

Expressionism in Tennessee Williams's Camino Real

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For all the scholarly attention critics have directed toward Tennessee Williams's dramatic works, little has been said of Camino Real. In fact, when first produced in 1953, it confused critics and confounded audiences. It was in Clive Barns's words "scarcely a success"(1956, p.1). Moreover, Jordan Y. Miller remarks that the appearance of Camino Real in the midst of the more orthodox productions of the 1950s was "so unusual...that the play seemed like an anachronism"(1962, p.139). Several reasons account for this. Brian Parker points out that the play's "intertextual and self-referential techniques were at least twenty years ahead of their time"(1998, pp.42-43). Furthermore, from the stylistic point of view, it is a challenging and highly experimental play wherein various "non-realistic trends like expressionism, surrealism and absurdism"(Richard E. Kramer, 2002, p.1) are freely used.

It is a well-known fact that in the first half of the twentieth century, Williams and many other American dramatists had made free use of these non-realistic trends, especially expressionism in their otherwise conventional plays. None, however, had formed a play in a style "so completely and unreservedly expressionistic as Camino Real"(Miller, 1962, p.139). At that time, expressionism as a recognized literary trend was so passé that not a single opening-night critic used the term in describing what he had just seen. The critical comments all mentioned the 'symbolism', the 'fantasy', or the 'surrealism' of the play, noting its 'episodic' and 'exotic' qualities. But strangely enough, Miller notes, "expressionism was completely ignored as if it had never existed" (Ibid.).

It is noteworthy that despite its relative failure on Broadway and comparatively infrequent revivals, Camino Real remained one of

Williams's favorite works because he felt he had been "imaginatively freer in creating it than theatrical circumstances usually permitted"(Parker, 1998, p.42). For Williams, it is a "complete and courageous departure from past work like Alice in the Wonderland or Ubu Roi; it is a work of the imagination"(Ibid. p.51).

I believe that Camino Real is a key text in Williams's dramatic canon for it is "significant of its author's seed thoughts, impulses, and ambitions"(Harold Clurman, 1953, pp.293-4) that later to develop into the major features of Williams's plays. In this respect, Williams asserts

More than any other work I have done, this play seemed to me...nothing or less than my conception of the time and world where I live and its people are mostly archetypes and qualities with those mutations that would occur if they had continued along the road to this hypothetical point in it (Tennessee Williams, 1964, p.336).

Written in 1953, Camino Real expresses with great power the atmosphere of disenchantment, cynicism, disillusionment and disgust of the period after World War II and the beginning of the Cold War (Josh Roger, 2002, p.1). Since, expressionism, as an artistic style, is marked by "unreal atmosphere, nightmarish qualities of action, distortion and oversimplification, and the de-emphasis of individual characters, anti-realistic stage setting and telegraphic dialogue"(C. Hugh Holman, 1981, p.178), Williams realizes that it best suits this post-war atmosphere of alienation and uncertainty.

In a series of bed room vignettes written in broken prose and foreign phrases, and loosely linked by the legend of "the violet that would break the rock"(Tennessee Williams, Camino Real in Miller, 1962, p.158) (All subsequent quotations are from this edition), Williams portrays a sterile and oppressive world of panicky fears and barren lusts and of

human beings waiting for some signs of promise and redemption- the plane 'Fugitivo' in this case. In this sense, the play makes a clear statement about man's journey in an unfriendly world where man's life is a matter of starvation, frustration, swindling, brutality, indifference and humiliating death (Signi Lenea Falk, 1962, pp.47-8).

Hence, Williams's choice of expressionism as an approach to his drama is not accidental. On the contrary, it represents a conscious effort to mirror a new perception of reality. It is, as a matter of fact, a reflection of his attempt to create a form which is true to the realities of our modern times (Esther Jackson in Allan S. Downer, 1974, p.86).

In fact, Camino Real is all expressionism. The complete auditorium from balcony and orchestra aisles to boxes and pit combine with the stage to become the acting area. Time and space are without meaning. Individual characters appear and disappear with no relation to probability- some are native inhabitants of this desolate place, others are creatures of legends, of myth, of history and of past literary works such as Marguerite Gautier, better known as Camille, the heroine of Alexander Dumas's La Dame aux Camelias, Lord Byron, Baron de Charlus, the hero of Marcel Proust's Remembrance of Things Past, Esmeralda, the Gypsy, the heroine of Victor Hugo's The Hunchback of Notre Dame and Don Quixote, the hero of Cervantes's Don Quixote de la Mancha. In a very dazzling manner, the advent of each characters is marked by "A *HUNCHBACK MUMMER somersaults through hoop of silver bells, springs up and shakes it excitedly toward a downstage arch which begins to flicker with a diamond-blue radiance*"(p.164). It is only natural then to have the characters speak in various languages such as English, French, Italian and Spanish. Moreover, plausibility in Camino Real is no concern. Scene blends into scene without pause; broad and bawdy farce intrudes upon horror, meaningless nonsense upon moments of serious

