

Laboratoire de domiciliation du master: Etude des Langues et des Cultures Etrangères

Dedications

To

Our beloved parents, brothers and sisters

To

Our friends and relatives

To

Our mates (Lycia, Rezika and Dyhia)

Thinhinane and Nadia.

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Abstract

This dissertation deals with the issue of American counterculture in Tennessee Williams plays 'Camino Real (1953) and Suddenly Last Summer (1958). Our main interest in this research paper is to depict the aspects of American counterculture in the selected plays. Therefore, we have borrowed some concepts of New Historicism. Throughout our study of the two works, we have reached the conclusion that, Williams is regarded as an avant gardist of American Counterculture which has its roots from the fifties. Our discussion is divided into three chapters. The first chapter explores the American cultural non conformism, whereas the second chapter is devoted to a tribute to two American historical figures. The third one tackles the psychological trauma of the main characters in both plays which reflects the psychological side of Americans of the fifties and sixties.

Introduction

This piece of research intends to explore aspects of American Counterculture in American playwright Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). Our purpose is to look into the ways the American dramatist depicts post World War II era in America and the extent to which he stands as an Avantgardist in his depiction of the movement of American counterculture. The latter has reshaped American religious, social, psychological and cultural life. It is of great importance in this piece of research to emphasize that American Counterculture refers to the Beat Generation; a group of poets and writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Henry David and Herbert Huncke who praised freedom, exploration and rejected the traditional social norms and values. They adopted the existentialist philosophy in poetry, jazz and literature. The counterculture era was marked by the assassination of the president of the United States of America John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

This span of time knew great changes in distinct aspects of American society, young Americans were disappointed about their country's fate and the materialistic American society was for them a denial of the American Dream in which they believed.¹ They were seeking for equality, sexual freedom, rejecting the new shape of life based on appearance only with no regard to human heart, sensitivity and beauty. It led to the emergence of a non conservative movement known as Counterculture.² Therefore, our intention is to explore and discuss the ways into which Tennessee Williams stands as an Avantgardist in his depiction of aspects of American Counterculture years before its advent.

a. Review of the Literature

From our research on the literature written on Williams' plays, we have noticed that the playwright and his plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer*

(1958) have been considerably scrutinized from various perspectives. It is worthy to say that during our investigation, we have witnessed that very little criticism was devoted to Williams' works compared to that of his contemporaries. We have also noticed that most criticism on Williams' drama is more or less limited to psychological or biographical perspectives.

To begin with, *Camino Real* was first published in 1953. Critics claimed that it confused the audience because of Williams' innovative and complex style introduced in it. Jennifer Banach is among the critics who shared this view. In "*Bloom's How to Write about Tennessee Williams*" (2009), the critic asserts that:

Williams in *Camino Real* abandoned the realism of Williams' previous works, the actions of the plot were illogic and nonsensical, and the audience may have trouble recognizing many characters who were taken primary from European literature.³

Besides, the same critic assumes that readers frequently tend to gravitate toward the examination of plot first; however in *Camino Real* the understanding of the plot is difficult, it is through the dialogue which occurs between characters that one can understand the events.⁴ From this piece of criticism it is clear that Banach fails to say that Williams and his play revolutionized the world of American theatre since she claims that Williams goes beyond his traditional ways in writings and in spite of the reproaches she makes, she recognizes that Williams proposes to his audience something different from what they were accustomed to.

In the "*Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*" (1992), Jan Balakian, handled Williams' *Camino Real* from a literary perspective. He asserts that the latter is an allegory about being trapped in a fascist state.⁵ This critic adds that, it is Williams most personal play. The same critics affirms that Williams' own philosophy which is romanticism is of a great importance.⁶ The critic explains that by romanticism he means the ability to feel tenderness toward another human being. According to him, "The

ability to love” is an ability reached by not following the dehumanizing experiences on the *Camino Real* to brutalize one’s spirit.⁷

It is evident that *Camino Real* as this critic says, reflects well Williams’ influential philosophy which is romanticism, and it is well embodied by one of the most important characters who is Don Quixote, but he neglects to mention the fears and schizophrenia that characterized the 50s and 60s. In addition, in the same piece of criticism, it is mentioned that *Camino Real* is a mythic and poetic allegory about characters who find themselves in the middle of journeys of their lives where the straightway is lost.⁸ The critic asserts also that Williams describes his characters in that middle realm between life and death where everybody gather at the end of their life’s journey while they are already dead, they have to remember their lives and their memories pain them. They want to come back to their lives, but the way is barred. The critic adds:

Similarly, the characters who inhabit the Camino Real represent a microcosm of society; the outcasts, bums, drunks, the street people who dance, sing, prostitute themselves and steal.⁹

From this piece of criticism, it is apparent that Williams’ play has been studied from the literary perspective. It is well explained that Williams’ characters represent the people of a society living their everyday lives, trying to survive. They are in a continuous fight. They are haunted by their souvenirs. They don’t want to give up even after death, according to the selected piece of criticism. Yet, it is apparent that both critics missed to see Williams’ *Camino Real* as a reflection of the era and its Counterculture.

Nancy M. Tishler is another critic who studied *Camino Real* in her book “*Student Companion to Tennessee Williams*” (2000). Tishler remains one of Williams critics who has always linked Williams’ oeuvre to his own fears and abnormalities. She states that Williams in his play, returns to the thematic premise that we all live in walled-in space

surrounded by a frightening wasteland.¹⁰ Tishler assumes that Williams believed that man is both an individual and a social creature hungry for human contact and frightened of the vulnerability involved in touching or being touched.¹¹ The same critic adds that the characters in *Camino Real* realize that this contact is not necessary to be sexual. In fact, she gives the example of the old married couple that shows little sympathy to one another. It is instead the old lovers and not the young ones who show genuine affection for one another as she says. In addition the critic argues that money was of great importance in Williams' life. He considers it as the key to social acceptance and certainly money is essential for housing, food, and companionship and survival itself.¹²

As the above mentioned critic assumes, it is certain that Williams has developed themes such as pain, relationships, love and materialism in *Camino Real*, however, it is surprising how the critic neglects the link between these themes and the 50s American culture as rendered by Williams in his plays. After all, he was the avantgardist of the extravagances of the 50s and 60s.

Like *Camino Real* (1953), *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) has been criticised from different perspectives. In *A Guide to Research and Performances* (1998), Philip C. K acknowledges that Williams himself confessed that among all his writings, *Suddenly Last Summer* is the first play that reflects the emotional trauma of his life.¹³ The same critic states that this piece of art mirrors well Williams' experience in psychoanalysis with Dr Lawrence Kubie who sought to disaccustom Williams not only from his artistic anxiety but also of his sexuality by urging him to forgo writing.¹⁴

The critic adds that *Suddenly Last Summer* shows well Williams' misbelief of medical science by contrasting harshly the great power that society accords to medicine despite the severe limitation of technology. To illustrate the point, Kolin says that the

potential lobotomy (a surgical operation on the frontal lobe of the brain, it intends to treat certain mental illnesses), is threatening Catherine, the female main character, reflects the fate of his sister Rose who remained lastingly institutionalised after a liberal lobotomy in 1943.¹⁵ From the criticism mentioned above, one can deduce that Williams' work is greatly inspired by his personal experiences, however the critic does not handle the play as an artistic work but as an autobiographical one.

Christopher Bigsby and Don B.Wilmeth in "*The Cambridge History of American Theatre*" (2000),state that Williams renews his familiar motifs of individual loneliness, sexuality, bigotry and the collective pain of Southern community that has succumbed to a degenerate modern world. The critics also point out that the play offers drama a small achievements and large disappointment showing little inclination to endorse the psychological, sexual or spiritual lives and families in the Mississippi town. Moreover the critics claim that:

Williams' distress was even more emphatically expressed in *Suddenly Last Summer*. The central image of that play: Children, armed with tin cans, savagery tearing the flesh of a decadent, homosexual poet then cannibalizing his body morbidly memorializes the loss of a world once defined by civility and grace as well as the fear of the misfit who challenges the natural laws of sexuality or withdraws from society to be the artist.¹⁶

From the quotations above, it is apparent that *Suddenly Last Summer* has been analyzed from a psychological perspective.¹⁷ What is apparent in this piece of criticism is its failure to see the psychological issues reflected by Williams as cultural , not personal and the characteristic of the two coming decades in America.

Another critic who studied *Suddenly Last Summer* is Gilabert Barbera. In his article *Literature and Mythology in Tennessee Williams' Suddenly Last Summer: Fighting against Venus and Oedipus* .Departing from the mythological perspective, Barbera assumes that the play is:

Basically a drama on God, on the human search for him, on His true face, on the dawn of the world, on Nature-God's, on life and on men's and women's longing to become the privileged beneficiaries of God's providence.¹⁸

The critic adds that: "The God of the play does not take care of human beings, he is not provident or pronoeitic".¹⁹ Barbera explains that one can understand that Williams blames God

for abandoning human beings to their tragic destiny without interfering.

