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Author's Place, Digital Space: Mapping Tennessee Williams, 1938-1948

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Click on the colored dots on the map below to see more information. To view the fully formatted map, download the Mapping the Writer's Life Tennessee Williams KMZ file below and open with Google Earth.

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MAPPING THE WRITER'S LIFE: Tennessee Williams

"Make voyages! — Attempt them! — there's nothing else . . ."
 — Tennessee Williams, *Camino Real*

ABSTRACT

From 1938-1948, twentieth-century American author Tennessee Williams traveled the country with his portable typewriter and a battered suitcase. He wrote every day, and his writings reflect the places and people he encountered. Williams's journey from obscurity to fame as a writer during this decade parallels the nation's path from depression to postwar prosperity. We use Google Earth to create placemarks that highlight Williams's professional and personal connections, production histories, and social and political contexts.

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St. Louis, Missouri

St. Louis embodied the best and the worst life had to offer for Williams. In December 1938, the writer left his family's suburban home, never to live there again. When asked what brought him to New Orleans, Williams often replied, "St. Louis."




New York, New York

A *Streetcar Named Desire* opened on Broadway on December 2, 1947 at New York's Ethel Barrymore Theatre. While initially a controversial piece, it ran for 855 performances and is considered by many to be "the best play" of both Williams's work and of all American playwrights to date.



In Scene 7 of *Streetcar*, Blanche sings "Paper Moon" while in the bathtub. Williams specifically highlights this song because the lyrics weave into the relationship between Blanche and Stanley.



'Bak, John S. Tennessee Williams: A Literary Life. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013. Print.

New Orleans, Louisiana

During January and February 1939, Williams resided at the boarding house at 722 Toulouse Street. While there, Williams worked on a first draft of *Vieux Carré*, which was titled *Dead Planet, the Moon* at the time. The boarding house became the setting for this story through the final draft.

