

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士論文

指導教授：姜翠芬先生

Advisor : Tsui-fen Jiang

《玫瑰紋身》中薩拉菲娜的苦難與成長

Suffering and Transformation of Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo*



研究生：高學賢

Name : Hsueh-Hsien (Rose) Kao

中華民國 108 年 12 月

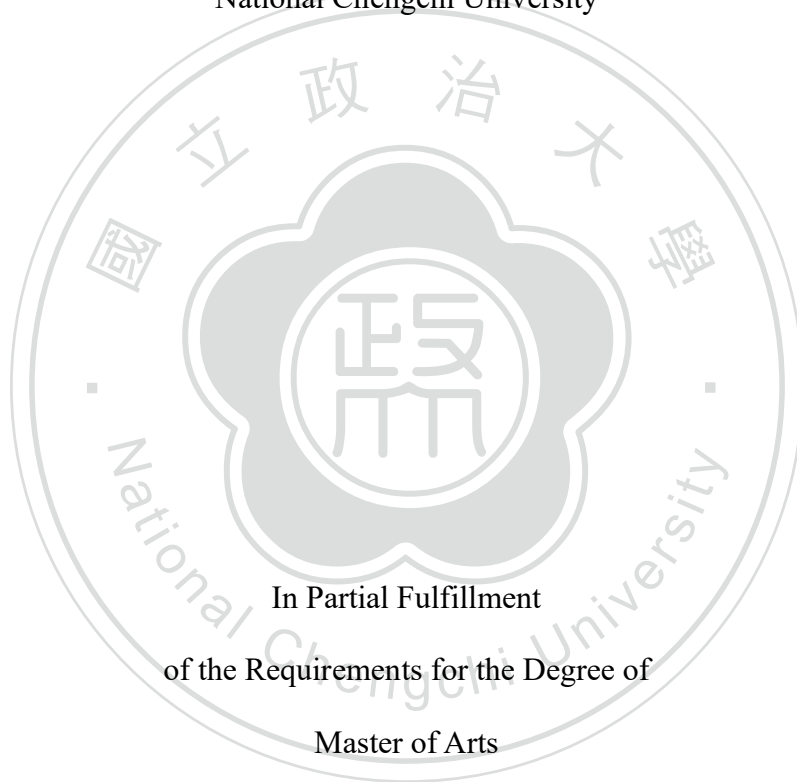
December 2019

Suffering and Transformation of Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo*

A Master Thesis

Presented to Department of English,

National Chengchi University



In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

by

Hsueh-Hsien (Rose) Kao

December 2019

To my beloved Hsuan



Acknowledgement

It's nearly over now. I cannot believe that I am one step from getting my master degree. I remembered why I wanted to pursue this degree. One of my professor from National Sun Yat-Sen University, Professor Rudolphus Teeuwen, inspired me to study literature. After four years training and long hours diggings on Tennessee Williams, I realize that I am not yet an expert and still not excel in my English writing. However, I have made progress, and I know more and better now.

Firstly, I want to thank my defense committee members, Professor Hsu Li-hsin and Professor Shih Yi-chin. They were very warm and nice in my defense exam, and offered me a lot of feedbacks and suggestions. My gratitude also goes to my advisor, Professor Jiang Tsui-fen, who has tutored me and helped me to finish my thesis. It is with her immense knowledge that this thesis can be completed. Secondly, I want to address my gratitude to my dearest friends, Ming-fang, Wendy, Tank, Sam, Sarah, Iris, and Jia-yin. I was not the only one struggling in this journey. There were with me and helped me to get through the difficulties. Thirdly, I want to thank my beloved boyfriend, Hsuan. He supported and comforted me whenever I had serious breakdown. He brought joy to my life, and made sure I deserved happiness. I was very lucky to have him.

Finally, I want to say thank you to myself. You made it. I had been feeling frustrated, insecure, and depressed in these four long years. My parents were not supportive, because it was not the path they wanted me to go. I was always sad had so many doubts because of their disapproval. However, it felt right that I followed my heart and didn't quit.

Enjoy reading this thesis, and remember that struggle and suffering will make a person stronger. Thank you.