thought. An over-all atmosphere of hysteria, which from time to time erupts without warning in an almost uncontrollable frenzy, permeates the whole work. Every possibility of electronic control in light and sound is employed to its maximum. Décor and costume, make-up and stage movement are grotesque, exaggerated and distorted. In theme itself, Miller observes, Williams is well within the tradition of expressionism, for he is intensely concerned with the fate of mankind in the corrupt society he has created for himself and with the inescapable loneliness of the human condition (1962, p.141).

Williams "first thought of the play when he was sick in desolate corner of Mexico, without friends and with an uneasy feeling that he might never escape. But the sickness still permeates the play that derives from that experience" (Brooks Atkinson, 1953, p.2). This may explain Atkinson's opinion that the world of Camino Real "is going out with neither a bang nor whimper but a leer and grimace of disgust. There is no health in it. With rare exception, everyone succumbs to depravity"(Ibid.).

Camino Real was originally the Royal Highway leading from Santafe to Chihuahua in Mexico. In this play, Williams chooses to make it "a terminal road, a dead end, a police state in a vaguely Latinate country from which there is no escape" (Barns, 1956, p.1) To give his setting a universal significance, Williams makes Camino Real, the tropical sea port "*bear a confusing but somehow harmonious resemblance to such widely scattered ports as Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca, Shanghai, New Orleans*"(p.146).

As a matter of fact, Camino Real was first written in 1948 as a one-act play called Ten Blocks on the Camino real. When Williams reworked it in the Camino Real of 1953, he deepened the symbolic meaning of the main character, Kilroy and attempted to give universal significance to the experience of this lonely misfit trapped in a surrealistic

world of decadence (Falk, 1962,p.120). In a truly Strindbergian manner, he also made of the longer version a dream play as Don Quixote, the lonely romantic falls asleep to dream of having a soul mate in a better world. Moreover, Williams adds to the play's already large cast several other romantics, few sexual perverts, a number of symbolic figures of evil and a kind of a chorus represented by the Street Cleaners (Ibid.).

Williams's prefatory quotation from Dante's Inferno "In the middle of the journey of our life, I come to myself in a dark wood where the straight way is lost" (The Divine Comedy, Canto 1) would imply that Camino Real is Williams's own version of hell. Camino Real is this dark wood from which there is no escape. It is no man's land between the desert and the sea wherein one does not see "nothing but nothing- and then more nothing" (p.160) and where one's luck "run out the day [he/she was] born"(p.180). It is noteworthy that at the back of the Plaza of the port, a flight of stairs mounts an ancient wall to "Terra Incognita", a "waste land" (p.147) between the town and the snow capped mountains at the distance. Moreover, in the centre of the town is a dry fountain. In this place, there is "nothing but the gradual wasting away of everything decent in [man]"(p.168) who can never leave it with honor, Marguerite Gautier desperately declares. With rare exception, almost all the characters are afraid of the unknown that awaits them upon leaving this place. Marguerite hits upon the truth when she frankly tells Jacques Casanova, "... the truth-the real not the royal truth is that you're terrified of the Terra Incognita outside that wall"(Ibid.). In the three sections of The Divine Comedy, the work Dante wrote after his exile from Florence in 1302, he portrayed the afterlife in Hell, Purgatory and Paradise. It tells a great deal about the waste land which becomes so pervasive a theme in modern literature. In Camino Real, Williams was able to use only the first two sections of Dante's work: the Inferno and the Purgation. Heaven is

closed to his characters. In the spiritual sterility which he describes, there is no place for faith in the redeeming Christ, for beatitude and the rituals of salvation. Williams's subject is suffering (Stephen Coote, 1985, p.113).

