The study of the whole range of Tennessee Williams’ drama shows the gradual development of a comprehensive moral structure in Williams’ outlook towards life. Williams conceives drama from his own personal experiences and his own consciousness. And as such each of his drama deals with his ideas of life in the light of his own views and values which he desires. From *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* which dramatize women’s tendency and need to escape the snares and dualities of a modern world, through the maze of desire and sensuality as in *The Rose Tattoo* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Williams reaches the world of spirituality and transcendentalism in *The Night of the Iguana*. Williams affirms that a writer’s view of the world is always affected by his own state of being. He writes:

If the writing is honest it cannot be separated from the man who wrote it. It isn’t so much his mirror as it is the
distillation, the essence, of what is strongest and purest in his nature, whether that be gentleness or anger, serenity or torment, light or dark. This makes it deeper than the surface likeness of a mirror and that much more truthful.¹

Here we get a moral vision of the playwright. Williams depicts the various aspect of human nature and life in the portrayal of his women characters and naturally women play major roles in his dramas.

In the early heroines, as discussed in the third chapter, Amanda Wingfield and Blanche Du Bois we see Williams, the romanticist escaping to the aristocratic past from the sordid realities of the present. In common with other southern writers, Williams is absorbed by a romantic vision of the past. So it is not surprising that Williams dramatizes aristocratic Southern society with an intensely romantic, almost fantasy-like landscape, dotted with “white-pillared plantations, weeping willows, and magnolia blossoms”. The picture of an elegant enclosed society of fine gentleman courting tremulous ladies in crinoline while devoted family servants move discreetly in the background, compromises for Amanda and Blanche an image of perfect social order. Williams is distinctly a regional writer, steeped in the Southern writer’s absorption with the past. The workings of memory and the collision between a dream of the past and the realities of an urbanized present, provided inspiration for plays like The Glass Menageries and A Streetcar Named Desire where he explored the dilemma of the Southern aristocrat fully and most poignantly.

Williams in his early two plays present Amanda and Blanche as representatives of the Victorian “butterfly” tradition which is a relic of the past.
In them we see the anguish of the soul of the aristocratic South suffocating in the complex modern world. Louis D. Rubin, Jr. observes:

_The Glass Menagerie_ exposes Williams' full dramatic strength. This gentle vignette of a Southern family living in exile is individualized, compassionate and real. The city of St. Louis is used as a painful symbol of their exile from the Deep South and its values, from the landscape and the flowers ... from position in family and community, from security and beauty and romance.  

In _The Glass Menagerie_, Amanda, the mother of Tom and Laura, draws an idealized past for her aristocratic values. She is an anachronism who has the tenacity to survive in the new world. In _A Streetcar Named Desire_, Williams repeats his portrait of the antiquated belle but isolates her from family and places and shows her tragic fall. Both Amanda and Blanche make insidious comparisons between their former life and the present situation, and they also emphatically reject the present in favour of the past. In them the past replaces the present and illusion becomes reality. To quote the words of Gerald Weales:

The strength of Amanda and Blanche is that we get to see them fully, their crudity and cruelty as well as their gentleness, their foolishness as well as their pathos. The reason that this is true is that Williams, in the early plays, has not yet completely succumbed to demonstration as a dramatic method, he still creates fine scenes – the fights between Tom and Amanda, and the dinner with the gentleman caller in _Menagerie_; the ghastly birthday party in _Streetcar_, in which revelation comes through the clash of personalities ... ... the kind of sympathy, even empathy, that an audience feels for Amanda and Blanche disappears in the later plays.
Williams, however, is the romantic and the realist, and his best work is marked by this important juxtaposition of beliefs. Thus, in *The Glass Menagerie* the author’s sympathies for his ineffectual dreamers are tempered by his objective attitude toward them. While portraying their tragic attempts to establish contact with each other and with the world in which they live he is nevertheless able to see that they are doomed to failure because of their inability to do more than dream. Blanche Du Bois also represents the honour, gentility and basic decency which is starkly contrasted against the world of Stanley Kowalski. Hers are the values which, untainted, should pervade our world, but they do not, and in seeking them in someone else she only hastens her final destruction. She refuses to give up her dream and her refusal is heroic, and tragic. But in the end she is destroyed because she really has nothing but illusions and chimeras against the brute force of Kowalski’s reality – the harsh reality of the world.

