THE FUGITIVE KIND IN THE MAJOR
PLAYS OF TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

THESIS

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By

John O. Gunter, B. A.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There are numerous ways to approach the works of a playwright critically; one is to examine the individual writer's "point of view" in order to define what the man is trying to "say" from his chosen vantage point. This tactic seems as appropriate as any in approaching the works of Tennessee Williams.

The plays of Tennessee Williams are written from an individual's point of view; i.e., none of the plays are concerned with a social or universal outlook as such; rather each play "takes the shape of a vision proceeding from the consciousness of the protagonist."¹ In other words, each one of Williams' plays "belongs" to one central "camera eye" character. Everything that happens is directly related to this character and his perception of and his subsequent adjustment to his environment. Furthermore, the majority of these central characters fall into certain categories which recur in the Williams canon. Some of these categories have been critically labeled and defined, but none of the studies

have attempted to make a definite statement of Williams' thought or overall moral statement as revealed by any one character type.

Benjamin Nelson, in his full-length study, *Tennessee Williams: the Man and his Work*, divides Williams' characters into the Cervantian categories of "realismo" and "idealismo" and states that "Williams is both the romantic and realist, and his best work is marked by this important juxtaposition of beliefs," which is one way of saying that Williams is aware of the duality of man. Nelson goes on to say that Williams constantly pits his romantic man against the realistic universe and therefore that "the universe is the great antagonist in Tennessee Williams." Nelson's viewpoint is valid, but it is also limited. Williams is also concerned with the conflict of man against himself. In fact, it will be shown that he thinks that man's greatest enemy is not the universe but himself.

Esther Merle Jackson comes very close to a definition of the dominant male figure in the Williams canon when she says that "Williams appears to reject the Aristotelian concept of the protagonist and to substitute for it an anti-hero, the personification of a humanity neither good,  

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3Ibid., p. 288.
knowledgeable, nor courageous."\textsuperscript{4} Jackson is right in saying that Williams rejects Aristotelian concepts; she herself says that "form in his \textsuperscript{Williams} drama is the imitation of the individual search for a way of redeeming a shattered universe."\textsuperscript{5} The universe of Aristotle is definitely not shattered; it is a universe of absolute form. But Jackson's definition is not totally correct; Williams' "personification" of a "humanity" may not be Aristotelian, but it is "good, knowledgeable" and "courageous." Kilroy in \textit{Camino Real} is basically a "good" person (he senses the loneliness of other characters and attempts to help them); Shannon in \textit{The Night of the Iguana} is a "knowledgeable" man (he knows what his basic problem is, and he realizes that he needs help); and the courage of Chance Wayne in \textit{Sweet Bird of Youth} (he knowingly allows himself to be captured and emasculated) is very apparent, though belated.

\textit{The Dramatic World of Tennessee Williams} by Francis Donahue provides little information on the subject of Williams' characters. It is primarily concerned with Williams' personal life rather than his work, and it is neither specific nor documented. The only section germane to this study is the one dealing with Williams' basic themes. Donahue lists both "the destruction of the

\textsuperscript{4} Jackson, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., pp. 26-27.
sensitive by the insensitive" and "the spirit versus the flesh" as basic themes in Williams' work, and both of these themes are discussed in this study.

A critic who does go deep into Williams' characters in an attempt to label them is Signi Falk. In her work, *Tennessee Williams*, Falk places Williams' characters into such functional categories as the "Southern Gentlewoman" (Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*), the "Southern Wenches" (Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*), the "Degen- erating Artists" (Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*), and the "Desperate Heroes" (Valentine in *Orpheus Descending*). The dominant male character type (he is found in one form or another in almost every work by Williams) in the Williams canon is best described as a member of the "fugitive kind." Falk includes two members of the fugitive kind in her dis- cussion of four "Desperate Heroes" and touches on a def- inition of the character to be discussed in this study when she speaks of the man who lives uncommitted to the mores and to the responsibilities of American society and stands above the average money-mad, sex-starved, high-tensioned, and unhappy job holder. . . . the hero walks by himself, a lonely misfit in an artificial society, an outsider misunderstood by his contemporaries.

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8Ibid., p. 117.
Falk's study is little more than a definition, and she sums up her chapter by merely saying that "for twenty years the hero has retained the same kind of adolescent rebellious attitude, the same yearning for a kind of indefinite and irresponsible freedom, and the same talent for failure." 9

The attitude of the fugitive male in Williams is certainly more than mere adolescent rebellion, and the fugitive is looking for more than "indefinite and irresponsible freedom." Only Valentine Xavier's failure in Battle of Angels can be attributed to an adolescent attitude; the other fugitives are beyond adolescence both in years and attitude. The fugitive, as he grows older, is more concerned with a practical means of survival than with mere "irresponsible freedom." The other fugitives who do fail do so for reasons much more complex than mere adolescence. Furthermore, neither Kilroy nor Shannon, both obviously fugitives, fails as totally as the other three fugitives.

Gordon Rogoff almost pinpoints the "fugitive kind" in an article in the Tulane Drama Review.

"We are prisoners inside our skins." (Orpheus Descending), which is surely a formative, motivating conviction, one that speaks immediately for the currents and tensions in all his plays. What is fascinating about the conviction is what it means for drama: from it springs unique, dramatic life, the urge in any

9 Ibid., p. 142.
character to free himself from the prison, to reach insistently—as men do—for what the mind insists is unattainable.

This basic conflict between the attainable and the unattainable forms the core of the fugitive's problem, but the total fugitive is more than Rogoff's statement implies. The total fugitive is a composite of all the definitions and ideas mentioned above.

The fugitive is a man seeking refuge or escape: the goals are the same in that they both mean "change" or reversal, and the fugitive is trying to change his life even though he knows it is futile (Rogoff). The fugitive is a misunderstood man who is trying to be understood (Falk); the fugitive is a sensitive individual trying to avoid being destroyed by an insensitive society (Donahue), and he is a romantic trying to become a realist (Nelson). He is all of these things, and also the dominant male character type in the Williams canon.

The fugitive kind first appears in the guise of Valentine Xavier in Williams' first professionally produced drama, *Battle of Angels* (1940), and he most recently appears in the guise of Lawrence Shannon in Williams' Broadway production, *The Night of the Iguana* (1961). Furthermore, the male fugitive kind appears in the majority of Williams' 10 Gordon Rogoff, "The Restless Intelligence of Tennessee Williams," *Tulane Drama Review*, X(Summer, 1966), 86.
other dramas and short stories. Tom Wingfield, the son in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945), is a fugitive whose active search for escape and refuge is implied rather than shown. Sebastian Venable, the poet in *Suddenly Last Summer* (1958), though not a live character, is a fugitive whose search for acceptance is the basic story line of the play. John Buchanan, Jr., in *Summer and Smoke* (1948) is another minor example of the fugitive kind. The writer Kamrowski of "Rubio y Morena" and the homosexual writer Billy of "Two on a Party" are examples of the type in Williams' short stories, as are the alcoholic poet in "The Poet" and the male prostitute Oliver Winemiller in "One Arm." In Williams' one-act plays both the writer Joe of "The Long Goodbye" and the momma's boy Eloi of "Auto-Da-Fe" are members of this group.

The label for the fugitive kind comes from the following eulogy for Valentine Xavier, the fugitive in *Orpheus Descending*:

> Wild things leave skins behind them, they leave clean skins and teeth and white bones behind them, and these are the tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind. . . .

There are a number of questions that can be asked about each fugitive in an attempt to determine what statement, if any, Williams is trying to make with this character. First

of all, in what sense is the character a "fugitive"? Does he seem to be a man running from one thing specially, or does he seem to be running to some particular thing? In general, he appears to be a sensitive man who is out of place in an insensitive situation where he finds himself, and he knows it. Therefore, he is either trying to change himself so that he will fit in, or he is trying to change the environment so that it will accept him, or he is searching for something that is permanently lost. Other questions concern the fugitive's physical attractiveness. Is he always magnetic physically? What reactions does his magnetism produce? Are women always attracted to this man, and do they usually reveal their attraction obviously? What form of behavior does the jealous reaction of the men take? Do they help him, accept him, or recognize his sexual charm? There is also a small but important group of characters who do not have a sexual reaction to the fugitive but usually give him advice or aid. How do these characters "fit into" the story of the fugitive? The fugitive always has a talisman of some sort—a talisman representing what the wanderer is looking for: "something permanent in a world of change." 12 How important is this talisman to the fugitive's quest and what happens to it in each case? Four of the five fugitives

to be discussed have a love relationship with a female which dominates their stories. Although the fugitive is involved with other women, sometimes sexually, there is never any doubt as to which woman assumes prime importance. How important is this relationship to the success or failure of the fugitive's quest? In fact, does this relationship reveal the reason for the fugitive's success or failure? One of the fugitives does not have a "primary" love relationship, but he does have a series of secondary relationships which, together, seem to serve the same purpose as the other major ones.

All of these questions can be asked about all the fugitives in an attempt to understand Williams' dominant male character.

This study will concern itself with five major examples of this sort of "hero": Valentine Xavier (_Battle of Angels, 1940_), Kilroy (_Camino Real, 1953_), Valentine Xavier (_Orpheus Descending, 1957_), Chance Wayne (_Sweet Bird of Youth, 1959_), and Lawrence Shannon (_The Night of the Iguana, 1961_).

These five lend themselves to this study for four main reasons: first, all five are obviously true members of the fugitive kind; second, each character is unique in some way, and therefore illustrative of Williams' different treatments of the same character; third, the plays of these five fugitives taken together span twenty years so as to encompass
the majority of the time Williams has been writing successfully; and fourth, the action of each of these five plays is specifically about the fugitive's quest and its success or failure. Whereas the fugitive is to be found all through Williams' canon, and his quest is sometimes a necessary part of the exposition relevant to the action of the play (Tom in *The Glass Menagerie*, Sebastian in *Suddenly Last Summer*, and Oliver in "One Arm"), it is only in these five dramas that the fugitive's quest and its success or failure constitute the action of the play. Thus, these selected plays provide the most direct, immediate, and comprehensive view of Tennessee Williams' treatment of the fugitive kind.