However, the play is not totally pessimistic. As Steve Vineberg suggests, there is a whiff of implausible hope in its decaying and oppressive atmosphere. Williams locates this hope in the dreamers and romantics whose devotion to love and whose willingness to reach out to each other marks them as rebels (1999, p.2). Williams himself insists that Camino Real is not a "document of despair, but of eternal idealism" (Nancy M. Tischler, 1961, p.20), and that it had served him as a "spiritual purgation of that abyss of confusion and lost sense of reality that [he] and those others had somehow wandered into"(qtd. in Falk, 1962, p.121). This hope is apparent in Kilroy's refusal to surrender to Gasper Gutman's totalitarian regime, in Jacques Casanova's devotion to his 'Lady', and in Lord Byron and Marguerite's determination to escape the rotten world they are living in. Marguerite staunchly tries to convince Casanova that the 'violets'(i.e., love) he is looking for can't grow on Camino Real, and as a result will not break the rocks because they are "fertilized by the carrion birds" (p.175). In his answer, Casanova strongly holds the view that the violets in the mountains can break the rocks if Marguerite, the woman he passionately loves, believes in them and allows them to grow (Ibid.), which is actually what happens at the end of the play. Williams here stresses man's need for love and understanding. He believes that

Every artist has a basic premise pervading his whole life, and that premise can provide the impulse to everything he creates....The dominating premise has been the need for understanding and tenderness and fortitude among individuals trapped by circumstances" (Lincoln Barnett, 1948, p.113).

In Camino Real, the division between the world of the privilege and the world of deprivation is very clear. Trapped in a border zone redolent of Hollywood's Casablanca, at the edge of seemingly eerie desert, the wealthy characters languish at the "Siete Mares", a luxurious hotel run by the despotic Gutman or, if their money supplies run dry, they seek a room at one of Camino's seedier establishment, a bag flea hotel called "Ritz Men Only". Accordingly, the residents of Camino Real fall into two main classes, "the unwashed mob and those rich enough to have a good life, neither of which are allowed the smallest freedom"(Roger, 2002, p.1). Between the Siete Mares and the "Ritz Men Only" is a public square used by both parties. It is also the haunt of the eerie giggling Street Cleaners whose job is to take away the dead bodies of the rich and poor alike. It is important to note that death, symbolized by them, is treated with humiliating indifference. The destiny of the dead body depends on "what the Street Cleaners happen to find in its pockets"(p.159). The Siete Mares hotel contains elegance, but its elegance is stained with greed, lust and gluttony. The opposite side of the square is the ultimate depth of complete human degradation and spiritual collapse, although life at the "Ritz Men Only" is in reality no more decayed than at Gutman's house of brilliant darkness. In fact, Williams not only finds life to have no safe attractive compromise, but he denies the existence of human dignity or self-respect at either side (Miller, 1962, p.140).

In the midst of this forbidding scene, centered within a fearful expanse of nothingness, all kinds of men and women exist. How they arrived there remains the permanent unknown. At his arrival, Kilroy asks Gutman's Officers "What is this place? What is this country and what is the name of this town?" (p.155). The same feeling of uncertainty and bewilderment is expressed by Marguerite who says

...what are we sure of? Not even of our existence...And whom can we ask the question that torments us? What is this place? Where? Why...We're threatened with eviction, for this a port of entry and departure, there are no permanent guests!...We're lonely. We're frightened. We hear the Street Cleaners not far away (p.175).

Williams chooses to present his non-permanent guests in Camino Real in terms of their last agonies, at "that time of life when full payment for every uninhibited dissipation must be made"(Miller, 1962, p.141). Casanova, the symbol of eternal rake; Marguerite, the image of all the enticements of the life of love; Byron, the poet, aesthete, and immoralist; and Baron de Charlus, the masochistic homosexual all find the truth about themselves, and in themselves reflect all "who would live as they have, faced with the final decision of what to make of their nearly spent lives" (Ibid.). In this sense, Camino Real is a kind of dead-end street, a grand avenue that has deteriorated and where the inhabitants are desperate transients.

What happens in this modern inferno is supposed to be a dream of Don Quixote, who wears a bit of faded blue ribbon which is the color of nobility to remind himself of distances gone and those yet to go, of green country, and of the spirit in his heart before such singing words as 'truth', 'valor', and 'devoir' turned into "meaningless mumble of some old monk hunched over cold mutton at supper" (p.147). The play opens with Sancho's decision to leave his master, Don Quixote who enters the Plaza and hears everyone whispering about their loneliness. He says "...in a place where so many are lonely ..., it would be inexcusably selfish to be lonely alone"(p.148), a statement which Williams calls key to the meaning of the play. To Quixote's surprise, the last two words are echoed softly by "*almost unseen figures huddled below the stairs and against the wall of the town*"(Ibid.). In fact, Williams believes that man's loneliness

results from "a singular lack of human give and take, of true emotional reciprocity"(1950, p.19) in a highly mechanized society whose complicated and materialistic nature helps to deepen the sense of isolation of human beings and their inability to communicate with each other. Completely disappointed, Quixote lies down to sleep and to dream. He describes his dream as "a pageant, a masque" in which "old meanings will be remembered and possibly new ones discovered" (p.148). He will also choose, among the shadows of the dream a new companion in place of Sancho.

