

I knew you as Thomas Lanier Williams at Iowa
That lovely farming place mid-prairie
Where the Iowa River flowed south with your ideas like blue paddlefish
To Mississippi where you were born, not far from Tennessee.

I knew you in New Orleans where your Streetcar
Rumbled past full of desire and your fragile southern women
Emoted with Stanley, your muscular American stage hero,
In love, passionate, and forever lustfully undeterred.

I knew you in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, home of your friends
The Mohicans, where you cared for your ailing sister
And invited the whole of New York City and the northeast
To view your plays and hear your poetry. You were indigenous.

I knew you in San Francisco where you were already
A famous oldster with the thick skin of composition.
You were everyone's dramatic hero, young men in tight jeans
Imploring: "Tennessee, please tell us more. Tell us more."

On Truman Street in Key West, your broad mind sequenced life best,
Viewing with Frank the sun hovering red over Cuba as though
It was never going to drop down from the sky until it burned itself out.
Tennessee, we all knew you then and now hereafter, our brightest ember.

pm, 2022