There are a number of male characters in Williams' canon who appear to be fugitives but are not, or at least not in the total sense that the five mentioned above are. Two of the most obvious examples are Brick Pollitt in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955) and John Buchanan in *Summer and Smoke* (1947). Neither of these two characters is attempting to change his life so as to be able to adjust to his environment. They are both almost completely apathetic. It is true that John changes towards the end of the play, but his change is not a reversal so much as a natural growth from a youngster "sowing oats" to an adult. It is also possible that Maggie is going to produce a change in Brick in their future relationship, but that is speculation. Even if these
two were accepted as members of the fugitive kind, it would have to be as minor members because the true fugitive is always the central figure in his drama, and *Summer and Smoke* is Alma Winemiller's play, and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* belongs to Maggie and Big Daddy Pollit equally.

In this study, each fugitive will be approached in a separate chapter which will briefly introduce his play, summarize background and plot, and deal with the questions listed above. Tentative conclusions about each fugitive will be made at the end of his chapter. In the final chapter these will be assimilated into overall conclusions about why some of the fugitives fail in their quests and others succeed.

There are two statements by Williams that are of prime importance to this study. In both cases Williams is speaking directly to the reader rather than indirectly through a character. The first statement concerns what Williams seems to feel is man's greatest fault. "The sins of the world are really only its partialities, its incompletions. . . . The nature of man is full of . . . makeshift arrangements, devised by himself to cover his incompletion."13 The second quotation concerns what Williams feels to be man's great attribute.

The great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power deliberately to choose certain moral values by which to live, as if he, too, like a character in a play, were immured against the corrupting rush of time.14

One of the ideas (man's incompleteness and the necessity of "getting through" life by a series of "makeshift arrangements") is negative; the other (man's power to "choose" to live by "certain moral values") is positive. Both of these ideas are directly related, in the case of each fugitive, to the success or failure of his quest for acceptance and understanding. These two ideas will be referred to throughout the text of this paper. An attempt will be made to show how certain incompletions (giving rise to "makeshift arrangements") in man are directly responsible for his failures. An attempt will also be made to show what "certain moral values," if any, Williams believes man should "choose," and if the act of choosing these values truly immures man "against the corrupting rush of time" and allows him to succeed in attaining dignity.

The purpose of this study is twofold: to label and define the dominant male character type in Williams' canon; and to deduce from these findings what basic moral statements, if any, Tennessee Williams has made with his fugitive male.

14 Williams, preface to The Rose Tattoo (New York, 1951), p. ix.
CHAPTER II

VAL IN BATTLE OF ANGELS

The first example of Tennessee Williams' fugitive male appears in Williams' first professionally-produced drama, Battle of Angels (1940). The play was a failure and closed out of town; the fugitive is also a failure as a character, but his very incompletion makes him important to this study. This unformed young character is obviously the seminal one in the series of male characters that dominate the rest of Williams' work. Both the story of this young fugitive and the story of the one in Orpheus Descending (1957) loosely follow the basic plot line of the Orpheus-Eurydice myth.\footnote{Orpheus Descending (1957) is a revision of an earlier play, Battle of Angels (1940). Battle of Angels was Williams' first professional production and was a failure; Orpheus Descending was Williams' ninth professional production and was a moderate success. Orpheus Descending was also done as a motion picture, The Fugitive Kind. The title, The Fugitive Kind, is from a very early play which Williams has since discarded. Furthermore, there is a Williams poem, "Orpheus Descending," which has no direct connection to either the film or the two published plays.}

Williams, however, is not very concerned here with the classical myth of Orpheus. One particular critic has noted that Battle of Angels, "had no connection whatsoever with Orpheus."\footnote{M. Owen Lee, "Orpheus and Eurydice: Some Modern Versions," Classical Journal, LVI (April, 1961), 311.} The play begins when Valentine Xavier, a young man, writing a book "about life," wanders into Two Rivers,

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1. Orpheus Descending (1957) is a revision of an earlier play, Battle of Angels (1940). Battle of Angels was Williams' first professional production and was a failure; Orpheus Descending was Williams' ninth professional production and was a moderate success. Orpheus Descending was also done as a motion picture, The Fugitive Kind. The title, The Fugitive Kind, is from a very early play which Williams has since discarded. Furthermore, there is a Williams poem, "Orpheus Descending," which has no direct connection to either the film or the two published plays.

Mississippi, and gets a job as a clerk in Torrance's Mercantile Store. The store is run by middle-aged but attractive Myra Torrance and her cancerous husband Jabe. Val becomes involved with three women: Cassandra Whiteside, an aristocratic nymphomaniac; Vee Talbott, a religious visionary; and Myra Torrance, the store owner's wife. Signi Falk mistakenly confuses Val with Orpheus when she says, "most important for Orpheus-Val Xavier are three women; for the play revolves around his relationship with them."³ It is Myra who finally becomes Val's lover; the other two women are gently discarded. At this point both the play and the credibility of characters rapidly disintegrate. Myra gets pregnant, and one of Val's past conquests, never named but described simply as "the woman from Waco," shows up to falsely accuse Val of rape. The fugitive tries to escape both females but is caught by a mob of jealous males. Vee Talbott is partially blinded by a vision of Christ; Cassandra Whiteside commits suicide; Myra Torrance is shot by her husband; and Val is burned to death with a blowtorch. His talismanic book is presumably burned along with him.

One kindly critic states that, "Williams not only heaped one element atop another in creating his dramatic tower of Babel, but he also created a host of fortuitous situations."⁴

³Falk, p. 131.
⁴Nelson, p. 63.
Nonetheless, Valentine Xavier, the center of these "fortuitous situations," is definitely a member of the fugitive kind and therefore relevant to this study.

Val fits the description of the fugitive kind in that he is a wanderer. He is gathering information for a book he is writing "about life," and this book is his symbol of "something permanent in a world of change." The purpose of his quest is revealed in his relationship with women.

Val fits the general description of the fugitive in that he is a sexually attractive male. Williams states that "he has a fresh and primitive quality, a virile grace and freedom of body, and a strong physical appeal."\(^5\)

The first woman to approach Val is Cassandra Whiteside, "the first of a series of aristocratic and beautiful women who despite their nobility carry a taint,"\(^6\) like the most famous example of this character type: Blanche DuBois in A Streetcar Named Desire (1947). Cassandra sees in Val a fellow rebel--someone to join forces with against society. She tells him, "You--savage. And me--aristocrat. Both of us things whose license has been revoked in the civilized world."\(^7\) After Val refuses her proposition, she continues

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\(^6\)Nelson, p. 289.

\(^7\)Williams, p. 161.
to be attracted to him, and warns Val and Myra, Cassandra-like, of their doom at the end of the play.

Sandra: I came here to give you a warning.

Myra: A warning? Warning of what?

Sandra: They've passed a law against passion. Our license has been revoked.8

Unable to reach or help Val, she takes refuge in suicide.

Another woman who is attracted to Val is Vee Talbott, the sheriff's wife. She is a lonely woman whose station in life forces her to witness the gothic type of violence that abounds in this southern town. At one time in the play she comes in to the store and Val attempts to sell her a new pair of shoes. He recognizes her attraction and sexually teases her by rubbing her feet and clutching "her about the thighs"9 when she almost falls. Dazed, Vee "turns vaguely and barges out the door."10 Vee tries to blind herself to sex and violence by painting and religion; consequently, her paintings have obvious Freudian overtones: her rendering of Christ strongly resembles the young man who "clutches her about the thighs." Val refuses Vee Talbott because he somehow senses the delicate sensitivity of this woman who "spends her time re-fauming tramps that her husband puts in the lockup."11 Vee is a respectable woman, and she would resist Val—but not for long.

8Ibid., p. 215.
9Ibid., p. 178.
10Ibid.
11Ibid., p. 141.
Val is also attractive to Myra Torrance. Myra is unique among the women in the play in that she has known true love when she was younger, in the person of David Anderson. Her lover, however, left her to make a marriage of financial convenience, and Myra, in retaliation, married the young store owner who was slated to rise in the community but merely wanted Myra as another material gain. Sexually, she has temporarily divorced herself from life. She tells Val, "I lived in a state of--what do they call it?--artificial respiration." Val, after Cassandra and Vee, sees Myra as a challenge to his seductive powers (she is the only female in the play who pretends to be unaware of his physical attraction) and he tells her, "decent is something that's scared like a little white rabbit. I'll give you a better word, Myra. . . . Love, Myra." Not only does Val seduce Myra out of this state of "artificial respiration," but he impregnates her. Myra, whose life has been barren for so long, welcomes this pregnancy with great joy. She tells Val, "when we went together that first time, I felt it already, stirring up inside me, beginning to live."

Val is also attractive to some teen-age girls who come in the store, and it is this scene which most directly

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12 Ibid., p. 191.  
13 Ibid., p. 181.  
14 Ibid., p. 223.
reveals the basic deficiency of this seminal fugitive.

Third girl: I'd like to try on some. Can you dance in these?

Val: Sure you can dance in Kickies. Sit down here. Let's measure your little foot.

The other girl (beating her to the chair): Me first, me first.

Val: Okay. First come, first serve. (He pulls her shoe off. She giggles spasmodically.)

No other fugitive flaunts his sexual attraction in this manner. No other fugitive does anything as obvious as clutch the thighs of a sexually frustrated woman. No other fugitive preaches the gospel of sexual love. This original, young, unformed fugitive alone sees sexual love as a panacea for mankind ("I'll give you a better word, Myra. . . . Love, Myra"). The purpose of his quest is to convince everyone that sex solves all problems. "Don't you know what those women are suffering from," Cassandra asks him. "Sexual malnutrition! They look at you with eyes that scream 'Eureka!'" He accepts this idea of Cassandra's and goes on to actively seduce Myra. He is young, adolescent, and incomplete. He reveals his adolescence in his belief in the magic power of sex, and he reveals his incompleteness when he becomes aware of both Myra's pregnancy and his impending danger. Instead of attempting to help Myra, he intends to leave her and escape. He tells her that his

15Ibid., p. 152.  
16Ibid., p. 136.
book "about life," is more important than anything else.

