plays Small Craft Warnings and Vieux Carre were written during a time of great depression. Tennessee had grown cynical and began looking at his lifestyle with a critical eye.

Warnings is full of the misgivings and wretchedness of a homosexual life. Leona has watched her brother live as a homosexual and has claimed to see the pain it caused him. Quentin, who has lived a long homosexual life, backs up her statements. He talks also of the coarseness of his lifestyle. Tennessee also expressed the observation that the experiences of many homosexuals follow a pattern, which is usually cruel. He now views some of his past experiences with gratitude that he has not only survived them but remained healthy.

We also are given Tennessee's view of the young homosexual. He experienced the naivete of youth and was led into homosexuality by a variety of encounters that progressed to mutual attractions. Bobby is the representation of these views. Quentin is also remorseful when he realizes he has lost Bobby's youthful qualities. Hence, Bobby is not supposed to be looked upon as a single case but as a universal embodiment of the coming out homosexual.

The last play, Vieux Carre, can be related to a period in Tennessee's life. After leaving his hometown of St. Louis he moved to New Orleans and rented a room in the Vieux Carre, a section of the city similar to Greenwich Village in New York City. A refuge^e for artists, many homosexuals inhabit the area.

In the play, the focal character has no name but instead is referred to as The Writer, Tennessee's profession. To say whether or not Tennessee experienced the same things as The Writer would be difficult. But assuredly it can be assumed that the attitudes of The Writer are those of Tennessee. Also, as an escape early in his life, a trip west was undertaken by Tennessee and a friend. They were both using this time to discover themselves--similar to The Writer's motivation. The lesson learned by The Writer about "protecting your heart" can be attributed to Tennessee's reluctance to a permanent relationship.

The life of Tennessee Williams has been opened for us to examine, criticize and use as a learning aid. In reading his plays we can see many aspects of his life. He used his vast

experiences to make comments about the joys in his life but also to allow others to view the mistakes and hopefully be spared the pain Tennessee had known. Eventually these would all become apparent in straightforward interviews and in his autobiography. But with awareness of the autobiographic nature of his plays, much of the same feelings can be comprehended from his works. Tennessee Williams left us with not only some of the best theatrical dramas of this century, but also an honest view of the world of the homosexual, a world he could portray better than most.

FOOTNOTES

¹Robert Berkvist, "Broadway Discovers Tennessee Williams," New York Times, December 21, 1975, Sec. 2, p. 4.

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³Williams, Memoirs, p. 53.

⁴Williams, Memoirs, pp. 59-61.

⁵Williams, Memoirs, p. 87.

⁶Williams, Memoirs, p. 156.

⁷Williams, Memoirs, pp. 188-95.

⁸Kenneth Tynan, "Valentine to Tennessee Williams," Mademoiselle, February 1956, p. 200.

⁹Williams, Memoirs, p. 227.

¹⁰Williams, Memoirs, p. 194.

¹¹Tennessee Williams, A Streetcar Named Desire (New York: New American Library, Inc., 1972), p. 96.

¹²Williams, Streetcar, p. 102.

¹³Arthur B. Waters, "Tennessee Williams: Ten Years Later," Theatre Arts, July 1955, p. 73.

¹⁴Tennessee Williams, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," in Stages of Drama: Classical to Contemporary Theater, ed. by Carl H. Klaus, Miriam Gilbert & Bradford S. Field, Jr. (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1981), p. 890.

¹⁵Williams, Cat, p. 907.

¹⁶Williams, Cat, p. 906.

¹⁷Tennessee Williams, "Small Craft Warnings," in Vol. V (5) of The Theatre of Tennessee Williams (New York: New Directions, 1976), p. 297.

¹⁸Williams, Warnings, p. 254.

¹⁹Williams, Warnings, p. 260.

²⁰Williams, Warnings, p. 261.

²¹Tennessee Williams, Vieux Carre (New York: New Directions, 1977), p. 20.

²²Williams, Vieux Carre, p. 25.

²³Williams, Vieux Carre, p. 50.

²⁴Williams, Vieux Carre, p. 50.

²⁵Tennessee Williams, "Prelude to a Comedy," New York Times, November 6, 1960, Sec. 2, p. 1.

²⁶Williams, Memoirs, p. 161.

²⁷Signi Falk, Tennessee Williams, Twayne's United States Authors Series, No. 10. (New York: Twayne, 1961), p. 21.

²⁸Berkvist, "Broadway Discovers T. W.", Sec. 2, p. 4.

²⁹Stephen S. Stanton, ed., Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1977), p. 3.

³⁰Joanne Stang, "Williams: 20 Years After Glass Managerie," New York Times, March 28, 1965, Sec. 2, p. 3.

³¹Williams, Memoirs, p. 162.

³²Falk, Tennessee Williams, p. 156.

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