The characterization of Don Quixote betokens the collapse of the values of the old chivalric world. He is dressed as a "desert rat", and as he enters the aisle, he shouts 'Hola!' in a cracked old voice. Moreover, Sancho mutters the Spanish word for excrement as several pieces of Quixote's rusty armor fall into the aisle (p.147).

Gutman, the proprietor of the luxurious Siete Mares manipulates the sixteen short scenes. A caricature of a businessman and symbolic of the power of money and brutal dictatorship, he considers the world a bazaar where the human heart is part of the bargain and views people as thieves, mendicants, prostitutes and vendors (p.153). More important than this, he considers 'Hermano, i.e., brother' the most dangerous word in any human tongue. "It is inflammatory [and] it disturbs the population" (Ibid.). In fact, Gutman deliberately distorts the meaning of this word. He points out that a 'brother' is "someone to get ahead off, to lie to, to cheat, and to undersell in the market" (Ibid.). Therefore, it is necessary to invoke the martial law to suppress it. Moreover, with the help of his stooges, Gutman destroys any sign of independence which he considers the intolerable spirit of anarchy. After being compelled to work as a Patsy, (i.e. clown), Kilroy listens to Casanova saying "You have a spark of

anarchy in your spirit and that's not to be tolerated. Nothing wild or honest is tolerated here" (p.164).

Another word from which Gutman is potentially afraid is 'freedom'. He and the Street People make fun of Lord Byron's participation in the Greek revolutionary war. Byron insists on the importance of freedom and struggle in man's life. He is determined to leave his present self to his self "as he used to be"(p.168). He tells Gutman "There is a time for departure even when there's no certain place to go to! I'm going to look for one now. I'm sailing to Athens" (p.170). It is apparent that Byron, like the other characters, longs for a glorious past that can't be retrieved. Before attempting his escape, Byron launches into an emotional soliloquy about the human heart and the role of the poet in his society. He believes that a poet has a cause to struggle for even if others make fun of him. A poet's vocation is to purify the heart and lift it above its ordinary level, for "what is the heart but a sort of instrument that translates noise into music, chaos into order"(p.169). Unfortunately, this noble vocation was obscured and lost among "masked balls and glittering salons"(Ibid.). Byron indirectly blames the public for the kind of writing he did during the present period. He makes a veiled comment on the demoralized character of the times, "There is a passion for declivity in this world" (p.170), a statement which Falk believes is a reflection of Williams's rather than Byron's opinion of modern times (1962, p.128).

As images of decay, sterility and impotence reign supreme in Camino Real, Sancho advises his master to escape, "the time has come for retreat" to which Quixote replies "The time for retreat never comes" (p.148). In this sense, Quixote is in the state of rebellion against the status quo. Quixote has known the royal time- before the loss of innocence and the oppressive totalitarian regime made it the present real. Accordingly

his presence demonstrates that even in chaos where there is no meaning, there will always be hope.

In Camino Real, one has to be realistic and practical. Dreams and romantic love have no place in it. Prudence Duvernoy tells the story of Marguerite who foolishly leaves a wealthy man who adores her to take a young penniless lover. Eventually, he is disinherited by his father because of her. Marguerite is a drug addict, an escapee from a sanitarium. Times for her, as for other characters, have changed. Whereas she used to be paid for the pleasures she gave, she must now pay for the 'love' which she hopes will retard the onslaught of age. She mouths Williams's cynical view of love, that it is not tenderness but two people becoming a habit with each other. Bored with the devotion of Casanova and offering for another her "cabochon Sapphire", she sends for a young gigolo who finally robs and insults her. In fact, Gutman believes that "the love of people belongs safely to their Generalissimo!"(p.152). This is to show the oppressive and pressurized circumstances under which people are living in Camino Real.

It is noteworthy that most of the women in Camino Real, except La Madrecita de los Predidos (i.e., Little Mother of the Lost Ones) who symbolically acts the role of 'Mary, The Virgin' seem to be an aging prostitute. Olympe and Prudence Duvernoy are overpainted and overdressed grotesques. In a grotesque scene, Prudence pokes Casanova obscenely and he recoils. She further advises those around her not to dream because a dream in Camino Real is nothing to live on.