Val: Well, anyway, when I've finished this book I'm going to send for you.

Myra: Are you? Why?

Val: Because I do love you, Myra.

Myra: Love? You're too selfish for love. You're just like a well full of water without any rope, without any bucket, without any tin cup even. God pity the fool that comes to you with a dry tongue!17

Val's concept of love is incomplete; Val's concept of love and of life is sexual and only sexual. He attempts to desert Myra; he teases Vee; he fails to understand the loneliness of Cassandra: he is without compassion. To be without compassion is to be incomplete, and Williams is vitally concerned with the fact that life is a solitary condition in which human beings need to help one another. "Personal lyricism is the outcry of prisoner to prisoner from the cell in solitary where each is confined for the duration of his life."18 It is by being compassionate towards one another that people are able to transcend the "makeshift arrangements" that represent their own incompleteness. Val attempts to "cover his incompleteness" by fleeing, but he is too late, and he fails.

The first fugitive is young, adolescent in his approach to life; he is not compassionate nor complete; he fails in

17Ibid., p. 225.
18Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (New York, 1955), p. vi.
his quest for refuge and understanding. Williams' first view of the fugitive and his youthful "incompletion" and failure reveals a dark, negative view of the fate of the fugitive kind in society, but it is important to remember that this is the first fugitive and therefore possibly not complete as a specific character type. Only two conclusion are apparent: one of the "certain moral values" Williams is concerned with is human compassion, and his first fugitive represents a dark view of the fugitive's chances for finding acceptance and understanding.
CHAPTER III

KILROY IN CAMINO REAL

The second fugitive appears in Williams' most expressionistic work to date, Camino Real (1953). The fugitive's story is presented as the dream of Don Quixote, who announces, "my dream will be a pageant, a masque in which old meanings will be remembered and possibly new ones discovered..." Williams says that his "desire was to give the audiences my own sense of something wild and unrestricted that ran like water in the mountains."\(^1\)

The prologue opens with the entrance of Don Quixote and Sancho Panza down the aisle of the theatre. Upon discovering that they have arrived at "the end of the Camino Real [royal road] and the beginning of the Camino Real [real road]," Sancho abandons Quixote and returns to La Mancha. Quixote announces that he will dream the masque and, at the end of the play, pick one of the characters to take Sancho's place. The play itself takes place in a plaza which "bears a confusing but somehow harmonious resemblance to such widely scattered ports as Tangiers, Havana, Vera Cruz, Casablanca, Shanghai, New Orleans."\(^4\)

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\(^2\)Ibid., p. ix. \(^3\)Ibid., p. 5. \(^4\)Ibid., p. 1.
The play resembles a masque in form; it is little more than a parade of images, divided like most expressionistic plays into short, terse episodic scenes rather than into the longer, fuller developed acts of realistic plays. It is broken up into sixteen segments called "blocks," maintaining the metaphor of the title. The story is obviously an allegory of the fugitive's quest as seen in the other, more realistic plays. As in most expressionistic drama the characters are not meant to be complex, living human beings so much as the symbolic representation of specific abstract qualities or things. For instance, in *Camino Real* the "Establishment" is represented by Gutman, who acts in the play as a character and also narrates certain passages directly to the audience (he announces the beginning of each "block.") Another example of such use of symbol-characters is the streetcleaners. Whenever anyone dies in the play, the streetcleaners appear and carry the corpse off to the state hospital to be used as a cadaver. The play is filled with such characters, though some are less abstract, and they will be explained as they are discussed.

The expressionistic nature of this drama must be understood, since it raises the plot to the level of allegory and shows the fugitive, Kilroy, as the personification of certain ideas common to one or another of the other fugitives rather than as a complex, living human being.
In fact, it is impossible to see this Kilroy as a living human being. He is surrounded in the play by such historical or fictional characters as Jacques Casanova, Marguerite Gautier, Baron de Charlus, Lord Byron, and Don Quixote. Having undergone a number of indignities, the crowning one being his having to dress up in "patsy" suit complete with flashing red nose, Kilroy is captured and killed by the "Establishment," only to be resurrected while he is being dissected and allowed to continue his personal quest as a traveling companion to Don Quixote. It is obvious that this fugitive cannot be treated exactly like the others, who are, despite their individual personalities, all mortal human beings in plays that are basically realistic.

Kilroy is a wanderer like the other fugitives. He is a prize fighter who had to quit fighting because of an enlarged heart.

The medics wouldn't okay me for no more fights. They said to give up liquor and smoking and sex!—To give up sex! ... my wife, she would of stuck with me, but it was all spoiled with her being scared and me, too, that a real hard kiss would kill me!—So one night while she was sleeping I wrote her good-bye ...  

He has been wandering ever since he left his wife. The purpose of his quest is not stated in the play, but he seems

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to be looking for a place where an incomplete man (one who cannot have sex) will be accepted.

Like Val, who has his book "about life" representing "something permanent in a world of change," Kilroy has symbols of "permanence," a pair of "golden boxing gloves" and a belt "ruby-and-emerald studded with the word CHAMP in bold letters."\(^6\)

He resembles the other fugitives not only in his wanderings and his need of a talisman but also in his physical attractiveness. His dungarees are described as "fitting him as closely as the clothes of sculpture."\(^7\) and he still has "the body of a champion boxer."\(^8\) Although Kilroy's sexual charm is not described graphically by a female, as with the other fugitives, his personal magnetism is apparent from the way the others seek him out.

Although Kilroy is similar to the other fugitives, it is precisely the non-sexual character of his relationship with the others in the play that contributes to his uniqueness. All of the other fugitives have a primary love relationship in their stories which directly reveals the reason for their success or failure. Kilroy does not have a primary love relationship; even the sexual encounter with Esmeralda does not begin to assume the significance of the major love relationship in the other dramas; rather he has several secondary

\(^6\)Ibid., p. 24. \(^7\)Ibid. \(^8\)Ibid., p. 148.
relationships which are not so much love relationships as
they are brotherly ones; i. e., Kilroy encounters several
characters in the play who can only be seen as minor ex-
amples of the fugitive kind, and each of these secondary
fugitives and Kilroy derive some kind of strength from their
contact which enables them to stop "the corrupting rush of
time" a little more successfully.

Williams' substitution of a series of non-sexual en-
counters for one major sexual one dictates a slight mod-
ification in the format of this chapter. Rather than
discuss the relationship of Kilroy to women, then his rela-
tionship to men, then his relationship to others of a non-
sexual nature, all of the secondary characters will be
treated in ascending order of their importance to Kilroy
regardless of their sex.

Kilroy is seen as a man with too much "heart" ("as big
as the head of a baby") who has to pass some of this
"heart on to other people. The first example of his
"passing" his heart on to other people is seen in the
spiritual awakening of Lord Byron. Byron admits that he has
allowed himself to be seduced by "vulgar plaudits." But
Kilroy gives him the courage to leave this place of quiet
desperation; it is Kilroy who inspires him to say that the
heart is "a sort of--instrument--that translates noise into

\[9\text{Ibid., p. 25.}\]
music, chaos into order. . . ."\textsuperscript{10} Byron also implies that fugitives have little choice in their lives when he says, "Make voyages! Attempt them! there's nothing else."\textsuperscript{11} Byron, "the standard bearer of the romantic spirit,"\textsuperscript{12} foreshadows the perpetuation of Kilroy's own voyage at the end of the play. Both Byron and Kilroy are strengthened by their contact.

Jacques Casanova, the greatest lover of all times, is seen as a foolish, broken old man whose last shred of personal dignity and honor is taken from him when he is crowned "the King of the Cuckolds."\textsuperscript{13} Casanova has given up; he tells Kilroy, "You have a spark of anarchy in your spirit and that's not to be tolerated. Nothing wild or honest is tolerated here."\textsuperscript{14} Yet by the end of the play Casanova has drawn enough strength from Kilroy successfully to defy the forces that destroy "anything wild or honest." He finds consolation in an honest love relationship with Marguerite Gautier.

At first Marguerite Gautier refuses to allow herself to love Casanova. She is seen as an older woman who is reduced to the practice of buying male prostitutes in order to gratify herself and forget that she is getting old. She

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 77. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{11}\textit{Ibid.}
\textsuperscript{12}Nelson, p. 175.
\textsuperscript{13}Williams, \textit{Camino Real}, p. 109. \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{14}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 56.
tells Casanova. "If you stay with me now, I'll taunt you with the decline . . . of your male vigor." It is only after a conversation with Kilroy in which he tells her of the importance of loving one person who loves you that she is able to turn to Casanova for acceptance and understanding. Thus, Kilroy, with his concept of "heart," helps to create the lasting relationship between Casanova and Marguerite, and it is their relationship which is the primary love one in the play.

The other person who draws strength from Kilroy is Esmeralda, the Gypsy's daughter. Esmeralda is somewhat unique in that she supposedly regains her virginity with every full moon, whereupon her mother sells the girl's favors to any man the girl chooses. She chooses Kilroy and he succumbs. The consummation itself is represented by Kilroy raising her veil and chanting, "I am sincere." The union is not very successful and afterwards Kilroy expresses his dissatisfaction and reveals one of the reasons why he neither totally succeeds nor totally fails: he is perpetuated and partially succeeds more as an immortal creature than as a human being.

Esmeralda: You pity yourself?  
Kilroy: That's right, I pity myself and everybody that goes to the Gypsy's daughter. I pity the world and I pity the God who made it.

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15Ibid., p. 95.  16Ibid., p. 132.  17Ibid., p. 133.
It is only after her encounter with Kilroy that Esmeralda is able to defy her mother the Gypsy. When her mother, who is primarily interested in the money she gets for her daughter's virginity, assures Esmeralda that there will be "lots of other chosen heroes to lift your little veil when Mamacita and Nursie are out of the room." Esmeralda defies her and retorts, "No, Mummy, never, I mean it." Byron, Casanova, Marguerite, and Esmeralda draw strength from contact with Kilroy, and Kilroy draws strength from contact with two other characters; La Madrecita de los Perdidos (the little mother of the lost ones) and Don Quixote de la Mancha.