Again, Barbera just like previous critics neglects to see Williams' play as the reflexion of a 60s American Counterculture and the decade's profanation of religious conservatism.

It is clear that Tennessee Williams *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958) have been the point of interest of a lot of critics. Yet, it seems to us that most criticism lack completion. In fact, Jennifer Banach stressed on the new stylistic aspects that Williams brought within his play *Camino Real*, putting aside the historical aspects, in addition, Jan Balakian focuses on the philosophical characteristics behind this play. He studied this piece of art from the characterization perspectives neglecting certain angles. In addition, Nancy Tischler studied this play from the autobiographical perspective forgetting that *Camino Real* is rich on other issues. Similarly, *Suddenly Last Summer* has been studied from different perspectives mainly the psychological and autobiographical. In fact, most critics overlooked the cultural dimension of both works. Philip C Kolin, for example insists on the extent to which Williams' life experiences are reflected in his works of art.

b. Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the above review of literature, it is clear that both Williams' plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer* are world widely known pieces of literature, whose significance has attracted a lot of critical attention, yet it is surprising to notice that very

little importance has been given to the issue of American counterculture in both works. Therefore, our task is to tackle this issue in both plays under the theoretical guidelines of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism and borrowing some concepts of Sigmund Freud's theory on repression.

Throughout our investigation, we will try to answer the two following questions: To what extent was Tennessee Williams influenced by the socio-cultural movement of the fifties and sixties, how do Williams' plays mirror both eras' shaping American counterculture?

c. Methodological outline

Our memoir is undertaken following the IMRAD system. Our work begins with an introduction that states our main purpose. It includes a review of some criticism on Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. It also contains the issue and working hypothesis. The Methods and Materials section provides a short summary of New Historicism borrowed from Stephen Greenblatt's book *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982) and Sigmund Freud's main concepts on psychoanalysis from his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). It also includes brief summaries of the two plays, their historical backgrounds and settings, as well as short biography of Tennessee Williams. In the Results section, we will give our findings. The Discussion section consists of three chapters. In the first chapter, we will depict the American cultural non conformism in both plays. The second chapter will be devoted to a tribute to American historical figures John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Heart Crane. Finally, in the third chapter, we will study the psychological disorder of the main characters in both plays. Our dissertation ends with a general conclusion that sums up the main issue tackled in this piece of research.

Endnotes

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II. Methods and Materials

1-Methods

This section of our research paper aims to shed light on the theoretical approaches that will be applied in our discussion. For the sake of relevance, we intend to undertake our piece of research under the theoretical guidelines of Stephen Greenblatt on New Historicism. Our choice of New Historicism stems from the fact that our issue is to depict aspects of the American counterculture in Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). We will also borrow some concepts on Freud's theory on repression to explore the psychological trauma of the main characters in both plays.

New Historicism is a literary theory which started in the 1980s, fathered by the American literary critic, theorist and scholar Stephen Greenblatt. It aims to study a literary work in its historical background and focuses on its socio-cultural circumstances. Greenblatt coined the term New Historicism for the first time in his famous book *The Power of Forms in the English Renaissance* (1982) to describe his method of interpretation of Renaissance texts. He was greatly influenced by Michel Foucault's philosophy.¹

The main basis of New Historicism is to reject the assumptions of previous literary theories which claim that a literary text should be analyzed as an autonomous element without taking into account the historical and cultural context. In other words, New Historicism deals with the historicity of texts and textuality of history.² In this context, Vincent B. Leitch stipulates that New Historicism symbolizes an important change from previous critical theories because its main focus is to look at any element outside the work instead of reading a text in isolation.³

New historicists claim that the psychological and cultural ideology of a given society can be reached through texts.⁴ Furthermore, this theoretical approach seeks to show the extent to which the writers' times affect the work and the work reflects the writer's time.⁵

In addition, new historicists assume that literature interacts as a product as well as a producer of social and cultural conventions and codes.⁶ Thus, it is the result of the creation of a given culture or society.⁷ Moreover, critics such as Catherine Gallagher, Stephen Greenblatt and others argue that the study of literature and its relationship to history has been too narrow and viewing a text as a culture in action. They shaped the distinction between an artistic production and any other kind of social production and event.⁸ Furthermore, the reader is expected to grasp the nexus between the text and the attended social, political, and economic conditions in which it is written.⁹ Greenblatt in his essay "*Resonance and Wonder*" provides a short summary about this literary theory in the following statement:

The new historicism obviously has distinct affinities with resonance; that its concern with literary text has been to recover as far as possible the historical circumstances of their original production and consumption and to analyze the relationship between these circumstances and our own.¹⁰

From this quotation, one can understand that new historicists make emphasis on the fact that there is a tight relationship between literature and history. In the same context, he adds that:

New historicist critics have tried to understand the intersecting circumstances not as stable, prefabricated background against which the literary texts can be placed, but as dense network of evolving and often contradictory social forces. The idea is not to find outside the work of art some rock into which literary interpretation can be securely chained but rather to situate the work in relation to other representational practices operative in the culture at a given moment in both history and our own.¹¹

Eventually, Greenblatt relates the work being produced to cultural, historical and social changes. As stated on page eight of our work, new historicists assume that even the psychological ideology of an era can be best found in literary text. Therefore and for the

sake of relevance and for the need of our third chapter, we will rely on Sigmund Freud's theory on repression as it marked the 1950s and 1960s literature.

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) is a late 19th and early 20th century neurologist. He is recognized as the father of modern psychology and the primary developer of the process of psychoanalysis.¹² It is a method used for treating mental illness and a theory which explains human behavior.¹³ He wrote many books among them: *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905), *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920) and *The Ego and the Id* (1923).

Freud in his article on repression (1915) argues that:

Repression is not a defensive mechanism which is present from the very beginning....it cannot arise until sharp cleavage occurred between conscious and unconscious mental activity.¹⁴

He also adds that the essence of repression lies simply in turning something away and keeping at distance from the conscious.¹⁵ He states that the mind is composed of three main parts named as follows: the Id, the Ego and the Superego.

- ❖ The Id: is a selfish beast, it is the impulsive and the unconscious part of the psyche and the primitive and instinctual part of the mind. It contains sexual and aggressive drives and hidden memories driven by a person's basic needs. It is based on the pleasure principle.¹⁶
- ❖ The ego: is the realistic part that mediates between the desires of the id and the super-ego. It is the conscious self created by the dynamic tensions and interactions between the id and the super-ego. It has the task of reconciling their conflicting demands with the requirements of external reality.¹⁷
- ❖ The super ego: its function is to control the id's impulses, especially those which society forbids, such as sex and aggression. It also has the function of persuading

the ego to turn to moralistic goals rather than simply realistic ones and to strive for perfection.¹⁸

Freud speculates that an inner conflict occurs in the mind between its constituent parts. On one hand, the id which belongs permanently to the unconscious mind is seeking to satisfy its thirst of pleasure impulses, whereas the superego attempts to limit the blind pleasure-seeking drives of the id by the imposition of restrictive rules tries to bring it to the reality. In the other hand, the ego that represents all objects of consciousness, as mediator, tries to solve and find a balance between the id and the superego. In order to fulfill this task avoid danger, anxiety and unpleasant. The latter makes use of various methods called devices defensive mechanism, among them repression.¹⁹ In this context Freud states:

When a person experiences an instinctual impulse to behave in a manner which the super-ego deems to be reprehensible (e.g. a strong erotic impulse on the part of the child towards the parent of the opposite sex), then it is possible for the mind to push it away, and represses it into the unconscious.²⁰

It is obvious that repression is an important device defensive mechanism used by the ego to avoid internal conflict and pain between the Id and Super ego. It is an integral part of the developmental process through which every child must pass on the way from childhood to adulthood.

Freud adds that traumatic events lead to mental disorder. In this context, Freud states: the traumatic events cause psychic break in our mind's ability to defend against or to cope with certain experiences.²¹ As Freud moves from hypnosis towards urging his patients to remember the past in conscious state, the very difficult and laboriousness of process leads Freud to crucial insight. The intensity of his struggle getting his patients

Recall past memories leads him to conclude that “there were some forces that prevented them from becoming conscious and compel them to remain unconscious”.²²

From our review of Freud’s’ theory on repression, it becomes clear that turbulences in American culture of post world war II era are deeply rooted in the psychology of the individuals of the era. Therefore, the third part of our work will be devoted to the investigation of the psychological issues that marked the 50s and the 60s.