Moreover, an atmosphere of nightmarish intimidation reigns supreme in Camino Real. The wealthy clients at the fashionable Siete Mares suffer from extreme fatigue; all of them have a degree or two of fever. Serious questions are passed amongst them like something illicit and shameful, like counterfeit money or drug or indecent postcards

(p.151). When Kilroy asks Casanova about the destiny of those who die in Camino Real, the latter answers

The exchange of serious questions and ideas especially between persons from opposite sides of the plaza, is regarded unfavorably here...If I start to whistle "La Golondrina", it means we're being overheard by the Guards on the terrace (p.159).

As a result, they engage in silly and meaningless conversations about fashionable couturiers and custom tailors, restaurants, vintages of wine, and plastic surgeries just to spend time (p.151). What really happens in Camino Real is not of their concern. They are the hollow waste Landers of T. S. Eliot, insignificant men and women who are characterized by their helplessness and inability to cope with the realities of life. It is only natural then that they do not bother themselves with what happens to the Survivor. The Survivor, "*a figure in rags, skin blackened by the sun*"(p.150), believes that his horse, Peeto, is wiser than him because when Peeto was born "he stood on his four legs at once and accepted the world"(p.151). Block Two opens with a detailed description of what has happened to him in Camino Real

He tumbles crazily down the sleep alley to the plaza. He turns about blindly, murmuring "Where is the fountain?" He stumbles against the hideous prostitute Rosita who grins ... gives him a jocular push toward the fountain. He falls upon his belly and thrusts his hands into the dried-up basin. Then he staggers to his feet with a despairing cry (p.150).

As Gutman's Officers fire at him, He drags himself slowly about the concrete rim of the fountain, "*almost entirely ignored, as a dying pariah dog in a starving country*" (p.151). Gutman considers this an insignificant incident that does not concern the people of Camino Real.

Actually, he is potentially afraid of the Survivor as well as the Dreamer who accompanies La Madrecita to the Plaza. Gutman objects to the Generallismo's description of the dreamers who are loved by the people. He considers those two things "dreaming and love" dangerous and harmful because "Revolution only needs good dreamers who remember their dreams"(p.152). When the Dreamer utters 'Hermano', the cry is repeated like a "*singing fire and a loud murmur sweeps the crowd*" (p.153). This cry is accompanied by the Madrecita chanting softly with her blind eyes lifted "Red is the sun! Red is the Sun of blood! White is the moon! White is the moon of fear" (Ibid.). 'Blood' and 'Fear' shed light on the atmosphere of terror under which people of Camino Real are writhing.

At his moment, Gutman thinks it would be better to "have some public diversion right away. Put the Gypsy on! Have her announce the Fiesta" (p.153). As a matter of fact, the Gypsy and her baby-faced daughter Esmeralda are brought on the stage whenever the street people need to be distracted from injustice or brutality. In his stage direction, Williams points out "*The Fiesta is a sort of serio-comic, grotesque-lyric 'Rites of Fertility' with roots in various pagan cultures*" (p.177). In this sense, it is a communal celebration associated with a variety of rites-religious, political and sexual (Philip Kolin, 1999, p.42). In this Fiesta, Esmeralda is supposed to restore her virginity at the moonrise. However, instead of having an animated celebration and eye-pleasing pageantry, this Fiesta leads to degradation and denial of love and brotherhood. Kolin points out that "by inverting traditional, comfortable Hispanic rituals and customs", Williams furthers his political goals (Ibid.). He intends the Fiesta as a criticism of any totalitarian political system that oppresses man and intimidates him. In fact, the Generallismo and Gutman have transformed the Fiesta into "a propagandized sideshow deflecting

attention and anger away from the harsh reprisals against the exercise of human rights"(Ibid). The first event in the Fiesta is the coronation of "The King of Cuckolds", i.e. Casanova. Like Marguerite, times have changed for Casanova. The Real Camino makes the once upon time chevalier, knight, and adventurer a "Con man extraordinary! Gambler! Pitch-man! Pimp! Spiv! And-great-lover" (p.176). As Casanova is now bankrupt and about to move to "Ritz Men Only", Gutman chooses him to play the role of a 'cuckold' which is the deepest humiliating culmination of his career. Another significant item in the Fiesta is the show put on by "the hideous old prostitute, Rosita, who grins horribly ...hitching up her ragged, filthy skirt [and] pulling down the filthy décolletage of her blouse to show more of her sagging bosom"(pp.150-151). As she dances, she asks, "Love? Love?" profaning the sacred bond. In this sense, her entertainment, like politics in Camino Real, is "corrupt and corrupting"(Kolin, 1999, p.42). Her actions and her name debase the sacred romantic bond and are tantamount to a devaluation of love. In fact, the desolation of the Plaza which suggests "a city devastated by bombardment"(p.174) is metamorphosized into human form through Rosita.