In an extremely expressionistic scene in the play Kilroy is resurrected from the dead and partially dissected by the medical students of the "Establishment" simultaneously. His resurrection is effected by the prayer-like chants of La Madrecita.

He stood as a planet among the moons of their longing, haughty with youth, a champion... blow wind where night thins--for laurel is not everlasting... Yes, blow wind where night thins! You are his passing bell and his lamentation. Keen for him, all maimed creatures, deformed and mutilated--his homeless ghost is your own! His heart was pure gold and as big as the head of a baby.

18 Ibid., p. 154. 19 Ibid. 20 Ibid., pp. 149-150.
She resurrects the fugitive whose "heart was pure gold and as big as the head of a baby," and he is allowed to continue his quest in the company of the character who strengthens him the most: the arch-fugitive Don Quixote.

It is Quixote who pinpoints one of Kilroy's faults when he tells him, "Don't Pity! Your! Self!" and goes on to explain:

The wounds of the vanity, the many offences our egos have to endure, being housed in bodies that age and hearts that grow tired, are better accepted with a tolerant smile—like this!21

Kilroy, like Dostoevski's Myshkin, is too good for his own good, he has too much "heart." Upon realizing that he is "too good" for society, he has fled (he has left his wife) and has sought refuge, feeling sorry for himself all the while.

Kilroy: . . . What's the best way out, if there is any way out? I got to find one. I had enough of this place. . . . I'm a free man with equal rights in this world.22

He has not learned to accept the world as it is. He must learn to "accept" or be destroyed; his need for change is foreshadowed in a speech by a character known as the Survivor, who is killed by the state early in the play.

When Peeto, my pony, was born—he stood on his four legs at once, and accepted the world!—He was wiser than I . . . —When Peeto was one year old he was wiser than God. . . . "Peeto, Peeto!" the Indian boys call after him, trying to stop him—trying to stop the wind!23

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21 Ibid., p. 158. 22 Ibid., p. 51. 23 Ibid., p. 17.
The pony is wiser than any of the dreamers in this play in that he "accepted the world." It is implied that Kilroy learns both to "accept" the world and to stop pitying himself by undergoing the humiliation and ridicule of Camino Real. Quixote picks Kilroy as a suitable companion because he knows that Kilroy, like himself, "achieved his immortality... by making himself ridiculous."\(^2\)

Kilroy is indiscriminate in his goodness, and that lack of discrimination is his incompletion. He must learn who is capable of receiving his compassion and benefiting from it; he must learn the futility of trying to be compassionate towards everyone. He does so, and he is allowed to continue on his quest, but his conflict is not resolved— it is merely perpetuated.

This second fugitive is forced to pawn his talismanic gloves, "champ" belt, and his heart of pure gold in order to continue his search for acceptance and understanding. They are pawned and therefore lost like the talismanic book of the first fugitive.

The first fugitive is destroyed because he is incomplete: he lacks compassion. "Kilroy, unlike Sartrean man, has retained human compassion,"\(^2\) but he does not totally succeed because he is incomplete: he lacks the


\(^2\)Jackson, p. 125.
ability to perceive who is capable of receiving his compassion and who is not, and he pities himself because he has too much goodness and compassion. From Williams' treatment of the first two fugitives it is possible to draw the same major conclusion as was drawn by Chapter II: one of the "certain moral values" that Williams is concerned with is human compassion.

Because of the expressionistic nature of the drama it is also apparent that the conflict of the fugitive is not clearly defined in Williams' own mind. Similarly, the question as to whether or not the fugitive is capable of succeeding, in spite of his conflict, is not firmly resolved.

Kilroy must learn to accept the error of his indiscriminate compassion. It is only after he has lost his excess of compassion that he is allowed to continue. His acceptance of the futility of his attempt to help "everyone" is symbolized when he pawns his heart. Kilroy becomes like the protagonist in the poem "Orpheus Descending."

"for you must learn, even you, what we have learned, that some things are marked by their nature to be not completed but only longed for and sought for a while and abandoned."

This statement seems fairly pessimistic, and yet Williams still retains hope for his fugitive and for all fugitives.

His hope is mirrored in a speech that is a perfect example of Williams' ability to combine "street talk" with the poetic.

God bless all con men and hustlers and pit-men who hawk their hearts on the street, all two-time losers who're likely to lose once more, the courtesan [Marguerite] who made the mistake of love, the greatest of lovers [Casanova] crowned with the longest horns, the poet [Byron] who wandered far from his heart's green country and possibly will and possibly won't be able to find his way back, look down with a smile tonight on the last cavaliers [Quixote], the ones 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 the plaza like songs not clearly remembered, oh, sometime and somewhere. Let there be something to mean the word honor again!

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27 Williams, Camino Real, pp. 155-156.
CHAPTER IV

VAL IN ORPHEUS DESCENDING

Orpheus Descending (1957) is a revision of Battle of Angels (1940). Williams himself describes his preoccupation with this myth through nearly twenty years when he says

... nothing is more precious to anybody than the emotional record of his youth, and you will find the trail of my sleeve-worn heart in this completed play that I now call Orpheus Descending. On its surface it was and still is the tale of a wild-spirited boy who wanders into a conventional community of the South and creates the commotion of a fox in a chicken coop.

Although Orpheus Descending is basically the same story as Battle of Angels, the plot "has been tightened, polished and deepened."\(^2\) The play still takes place in Two Rivers, Mississippi. The fugitive Val still enters town and gets a job in Torrance's Mercantile Store. He still becomes involved with the same three types of women: the aristocratic nymphomaniac (renamed Carol Cutrere), the religious visionary and painter Vee Talbott, and the lonely, mature woman, (renamed Lady) Torrance. The Val of Orpheus Descending also has an affair with Lady Torrance which results in her pregnancy, and Lady, like Myra, is shot to death by her cancerous husband Jabe. In all of these things the two plays are alike; however, there is no "woman from Waco" unjustly

\(^1\) Williams, Orpheus Descending, p. vi.

\(^2\) Nelson, p. 224.
charging Val with rape; Vee Talbott is only momentarily blinded by her vision of Christ; and Carol (Cassandra) Cutrere does not pointlessly commit suicide. Nonetheless, the fugitive Val is still burned to death with a blowtorch by a mob of jealous males—he is still defeated.

Val resembles the other fugitives in that he is a wanderer looking for refuge. He tells Lady about "a kind of bird that don't have legs so it can't light on nothing... never light on this earth but one time when they die." Both Val and Lady would "like to be one of those birds... and never be corrupted." In fact, Val has so far managed to escape corruption by avoiding deep personal involvement and by believing in his personal symbol for "something permanent in a world of change": his guitar.

Val: .. I lived in corruption but I'm not corrupted. Here is why. (Picks up his guitar.) My life's companion! It washed me clean like water whenever anything unclean has touched me... .

In the course of the action, Val, like the birds that are not corrupted, has to "land" and he dies. He "lands" because he wants to settle down; he tells Lady, "I'm thirty today and I'm through with the life that I've been leading." When Carol Cutrere tells him that he is young at thirty, Val silences her with "you're not young at thirty if you've

3 Williams, Orpheus Descending, pp. 41-42.
4 Ibid., p. 42.  5 Ibid., p. 37.  6 Ibid.
been on a Goddam party since you were fifteen." Val wants to get off the "party"; he is "all through with that route." He has aged fast on the "party," and he realizes that "the corrupting rush of time" is catching him.

The earlier Val (in *Battle of Angels*) has his book "about life"; Kilroy has his golden gloves and "champ" belt; and this older Val has his guitar. All of the fugitives have something which symbolizes "permanence" to them; Val is unique in that he also has something which symbolizes the changing ("corrupting rush of time") part of his life. He wears a snakeskin jacket which is "sort of a trademark" of the former life he is attempting to shed like a snakeskin.

In his wandering through corruption with his talismanic guitar Val resembles the other fugitives; he also resembles them in his physical attractiveness. In the stage directions for Val's initial entrance Williams describes him as "a young man, about 30, who has a kind of wild beauty about him." Lady pretends to be indifferent to Val at first, but she reveals her own pretence when she accuses him of walking around "slew-foot" and goes on to say that everything he does "is suggestive." Carol Cutrere openly admits that she is attracted to and wants Val.

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7 Ibd., p. 22. 8 Ibd. 9 Ibd., p. 34.  
10 Ibd., p. 16. 11 Ibd., p. 45.
Carol: --I'd love to hold something the way you hold your guitar, that's how I'd love to hold something, with such--tender protection! I'd love to hold you that way, with that same--tender protection! . . .

Val is attractive to women; he is a wanderer who carries his guitar as protection against "the corrupting rush of time"; and his primary love relationship, discussed in depth later, reveals the basic reason for his failure to find acceptance and understanding. In all these things he is identical with the other members of the fugitive kind.

In his relationship with women in the play Val reveals things about himself other than mere physical magnetism. The first woman openly attracted to Val is the aristocratic nymphomaniac, Carol Cutrere. Her manner and appearance is described as "that of a wild animal at bay, desperate but fearless." She is something of a fugitive herself; she, like her former self in *Battle of Angels* and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, carries a "taint" despite her "nobility." In spite of the fact that she belongs to a family which is "the oldest and most distinguished in the country," she is an outcast in her own hometown and spends most of her time away from Two Rivers. She is lonely and in Val she sees a kindred soul as well as an attractive male. She confesses her loneliness to him.

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Val: Who're you trying t' fool beside you'self? You couldn't stand the weight of a man's body on you. . . . A man's weight on you would break you like a bundle of sticks. . . .

Carol: Isn't it funny! You've hit on the truth about me. The act of lovemaking is almost unbearably painful, and yet, of course, I do bear it, because to be not alone, even for a few moments, is worth the pain and danger.1

In the stage directions for this scene Williams states that "it's important that Val should not seem brutal in his attitude toward Carol; there should be an air between them of two lonely children."16

This fugitive, like most of the others, is a sensitive man. He is sensitive to Carol's loneliness, but he shuns involvement. This Val, unlike his younger self in the earlier play, does not believe in the power of sexual love; in fact, he does not believe that people can reach each other at all. He tells Myra that "nobody ever gets to know no body! We're all of us sentenced to solitary confinement inside our skins, for life."17 At another time he expresses his belief in the futility of sexual love.