2-Materials

This part of our memoire includes some biographical elements on Tennessee Williams. We will also include a brief synopsis of the two works. As it is the purpose of our research is to discuss Williams’ depiction of some aspects of American counterculture in both selected plays, it is relevant to review the historical background that surrounds the period in which the two plays were written.

a. Tennessee Williams: the Man and the Artist of the Counterculture.

Williams Tennessee is widely regarded as one of the greatest and prolific American playwrights though to a lesser extent than O’Neill and Miller. He wrote many plays that changed the world of theatre .His full name is Thomas Lanier Williams. He was born in Columbus, Mississippi on March 26th, 1911. He was the second child of Edwina Dakin and Cornelius Coffin Williams.

Williams’ life was unstable and complex since his childhood. His father was absent, aggressive, alcoholic and traveling salesman. He used to privilege Tennessee’s younger brother Dakin because of Williams’ effeminacy. Williams spent most of his early life closer to his maternal parents for whom he developed great affection. His mother was a puritanical daughter of an Episcopal clergy man. She was harsh and overprotective towards her son. He had a closer relation with her. She encouraged him to

fulfill his passion for writing. At the age of eleven, she offered him a typewriter as a gift. During his childhood, Williams remained close to his sister Rose who was diagnosed with schizophrenia. She was subjected to a lobotomy, a symbol used in *Suddenly last Summer*. This contributed to Williams' deterioration and alcoholism. In 1918, the family moved to Saint Louise where Williams in his Family experienced misery.

Williams attended the University of Missouri from 1931 to 1933 , then he continued his education at Washington University from 1936 to 1937, and graduated with the Bachelor of Art Degree. During this period, after some attempts to have relationships with women, Williams finally accepted his homosexuality which is an important theme in some of his plays comprising *A Street Car Named Desire* (1947), *Cat on Hot Roof* (1955) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958).

Williams had a long and flourishing career. Among his great successful plays: The *Glass Menagerie* (1944), *Camino Real* (1953), *The Night of the Iguana* (1961). Tennessee Williams continued to write until his death on February 25th, 1983. He died at the age of 72 in New York.

b. Synopsis

➤ Synopsis of *Camino Real*

Camino Real is a one act play (1953) originated from Williams' work *Ten Blocks on the Camino Real* (1947) .The play is set in a windy deserted town in an unspecified Latin American country.

This play includes famous figures of history and literature like Don Quixote, Casanova, Camille, Esmeralda and Lord Byron. They all evolve in an environment dominated by corruption, starvation, and indifferences. They are lost souls anxious to run away the unknown wasteland beyond the city walls²³. Kilroy is the main character of

the play. He is an American young traveler and former great champion of box. He is a twenty seven years old man with “a heart big as the head of a baby” as his doctor tells him, he can no more practice box because of his heart disease, thus he decides to leave his wife since he thinks that sexual relationship could kill him, he lives in this nether world.²⁴ Like other inhabitants in the Camino Real, he finds himself victim of this town. He is robbed, conned, forced and turned into a patsy by Gutman. Through this play, he sets on a fantastic adventure full of illusion and temptation to flee its confines and defy his faith.²⁵

➤ *Synopsis of Suddenly Last Summer*

Suddenly Last Summer is one act play that covers four scenes. It is set in the garden of New Orleans mansion in 1937 in the United States of America.²⁶ The whole play centers on the main character Sebastian Venable, a prolific homosexual poet. He is killed by homeless children he had procured for sexual desire, last summer during his holidays with his cousin Catherine in Cabeza de lobo.²⁷

The play opens with Mrs. Violet Venable, a wealthy widow, showing Dr John Cukrowicz, a young neurosurgeon, the garden of her late son Sebastian. She is ready to donate a large amount of money to fund the doctor’s research at the state mental hospital if he accepts to operate her niece Catherine Holly whom she believes to be the responsible of her son’s death.²⁸

In the second scene, Catherine stays with a nurse named Sister Felicity.²⁹ There is a disagreement between them because the latter does not allow Catherine to smoke. Afterwards, she starts telling her about the final days that she spent with Sebastian. The latter had an excessive desire for sexual relationships. He regards men as “delicious-looking” and “appetizing,” like items on a menu.³⁰

In the third scene, Grace Holly, Catherine's mother and her brother George come to visit her in Saint Mary Hospital. Mrs. Holly prevents Catherine from repeating the same horrific story of Sebastian's death to her family members. If she does not obey, the \$100,000 that Sebastian has left will be blocked until Grace signs the agreement for lobotomy.³¹

In the last scene, Violet asks the doctor to meet Catherine in order to convince her to change her mind about Sebastian death, but Catherine strongly refuses to see her. The doctor decides to give Catherine a last chance to save her memory. He arranges a meeting in Violet's house where he injects her with a "serum of truth". He pushes her to remember what happened last summer. After remembering Sebastian's declaration concerning his trip to Europe with her, she remembers all the events of that summer.³²

By the end of the play, Catherine becomes aware that her memory is restored as she describes the scenes of Sebastian's tragic death. He was chased and tortured by a group of young boys that he has already exploited to satisfy his sexual desires. Mrs. Violet Venable is shocked and becomes insane with the revelation of her son's homosexuality, since she doesn't accept the reality.³³

c. Historical background

- **The United States of America of 50s**

The United States of America is that powerful country in the World, well known for its rich history. It witnessed diverse significant changes and events since the discovery of America by Christopher Columbus in 1492.

After the economic difficulties of the great depression in (1929) and the challenges of World War II of (1939-1945), the 1950s are regarded as decades of stability

and prosperity that helped the United States of America to expand all over the world. The fifties are considered as the stable period in the American life.³⁴ During this period, the American history witnessed several developments in various fields such as; economy, literature, civil rights and music; it signaled the momentous changes that were coming in just a few years as America entered the Sixties.³⁵

The fifties marked the American history by the growth of consumerism, use of technology; the industry of television was the most significant one since, it played a key role in shaping the American society of the 1950S. During that period, the civil right movement was at its peak.³⁶ The great protest against racial segregations was clearly expressed. It is during that period that Martin Luther King *Jr* made his famous speech “*I Have a Dream*” in 1963 in Washington.³⁷ The civil rights were also among the main priorities of The American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy during his short presidency term (1961-1963). During the same period, women gained more freedom even in sexuality, eventually the new freedom allowed them to decide by themselves about their fate, including their sexual lives. Counterculture women had often sexual relationships with men without being married.³⁸

Concerning literature, the fifties saw the birth of what is called the beat Generation. It was led by writers and poets who rejected the old conventional values .The beat generation includes figures like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg. Their favorite battle-field was art .They were seeking for sexual and artistic freedom. They wrote poems and novels praising their vision of a life based on absolute freedom.³⁹ The Beats directly influenced the hippies of the next generation and the movement called the counterculture, which is a philosophical approach to life that based on freedom, peace, love and a respect for others.⁴⁰

Concerning music, the fifties saw the birth of new genre which is rock and roll. Elvis Presley was the first rock and roll star in the world. He performed his songs with a natural hip swiveling sexuality that made him a teen idol. He represented the spirit of rebellion.⁴¹ He was the idol of youth who were struggling against the world of adults, rejecting all the old American social and cultural norms.

Endnotes

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¹⁶[http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/freud complete works.pdf](http://www.valas.fr/IMG/pdf/freud_complete_works.pdf).3692

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Madison, Peter. *Repression and Defense –Its Theoretical And Observational Language*-(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961), 25.

²⁰<http://www.crystalinks.com/Freud.html/>

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²²Freud, Sigmund the concept of repression *in Western Civilization: A brief History ,vol II: since 1500*, ed ,Jackson, J, Spielvogel, (The Pennsylvania State University:2016), 538.

²³Alycia Smith Howard and Greta Heitzelman. *Critical Companion to Tennessee Williams: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*.(New York: Facts on File Inc,2005),43.

²⁴Ibid,44.

²⁵Ibid,45.

²⁶Ibid,297.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid,280.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid,281.

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³⁴<https://www.enotes.com> › Homework Help › History.

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³⁶Melissa,Kidari, *The counterculture of the sixties in the United States of America “An alternative consciousness”* (Stendhal university 2012),9.

³⁷Ibid,14.

³⁸Barry Miles, *Hippies*, (London: October, 2003), 13-16.

³⁹Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 35.

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III .Results

In this part of our research paper, we will shed light on the findings reached through our analysis of the American Counterculture of the 1960S through Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). In order to explore the issue of American Counterculture in both selected works, we have relied on Stephen Greenblatt's theory of New Historicism and borrowed some concepts from Sigmund Freud's theory on repression.