The last item in the Fiesta is concerned with forcing Kilroy into having a clown's outfit with a red fright wig, a big crimson nose that lights up, horn rimmed glasses and a big footprint on the seat of the pants, "an outfit that obviously signifies man's loss of dignity"(Falk, 1962, p.125).

Kilroy, the all American veteran and ex-boxer, ubiquitous soldier of fortune, naïve with a "heart as big as the head of the baby"(p.154) arrives at the Plaza at the beginning of the Fiesta. He is, Vineberg believes, "Williams's parodic representation of the undownable Yankee spirit", for he is made boyishly sweet, huge hearted, and a boxing champ

in the tradition of the American athlete hero. Like the other characters, he does not know how he gets into this place (1999, p.2).

Like Quixote, Kilroy had known the royal time when he had the love of his one true woman. Marguerite says to him, "Then you have been on the street when the street was royal", "Yeah", Kilroy answers, "When the street was royal"(p.186).

Kilroy complains of his troubles at length: tropical fever on a ship without medical care; forced retirement from the prize ring because of a bad heart; forced renunciation of liquor, smoking and sex; and loving a wife afraid of a big hard kiss because it would kill him (pp.154-155).

As he crosses to the fountain, Kilroy sees the body of the Survivor. Panic-stricken, he kneels beside the body to investigate the matter. He desperately shouts and his shouts are answered by the Street Cleaners' piping. They trundle their white barrel into the Plaza from one of the down stage arches to carry the dead away. It is noteworthy that the appearance of these men undergoes a progressive alteration through the play. When they first appear,

They are almost like any such public servants in a tropical country; their white jackets are dirtier than the musicians and some of the stains are red. They are continuously exchanging sly jokes and giggling unpleasantly together (p.156).

Apparently, their appearance and actions are intended to symbolize the cannibalism Williams abhors. Kolin strongly holds the view that they represent "the visible secret police exterminating dissenters, especially wanderers and artists" (1999, p.42).

In the first few moments of his arrival, Kilroy experiences another shocking incident. His wallet was lift. Kilroy protests and demands an explanation of the whole situation. He asks about the location of the Post

Office so as to send a wire to some friend in the United States (p.154), and about the American Embassy to investigate the theft incident. His questions, as expected, are not answered. Therefore, Kilroy feels that he enters a dream world for the Officers tell him that "You just dreaming that you have money. You don't ever have money" (p.156). As a result, Kilroy reaches the impression that "nothing in this community does much good.... This place is confusing to me. I think it must be the aftereffects of fever. Nothing seems real" (p.158).

In his refusal to wear the Patsy's outfit and in his hysterical chase all over theatre aisles, box, and balconies, Kilroy symbolizes "all men's rebellion against loss of dignity and impending death"(Falk, 1962, p.187). As the Officers try to shove him down roughly to the Patsy's outfit, Kilroy suddenly tosses it into Gutman's face and leaps into the aisle of the theatre. He desperately looks for a way out. He cries

How do I get out? Which way do I go ...out?
Where's the Greyhound depot?...If there is any
way out? I got to find one. I had enough of this
place. I had too much of this place. I'm free. I'm
free man with equal rights in this world!...I see
a sign that says EXIT. That's a sweet word to me,
man, that's a lovely word, Exit! That's the
entrance to paradise for Kilroy! EXIT, I'm
coming, I'm coming (p.162).

As the events of the play imply, it seems that Williams's answer to these poignant questions is that it is "the same either way- fictional Latin American country or real American Republic" (Kolin, 1999, p.41). In this sense, Camino Real can be seen as "Williams's emancipatory manifesto hurled against any right wing dictator/oligarchy, whether in Central America or in the United States" (Ibid.). It is a personal outcry against the suffocating atmosphere of oppression and intimidation which many intellectual Americans suffer from in the 1950s. Just it was impossible to

escape from Camino Real, it was impossible to evade Joseph McCarthy's witch hunts in America. An artist in a repressive America or in Camino Real is any one who values love, freedom, and speaks the forbidden word 'Brother'. In this sense, Kilroy is both freedom fighter and a disposed artist just like Williams during the Summer of 1948 when the idea of Camino Real flowered in his imagination"(Ibid., p.42).

In a double scene, Kilroy's attempt to escape from Gutman's Officers is timed with Esmerald's attempt to free herself from her captors. In a scene of violence and confusion, she bursts out of the Gypsy's establishment like an animal broken out of a cage. She darts among the Street People to the front of the Crowd which is shouting like the spectators at the climax of a bullfight.