Val: We don't know each other. How do people get to know each other? I used to think they did it by touch.

Lady: By what?

Val: By touch, by touching each other.

15Ibid., pp. 57-58. 16Ibid., p. 57. 17Ibid., p. 47.
Lady: Oh, you mean by close contact.

Val: But later it seemed like that made them more strangers than ever. . . .

But Val is tender and compassionate in spite of his cynicism, as is evidenced in his reaction to Vee Talbott, the religious visionary who paints her visions in what the "New Orleans and Memphis newspaper people" call a "primitive style." In this land of violence and insensitivity, this woman has created beauty, and Val recognizes it. In one of Williams' tenderest scenes Val kneels in front of Vee, holds her hands, and says, "Without no plan, no training, you started to paint as if God touched your fingers. . . . You made some beauty out of this dark country with these two, soft woman hands. . . ." The inner beauty of Vee touches Val as does the loneliness of Carol, but his belief in the purposelessness of contact between people shields him from any real personal involvement.

Val is even hesitant to become involved with Lady,--so much so that it is Lady who seduces him. He takes no active part in the seduction; in fact, he attempts to discourage her advances. When she counters his remarks about the futility of "touch" with a question about whether or not love is an answer as to how people reach each other, he tells her

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18Ibid., pp. 46-47. 19Ibid., p. 65. 20Ibid., p. 68.
Val: That's the make-believe answer. It's fooled many a fool besides you and me, that's the God's truth, Lady, and you had better believe it.21

When Val finally allows Lady to seduce him, it is not so much because of love as a mixture of compassion and passivity. In the seduction scene Val attempts to leave, but Lady blocks his path and shouts, "NO, NO, DON'T GO . . . I NEED YOU!!! . . . TO LIVE . . . TO GO ON LIVING!!!"22 "The true passion of her outcry touches him then,"23 and he stays although he "knows the fruitlessness of this kind of attempt to make connection. He knows it is the end of connection and would flee from it."24

Although Val is responsible for his own defeat partly because of his unwillingness to actively attempt to reach people, Lady is also greatly responsible for Val's failure and death, as well as her own. Lady's desire for Val is not based on love so much as it is on selfishness and revenge. When it becomes apparent that Val is in physical danger primarily because of his affair with Lady, rather than let him go or help him to escape, she selfishly prevents him from leaving. He attempts to collect his salary; she threatens to accuse him of theft; he agrees to leave without pay; she shouts, "then you ain't understood me. With or without pay,

21Ibid., p. 48. 22Ibid., p. 81. 23Ibid.

you're staying."\(^25\) She also reveals that her selfish desire for him is prompted by revenge against the husband who has forced her to lead a barren life. She refers to Jabe as "a son of a bitch who bought me at a fire sale,"\(^26\) and as "Mr. Death."\(^27\) She announces her pregnancy by screaming, "I've won, I've won, Mr. Death, I'm going to bear."\(^28\) Her victory is both short and Pyrrhic as her husband kills her at the end of the play, and then he tells the crowd of males that Val has robbed the store. The mob of males are already against Val because they have misunderstood the scene between Val and Vee mentioned above. False cries of "theft" and "rape" are all they need, and the mob burns Val to death.

What could have been genuine love of Val by Lady is twisted by her selfishness and desire for revenge into little more than lust. Her "love" lacks compassion for her lover or concern for his personal safety; her "love" is incomplete; and her incompletion merely helps Val on the way to his defeat. Val is the only fugitive whose failure can be partially attributed to his lover. It is true that he is primarily responsible for his failure, as are all the fugitives, but he is unique in that his lover is the only one who contributes to the causes for his failure to find acceptance or even refuge.

\(^{25}\) Williams, p. 108.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., p. 42. \(^{27}\) Ibid., p. 114. \(^{28}\) Ibid.
The other males in the play are antagonistic toward Val. Jabe Torrance tells Lady that Val is "mighty good-looking" and should bring in women customers. The purpose of Jabe's appraisal is to let Lady know that he suspects her of finding Val attractive; it is not out of any concern about the amount of business Val might bring to the store. Two friends of the local sheriff, Vee Talbott's husband, tease Val into a fight by manhandling his guitar and ripping his shirt open with knives. The fight is soon stopped by Sheriff Talbott, who questions Val and ends the session by telling Val, "Don't let the sun go down on you in this county." Although quite sincere in his threat, Sheriff Talbott treats Val in a strangely gentle manner, "as if he recognized the purity in him [Val] and was, truly, for the moment, ashamed of the sadism implicit in the occurrence [the fight]."

The only character in the play who does not have a typical male or female reaction to the fugitive is an old Negro known as Conjure Man. Unlike Hannah Jelkes in The Night of the Iguana or La Madrecita de los Perdidos in Camino Real, this character does not help or influence the fugitive in any way. At the very end of the play he brings Val's snakeskin jacket to Carol Cutrere as she recites the eulogy which gives the members of the fugitive kind their name.

29 Ibid., p. 86. 30 Ibid., p. 97. 31 Ibid., p. 96.
Wild things leave skins behind them, they leave clean skins and teeth and white bones behind them, and these are the tokens passed from one to another, so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind. . . .

Val's uniqueness among the fugitives lies in his passivity. All of the other fugitives are active in their search. The use of the word "power" in Williams' statement that "the great and only possible dignity of man lies in his power to choose certain moral values by which to live" strongly implies that man is obligated to actively "choose" something, and this is exactly what Val does not do. He does not choose Lady; she chooses him. He is the only fugitive who is not the seducer; he allows Lady to seduce him. "But once you fully apprehend the vacuity of a life without struggle you are equipped with the basic means of salvation." Val attempts to live "a life without struggle," and he is denied "salvation." Even if his "choice" to stay with Lady is an active one, there is no evidence in the play that this choice is based on any "certain moral value."

Even before the Sheriff's ultimatum he know he is in danger. Carol Cutrere warns him,

This country used to be wild, the men and women were wild and there was a wild sort of sweetness in their hearts, for each other, but now it's sick with neon, it's broken out sick, with neon, like most other places. . . .

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33 Ibid., p. 103.
Val is obligated to "choose," but he fails.

In Val Xavier, the three women see the heterosexual male who will enable them to transcend this situation. But the situation cannot be transcended because Val Xavier is the reluctant, passive male. His passivity is his incompleteness, and his incompleteness, aided by Lady's incompleteness, is responsible for his failure.

His symbol of "something permanent in a world of change," symbolically enough, is destroyed by Lady. She breaks the guitar in their final confrontation scene just before she is shot and he is killed. The snakeskin symbol of his wildness, of his changing ("corrupting rush of time"), is passed on to another fugitive, Carol Cutrere ("so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind").

The first fugitive (Val of Battle of Angels) fails because he lacks compassion; the second one (Kilroy) is not successful because he has too much compassion and he pities himself (although his outcome is not destruction but a Sisyphean perpetuation of his quest); and the third fugitive fails because he is too passive and his lover lacks compassion. So far it seems possible to advance three basic statements: Williams' development of this character in relation to his success or failure is not linear (one quasi-success flanked by two failures does not indicate certainty of direction); Williams believes that the fugitive must actively "choose certain moral values" (Val of Orpheus

\[34\text{Nelson, p. 234.}\]
Descending loses primarily because of his reluctance to choose); and one of the "certain moral values" Williams is concerned with is human compassion (the outcome of all three fugitives so far is directly related to compassion).
CHAPTER V

CHANCE IN SWEET BIRD OF YOUTH

The title page of Sweet Bird of Youth (1959) contains the last two lines of a poem entitled "Legend" by Williams' favorite poet, Hart Crane.

Relentless caper for all those who step
The legend of their youth into the noon.

The quotation is exact; the play tells of Chance Wayne and how he attempts to hold on to the legend of his youth. His "caper," or attempt to find refuge from time, is unsuccessful; and he loses the sweet bird of his youth. The play is easily Williams' most pessimistic "fugitive kind" drama, and Chance, appropriately enough, is Williams' most unsympathetic fugitive. "He represents the seamy side of the American dream. He means to take whatever he can snatch; he is the perpetual adolescent steeped in gaudy illusions of success and grandeur."1 Nevertheless, he is a fugitive and therefore germane to this study.

The play begins when Chance arrives in St. Cloud (a Gulf Coast town) as the "gigolo" escort to a fading movie star, Alexandra Del Lago. He is the local ex-high school hero who was going to "make it" in show business but has failed. He is back in town to see his one true love, Heavenly Finley,

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the daughter of the local political boss. On his most recent visit to St. Cloud Chance has unwittingly infected Heavenly with a venereal disease. The necessary operation has left her barren, and the Finley males, Boss Finley and his son Tom Junior, have sworn that they will castrate Chance on sight. He eludes the jealous males temporarily, refuses the help of the ever-present females, faces the reality of his defeat, and allows himself to be cornered and castrated.

One of the reasons for his defeat is seen in the purpose for his quest. All of the other fugitives are attempting to change either themselves or their environment or they are searching for something that is permanently lost. Chance is attempting none of these; he is merely trying to become rich and famous and he does not care if he hurts someone on the way. He is the most insincere of the fugitives, and his insincerity is partially responsible for his failure. Even the younger Val (in *Battle of Angels*), adolescent though he may be, is certainly sincere in his quest for acceptance and understanding. The older Val (in *Orpheus Descending*), Kilroy, and Shannon are all sincere in their desire for acceptance. Chance is not sincere, not interested in acceptance (his direct plea for acceptance at the end of the play can only be seen as a desperation measure); he is only interested in material success. He admits as much to Alexandra:
I'm pretentious. I want to be seen in your car on the streets of St. Cloud. Drive all around town in it, blowing those long silver trumpets and dressed in the fine clothes you bought me.²

Esther Merle Jackson describes Chance as an attractive young man "who regards himself as a commodity to be bought and sold on the open market to the highest bidder."³ The image is exact; he is little more than a "con-man." He is easily the most negative person in the Williams canon, and the negative nature of his character is revealed in the opening scene of the play.