Our examination of the two works under study has shown that both plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer* depict the aspects of Counterculture of the American society of 1950S. During that time, America knew high economic growth, prosperity and confidence. However, there is a hidden side within it, where its old norms and values were almost destroyed. For instance, there was the emergence of religious profanation, free sex and drugs.

Through our study of both plays, we have deduced that Tennessee Williams is an avantgardist playwright. He mirrors the hidden reality that is neglected by most of the American playwrights of his time. One can notice that he depicts the American counterculture of the 60s through his plays that were written during the 50s.

In addition, our analysis has drawn us to deduce that Tennessee Williams in his plays focuses more on the psychological side of his characters. Through studying the characters in depth, we have found that the two plays are semi-autobiographical. Many events in both works are similar to those of Tennessee Williams' life.

The last but not the least of our findings is that, the issue of the American Counterculture informs both plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958).

Eventually, the events and characters of the two selected plays reflect well the American society of the fifties. In *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, characters represent the people of the fifties in American society. They are seeking for their freedom, smoke, they consume alcohol and drugs, and they have sexual relationships without getting married.

The two pieces of work are written a decade before American counterculture movement, that makes Tennessee Williams an avantgardist playwright.

IV. Discussion

This part of our work is the most expanded as it studies the aspects of the American counterculture in Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, under the theoretical guidelines of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism, and borrowing some concepts of Sigmund Freud's theory on Repression. The first chapter is devoted to explore the American cultural non conformism through the depiction of the aspects of American Counterculture in both plays. The second chapter consists of a tribute to the American president John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963) and the American poet Hart Crane (1899-1932) and Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997). The third one focuses on the Psychological trauma of the main characters.

Chapter One: American Cultural Non Conformism

This chapter depicts the major characteristics of American Counterculture such as; freedom, homosexuality and religion developed in both Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958).

a. Freedom in *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer*

It is important to remind that American Counterculture was characterized by the rise of a new generation seeking for equality, sexual and artistic freedom.² It is well represented in Williams' plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*.

In *Camino Real*, Williams describes the real journey of life. For him, every human being is a desperate soul, only courage and strength could enable them to face life's struggles.² Kilroy is one of the characters who symbolizes freedom. He strives for his own liberty. As it is already mentioned, Kilroy is a young former champion of box. Unfortunately, he suffers from health problem. Thus, he ends up leaving his wife. He

fears intimacy and avoids closeness in his relationship because he thinks that it will cause his death, and finds himself trapped in the unrealistic town of Camino Real.³ During his journey, he is robbed, tricked and turned into a pasty. Gutman forces him to put the uniform of the pasty without taking into consideration Kilroy's will. The latter says:

Kilroy: What is this outfit?

Gutman: The uniform of a pasty.

Kilroy: I know what is a pasty. He's clown in the circus who takes part falls but I'm no pasty!

Gutman: Pick it up.

Kilroy: don't give me orders. Kilroy is a free agent

Gutman (smoothly) but a pasty isn't .Pick it up and put it on
Candy Man you are now the pasty.⁴

From the above quotation, one can deduce that Kilroy is exploited and treated unfairly in Camino Real. As all individuals, he refuses to be a prisoner. He doesn't want to be jailed in Camino Real since he is unsatisfied with his life. His rejection for his life's discomfort and his desire for freedom is illustrated in the play:

Kilroy: How do I get out? Which way do I go, which way do
get out? What is the best way out, if there is any way out? I got
to find one. I had enough of this place .I had too much of this
place.⁵

It is clear that Kilroy cannot stand living anymore in Camino Real. He desperately hates this dark place which represents a nightmare to him. Kilroy adds:

I'm free .I'm free man with equal rights in this world! You had
better believe it! Kilroy is a free man with equal rights in this
world! All right, now help me, somebody, help me find a way
out, I got to find one. I don't like this place! It's not sign says
EXIT. That's a sweet word to me ,man, that's a lovely word
EXIT that the entrance to paradise for Kilroy !Exit, I'm coming
Exit, I'm coming!.⁶

It is evident from the above quotation that Kilroy is aware of his rights and the necessity of being a free man. It is until the end of the play that Kilroy's dream of freedom is fulfilled, when Don Quixote asks him to leave the town together. In addition to Kilroy, Esmeralda is another character who is also longing for freedom. She is a charming girl, highly desirable and a lover of many men.⁷ Her virginity is restored each month during a lunar fiesta.⁸ Esmeralda is exhausted and unhappy with her life. Her mother Gypsy used to provide her with customers after her virginity is renewed. Esmeralda's need for freedom and her dissatisfaction with her life is expressed in the following passage:

The Street people have gathered along the forestage to watch the chase. Esmeralda barefooted, wearing only a slip, bursts out of the Gypsy's establishment like an animal broken out of rage, darts among the Street People to the front of the crowd.....Behind her Nursie appears, a male actor, wigged and dressed austere as duenna, crying in both languages.⁹

One can understand that Esmeralda feels increasingly dissatisfied with her life. She wants to escape and leave everything behind her. She believes that freedom will make her find her real self.

Esmeralda fights savagely. She nearly breaks loose, but Nursie and Gypsy close upon her, too, and she is over-whelmed and dragged back, fighting all the way, toward the door from which she escaped.¹⁰

Esmeralda fights obstacles that she finds in her way because she values her own independence. She wants to carry on with her life, and decides that it is time for her to get her freedom. Esmeralda realizes that she is capable of making her own decision without her mother's interference. She wants to distance herself from her mother who used her as a prostitute. Esmeralda's quest for sexual freedom reflects a trend in Counter culture that

started in the fifties. It was represented by a group of people who labeled themselves the hippies. The term “hippy” is used to describe the masses of young people who have a distinct life style. They are people who enjoy a lot of freedom.¹¹ They wear trendy clothes and are fond of rock music.¹² They are also big consumers of drugs and interested in having sexual relationships. The hippies enjoy going to various gatherings and concerts, demonstrating and rejecting the popular culture of the early 60s.¹³

Freedom is also recurrent in *Suddenly Last Summer*. It is explored through Catherine Holly, one of the main characters. She is Sebastian’s cousin and the only witness of his tragic and mysterious death. Shocked by Catherine’s revelations about Sebastian’s death, Mrs. Venable orders to put her at Saint Mary and subjects her to a lobotomy. Hence, Catherine lives in the memories of the disastrous accident of last summer. She says” *I’m sick, I’m sick of being bossed and bullied.*”¹⁴ She is devastated and cannot handle her life because she is facing tough obstacles. In order to prove her innocence to the rest of her family members, she accepts to be injected with a serum of truth. In doing so, she thinks that she will feel relieved, and will be able to get back her life.

Sebastian Venable is also another character who longs to free himself from the restrictions of the society. He sees himself as a victim of social norms and religious beliefs, which prevent him from having sexual freedom. Sebastian creates his own identity and becomes a homosexual. In spite of being considered as an outcast, he is also described as a loving son and a dedicated poet. “He wrote one poem a year”¹⁵. He is a homosexual who lives openly his sexual orientation in crowded places where attention is centered on him.¹⁶ Sebastian’s freedom is only achieved and accomplished through his writings. He is killed by the boys he has already raped.

It is worthy to remind that Tennessee Williams is an Avantgardist in his depiction of issues that would mark American culture a decade later. According to Williams, the fifties contained the seeds of the American Counterculture. In both plays, women are depicted as independent, strong and responsible. This reflects the social status of women during the 1960s. It supports New Historicism's assumption which deals with the historicity of texts and textuality of history.¹⁷ Williams depicts women in the two selected plays to counter the American conservative culture.

In *Camino Real*, the female characters are given too much freedom. They act independently and behave freely. They are not restricted by social rules and norms. Some of them see prostitution as the only way to get out from poverty, and it is considered as an efficient mean, to gain money. They are also engaged in sexual intercours before marriage. This is shown through one of the female characters, Rosita. Williams' use of the character Gypsy stands as a direct reference to "bohemian" women who are open-minded, solitary. They adopt a non-traditional life style as they have an open attitude towards sexual expression. They remain a symbol of American Counterculture.¹⁸ .

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Mrs. Venable is portrayed as a strong independent woman. She controls her life since she takes her own decisions. Although she is a widow, she succeeds to raise her son Sebastian alone. She spent her life taking care of him, and she still looks after his well-being. She says: "My son, Sebastian and I constructed our days, each day, We would –carve out each day of our lives like a piece of sculpture."¹⁹

Catherine is also depicted as a modern independent woman .She is a young, beautiful and attractive lady. She is a non-conservative woman who drinks and smokes cigarettes as it is shown in the play: "Sister: what did you take out of that box on the table?" Catherine answers: "Just a cigarette, sister".²⁰ She is able to defend and express

herself .This is well depicted when Catherine's mother Grace and his brother George try to convince her to change her statements about Sebastian's death in order to get profit from Sebastian's heritage .