In the fourth chapter of the thesis, Tennessee Williams celebrates the victory of women in the male-dominated world in the portrayal of Serafina Delle Rose and Maggie the Cat. Both of them along with Mrs. Violet Venable are classified as natural and domineering women characters in this part. However, in the case of Mrs. Venable, the domineering attitude over men surpasses even that of Serafina and Maggie. In fact, in the portrayal of Mrs. Venable, Williams shows that “cannibalism” is something that is inherent in human relationships. The destruction of Sebastian by Mrs. Venable symbolizes the destructive quality in the relationships of all the other characters which in turn symbolizes the voraciousness in mankind. It is also pertinent to note here that in *Suddenly Last Summer* Williams explores the problem of inhumanity supported by social, political, and intellectual advantages. In this play, he demonstrates that intelligence and morality are not necessarily properties of the
same function. This work, in many ways, the most terrifying of the playwright’s apprehensions, shows man and woman as the prisoner of a corrupt intelligence. The gifted, intelligent, domineering and attractive Mrs. Venable is, no less than the primitive creatures of the earlier drama, a savage like Kowalski. Indeed, in her domineering and forceful character Mrs. Venable is a more frightening creature than any other women characters of Williams. It is because Mrs. Venable is committed to the annihilation of a fellow human being through the agencies of society. In fact, in *Suddenly Last Summer* Williams poses an extremely serious question for civilization, it involves the threat that the humanity symbolized by Mrs. Venable may come to control society itself.

On another level, it can be said that *The Rose Tattoo* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* are serious efforts to emancipate captive characters through the celebration of flesh. There is much of D.H. Lawrence in Williams’ concern with the liberation of sex through uninhibited sexuality. Williams is passionately committed to his new Lawrencian point of view that the natural instincts which spring up out of the subconscious depth of mankind, particularly sexual instincts are to be trusted absolutely. *The Rose Tattoo* is a kind of lyric poem to the Gods of creation and Reproduction. Rosario Delle Rose is the Dionysus whose death means rebirth and the play ends on a note of joy and hope symbolized by Serafina’s announcement that she is pregnant. This is her victory over men (presented by Rosario). Maggie is another woman of Williams’ primal woman who like Serafina uses sex for propagation. Her earlier portrait in *Three Players of a Summer Game*, delineates a sterile female, seeking to dominate the weak husband. Maggie like an Amazon fights to retain her husband’s love and to get the family plantation. Benjamin Nelson who finds *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* “extremely moral” insists that despite the
hypocrisy, scheming and greed that permeate the drama, Williams’s pervading declaration is that human existence can have meaning, if one vitally engages life. He insists that more than any Williams’ play written before it, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* affirms man’s moral potential. For not withstanding the traces of deceit and cupidity to a lesser or greater extent in almost every character, some of the people also exhibit nobility, dignity, tenderness, love and courage. Through the character of Maggie, Williams emphasizes that it is only in direct and active involvement in life that man (like Brick) can survive. The play presents a positive approach to love and subsequently to life.

In the fifth chapter of the thesis, the conflict between puritanical and cavalier strains in Tennessee Williams can be seen and it amply shows the effect on his moral vision of life. This conflict is depicted in the characters of Alma Winemiller and Laura Wingfield in this part of the work. Williams has said repeatedly that Alma is his favourite character:

I think the character I like most is Miss Alma ... She really had the greatest struggle ... you see, Alma went through the same thing as I went through – from puritanical shackle to well, complete profligacy ... Freedom and liberation from taboos.

Suffering the consequences of a rigid puritanical upbringing Alma like Williams idealizes the body and moves from longing for the bohemian life to actual participation in it. Unlike Amanda and Blanche who reject reality, Alma and Laura, develop in the course of the play from women who live in illusion into women who face life realistically. Laura’s stoic acceptance of Jim’s desertion shows that she is capable of accepting the world with all its cruel blows. During the dance with Jim when her favourite unicorn is broken she is
able to say, “It is no tragedy, freckles.” Now like the broken unicorn which is just like all the other horses, Laura also belongs to the world of reality.