In scene one Chance secretly turns on a tape recorder while he and Alexandra smoke some hashish. Later he attempts to blackmail her with the portion of the tape in which she admits "possession" of the stimulant. Alexandra, who is not exactly a vestal virgin, out-bluffs him and adds to his defeat by forcing him to make love to her. Alexandra's primary function in the play is to reveal his insincerity and the shallowness of his dream. She "is the instrument through which the truth is revealed to the spectator as well as to the troubled protagonist Chance."⁴ She parallels Chance in that she is an "individual who has sold her heart, soul and body to get to the top ... but whose triumph depends too greatly on time standing still."⁵ Chance's youth

³Jackson, p. 149.
⁴Nelson, p. 264.
⁵Ibid., p. 262.
is flying away, but Alexandra's youth has already flown and she realizes his plight. She tries to tell him that his values are false. "Of course, you were crowned with laurel in the beginning, your gold hair was wreathed with laurel, but the gold is thinning and the laurel is withered. Face it--pitiful monster."\(^6\) He does attempt to "face it" at the end of the play, but his reversal of character is too late. He is already too old.

Chance Wayne, like the other fugitives, has one thing which symbolizes "something permanent in a world of change": Heavenly. Chance reveals the idealistic nature of his thoughts about the perfect, ideal "Heavenly" when he tells Alexandra that people can be differentiated as those "that had or have pleasure in love and those that haven't or hadn't any pleasure."\(^7\) He goes on to say that nothing can cancel out the pleasure that he and Heavenly have given each other.

Chance resembles the other members of the fugitive kind in that he is a sensual young male who attracts women and incurs the jealousy, although probably well-grounded in this play, of men. Miss Lucy, Boss Finley's mistress, reminds Chance of his high school glory and tells him that he "used to be so attractive I couldn't stand it."\(^8\) Boss Finley, a rather thinly drawn imitation of Huey P. Long, pinpoints the

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\(^5\) Williams, *Sweet Bird of Youth*, p. 110.  
male attitude toward this fugitive when he assures his cronies that the "pinko" Supreme Court would probably "tell you a handsome young criminal degenerate like Chance Wayne is the mental and moral equal of any white man in the country."9

The fugitives are always offered help by females, and Chance is no exception. His traveling companion, Alexandra Del Lago, sees him as "a lost little boy that I really would like to help find himself."10 Later, when she realizes that he is threatened by castration, she offers to help him escape. "Oh, Chance, believe me, after failure comes flight. Nothing ever comes after failure but flight. . . . There's no one but me to hold you back from destruction in this place."11

Chance refuses Alexandra's offer and is next offered help by Miss Lucy, Boss Finley's mistress. In a hotel bar, right before he is cornered, Miss Lucy tries to help him escape. "Baby, I'll go to the checkroom and pick up my wrap and call for my car and I'll drive you out to the airport. . . . You still got a friend in St. Cloud."12 Chance refuses her offer and his reply foreshadows his own outcome: "I still have a girl in St. Cloud, and I'm not leaving without her."13

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9Ibid., p. 64. 10Ibid., p. 43. 11Ibid., pp. 93-94. 12Ibid., p. 85. 13Ibid.
Even Chance's girl, Heavenly Finley, tries to help him. When she refuses to participate in a political rally as the beautiful, virginal daughter of Boss Finley, her father threatens her with possible harm to Chance.

Boss: How do you want him to leave, in that white Cadillac he's riding around in, or in the scow that totes the garbage out to the dumping place in the Gulf?

Heavenly: You wouldn't dare?

Boss: You want to take a chance on it? 

Heavenly does not want to take a chance on it, and she goes through with the rally.

Chance is approached by one more female: his Aunt Nonnie. She is not able to help him personally because of her financial dependence on Boss Finley, but she does give him advice. "I've got just one thing to tell you, Chance, get out of St. Cloud." His personal charm softens her so that she pleads with to leave instead of ordering him to, but neither approach reaches Chance.

Chance also resembles the other members of the fugitive kind in that his attempt to stop the "corrupting rush of time" is thwarted by jealous males who emasculate him. In a reunion scene in a bar his high school friends taunt him about his failure to become a star.

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14 Ibid., p. 75.  
15 Ibid., p. 81.
Bud: Does Chance Wayne have a fan club?

Scotty: The most patient one in the world. They've been waiting years for him to show up on the screen for more than five seconds in a crowd scene.\textsuperscript{16}

Later, these same two men are part of the group that castrates Chance. Even Scudder, the physician who performed the operation on Heavenly, calls the fugitive "a criminal degenerate" and also takes part in his emasculation.

It is bad enough that his passage through the "wrong doors" had turned him into a would-be blackmailer, a paid gigolo, and a man interested only in material success. But Chance also commits an unforgivable sin: he violates a love relationship that is good and beautiful. None of the other fugitives have a love relationship that approaches what Chance and Heavenly had. Val (in \textit{Battle of Angels}) seduces Myra; Kilroy is seduced by the Gypsy's daughter; Val (in \textit{Orpheus Descending}) is seduced by Lady; Chance does not seduce Heavenly; Heavenly does not seduce him; they make love to each other. It is the closest thing to a good, healthy relationship in any of the fugitive kind dramas, and Chance violates it. Not only does he violate the relationship by sleeping with other women for money, but he leaves town and does not return to Heavenly when he obviously knows

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., pp. 88-89.
he has infected her with a venereal disease and she needs him. In a confrontation with Tom Junior, Chance attempts to excuse his action.

    Tom Junior: . . . my little sister that had hardly even heard of a thing like that, and didn't know what it was till it had gone on too long and--

    Chance: I left town before I found out I--

    Tom Junior: You found out! Did you tell my little sister?

    Chance: I thought if something was wrong she'd write me or call me--

    Tom Junior: How could she write you or call you, there're no addresses, no phone numbers in gutters. . . . My little sister, Heavenly . . . spayed like a dawg by Dr. Scudder's knife. . . . And tonight--if you stay here tonight . . . you're gonna get the knife, too.17

If this is not enough to condemn Chance, it is also revealed that his mother has recently died and that the church had to pay for the funeral, as Chance did not even return for the funeral.

There is some indication that this fugitive is not to blame for his failure but that he is a victim of society. Chance tells Alexandra that he was forced to leave St. Cloud so that he could become good enough for Heavenly because Boss Finley "figured his daughter rated someone a hundred, a thousand percent better than me."18 Even Heavenly tells her father than Chance "went away" and tried to "make himself as

17Ibid., p. 103. 18Ibid., p. 41.
big as those big-shots... The right doors wouldn't open and so he went in the wrong ones..." 19 But, as Nelson points out, "Williams is not writing a social tract. The fault, and Williams recognizes it, is in great part Chance Wayne's. The initial choices were his to make and if the wrong doors were open he chose to go through them." 20 Like all the other fugitives, especially the two Vals, Chance is responsible for knowing his own environment and how it reacts to him.

Chance is the most incomplete of the fugitives; it is almost as if Williams has purposely drawn an antithetical fugitive with the character of Chance. Other fugitives lack compassion (Val in *Battle of Angels*) or discrimination (Kilroy), but Chance lacks almost everything. He not only lacks compassion; he is totally indifferent to everyone except Heavenly and he violates his relationship with her. He cannot escape the fact that he was obligated to Heavenly because of their love, and his conduct can only be seen as a lack of concern for Heavenly and her love, and such a lack of concern for something so rare and sought after by all the fugitives is a major sin in Williams' moral framework.

"Since Chance... has committed a grave offence against the bird [of his youth and Heavenly's], the removal of his

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sexual organs can be regarded as a form of poetic justice."21
His talismanic symbol of "permanence" continues to live the barren life Chance has given her, and Chance's castration is symbolically perfect because, rather than merely die, he will continue to live and search for something that is now unattainable (the sweet bird of his youthful sexuality).

Thus, Chance is defeated and in a pathetic gesture at the end of the play he turns to the audience and pleads the case for those "who step the legend of their youth into the noon."

I don't ask for your pity, but just for your understanding—not even that—no. Just for your recognition of me in you, and the enemy, time, in us all.22

He is mistaken. Time was one of his enemies, but his own incompletion was his worst enemy. He destroyed himself; time merely helped him do it.

In this drama Williams is still concerned with human compassion as a "certain moral value," and, if anything, his fugitive's chances for survival seem to be waning.


22 Williams, Sweet Bird of Youth, p. 124.
CHAPTER VI

SHANNON IN THE NIGHT OF THE IGUANA

Tennessee Williams' most recent fugitive kind drama is The Night of the Iguana (1961). Lawrence Shannon, the protagonist, is a true fugitive, and he is also the most successful fugitive in the Williams canon. True, a more recent drama has a young, sensual male as a major character (Chris in The Milk Train Doesn't Stop Here Anymore, 1964); however, it soon becomes apparent that this young man is not a member of the fugitive kind. Whereas all of the fugitives are either trying to change themselves or their environment or searching for something that is unattainable, the purpose of this young wanderer is to help people die. The only common bond this "young messenger of death"\(^1\) has with the fugitive kind is his physical attractiveness.

The action of The Night of the Iguana begins when the fugitive, the Reverend T. Lawrence Shannon, arrives at a second-class resort hotel in Puerto Barrick Mexico. Shannon is a defrocked minister who is currently acting as guide to a busload of schoolteachers from "a Baptist Female College

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\(^1\)Allan Lewis, American Plays and Playwrights of the Contemporary Theatre (New York, 1965), p. 119.
in Blowing Rock Texas."² At the hotel Shannon is alternately pursued by the sensual proprietress, the widow Maxine Faulk, and the youngest of the Baptist females, Charlotte Goodall. He also encounters a water colorist and sketch artist named Hannah Jelkes, who tours the globe with her grandfather-poet, Jonathan Coffin. Shannon dodges Maxine and Charlotte, suffers a minor nervous breakdown when he loses his position as tour guide, is semi-willingly restrained in a hammock where he undergoes a therapeutic "session" with Hannah Jelkes which results in a major character "reversal" allowing him to succeed as a human being. At the end of the play Shannon settles down to help Maxine run the hotel; he has successfully adapted to his environment—he will survive.