George (cutting in): Cathie, Cathie you got to forget that story!
Can'tcha? For your fifty grand ?
Mrs Holly: Cathe, why, why, why! did you invent such a tale?
Catherine: But mother , I didn't invent it. I know it's a hideous story but it's a true story of our time and the world we live in what did truly happen to Cousin Sebastian in Cabeza de Lobo.
George: Oh, then you are going to tell it. Mama she is going to tell it! Right to aunt Vi and lose us hundred thousand !- Cathie ? you are a BITCH .²¹

From the above quotation, one can understand that Catherine is a determined person, with a strong personality, not easy to manipulate.

b. Homosexuality in *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958)

The American Counterculture was shaped by the need for sexual freedom. As we have already mentioned, people expressed their rejection of the old American conservatism. They wanted to express their sexual orientation freely, therefore homosexuality was one the dominant features of the 1960s and it is highly illustrated in both works. This reflects the perception of New Historicists who claim that literature interacts as a product as well as a producer of social and cultural conventions and codes.²²In *Camino Real*, homosexuality is reflected through the character Frenchman Baron de Charlus.²³He is described as a masochistic gay man who has excessive sexual desire.²⁴ It is well illustrated when he reserves a room in the 'Ritz Men Only'.

A.Ratt: Vacancy here! A bed at the "Ritz Men Only"! little white ship to sail the dangerous night in
The Baron: Ah, bonsoir, Mr.Ratt.
A.Ratt: cursing?
The Baron: No, just walking!
A.Ratt: That's all you need to do.

The Baron: I sometimes find it suffices. You have a vacancy, do you?

A. Ratt: For you?

The Baron: And a possible guest. You know the requirement .An iron bed with no mattress and a considerable length of stout knotted rope. No! chains this evening, metal chains. I've a lot of to a tone...²⁵

In addition to this, the sexual orientation of The Baron is highly depicted when he meets Kilroy, an American hero and a former boxer who leaves his wife because of the abnormal size of his heart. He is scared of having a heart attack during sexual intercourse with her. The Baron falls immediately under Kilroy's charm .It is well illustrated in this passage:

The Baron (continuing the blum's song): Echoes the beat of my heart ! Pa dam, Pa dam-hello!
He has crossed to kilroy he sings and extends his hand to him.²⁶

It is clear that The Baron is highly seduced by Kilroy. One can notice that the former is speaking softly and intimately. He also expresses his feelings and tries to get closer to Kilroy. This is shown when the latter asks The Baron about his cigarette. The former states:

Kilroy: where is your cigarette?
The Baron (gently and sweetly): oh, I don't smoke. I just wanted to see your eyes more clearly...
Kilroy: Why?
The Baron: The eyes are the window of the soul, and yours are too gentle for someone who has as much I have to a tone for.²⁷

It is obvious that Kilroy catches The Baron's eyes and tries to seduce him, but at the end he realizes that his eyes are too gentle for him and says 'au revoir.'²⁸

Similarly, in *Suddenly Last Summer*, homosexuality is well shown through Sebastian Venable, a homosexual poet who died last summer in mysterious conditions. Sebastian's mother tries to deny and protect her son's reputation and social status. She does not accept the truth revealed by Catherine about her son's death and homosexuality. She considers her as a liar as it is shown in the following passage:

Mrs. Venable: I've waited months to face her because I couldn't get to St Mary's to face her – I've had her brought here in my house ,I won't !She 'll collapse! I mean her lies will collapse –not my truth-not the truth.²⁹

It is obvious that Mrs. Venable believes strongly in her version of truth. She shows her deep pride of her son, especially in front of others. She keeps complimenting Sebastian's achievements and career. She says:

MRS Venable: No, you don't see yet, but before I'm through, you will.-Sebastian was a poet! That's what I mean when I said his life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and –vice versa, the life of a poet is the work of a poet, I mean you can't separate them. I mean well.³⁰

It is evident that Mrs. Venable son's career is very significant. She fights against anyone who tries in a way or another to stain her son's reputation or social status. While showing Sebastian's garden to the doctor, she states:

Mrs. Venable: Yes this was Sebastian's garden. The Latin names of the plants were printed on tags attached to them but print's fading out .Those ones there-(She draws a deep breath)-are the oldest plants on earth, survivors from the age of the giant fern-forests. Of course in this semi tropical climate-(She takes another deep breath)_some they rest plants ,such as the Venus flytrap you know what is Doctor ?The Venus flytrap?³¹

Mrs. Venable tries to give a good image of Sebastian even after his tragic ending. She still sees him as an intellectual and a sensitive human being. While talking with Mrs. Venable, Catherine says:

Waiters, police and others ran out of buildings and rushed back up the hill with me. When we got back to where my cousin Sebastian had disappeared in the flock of featherless little back sparrows, he was lying naked as they had been naked against a white wall and this won't believe it, nobody could believe, nobody on earth could possibly believe it, and I don't blame them! –They had devoured parts of him.³²

Mrs. Venable is deeply affected by Catherine's account of her son's painful death. She neither wants to hear the truth, nor have the courage to accept it. Furiously, she orders the doctor to exercise on Catherine a lobotomy. "Lion's view! State asylum, cut this hideous story of her brain! " ³³ states Mrs Venable. Catherine's honesty pushes her to make another confession to the latter. She informs her about Sebastian's homosexuality, and the way he takes advantage of her. Sebastian considers Catherine as a sexual object and a means to seduce young boys. When the former asked Catherine to travel with him to Italy, she replied: "I was procuring for him!"³⁴ She also states:

Not consciously! She didn't know that she was procuring for him in the smart, the fashionable places they used to go to before last summer! Sebastian was shy with people. She wasn't. Neither was I. We both did the same thing for him made contact for him, but she did it in nice places and in decent ways and I had to do it the way that I just told you!-Sebastian was lonely, and the empty Blue Jay notebook go bigger and bigger, so big it was big and empty as that big blue sea and sky. ³⁵

It is obvious that Sebastian was living his homosexuality despite the American conservatism. He uses the help of both his mother and his cousin Catherine to satisfy his excessive desire for men. He even pushes the latter to wear a seductive and sexy transparent swimsuit. Catherine states:

Catherine: My God, yes! It was a one piece suit made of white lisle, the water made it transparent!...I didn't want to sleep in it, but he'd grab my hand and drag me into the water, all the way in, and I'd looking nacked. ³⁶

As it is already mentioned, Sebastian is a homosexual. He is described as a "famished" and thirsty man for sexual relationships. ³⁷

As we have previously mentioned, Williams was an Avantgardist in his vision of American Counterculture. In fact the 50S gave signs of a counterculture era, which becomes widespread during the 60S. Among its characteristics; sexual freedom. It is

celebrated by famous American poets as Hart Crane and Allen Ginsburg. In Williams' play *Suddenly Last Summer*, the main character Sebastian lives his homosexuality freely by rejecting moral standards and social values. Similarly, in *Camino Real*, Kilroy revolts and counters American conservatism by living an open homosexual life, without any constraints or boundaries.

c. Religion in *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958)

As we have stated earlier, the United States of America witnessed many changes during the fifties and sixties. People rejected the old values of American conservative culture, even in religion. Coming out of World War II, America was not very religious as it was before. People started to question the religious institutions and lose faith.³⁸ This has led to religious profanation which is greatly developed in both Tennessee Williams' plays.

In both works, one can notice that there is a constant reference to religion. In *Camino Real*, Kilroy is persistently using this expression "Mary, help a Christian! Help a Christian, Mary!."³⁹ Kilroy says:

Gee, I'm lost! I don't know where I'm! all turned around, I'm confuse, I don't understand-what 's-happened it's like a dream, it's just like a-dream.....Mary !Oh ,Mary ! Mary!⁴⁰

It is apparent that Kilroy is a devoted Christian who prays, and asks for Mary's help. He relies on God's will that shall save him from life's struggles and obstacles. Another example that represents religion in Williams' play is the repetitive use of the word God, for instance:" prudence: thank God I wake up and " Marguerite: Jacques! Jacques! Oh God!"⁴¹

Adding to the different illustrations cited above, there is a constant use of number seven: Number seven is vacant.⁴² In religion this number has great significance. In the Bible; it is one of the most frequently used numbers. It is used approximately 735 times, including its derivatives.⁴³ The number seven is used extensively in the books of Daniel and Revelation world .The latter is considered to be God's seal of completion.⁴⁴ He stamped His approval on creation by resting on the seventh day and declaring it good. Creation was complete. ⁴⁵Add to this, it represents complete spiritual victory secured by Jesus Christ and complete Forgiveness. Moreover, it symbolizes the seven Prophetic Feasts and his Fulfillment too. Number seven represents also the holy spirit of God.⁴⁶

Another illustration that shows a direct allusion to religious profanation is the use of the character Esmeralda. As it is already mentioned, the latter is a prostitute; her virginity is restored each lunar fiesta. Gypsy says: “Hoy !NOche de fiesta! Tonight will restore the virginity of my daughter!”.⁴⁷ It is a clear reference to Virgin Mary. In the Bible, Mary symbolizes purity. She gives birth to Jesus without having any intimacy with any man.⁴⁸

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, religion is also recurrent and depicted through the characters . Mrs. Venable is a member of the Protestant Episcopal Church. She orders to put Catherine in St Mary Hospital, a kind of house detention guarded by religious sisters. In addition, the use of expressions such as “*priests*” “*churches*” and “*Buddhist*” “*monastery*” ⁴⁹ . They are direct references to religion, and the use of these expressions is of high significance. Actually, they express religious profanation in America during the 1950S that marked the American Counterculture era. It is depicted in most of the play’s passages:

Catherine : I tried to save him, Doctor.