Throughout his career, Williams has endowed his characters with various degree of spiritual awareness. His spirituality reaches its culmination in the character of Hannah Jelkes. This has been discussed in the sixth chapter of the thesis. After passing through the dark night of spiritual crisis, Williams reaches the dawn of serenity in The Night of the Iguana. Even the names of Williams’ saintly women suggest their transcendental view of existence. The Hebrew root of Hannah Jelkes is “grace”. Hannah stands so utterly apart from flesh that she is the very embodiment of grace. The other woman who shares Hannah’s angelic character is Leona Dawson of Small Craft Warnings. It has been discussed that Hannah Jelkes and Leona Dawson reached a form of transcendentalism in their philosophical outlook towards life. These two heroines have not only maintained the virtues, viz, Valour and endurance of the earlier heroines, but also have demonstrated the virtues of pity, tenderness and compassion. The perception of beauty is also the most vital impulse of Hannah and Leona. Hannah’s response to the eyes of those in the House of the Dying in Shangai and Leona’s remorse over her dead brother’s angelic beauty reveal their love of beauty. Leona, a professional beautician is another of Williams’ tempestuous “artist-priest” for she has put Violet back on her feet. The Night of the Iguana is Williams’ most convincing dramatization of redemption. Like Small Craft Warnings it celebrates the “endurance if not triumphs of lives, facing larger obstacles”. The rhetorical climax of Nonno’s poem summons courage to live in this fallen world. The artist naturally yearns for the inviolability and timelessness of the sphere inhabited by “being of a golden kind” as Yeats yearned for Byzantium and Keats mused upon his “unravished
bride of quietness”. According to Williams, courage has a spiritual force as it
gives not only dignity to life but also supports man’s redemptive hope.

Williams’ portraits of male characters are fine as many of them are
contrasted sharply with the beautifully nuanced characterization of women. It is
impossible to discuss Williams’ women without including their counterparts,
the men. It is through their interactions and their exquisite contrast that we are
attracted to Williams’ women. Many of Williams’ men are poets, dreamers, and
philosophers who are detached from a physical world. They refuse to be bound
by realistic responsibilities. Tom Wingfield, the hero of *The Glass Menagerie*
is a would be poet who feels trapped between his domineering mother and a
physically and spiritually crippled sister. Tom finds solace in the fantasy world
of movies but he is still ensnared by the responsibilities of his mother and sister.
Amanda’s words, “You don’t know things anywhere! You live in a dream; you
manufacture illusions!”[6] throws light on Tom’s dreamy nature. Eventually he
abandons his family in his search for self. Though it is easy to leave Amanda,
Laura continues to haunt him. Tom cannot abandon Laura without destroying
her as they are kindred spirits, “who live in a dream” and which is for them an
omnipresent phenomenon. Tom in his attempt to become an artist must break
away from their environments. Like the phoenix, he must rise from the ashes of
the past that he had destroyed. Jim, the other male character in *The Glass
Menagerie* is another idealist who is transformed as if by magic into the
romantic figure of a gentleman caller. Jim is a great believer in the importance
of the “right connections” and the power of positive thinking. Under the spell of
Amanda and her jonquils and romantic candle light, Jim emerges as an
emissary not from the world of reality but from Blue Mountains. The leading
male characters in *A Streetcar named Desire, Summer and Smoke* and *The
Rose Tattoo remain essentially the same as they seem to have had a certain animal vitality that make them attractive to women. Stanley Kowalski in A Streetcar Named Desire contrasts himself to Blanche Du Bois. On a purely psychological level rather than a social one Stanley emerges as the antagonist of Blanche. The healthy marriage he shares with Stella stand as the sacred arena defiled by the profane intruder Blanche. Robert Brunstein offers a clear picture of Stanley when he discusses his complex nature. He says, Stanley is:

a highly complex and ambiguous character, one who can be taken either as hero or as villain. As a social or cultural figure, Stanley is a villain, in mindless opposition to civilization and culture – the “new man” of the modern world whom Williams seems to find responsible for the present day decline in art, language, decorum, and culture. As a psychological or sexual figure, however, Stanley exists on a somewhat more heroic moral plane. He is akin to those silent, sullen game-keepers and grooms of D.H. Lawrence … whose sexuality, though, violet, is unmental, unspiritual, and, therefore, in some way free from taint. The conflict between Blanche and Stanley allegorizes the struggle between effeminate culture and masculine libido.7

Similarly, John Buchanan and Rosario Dell Rose are also characters of menacing sexual instinct. They may be regarded as the women’s sexual alter ego.