Kilroy and Esmeralda's shouts are mostly lost in the general rhubarb of the chase and the shouting Street People. Esmeralda crouches on the forestage, screaming encouragement in Spanish to Kilroy, the fugitive. Although she savagely fights her Captors, she is finally "*overwhelmed and dragged back, fighting all the way toward the door from which she escaped*" (p.162).

Shots are fired in the air by Kilroy's Pursuers. In a wild chase, he dashes panting into the boxes of the theatre, darting from one box to another, shouting incoherently, and sometimes sobbing for breath. He leaps onto the stage and crumples up with a twisted ankle. Meanwhile, Esmeralda screams demoniacally, breaks from her mother and rushes to him, fighting off his Pursuers who have leapt after him from the box. As she is seized by her Captors, Kilroy is seized by his Pursuers. The Officers beat him to his knees. Each time he is struck, Esmeralda screams as if she received the blow herself. As his cries subside into sobbing, so do hers, and at the end, when he is quite helpless, she is also overcome by her Captors and as they drag her back to the Gypsy's establishment, she

cries to Kilroy, "They've got you! They've got me! Caught! Caught! We're caught" (p.163). In this sense, they are conned, like the rest, into despairing subjection.

Meanwhile, the 'Fugitivo', the non-scheduled and long awaited plane has unexpectedly arrived at Camino Real. This scene as Williams explains in the stage direction is a "scene for improvisation", for it is

...punctuated by crashes of percussion. Grotesque Mummies act as demon custom inspectors and immigration authorities. Baggage is tossed about, ripped open, smuggled goods seized, arrests made, all amid the wide importunities, protests, threats, bribes, entreaties...(p.172).

Unfortunately, access to the plane is denied to all the characters. Lord Mulligan feels terribly sick; he dies the moment he ascends the staircase of the plane. Marguerite can not travel in the Fugitivo because of the Pilot's insistence that "payment is only accepted in pounds sterling or dollars" not Francs (Ibid.). Her frenzied reaction is a reflection of the desperation and the misery people suffer from in Camino Real. In a hysterical manner, she "*makes violent, crazed gestures, clinging to the railing of the steps; her breath is loud and hoarse as a dying person,...She holds a blood- stained handkerchief to her lips*" (p.174).

Similarly, Kilroy's attempt to escape from Camino Real is temporarily thwarted by the cunning bawd Gypsy who offers her baby-faced daughter, Esmeralda. Now she is carried on the stage reclining on a low divan. The description of Esmeralda recalls the 'femme fatale' of the silent film- a veil over her face, a girdle below her navel, a diaphanous skirt, and green snakes over her breast (p.180). Kilroy looks upon this glittering daughter of Eve and gets dizzy. Instead of offering love to Kilroy, Esmeralda indulges in some thoughtful comments about the monetary system, the class struggle and the collapse of religious faith

which are "more likely the acid observation of her own creator than ideas from her own little head (Falk, 1962, p.126). Kilroy prefers a more intimate conversation. When Nursie pointedly warns that the lovers have only fifteen minutes, a symbolic courtship scene begins. It is another variation on Williams's seduction scene that becomes "more and more conspicuous in his later plays" (Ibid.). The courtship scene which is part of the "fertility rites" is often a "conglomeration of the innuendo and the blatantly obvious, the precious and the corny, the silly and the sentimental, the caustic and the humorous" (Ibid.). It seems to be, Falk believes, Williams's comment about American women who are "sex-obsessed and ruthlessly cunning, and wholly incapable of love" (Ibid, p.127). After this symbolic scene between Esmeralda, the mercenary doll and the disillusioned American boy, Kilroy describes love as no better than the four-letters word which youngsters scribble on fences when they run away from school. Both of them talk about being gentle and sincere, words that are repeated ad nauseam; and he admits that this love game was not worth the gloves he pawned to pay for it.

The "fertility rites" is followed almost immediately by the death scene. Pestered by the Street Cleaners, Kilroy taunts them to come and get him, "COME ON, YOU SONS OF BITCHES! KILROY IS HERE! HE'S READY!" (p.187). These verbal hysterics are set out in solid capital letters and exclamation points. This is to show that Kilroy, for all his loneliness and disappointments in love, is a man of courage and responsibility.