Doctor Cukrowicz: From what? save him from what?
Catherine: Completing- sort of! image he had himself as a sort
of _sacrifice to a!_ terrible of_
Dr Cukrowicz: God
Catherine: yes, a _cruel one⁵⁰

Form the above quotation; one can notice that the characters are losing faith in God who is regarded as being cruel. They even start to question his existence. Mrs. Venable says:

MRS. Venerable: yes, well, now, I can tell you without any hesitation that my son was looking for God. I mean for clear image of him. He spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow net of the schooner watching this on the beach till it was too dark to see it, and when he came down the rigging he said” Well, now I’ve seen Him” and he meant God.⁵¹

Mrs. Venerable is talking about Sebastian who was in a continuous meditation searching for the true image of God .She also adds:

He meant that God shows a savage face to people and shouts some fierce things at them; it’s all we see or hear of Him. Isn’t it all we ever really see and hear of Him, now? – Nobody seems to know why.⁵²

It is certain that Sebastian is trying to understand and conceive God’s reality and existence. He has different assumptions and is looking desperately for the truth. It is in this context that *Suddenly Last Summer* is said to be a play of God.⁵³

To sum up, in this chapter we have depicted one of the most important characteristics of American Counterculture, which is reflected in Tennessee Williams’ plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. We have also depicted the main symbols that refer to that period. One can conclude that America of the 1950s is characterized by religious profanation.

Endnotes

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Chapter Two: Tennessee Williams' Tribute to Historical Figures in *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958).

This chapter explores the main characters in both plays. Kilroy in *Camino Real* as a representative of the popular American president John Fitzgerald Kennedy (1917-1963) and Sebastian Venable the poet in *Suddenly Last Summer* as Hart Crane (1899-1932), and Allan Ginsberg (1926-1997) two outstanding American poets who reflect the main characteristics of America during the late 50s and 60s.

a. Kilroy as John Fitzgerald Kennedy.

It is important to mention that John Fitzgerald Kennedy was one of the youngest presidents of the United States of America since he was elected at the age of 48 in 1960.¹ His short term presidency (1960-1963) coincided with many social changes that the American society witnessed from the beginning of the 50s.² A new generation was ready to reject the norms, standards of the society and venture beyond the old taboos and restraints and Kennedy represents the youthful spirit.³ Yet, his term was cut short by his murder in November 1963.⁴ In *Camino Real*, the character named Kilroy or "kill Roi" that is the killing of the king as some critics assume, is a direct identification to the American President. Kilroy and J.F. Kennedy have many similarities. They are men of war and popular heroes who fight for freedom and equality, unfortunately J.F. Kennedy was assassinated.

It is certain that Williams' use of Kilroy as one of the main characters in *Camino Real* is very symbolic. In fact, it is a direct reference to the American president J. F. Kennedy since he was a soldier as well.⁵ During World War II, he joined the American Navy and was assigned to the South Pacific. He was a commander of a patrol boat. He behaved heroically as he saved his crew members after the boat was destroyed by a

Japanese warship.⁶ John F Kennedy was awarded a purple Heart and Navy Marine Corps Medal for his leadership and courage and was considered a hero.⁷ Similarly, in Williams' play *Camino Real*, Kilroy is also presented as a brave man and a great champion. As it is depicted in this passage:

He has a pair of golden boxing gloves slung about his neck and carries a small duffle bag .His belt is ruby –and-emerald-studded with the word CHAMP in bold letters.⁸

Kilroy is described as a man of good qualities and high moral standards. He is a man with “big heart as the heart of baby”⁹ and also “a Candy man”.¹⁰ Likewise, the president J.F. Kennedy was well-known because he was humanistic, handsome and charismatic.¹¹

Kilroy is also portrayed as a man of freedom. He seeks to escape the labyrinth of Camino Real and wants to gain back his civil rights. He doesn't want to be the prisoner of this town. As he says: “I'm a free man with all rights in this world”.¹² One can deduce that there is a tight relationship between him and the American president Kennedy, since the latter was an important figure who contributed to racial equality in the United States of America.¹³ He supported racial integration and civil rights. This is greatly shown through his several speeches,¹⁴ and also through his different political actions. On March 6, 1961, he signed *The Executive Order 10925* which required government contractors to take affirmative action to ensure that all employees are treated equally irrespective of their race, creed, color, or national origin.¹⁵ In November 1962, he signed the *Executive Order 11063*.¹⁶ It banned segregation in federally funded housing. On June 11, 1963, J.F. Kennedy gave his well-known Civil Rights Address calling Americans to recognize civil rights as a moral cause.¹⁷ In 1964, a year after his murder, his suggestions which

comprise equal access to public schools and other facilities and greater protection of voting rights, became part of the historic *Civil Rights Act of the same year*.¹⁸

Moreover, Williams uses the name of Kilroy because of its high significance and its deep meaning. It can be divided into two parts: kil and roy. kill alone expresses “to cause the death of a person or animal or other living things”,¹⁹ and “roy in old French roi,”²⁰ its equivalent in English is king. These two parts combined together means the killing of the king. Besides, the falling of Kilroy in his knees and the exposition of his body in the central plaza are direct illusions to the assassination of young American President J.F. Kennedy. He was assassinated on November 22nd, 1963, shortly after noon while He was riding in a motorcade through Daley Plaza in downtown Dallas in Texas.²¹ He was shot by Cuban sympathizer Lee Harvey Oswald who had targeted the president from a window of the Texas School Depository where he worked.

As it has been discussed above, Tennessee Williams’ choice of using Kilroy as one of the main characters in *Camino Real* is of a significant importance. He is included as a real reflection of the American President John Fitzgerald Kennedy who is one of the representatives of American Counter culture’s spirit since he was a man of freedom, equality and a defender of civil rights.

b. Sebastian Venable as Heart Crane and Allen Ginsberg.

It is worthy to mention that Tennessee Williams was greatly influenced by two of the most significant American poets; Allen Ginsberg and Hart Crane. In fact, their lives and professional careers are well depicted in *Suddenly Last Summer*. To begin with, the choice of the protagonist as a poet is not done randomly since it represents both Ginsberg and Crane. One can notice that the main character Sebastian shares many initities, including professional career, sexual freedom, domineering mother and their tragic ending.

1. Professional career

As it is depicted throughout the plays' passages, Tennessee Williams makes a clear reference to Allen Ginsberg and Hart Crane through his character Sebastian Venable. There is a noticeable resemblance between these three prolific poets. While speaking to the Doctor, Mrs. Venable says:

DOCTOR: (reading the title): *Poem of summer*?

MRS.VENABLE: *Poem of summer*, and the date of summer. There are Twenty five of them. He wrote one poem a year which he printed himself on an eighteenth-century hand press at his atelier in the –French-Quarter-so no one could see it.....²²

Since Sebastian is fond of writing, which he considers as a means of emotional expression and reflections of one's thoughts and ideas, he devoted all his life to poetry. It becomes later on a part of his identity. His artistic passion enables him to create his own world of imagination and fantasy. It is shown throughout the play as Mrs. Venable says:

MRS Venable: No, you don't see yet, but before I'm through, you will.- Sebastian was a poet! That's what I mean when I said his life was his work because the work of a poet is the life of a poet and –vice versa, the life of poet is the work of poet, I mean you can't separate them. I mean you can't separate them. I mean –well, for instance, a salesman's work is one thing's and his life is another-or can be. The same thing's for doctor, lawyer, merchant, thief!-But poet's life is his work and his work is life in a special sense because-because-on, I've already talked myself breathless and dizzy.²³

One can notice that Sebastian, Ginsberg and Crane share a common strong passion for poetry. For them, poetry is not only a way of gaining wealth, but it constitutes the basis which gives real meaning and value to their lives.