Another group of male characters might be classified as the mutilated, either physically or psychologically. Brick Pollit and Reverand T. Lawrence Shannon belong to these types who are dramatically engaging characters. Brick is one of the most metaphysically mysterious characters of Williams’ male characters. In his note of explanation Williams makes it quite explicit that for
him Brick’s moral paralysis is central to the play, the root cause in Brick’s tragedy. Throughout the published version of *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* Williams’ comments suggest that Brick’s problem is spiritual or metaphysical in nature. What Williams wishes to capture in the play is not the solution of one man’s psychological problem but rather the “true quality of experience, the interplay of live human beings in the thunder cloud of – common crisis.” Shannon, the main character of *The Night of the Iguana* is another moral wreck. Shannon’s identification with the bound lizard objectifies and amplifies his view of the human state. Shannon like the iguana which is tied to the post is helplessly tied to the “earth” by his life and so cannot evade the inevitable suffering of existence. And another important male character, Monk, the bartender in *Small Craft Warnings* belongs to a special category as he is also a saintly character like Leona. Monk, like Leona comes to the rescue of others in their hours of distress. His bar is the refuge of outcastes who in their nexus of loneliness provide a temporary home for one another. Their sorrows and despair are presented as forcefully as that of the earlier characters. Monk’s compassion reaches its highest point when he gives asylum to Violet.

Contrasted with the men, Williams’ women are convincing and realistic. Williams is concerned with the illumination of the role of the women in the world of the twentieth century. He attempts to interpret the complex role of the women on the contemporary stage by shedding light on the inner recesses of feminine psyche.

Williams’ plays reveal the fusion of a number of movements to be found in the twentieth century. Williams is perhaps the greatest expert in psychology, for the complex motivation of Freudian and Jungian psychology lie at the root of most of his work. Psycho-analytical drama, no doubt, reveals itself in the
work of Eugene O'Neill, Clifford Odets and Arthur Miller; and all these dramatists deal with the oriental and physical disease of modern man but it can be said that Williams has done more than anyone else in extending the frontiers of the psychological drama. In most of his works, attention is given persistently upon the inner life of the characters, whose difficulties are presented as first of all psychological rather than social or political. In fact, Williams gives more importance to the particular than to the universal in his characters. He is often proclaimed as the spokesman for the defeated, the frustrated, and the beaten. The problems his characters face are not universal but their “fall” is quite ennobling. As Williams says:

My politics is that of the heart. I am only interested in human nature. My chief aim in playwriting is the creation of character. I always had a deep feeling for the mystery in life, and essentially my plays have been an effort to explore the beauty and meaning in the confusion of living.⁹

Williams’ viewpoint combines a sharp sense of reality, a naturalistic fearlessness in the face of what is gross in individual life and society, and a just compassion. Williams’ morality is not the morality of most men but it is a consistent ethic, giving him a point of view from which he can judge the actions of people.

From the beginning of his dramatic career, Williams used the stage as a model of human consciousness. His poetic vision has been used to a more conventional mode of human understanding. The majority of critics agree that Williams’ most significant contribution to the American theatre has been the utilization of various theatrical techniques to universalize what on the surface seemed to be uniquely individual situation. By combining impressionistic and
expressionistic staging devices with the naturalists’ keen observation and the realists’ objectivity in handling his materials, Williams has created a new poetic drama in the American theatrical world. Esther Merle Jackson says that Williams and his artistic collaborations – Margo Jones, Jo Mielziner, Elia Kazan, and others – have given to plays such as *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* a production form known in the world theatre as the “American Method”, and she further says:

This American method is characterized by its own distinctive style of directing as well as by its own patterns of acting, staging, designing, and lighting. … … one of Williams’ most lasting achievements may be his contribution to the development of this American dramaturgy, to the creation of this distinctive production form.10

This new “American method” developed by Williams and his collaborators should be distinguished from the “Stanislavskian method”, from which it is in part derived. “Stanislavskian method” is a theatrical technique developed by the Russian director and theatrical producer, Constantin Stanislavsky. According to this method, he eliminated stylized theatrical techniques and trained actors to strive for subjective interpretations of roles. Although many of the American innovators began by studying and imitating the theories of Stanislavsky, certain major alterations have been effected by Williams and Kazan which give to the American drama a character distinct from that of earlier forms. This new method is called “Plastic Theatre”. Williams’ “plastic theatre” is best explained by Esther Merle Jackson in the following words:
His [Williams] "plastic theatre" is concerned not only with the exposition of rational planes of experience but also with the connotation of the ambiguous world of meaning above and below accepted levels of reason. Williams attempts to project into the cube called a "stage" a vision of the entire complex of human experience, including those planes of reality which Wagner described as "unutterable".  

