"Tennessee Williams, author of more than 24 full-length plays, including "The Glass Menagerie," "A Streetcar Named Desire," "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" - the latter two won Pulitzer Prizes - and "The Night of the Iguana," had a profound effect on the American theater and on American playwrights and actors. He wrote with deep sympathy and expansive humor about outcasts in our society. Though his images were often violent, he was a poet of the human heart.

His works, which are among the most popular plays of our time, continue to provide a rich reservoir of acting challenges. Among the actors celebrated in Williams roles were Laurette Taylor in "The Glass Menagerie"; Marlon Brando and Jessica Tandy in "A Streetcar Named Desire" (and Vivien Leigh in the movie version), and Burl Ives in "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof."

"The Glass Menagerie," his first success, was his "memory play." Many of his other plays were his nightmares. Although seldom intentionally autobiographical, the plays were almost all intensely personal -- torn from his own private anguishes and anxieties.

He once described his sister's room in the family home in St. Louis, with her collection of glass figures, as representing "all the softest emotions that belong to recollection of things past." But, he remembered, outside the room was an alley in which, nightly, dogs destroyed cats.

Mr. Williams's work, which was unequaled in passion and imagination by any of his contemporaries' works, was a barrage of conflicts, of the blackest horrors offset by purity. Perhaps his greatest character, Blanche Du Bois, the heroine of "Streetcar," has been described as a tigress and a moth, and, as Mr. Williams created her, there was no contradiction.

-- From the obituary by Mel Gussow, February 26, 1983.

News about Tennessee Williams, including commentary and archival articles published in The New York Times