Among the characteristics of American Counter Culture movement of 1950-60s is the use of natural symbol. Ginsberg and Crane are among the major romantic figures who consider the use of such symbols like flowers and birds as a crucial element in their poetry. It is initially depicted at the beginning of the play:

The interior is blended with a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. The colors of this jungle –garden are violent, especially since it is streaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree flowers that suggest organs of body, torn out still glistening with undried blood.....²⁴

One can conclude that the use of the garden as a setting is very significant since it stands as a direct reference to Hart Crane's literary movement which is romanticism. Sebastian's pure love and commitment to protecting plants and animals is shown in some passages of the play:

Yes, it feeds on insects. It has to be kept under glass from early fall to late spring and when it went under glass ,my son ,Sebastian had to provide it with fruit flies in at great expensive from Florida laboratory that used fruit for experiments in genetic.²⁵

It is obvious that Sebastian has a long-term connection with his environment. His sense of responsibility creates in him affective bonds and a deep attachment to certain places. Throughout the play, He devotes his time preparing himself to take a journey to Florida, where he is willing to take care of plants. He also goes to Galapagos Islands to see turtles. Hence, Sebastian's creativity and inspiration for his writing has strong ties with his surroundings.

2. Sexual orientation and domineering mothers

Sexual orientation is portrayed in the play through one of the most significant characters, Sebastian. Like Hart Crane and Allen Ginsberg, Sebastian is also a homosexual poet. As all beat poets, both Ginsberg and crane express a rebellious attitude toward the traditional norms and standards concerning different sphere in American lifestyle. In the play, Sebastian takes advantage of the members of his family especially; his mother Violet Venable and his cousin Catherine. In order to satisfy his sexual desire,

he depends on their physical appearance and uses them as objects to seduce young boys. This is well illustrated in the play, the doctor asks Catherine “if there was something disturbing her during their last vacation. Catherine replies: he bought me a swim suit I didn’t want to wear. I laughed. I said I can’t wear that, it’s a scandal to the jay-birds.”²⁶ She confesses to him about Sebastian’s attitude and behavior. When he asks her for more details, she replies: “You don’t understand ? I was procuring for him.”²⁷

Catherine’s conversation with the Doctor makes Sebastian’s sexual orientation visible. However, one can notice that his mother is very protective since she strives to protect his reputation. She constantly refuses to accept the truth and is incapable of confessing to others about his homosexuality. It is well illustrated in the play:

I have gathered enough that is a hideous attack on my son’s moral character which being dead, he can’t defend himself from. I have to be the defender.²⁸

Obviously, Mrs. Venable greatly sympathizes with her son as she tries to justify his actions. Each time somebody talks about Sebastian’s sexual orientation, she feels discontent. No matter the circumstances, she always strives to protect her son from any harm. She prevents him from listening to what others may say about him, especially his cousin Catherine. Mrs. Venable says:

Before you hear whatever you’re going to hear from the girl when she gets here. My son, Sebastian, was chaste. Not c-h-a-s-t-e-d-! Oh, he was chased in that way of spelling it , to , we had to be very flit-footed I can tell you, with his looks and his charm , to keep head of pursuers, every king of pursuer! __I mean he was c-h-a-s-t-e! __ Chaste...!²⁹

As we have mentioned earlier, Williams’ fictional character Sebastian represents Hart Crane and Allen Ginsberg. Another feature the three poets share is their close relationship with their mothers. One can notice that Mrs. Venable stands for Crane’s mother Grace who also rejected her son’s homosexuality. She concentrates her efforts on the behalf of Hart’s posthumous poetic reputation³⁰ as it is portrayed throughout the play.

3. Tragic Ending

It is apparent that Sebastian Venable and the beat poets Allen Ginsberg and Hart Crane have the same tragic ending. Sebastian's death is very painful because he was beaten vigorously by a group of young children that he had exploited. Some of the members of his family could not feel any pity or empathy for him. His cousin Catherine believes that his death is only the result of his deeds. She says: don't blame them!__ they have devoured parts of him."³¹

Similarly to the fictional character Sebastian Venable, the famous American poet Hart Crane underwent the same tragic faith. On April 27th 1932, after a night of drinking ,he climbed over the ships railing and jumped off the stern to his death.³² It is clear from this second part that Tennessee Williams is influenced by Heart Crane. This is well reflected through the character of Sebastian. It seems that Hart Crane and Sebastian Venable are identical since they share many affinities at different levels.

To sum up, in this chapter we have dealt with American counterculture's aspects that consist of a tribute of Tennessee Williams to two important figures: the unforgettable and popular American president John F Kennedy and the Homosexual American Poet Hart Crane. In the two plays *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*, Williams used two fictional characters Kilroy and Sebastian as identification to the cited figures. Kilroy as the representation of John Fitzgerald Kennedy and Sebastian as Hart Crane and Allen Ginsberg. They share many affinities, for instance: their personalities and career.

Endnotes

¹Tim, Mc Neese ,*The U.S Presidency :Revised and updated*, (United States of America: Lorenz Educational Press ,2001),80

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Balakian, Jan. Camino Real; Williams' allegory of the fifties in *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*, ed, Mathew Roudané. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997),69

⁶Tim, Mc Neese ,*The U.S Presidency :Revised and updated*, (United States of America: Lorenz Educational Press ,2001),80

⁷Ibid.

⁸Williams, Tennessee. *Camino Real*. (New York: New Directions publishing,1953),764.

⁹Ibid, 765.

¹⁰Ibid, 778.

¹¹[www.quora.com/why do Americans love J.F.Kennedy](http://www.quora.com/why-do-Americans-love-J.F.Kennedy).

¹²Williams, Tennessee. *Camino Real*. (New York: New Directions publishing,1953),780.

¹³Michaela ,Lupačová, *John F. Kennedy and His Role in the Civil Rights movement* (Masaryk University: Faculty of Art and American Studies,2008),6.

¹⁴[https://Learnodo-newtonic.com/ J.F.K accomplishments\(pdf\)](https://Learnodo-newtonic.com/J.F.K-accomplishments(pdf))

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸ibid.

¹⁹<https://En.Oxforddictionaries.com/definition/kill>.

²⁰<http://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roy>

²¹Tim, Mc Neese ,*The U.S Presidency :Revised and updated*, (United States of America: Lorenz Educational Press ,2001),80.

²²Williams, Tennessee. *Suddenly Last Summer*. (New York :Penguin Books,1958),104

²³Ibid,102

²⁴Ibid,101.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid,140.

²⁷Ibid.

²⁸Ibid,110.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰. *The Cambridge Companion to Tennessee Williams*, Ed, Mathew Roudané. (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1997),172 .

³¹. Williams, Tennessee. *Suddenly Last Summer*. (New York :Penguin Books,1958),

³². Harold,Bloom,*Comprehensive Research Study Guide Heart Crane* (bloom's major poets),Ed ,Harold Bloom.(Chelsea House Publishers,2003),30.

Chapter Three: Psychological trauma

This chapter sheds light on the psychological trauma of the main characters in Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958). For the sake of relevance, we have relied on Sigmund Freud's theory on repression. *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer* are among Williams' works which depict characters that are psychologically unstable.

a. Kilroy

Kilroy is the main character in William's play *Camino Real*. The diagnostic tests carried out by the doctor have revealed that Kilroy suffers from heart disease. The latter, has a big heart as the head of a baby. Unfortunately, it puts an end to his long-term career, thus it is one of the most defining moment in his life. It has completely changed his mind set and his body. He ends up making a firm decision to leave his hometown. This is reflected in the play. Kilroy is psychologically disturbed and cannot think logically. On this basis, Freud states that shocking events lead to illogical behavior.¹ Kilroy states:

The medics wouldn't okay me for no fight .They said to give up liquor and smoking and sex !-to give up sex! -I used to believe a man couldn't live without sex-but he can if he wants to! My real true woman my wife, she would of stuck with me, but it was all spoiled with her being scared and me !So one night while she was sleeping I wrote her good bye.²

It is important to remind that the 50s witnessed a revolution in psychoanalysis. On one hand, this era was marked by economic growth and prosperity in different spheres, on the other hand, people felt insecure and lived in constant fear and anxiety of nuclear war. It is clear from the above quotation that Kilroy is mentally unstable. He remains in a shocking state, after being diagnosed with heart disease. Kilroy decides to end his relationship with his wife. He finds himself in troubles that he cannot handle.