Williams' theatre symbol is also a distinctive part of his "plastic theatre". In fact, he describes his sensuous symbol as "plastic". In the "Forward" to *Camo

Real*, Tennessee Williams says "symbols are nothing but the natural speech of drama". According to Carl Gustave Jung, a symbol is "a term, a name, or even a picture that may be familiar in daily life, yet that possesses specific connotations in addition to its conventional and obvious meaning ... It has a wider unconscious aspect that is never precisely defined or fully explained". Williams' belief in the evocative value of symbols closely resembles Jung's theories of the "collective unconscious", that second psychic system of a "collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals". As Williams notes, "We all have in our conscious and unconscious minds a great vocabulary of images, and I think all human communication is based on these images as are our dreams". Based on familiar religious, mythical, and literary associations, Williams' symbols tap the emotional depths of the collective unconscious with its store of "archetypes" - those "mental forms ... which seem to be aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind". Williams' dramatic use of universally evocative symbols derives from his concept of and concern with the interrelationship of the playwright, the audience, and the play. He characterises himself as one of the those playwrights "permitted only to feel." In fact, the fundamental theatrical concern of Williams is to transform his personal emotions into
recognizably universal feelings. He would rise "above the singular to the plural concern, from personal to general import." By using symbols, Williams attempts to create in his audience an empathetic response to his characterizations of the lonely, the neurotic, the alienated, and persecuted, thereby evoking that shock of recognition by which the audience acknowledges as familiar the characters' psychic conflicts. As Williams describes the experience:

Our hearts are wrung by recognition and pity, so that the dusky shell of the auditorium where we are gathered anonymously together is flooded with an almost liquid warmth of unchecked human sympathies, relieved of self-consciousness, allowed to function ...'

A major function of Williams symbols is to form an emotional bridge with the audience so that they feel one with the characters. The symbolism associated with Laura in *The Glass Menagerie* is composed largely of religious and ascetic images connoting the innocent other worldliness of the saint and chaste virgin. Her favourite animal in the glass menageries is the mythical unicorn, an emblem of chastity and the lover of Virgins. *The Glass Menagerie* and other major plays embody Williams' vision of the fundamental human situation as one of solitude in a universe which is indifferent to our existence. Many of Williams' plays also employ symbolic titles like *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The words of Tom Wingfield in *Menagerie*: "... I have a poet's weakness for symbols" echoes Williams' love for symbols. Illusion against reality defined through the breaking of a tiny glass animal or the shading of a light bulb enhance a world of moods and meanings and these effective "plastic" symbols have given a tremendous emotional impact on the audience. This is the achievement of Williams as one of the innovators of the
American dramatic technique. In fact, it can be said that in the use of sensuous and visual symbols, Williams remains without peer among contemporary American dramatists.

But the greatest contribution of Tennessee Williams is his handling of speech. Through words he is able to arouse emotional excitement, to increase suspense, and to enhance the understanding of character and emotion. It has been said that Williams writes with his eyes and his ears while other playwrights are often content to write out of memory or to pick their brains for dramatic content. Brooks Atkinson says:

> Behind the fury and uproar of the characters are the eyes, ears and mind of a lyric dramatist who has brought into the theatre a new freedom of style ... He can make [language] express shades of feeling outside the range of most writers — coldness and longing, silence, desolation, dissolution. Between society and the individual theatre is a void that Mr. Williams can cross with words that are plain in themselves but radiant in meaning.20

In fact, Williams' language has been unequalled in the American theatre in its ability to be both conversationally idiomatic and poetically vivid. Williams has brought poetry back to the theatre to a more significant degree than T.S. Eliot, Christopher Fry and Maxwell Anderson. The inner conflict of the characters are beautifully illuminated by their dynamic dialogues. Hannah provides Shannon with an image of himself through her sketches and her conversation; she tells Shannon, "I'm just attempting to give you a character sketch of yourself in words instead of posted crayons or charcoal." And in Streetcar Stanley Kowalski's mumbled speech and crude manners give us a hint to the hidden animality in his nature. It is effectively shown in "Scene Eight":

...
STELLA: Your face and your fingers are disgustingly greasy. Go and wash up and then help me clear the table. [He hurls a plate to the floor.]