Shannon resembles the other fugitives generally in his wanderings, and he resembles Val (Battle of Angels) in the messianic nature of his quest. Val is seen as the would-be messiah of sex, and Shannon, by the end of the play, is seen as the would-be messiah of the reality of human weakness. This characteristic of Shannon's quest is not immediately apparent, but it becomes so after a look at several facts about Shannon's life, both past and current.

Shannon's encounter with the sixteen-year-old Charlotte Goodall reveals her to be more important in the play as a type than as a character. The brief encounter that she has with Shannon is a perfect example of Shannon's past love life, and this example clearly reveals a great deal of information about the character of this one successful fugitive.

Shannon: ... you rushed into my room and I couldn't get you out of it, not even when I, oh God, tried to scare you out of it by, oh God, don't you remember?

Charlotte: Yes, I remember that after making love to me, you hit me, Larry, you struck me in the face, and you twisted my arm to make me kneel on the floor and pray with you for forgiveness.

Shannon: I do that, I do that always. ...

In a scene where Shannon confesses to Hannah Jelkes that he was kicked out of the church for "fornication and heresy. ... in the same week," it is indicated that he does "do that always." The first fornication occurred when he was seduced by a young Sunday School teacher in his church study much in the same manner that he has been seduced by Charlotte Goodall. After both seductions, Shannon felt so much guilt at having succumbed to the temptation of the flesh that he forced his partner to kneel and pray for

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3Ibid., pp. 49-50.
4Ibid., p. 54.
forgiveness. Charlotte is merely shocked; the young Sunday School teacher was so confused that she went home and attempted to slash her wrists. The following Sunday Shannon's congregation was packed with people who had come to see the fornicating priest.

Shannon: . . . So the next Sunday when I climbed into the pulpit and looked down over all of those smug, disapproving, accusing faces uplifted, I had an impulse to shake them—so I shook them. . . . I shouted, I'm tired of conducting services in praise and worship of a senile delinquent . . . a thunderstorm broke that Sunday. . . .

Hannah: You mean outside the church?

Shannon: Yep, it was wilder than I was. And out they slithered . . . I even followed them halfway out of the church . . . I shouted after them, go on, go home and close your house windows, all your windows and doors, against the truth about God.5

Shannon's idea of what really is the "truth about God" is referred to throughout the play. God for Shannon is not "a senile delinquent"; rather he is a God of "Lightning and Thunder." Once he points to the sunset, "a majestic apocalyptic of gold light," and says, "That's him! There he is now! . . . His oblivious majesty. . . ."6 Another time, during a storm, Hannah says, "Here is your God, Mr. Shannon," and Shannon replies, "Yes, I see him, I hear him, I know him."7

It is revealed that Shannon's "knowledge" or "truth" about God has been a major concern to him since childhood,

5Ibid., pp. 55-56. 6Ibid., p. 57. 7Ibid., p. 78.
and he has attempted to force other people to face this "truth" through the use of sex. Maxine tells of a confession she overheard Shannon make to Fred, her dead husband.

... You told him that Mama, your Mama, used to send you to bed before you was ready to sleep—so you practiced the little boy's vice... And once she caught you at it... she said she had to punish you for it because it made God mad as much as it did Mama... it was your secret pleasure and you harbored a secret resentment against Mama and God for making you give it up. And so you got back at God by preaching atheistical sermons, and you got back at Mama by starting to lay young girls.⁹

"Mama" and "God" are perfect representatives of society at large. Shannon uses sex as a tool for revenge against this authority because authority denies him acceptable outlets for both sides of his dual nature.

Shannon himself speaks of this use of sex as revenge when he tells Hannah,

It's always been tropical countries I took ladies through... Fast decay is a thing of hot climates, and I run back to them... Always seducing a lady or two, or three or four or five ladies in the party, but really ravaging her first by pointing out to her the—what?--horrors?—Yes, horrors!—of the tropical country being conducted a tour through.⁹

It is obvious that by "pointing out" the "horrors" Shannon feels he is forcing the "lady" to face "the truth about God." He has an image of himself as something of a

⁸Ibid., p. 81. ⁹Ibid., p. 121.
messiah who tours the world preaching his message of sensuality and subsequent guilt and the progressive and natural decay of man.

Shannon's God of "Lightning and Thunder" who forces him to show people decay is very akin to the type of mechanistic determinism that characterizes naturalism. This naturalistic concept of Shannon's God is strengthened throughout the play by such portions of Jonathan Coffin's poetry as the following:

How calmly does the orange branch
Observe the sky begin to blanch,
Without a cry, without a prayer
With no expression of despair.  

This recitation of this poem is a thematic counterpart to Shannon and his conflict because he feels that such a relationship between man ("the orange branch") and God ("the sky") is

An intercourse not well designed
For beings of a golden kind
Whose native green must arch above
The earth's obscene, corrupting love. . . .

Shannon envies the "calmness" with which the orange branch faces life and the decay of all living things, itself included, and yet he himself has attempted to defy this indifference because he basically loves mankind ("beings of a golden kind")--he has both "a cry" and "a prayer," and he despairs. He cannot reconcile his innate belief in the

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10Ibid., p. 123.  
11Ibid.
beauty and goodness of "beings of a golden kind" with "the horror and indifference of life ("the earth's obscene, corrupting love") and his conflict has been such that he has had to force people to look at this horror and indifference. But the strain of his quest has almost destroyed him. He has told Hannah of "the gradual, rapid, natural, unnatural--predestined, accidental--cracking up and going to pieces of young Mr. T. Lawrence Shannon. . . ." He has also confessed, "I don't have a dime left in my nervous emotional bank account--I can't write a check on it, now." At the loss of his position as tour guide, he has suffered a minor nervous breakdown, which manifests itself when he publicly urinates on the suitcases of the departing schoolteachers. He realizes but has not been able to accept the fact that he is subject to the same natural decay ("corrupting rush of time") and indifference which affects the rest of mankind.

Shannon resembles the other fugitives not only in his quest but in his physical attractiveness. Both Shannon's sexuality and his unstable emotional condition are revealed in Maxine Faulk's attraction to him. She is described by Williams as "affable and rapaciously lusty," and when she hears that Shannon has made love to the sixteen year old

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12Ibid., 121. 13Ibid., p. 50. 14Ibid., p. 7.
Charlotte Goodall, she asks him, "why don't you lay off the young ones and cultivate an interest in normal grown-up women?" obviously herself. Later, when she believes something of a sexual nature is going on between Shannon and Hannah Jelkes, she warns the spinster, "I want you to lay off him, honey. . . . So if you just don't mess with Shannon, you and your Grandpa can stay on here as long as you want to, honey." When Shannon himself accuses her of being "bigger than life and twice as unnatural," Maxine retorts by telling him, "no one's bigger than life-size, Shannon, or even ever that big. . . ." Maxine is unusual in the Williams' canon, filled as it is with numerous neurotic females, in that she is happy and sexually well adjusted. Her sexual drive is certainly strong, but it is not psychotically nymphomaniacal nor deviate. Among other Williams women, only the peasant Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo* (1951) and the communistic landlady, Olga Kedrova in "The Mattress by the Tomato Patch," approach Maxine in their ability to accept life, sex included, and totally enjoy it. Maxine's attraction to Shannon not only is indicative of her own healthy sexual appetite, but it also serves to indicate that Shannon is in need of some help from a "normal grown-up woman.

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Shannon, like the other fugitives, also has a talisman which represents "something permanent in a world of change." His talisman is, logically enough, a crucifix.

The part of the jealous males usually found in the fugitive kind drama is assumed in this play by a female, Judith Fellowes. She is the leader of the group of school teachers and is directly responsible for getting Shannon fired. Furthermore, the fact that she is a latent lesbian is implied several times in the play ("this butch vocal teacher"\textsuperscript{18}). She, like the males in other plays, attempts to destroy the fugitive, but she fails: Shannon is successful.

One of the reasons Shannon succeeds is that he is ready for help and also capable of accepting it as Hannah reveals when she tells him, "I think you will throw away the violent, furious sermon . . . and . . . lead them beside still waters because you know how badly they need the still waters, Mr. Shannon."\textsuperscript{19} Hannah, like La Madrecita and Quixote in Camino Real and the Conjure Man in Battle of Angels and Orpheus Descending, is a member of that group of characters that do not have a sexual relation to the fugitive but exist to give him advice or aid.

It is Hannah who finally helps Shannon find not what he is specifically looking for so much as a way of looking at things which will allow him to live with himself. Shannon

\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 13. \textsuperscript{19}Ibid., p. 50.
recognizes his problem and even has a nickname for the "other half" of himself: the "spook." He tells Hannah, "when you live on a fantastic level as I have lately but have got to operate on the realistic level, that's when you're spooked, that's the spook." 20 Hannah tells him,

Hannah: I had something like your spook—I just had a different name for him. I called him the blue devil, and... oh... we had quite a battle, quite a contest between us.

Shannon: Which you obviously won.

Hannah: I couldn't afford to lose.

Shannon: How'd you beat your blue devil?

Hannah: I showed him that I could endure him and I made him respect my endurance.

Shannon: How?

Hannah: Just by, just by... enduring. Endurance is something that spooks and blue devils respect. 21

All through their exchange Shannon attempts to shock Hannah, to force her to face "the truth about God," but Hannah always gently parries his thrust and continues to soothe him with calm, logical statements. She pinpoints his conflict when she tells him that his problem is "the oldest one in the world—the need to believe in something or in someone—almost anyone—almost anything... something." 22 Hannah goes on to tell Shannon that she had the

20 Ibid., p. 69. 21 Ibid., p. 105. 22 Ibid., p. 104.
same problem but found something to believe in:

Hannah: Broken gates between people so they can reach each other, even if it's just for one night only.