In another double scene, La Madrecita, with the body of Kilroy across her knees, speaks obituary praises at the same time as the medical students perform a post-mortem on him. Since no one has identified Kilroy, he is classified as "unidentified vagrant" and his body will be the property of the State within few days (p.188). La Madrecita begs the

audience to remember Kilroy when he was at the peak of his career, and not when he was frightened and defeated. She makes an appeal to all failures and deformed creatures to pray for one of their own whose heart was "as big as the head of a baby". And then, in one of the most incredible bits of fantasy, La Madrecita effects Kilroy's resurrection with a touch of flowers. After all this sentiment and theatrical legerdemain, Kilroy awakens; rubs his eyes; watches the medics remove the golden sphere from a dummy corpse- his solid golden heart; and hears them talk about 'pathological lesions" (Ibid.).

Although Kilroy snatches the golden sphere from the medical instructor, the autopsy proceeds as if nothing has happened. Immediately, a ghostly, dream-like chase reminiscent of the previous rhubarb commences. This dream-like atmosphere is reinforced in Kilroy's agonized questioning as to the real nature of his experience in Camino Real. He says, "I'm lost! I don't know where I'm!...I'm confused, I don't understand what's happened, It's like a-dream "(p.189). At this moment, Kilroy cries, "Mary, help a Christian!" (Ibid.). This call is significant because firstly, it shows man's need for faith in something, let it be God, brotherhood, love or flower to ward off the feelings of loneliness and frustration and secondly, it affirms man's responsibility for severing his relationship with the basic premises of certitude the most important of which is religious faith.

In an extended burst of rhetoric, Esmeralda embraces all the failures and disillusionments of the Camino Real people and gives an incredibly articulate statement which can be described as a resume of the play

God blesses all con men and hustlers and pitchmen who hawk their hearts on the street, all two-time losers who're likely to lose once more, the courtesan who made the mistake of love, the

greatest of lovers crowned with the greatest horns, the poet who wandered far from his heart's green country...., look down with a smile tonight on the last cavaliers, the one with the rusty armor and soiled white plumes, and visit with understanding and something that's almost tender those fading legends that come and go in this plaza like songs not clearly remembered, oh, sometime and somewhere, let there be something to mean the word *honor* again! (p.189)

Falk believes that his is one of the "fullest and most romantic prayers that Williams has written for the outcast and the defeated (1962, p.128).

Thinking that he has found another true woman in Esmeralda, Kilroy is soon disillusioned. His final comments about his experience on Camino Real suggests that nothing really happened to him; he is still the cry baby, this time bitter over being cheated in love. Taking the advice of the old knight of dreams, Don Quixote, who says "Don't! Pity! Your! Self!" (p.190), Kilroy walks off, 'mugging' to the audience and 'leering' about his new companion. The play closes on a falsely optimistic note when the old Knight, watching Casanova and Marguerite in a doubtful reconciliation scene, speaks the symbolic line: "The violets in the mountains have broken the rocks" (p.191). As he speaks and as Kilroy prepares to cross the terror of the desert outside, the fountain begins squirting water, which would seem to be "another last-minute gesture of hope- or a bit of attention to the scenery" (Falk, 1962, p.128).

In his preface to The Dream Play (1902), August Strindberg says,

Anything may happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist. On an insignificant background of reality, imagination designs and embroiders novel patterns; a medley of memories, experiences,

free fantasies, absurdities and improvisations
(B.S. Goyal, 1996, p.85)

Strindberg lightly calls this play a 'Dream Play' because, as he declares, it tries to "imitate the disconnected but seemingly logical form of the dream" (Ibid.).

Reading Camino Real carefully, one gets the impression that Williams, a convalescent on a Mexican beach, had just read Strindberg's A Dream Play and had written his own adaptation. In fact, Williams himself declares that his aim of writing Camino Real was to give the audience "something wild or unrestricted that ran like water in the mountains or clouds changing shape in a gale, on the continually dissolving and transforming images of a dream"(qtd in Falk, 1962,121).

Williams chooses to put a dream situation onto the stage in which the rules of the realistic theatre are no longer valid. This enables him to gather characters from widely different nationalities and social backgrounds. This is to emphasize the universality of man's dilemma. In fact, in so doing, Williams is able to draw correspondences between the problems of the twentieth century and those of the earlier epochs in human history. Bewildered at the meaningless and the unreality of the whole atmosphere in the post-war period of breakdown and despair, Williams believes that his artistic expression could hardly have taken any other form except crazy actions and resorting to dreams where there is no plot, no identity, and no logical development of character and events. As Roger points out that Camino Real seems to be the "last stop on a trajectory along which we seem to be still headed; a trajectory that rewards utilitarianism, violence, and oppression over personal liberty and artistic freedom (2002. p.3).

Ultimately, the play appropriately befits the general climate of the fifties as man was caught up in a web of sudden changes in all aspects of life.

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