STANLEY: That’s how I’ll clear the table! [He seizes her arm] don’t ever talk that way to me! ‘Pig – Polack – disgusting – vulgar – greasy!’ – then kind of words have been on your tongue and your sister’s too much around here! What do you two think you are? A pair of queens? Remember What Huey Long said – ‘Every Man is a King!’ And I am the king around hers, so don’t forget it! [He hurls a cup and saucer to the floor] My place is cleared! You want me to clear your places? 

But the most effective illustrations of Williams’ dramatic language – or “personal lyricism” (as Esther Jackson said) – is The Glass Menagerie. This play, still a favourite of American audience, players, and critics alike, shows Williams’ lyric technique in a lighter tone than does A Streetcar Named Desire. In the play, Tom – the poet-figure – speaks to the audience in a highly poetic style:

I didn’t go to the moon, I went much further – for time is the longest distance between two places – Not long after that I was fired for writing a poem on the lid of a shoe-box.

I left Saint Louis. I descended the steps of this fire-escape for a last time and followed, from then on, in my father’s footsteps, attempting to find in motion what was lost in space –

I travelled around a great deal. The cities swept about me like dead leaves, leaves that were brightly coloured but torn away from the branches.
Williams' plays therefore are note-worthy for their experimentation with theatre language. John Von Dormum attributes the vitality of the characters to the playwright's skill in recreating the rhythms and patterns of ordinary speech and his ability to augment the "illusion of reality" through the speech of his characters is one of Williams' major contributions to modern American literature. Walter Kerr also points out that Williams "sees and writes as an artist and a poet. He makes plays out of images, catching life while it is still fluid, still immediate, before it has been sterilized by reflection". But a thorough examination of Williams' "verbal magic" is given by Francis Donahue. He writes:

In his dialogue Williams achieves a colloquial pungency which is realistic and poetic at the same time. His heroines, granted their station in life, can often indulge in a type of rhetoric which may set them off from their surroundings. His heroes generally speak a cadenced slang which is considered sensitive realism. Over-all his dialogue is supple and hard-hitting, characterized by a fine Southern quality.

Critics agree that Tennessee Williams is one of the few outstanding playwrights in modern American theatre history. Like his predecessor and compeer Eugene O'Neill who dominated the realm of American playwrighting during the first thirty years of the Twentieth century, Williams along with Miller has dominated the theatre since World War II. Their chief common ground is the portrayal of men and women who suffer disaster, who destroy themselves, or move toward self-destruction. For the most part, however, O'Neill and Williams are closer to each other than either is to Miller. Failure of personality is a special theme of O'Neill and Williams. But it can be said that Williams is superior to O'Neill in his special genius for the portraiture of
women characters. Some of Williams' women characters are unforgettable. Blanche Du Bois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the most unforgettable character among Williams' women characters. Nancy M. Tischler calls Blanche "Williams' finest creation" and regard her as the representative of tradition and idealism in a world torn asunder by cruelty. Elia Kazan calls her a heightened version, an artistic intensification of all women which makes the play universal.

Examination of Tennessee Williams' women characters shows a subtle development in their characterization. Williams' early women dramatized the theme that a women must avoid illusion about both herself and others. Amanda is too involved in her aristocratic past to see her daughter's mental condition. Blanche who has failed once in love spends the rest of her life trying to avoid it. Later women like Alma and Laura face life stoically and so acquire the capacity to be loved. Serafina, Maggie, and Mrs. Venable are so strong and vital that they are not subjected to illusion for long but fight for what they want. Hannah and Leona in the later plays display greater intelligence and maturity than their predecessors do. From a psychological point of view the portrayal of Williams' women characters enriches our knowledge not only of human nature but also of the society that produced these types. The popularity of *The Glass Menagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* since their first productions shows that Williams has established himself as a dramatist of the forefront. Nancy Tischler comments:

> Although typical of his age, Tennessee Williams is no typical artist. Perhaps, as he himself has said, he is only a minor artist who has written some major plays. Whatever time and the critical consensus may decide, Tennessee Williams is an author who has brought
power and beauty to the American stage. Out of the stuff of his own tormented life, he has created dramas of rich humanity. Writing for him is an act of faith, and writing such as his gives us a new respect for the human mind and heart. The position of Tennessee Williams as one of the America’s most forceful and original playwrights is assured.
Notes


11. Esther M. Jackson. Ibid. p. 89.