Shannon: One night stands, huh?

Hannah: One night . . . communication between them on a verandah outside their . . . separate cubicles, Mr. Shannon.

Shannon: You don't mean physically, do you?

Hannah: No.

Shannon: I didn't think so. Then what?

Hannah: A little understanding exchanged between them, a wanting to help each other through nights like this.  

After having told Shannon that he should be more compassionate, more "understanding," Hannah goes on to show Shannon that he must resolve the conflict of his dual nature by compromise. She convinces him that he must give up the idealistic attitude he has toward the poles of his conflict (spirit versus flesh).

Hannah: . . . at the far end of the tunnel that I was struggling out of I began to see this faint, very faint gray light—the light of the world outside me—and I kept climbing toward it. I had to.

Shannon: Did it stay a gray light?

Hannah: No, no, it turned white.

Shannon: Only white, never gold?

Hannah: No, it stayed only white, but white is a very good light to see at the end of a long black tunnel you thought would be never ending. . . .  

\[23\text{Ibid.}\]  
\[24\text{Ibid., p. 107.}\]
Shannon accepts Hannah's message of human compassion and attempts to convince her that they should travel together. She refuses, and he asks her if he is supposed to stay with Maxine. In a statement that reveals that she realizes that the principle of compromise must be applied to everything, even her compassion for him, she tells him,

... We all wind up with something or with someone, and if it's someone instead of just something, we're lucky, perhaps ... unusually lucky. 25

Shannon demonstrates his acceptance of Hannah's message by freeing an iguana which has been captured and tied to the steps of the hotel. The poet, Hannah's grandfather, completes the last verse of his last poem as Shannon cuts the reptile loose.

O Courage, could you not as well
Select a second place to dwell,
Not only in that golden tree
But in the frightened heart of me? 26

Hannah gives Shannon the "courage" to face himself and to accept the fact that he and Maxine need each other ("someone instead of just something"). He is neither destroyed nor perpetuated: he succeeds.

Shannon symbolically indicates his acceptance of Hannah's help by giving her his talismanic crucifix. She, who is also a wanderer, takes it "so that the fugitive kind can always follow their kind..." 27

25Ibid., p. 117. 26Ibid., p. 124. 27Ibid., p. 118.
Shannon succeeds where the other fugitives fail because he recognizes that he is never going to be, "like a character in a play, immured against the corrupting rush of time," but that he is only a man and therefore subject to "the enemy, time, in us all." At the same time he realizes that compassion between human beings ("a little understanding exchanged between them") enables them to accept themselves. The fugitive achieves acceptance and understanding of himself and compassion for other humans because "he has potential for improvement, for he is intelligent; the play shows him turning from cruelty to kindness; and perhaps eventually he will find what he can at least be praised for seeking: a God who is not a senile delinquent." 28

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Before major conclusions can be drawn, there is an important side issue that needs to be dealt with. While not directly related to the stated purposes of this study, Williams' preoccupation with the Orpheus-Eurydice myth in the stories of the fugitive kind is so obvious that it cannot be overlooked. Yet, at the same time, while not obvious, it is equally apparent that his concern with the myth is limited to a general use of the basic story line rather than an attempt to re-interpret the myth for a modern audience. It is true that the fugitives are all poetic wanderers like Orpheus; that they each have a talisman which, especially with Val's guitar, could be equated with Orpheus' lyre; that all the fugitives search for and lose the ideal, whether it be goodness or idealized love, as Orpheus loses his ideal Eurydice; and that at least two fugitives (Val of Battle of Angels and Shannon) have messianic complexes which somehow align them with the mythical hero supposedly responsible for the dissemination of the Orphic mysteries. However, Kilroy does not really have a love relationship in the play, and neither he, Val (Orpheus Descending), nor Chance can be said to have a messianic complex. Furthermore,
neither Val of *Battle of Angels* with his concept of sex as a panacea nor Shannon with his use of sex as a tool of revenge and rebellion against authority could be said to be "not only unlike Dionysos but in many respects similar to and closely connected with another god, Apollo."¹ Finally, Orpheus was destroyed by females, and the fugitives are attacked and sometimes destroyed by jealous males. Williams is not concerned with re-telling the myth; he is merely using the basic structure as a proven vehicle of communication.

What basic similarities are found in all the fugitives? First of all, they are fugitives in the sense that they are wanderers. While not necessarily running to or from some specific thing, the fugitives nonetheless are men who travel; they are men who only face their conflicts directly when they attempt to stop traveling either by changing themselves so that they will fit in (Val in *Orpheus Descending* and *Chance*), by changing their environment so that it will accept them (Val in *Battle of Angels* and Shannon), or by searching for something that is permanently lost (Kilroy). The fugitives are sexually magnetic males who cause similar reactions in the plays: women are obviously attracted to these males; men are aware and and jealous of their sexuality and attempt to destroy them. Each fugitive has a talisman

representing what the wanderer is looking for: "something permanent in a world of change." Some of the fugitives receive aid or advice from a small but important group of characters who do not have a sexual reaction to them. Four of the five fugitives have a major love relationship which mirrors the success or failure of their quests; one (Kilroy) has a series of minor non-sexual relationships which mirrors the quasi-success of his quest.

The success or failure of each fugitive is of prime importance in understanding this character, and yet there is no linear development of this character over twenty years in terms of his success or failure. The first fugitive (Val) appears in 1940 and he totally fails; the second (Kilroy) appears in 1953 and is allowed to partially succeed as a spirit rather than a man; the third member of the fugitive kind (Val) appears in 1957 and fails; the fourth example of the fugitive (Chance) appears in 1959 and is not successful; and the fifth fugitive (Shannon) appears in 1961 and does succeed as a living, breathing human being. While this last fugitive does indicate that Williams is fairly optimistic about his fugitive, the pattern of the plays preceding it does not indicate linear development and while Williams is not concerned with linear development, he is concerned with five different treatments of what is basically the common theme: man's own incompletion and his ability or inability to rise above it. He states that "the sins of the world are
really only its partialities, its incompletions . . .", and then he dramatizes man's "incompleteness" in these five dramas.

The total result of the incompleteness of these five characters is more negative than positive: three totally fail; one partially succeeds as a spirit; and only one succeeds as a man. Yet this negativity on Williams' part is balanced by his constant belief in man's power to achieve "dignity" by choosing "certain moral values by which to live, as if he, too, like a character in a play, were immured against the corrupting rush of time." At the same time that this quotation reveals the positive side of Williams' thought, it also reveals two other things: man is obligated to be an active creature ("deliberately to choose"), and he has a common enemy with other men in time ("corrupting rush of time"). Williams' belief in the necessity of active choice by man is most directly seen in his destruction of his most passive fugitive, Val in Orpheus Descending. The necessity of choice is a theme that has concerned Williams since his earliest successes. In the foreword to A Streetcar Named Desire (1947), he stated that man should know that he had to actively choose because "with this knowledge you are at least in a position of knowing where danger lies." 2 The concept of "the corrupting rush of time" is most obvious in

the stories of Shannon and Chance, but it is seen everywhere in the Williams' canon, even in his poetry.

Those who ignore the appropriate time of their going are the most valiant explorers, going into a country that no one is meant to go into, the time coming after that isn't meant to come after. It is not time in itself which is corrupt "and the enemy . . . in us all" as Chance calls it, as it is the inability of man to accept the fact that he, like all living things, grows old. This is the "decay," or the loss of youth, that the old poet, Jonathan Coffin, refers to in his poem.

Youth must be wanton, youth must be quick, Dance to the candle while lasteth the wick,
Youth must be foolish and mirthful and blind, Gaze not before and glance not behind,
Mark not the shadow that darkens the way, Regret not the glitter of any lost day,
But laugh with no reason except the red wind, For youth must be youthful and foolish and blind.4

Man, according to Williams, is obligated to realize that this "youth" will naturally be destroyed by "the corrupting rush of time," and the only way to deal with time is by choosing "certain moral values by which to live." The questions as to what these values are naturally arises. Sincerity (Chance's lack of it is responsible for his failure) and activeness (Val's passivity in Orpheus

3Williams, "Those Who Ignore the Appropriate Time of Their Going" in In the Winter of Cities, p. 37.
Descending is responsible for his failure) are easily seen as two of these values, but the primary one common to all fugitives is human compassion. Life for the fugitive and for man "is a lonely idea, a lonely condition," and men should make every possible "effort to break through walls to each other." This is the compassion which Hannah speaks of when she tells Shannon that people need "a little understanding exchanged between them." In her chapter on Williams' morality, Jackson speaks of the importance of this compassion when she says, "For it is Hannah who suggests that he throw away violence and embrace the quiet virtue of compassion." It is this same belief in the strength of compassion between men that Nelson speaks of in mentioning man's "often deeply moving attempts to communicate meaningfully to each other," and it is this same compassion that Rogoff speaks of:

... a feeling that much of survival depends upon the discovery not of the imprisoned self alone (that, after all, is already known once it is stated), but of the many selves so-existing or battling within the prison.

Another prevailing idea in Williams' treatment of the fugitive is that man should not be so much of an idealist

5 Williams, Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, p. vi.
6 Ibid.
7 Jackson, p. 153.
8 Nelson, p. 291.
9 Rogoff, p. 86.
that he refuses to compromise. Kilroy is idealistic in his excess of compassion, and he is forced to lose his oversized "heart" before he is immortalized, and Shannon, who complains that the light at the end of his personal tunnel vision should be gold rather than just white, is told by Hannah that, "white is a very good light to see at the end of a long black tunnel you thought would be neverending..." This is the same idea expressed in the poem "Orpheus Descending" when it is stated that

... some things are marked by their nature to be not completed but only longed for and sought for a while and abandoned.

Williams reveals in his treatment of the fugitive kind that the condition of life for sensitive man is essentially a lonely one. This loneliness can be lessened by compassionate understanding between human beings, and an inability to actively choose to be compassionate or an insincerity which prevents the opportunity to choose from arising insures failure on the part of man to find acceptance and understanding in other man.
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