b. Catherine

In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Catherine is one of the main female characters. She is a young beautiful girl. She is Sebastian's cousin and Mrs. Venable's niece. Catherine suffers from a mental disorder because she was the witness of her cousin's atrocious death last Summer. He is tortured and beaten violently by a group of hungry boys who had already been sexually exploited by him. This tragic event profoundly traumatizes her, putting her in St Mary's Sanatorium, where she is subjected to lobotomy. In this regard, Freud claims that "traumatic events cause psychic in our mind's ability to defend against or to cope with certain experiences".³ Catherine cannot fully recover from the *trauma* of her experience. in Cabeza de Lobo. She is perceived as being insane by the members of her family. In fact, she is in a severely disordered state of mind. While speaking to Catherine, her mother says: "Just don't repeat the same fantastic storydon't repeat that horrible story again".⁴

It is clear that Mrs. Violet Venable is unable to believe Catherine. For Mrs. Venable Catherine's words are only the outcomes of her own imagination. Mrs. Venable is trying to confirm Catherine's insanity and mental disorder. She says:

Mrs. Venable: I mean keep her till there. She babbles! They couldn't shut her up in Cabeza de Lobo at the clinic in Paris –she babbled, babbled!-smashing my son's reputation One the Berengaria bringing her back to the States at the airport when she w7as flown down here, She bubbled a bit of the story before they could whisk her into an ambulance to St Mary's.⁵

Catherine is devastated and haunted by memories of Sebastian's death. She is left in hysterical condition and fails to maintain a sense of inner *reality* and balance. this is depicted in her conversation with her sister:

Sister (mechanically): What's wrong, dear?

Catherine: I' think I'm just dreaming this, it doesn't seem real!

Catherine is really affected psychologically. She doesn't believe what happened to her. Another exemplification that emphasis on this, is this short exert from the play :

Catherine: Is it Lion's View? Doctor ?

Sister: Be still

Catherine: When can I stop running down that steep white street in Cabeza Lobo?⁶

Moreover, Catherine's repression about the tragic death of her cousin Sebastian creates in her a kind of abnormal behavior:

Sister: Catherine, give it here. You know that you're not

allowed to smoke at Saint Mary's.

Catherine: We are not at Saint Mary's, this is a afternoon out.

Sister: You are still in my charge. I can't permit you to smoke because the last time you smoked you dropped a lighted cigarette on your dress and started a fire.⁷

It is evident that Catherine has lost control over her thoughts and body. Her traumatic experience *produced* gradual deterioration in her memory and intellectual abilities. On this concern, Freud discovered that people's mind tend to effectively repress memories of painful events and to resist any attempts to draw memory back into conscious.⁸ In the play, Dr Cukrowicz injects Catherine with a serum of truth. He urges her to tell the truth about the harsh circumstances she has faced. He says:

Doctor: You will tell the true story?

Catherine: Yes, I will.

Doctor: The absolutely true story. No lies, nothing not spoken. Everything told, exactly.

Catherine: Everything .Exactly. Because I'll have to.⁹

c. Sebastian/Mrs.Venable and the Oedipus Complex

In 1899, in his *Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud introduced the term Oedipus complex.¹⁰ It refers to the Greek mythical figure who unconsciously killed his father and married his mother.¹¹ According to Sigmund Freud, the accidents or incidents in the life of Oedipus occurred because of sexual complexity between Oedipus and his mother.¹²

Freud created the term ‘Oedipus Complex’ in accordance to the story of Oedipus.¹³ Freud attributed this concept to children of about the age of three to five. He assumes that humans’ thoughts, emotions and behaviors are motivated by sexual instincts, which are the neurological representations of physical needs.¹⁴ As it is already mentioned, Freud defines ‘The ego’ as a selfish beast who seeks to satisfy his sexual desire.¹⁵ This relationship is embodied in Sebastian’s relation to his mother Mrs. Venable.

Mrs. Venable is a strong widow. She is portrayed as being possessive. She takes control of her life. Despite the struggles she has gone through, she remains a rebellious woman. She has devoted all her life taking care of her son Sebastian. After his sudden death in last summer, Mrs. Venable strives to maintain her son’s big reputation in the public eye. She says: “I have to be the defender.”¹⁶ Her praise seems to be everlasting. Later on, Mrs. Venable becomes jealous of any woman that admires her son Sebastian, or wants to be part of his life. She says:

Mrs. Venable: ...I DID NOT HAVE A STROKE!_I had a slight aneurism.

You know what that is, Doctor? A little vascular convulsion!

Not a hemorrhage, just a little convulsion of blood –vessel.

I had it when I discovered that she was trying to get my son away from me.

She totally rejects the idea that another person will be part of his son’s life

Mrs. Venable: As strictly as if he’d to. This sounds like vanity, Doctor, but really I was actually the only one in his life that satisfied the demands he made of people.¹⁷

Mrs. Venable and Sebastian have a close relationship. They mostly regarded as a couple rather than as a mother and son. The former states:

Mrs. Venable: My son, Sebastian, demanded! We were a famous couple. People didn’t speak of Sebastian and his mother or Mrs. Venable and her son, they said Sebastian and Violet, Violet and Sebastian are staying at the Lido, they are at the Ritz in Madrid .Sebastian and Violet , Violet and Sebastian have taken a house at Biarritz for the season” and every appearance, every time we appeared ,attention was centered on us !everyone else !Eclipsed!.¹⁸

Throughout the play, one can notice that Mrs. Venable's relationship with her son Sebastian exceeds the norms of a traditional mother-son relationship. Mrs. Venable is obsessed with her son since she does not give him enough space to develop his sense of independence. She desperately tries to enhance his fear of women.

DOCTOR: He wrote one poem a year?

VIOLET: One for each summer that we traveled together. The other nine months of the year were really only a preparation.

DOCTOR: Nine months?

VIOLET: The length of a pregnancy, yes...

DOCTOR: The poem was hard to deliver?

VIOLET: Yes, even with me. *Without* me, *impossible*, Doctor!—he wrote no poem last summer.¹⁹

From the above quotation, it is interesting to note that Violet and Sebastian are acting like parents implying a figurative sexual exchange between mother and son.²⁰

One can understand that Mrs. Venable's strong devotion to her son is caused by the death of her husband. It results in the development of an Oedipus complex.

In this chapter, we attempted to demonstrate the psychological trauma in the main characters in both plays. In *Camino Real*, Kilroy is psychologically tormented. After the announcement of his disease, he loses the joy of life. He decides to give up on everything, his career, even his beloved wife. In *Suddenly Last Summer*, Catherine is mentally disturbed. She is greatly affected by the tragic death of her cousin Sebastian.

Mrs. Venable is another character who suffers from mental disorder. She shares an unusual relationship with her son. It goes beyond the traditional norms, it qualifies rather husband –wife union.

Endnotes

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²Williams, Tennessee. *Camino Real*.(New York: New Directions Publishing,1953),105.

³Freud, Sigmund. *Introduction to psychoanalysis*.(The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud1917).

⁴Williams, Tennessee .*Suddenly Last Summer*.(New York: Penguin Books,1958),121.

⁵Ibid,112.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

⁸www.age-of-the-sage.org › Psychology Index.

⁹Williams, Tennessee.*Suddenly Last Summer* (NewYorkn:Penguin Books,1958),

¹⁰Ahmed, Sofe .*Sigmund Freud's Psychoanalytic Theory Oedipus Complex :A critical study with reference to D.H Lawrence's Sons and lovers*.(Benghladesh:2012), 64.

¹¹Ibid,65.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵ Williams, Tennessee .*Suddenly Last Summer*.(New York: Penguin Books,1958),134.

¹⁶Ibid,125.

¹⁷Ibid,118.

¹⁸.Ibid,134.

¹⁹Ibid,104.

²⁰Rush, Kathleen. *The Fate of The Insane in Tennessee Williams 'Suddenly Last Summer*.(Florida Atlantic University :August 2009),24.

V. Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation, we have attempted to depict the aspects of American counterculture in Tennessee Williams' plays *Camino Real* (1953) and *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), relying on the theoretical approach of Stephen Greenblatt's New Historicism. This allowed us to penetrate into the heart of the American society during the sixties and illustrate the most important events that characterized that period. In addition, we have also borrowed some concepts of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytical theory. This allowed us to examine the psychological side of the main characters and show the way they suffer from the chaos of the American society of the 50s.

Our dissertation was divided into three chapters. We have focused on the American cultural non conformism. It shows the rejection of the old values of the American conservative society. We have also shed light on the important personalities that marked the American history, by drawing parallel between Tennessee Williams' major characters and historical figures. Finally, we have demonstrated the psychological disorder and the different mental illnesses that the American society suffered from.

In fact, the scope of this dissertation did not allow us to explore all the aspects of American counterculture in Tennessee Williams' two pieces of art. Thus, the two works are full of other interesting issues that could be suggested for further research. Therefore, coming students can tackle the issues of myth and symbolism in *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. Moreover, we also suggest them to undertake the representation of the artist in both works.

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