國立政治大學英國語文學系碩士班

碩士論文提要

論文名稱：《玫瑰紋身》中薩拉菲娜的苦難與成長

指導教授：姜翠芬教授

研究生：高學賢

論文提要內容：

田納西·威廉斯的作品：《玫瑰紋身》並不像他其他的作品富有盛名，然而《玫瑰紋身》與上述所說的劇本不同之處為：它是一部更樂觀及讓人發笑的喜劇。威廉斯在劇中使用大量的象徵手法，也呈現劇中的荒誕(Grotesqueness)與酒神元素(Dionysian elements)，並討論其文化背景對角色雕塑的影響。

本論文探討《玫瑰紋身》中不斷重複與誇飾的象徵手法之解析，特別是與「玫瑰相關」的象徵。威廉斯透過大量使用「玫瑰」的象徵完成了劇中主人翁：薩拉菲娜·德拉蘿絲的人物塑造，他向我們介紹了這位不完整並且苦命的女性主角。同時透過相同的手法他也帶出了薩拉菲娜人格中最大的問題：她對「丈夫崇拜」的極端與沈溺。在這篇論文中我嘗試使用佛洛伊德的防禦機制理論來解釋薩拉菲娜對於丈夫出軌的現實醜惡的逃避和拒絕，以及他是如何壓抑自己的性慾，進而導致他與她的女兒蘿莎受盡苦難。在本劇的最後，薩拉菲娜終於從悲劇的人生解脫。她的成長不僅只是從幻想回到現實，更是一種對人性深刻的理解。本論文旨在呈現威廉斯精彩的人物塑造，以及作者精準描述主人翁在苦難後仍能堅強成長並且從獲新生。

關鍵詞：人物塑造，人性，苦難，象徵，崇拜，成長

Abstract

The Rose Tattoo (1951), composed by Tennessee Williams, is not his very famous play, yet it still stands out from the rest of his plays as it is a rather optimistic comedy. Symbolism is largely used in this play along with the discussion of the grotesqueness, the Dionysian elements, the global and cultural context.

This thesis focus on the analysis of the repetitive and ambivalent “rose-related” symbolism in the play. By excessively using these symbols, Williams introduces the incomplete and sad female protagonist, Serafina Delle Rose. The usage of the excessive symbolism also brings out her biggest problem: her over-indulgence on husband-worship. With the help of Freudian theory of the defense mechanism, I try to elaborate how Serafina denies the ugly truth of her husband’s adultery and confines her sexual desire, and makes her along with her daughter, Rosa, suffer. In the end of the play, Serafina can finally liberate herself from the tragic situation. Her transformation is not merely an awakening from illusion to reality, but also the realization of humanity. Finally, this thesis intends to connect our sympathy with Serafina’s suffering; moreover, it seeks to present Williams’ successful characterization of Serafina’s thriving and transforming into a happier and more fulfilled person.

Keywords: characterization, humanity, suffering, symbolism, worship, transformation

Table of Contents

Chinese Abstract.....	v
English Abstract.....	vi
Chapter One: Introduction.....	1
Chapter Two: The Ambivalent Symbolism of “Rose”.....	14
Chapter Three: Serafina’s Final Acceptance and Transformation.....	36
Chapter Four: Conclusion.....	58
Works Cited.....	62

Chapter One: Introduction

Among all Tennessee Williams' plays, *The Rose Tattoo* is not a very famous one. It was first premiered in 1951 on Broadway, a few years after his two successful plays, *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) and *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947). What makes *The Rose Tattoo* stand out from the rest of Williams' plays is that this work can be counted as his first comedy, and compared to other works by Williams, it is rather optimistic. In the introduction to the play, "The Meaning of *The Rose Tattoo*," Williams emphasizes the Dionysian elements in human life in the play (55). Even without watching the play in person, readers can easily picture the farcical scenes and anticipate the characters' strong emotions. Although the play ends cheerfully, the hardship and struggle of the protagonists are crucial and worth a further exploration.

American drama of the twentieth century tends to reflect the reality of people's lives. According to Bert Cardullo, most American plays in the last century were about love and marriage, sickness and death, earning a living, or dealing with a family crisis (4). Most of Williams' early plays feature the domestic issues and include the author's personal experience as a Southerner. The Southern belle or the plantation context is usually mentioned in his works. For example, Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* and Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* are Williams' typical Southern belles. These characters are entangled with their own problems regarding love, desire, dreams and domestic disharmony.

The aforementioned themes are also presented in Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*, as the author focuses on the lives of the Delle Rose family, who live in a Sicilian community in the Mississippi Gulf Coast, and how the protagonists, the widow,

Serafina Delle Rose and her daughter, Rosa, struggle to earn freedom and better lives for themselves after the death of the husband/father, Rosario. Nevertheless, this play is slightly different from Williams' early plays on its dramaturgy, for it is his experimental work inserting the idea of grotesqueness in the play. In the preface "The Timeless World of a Play," another article Williams writes for *The Rose Tattoo*, he indicates that the way of minimizing the time's influence on aesthetic works is perhaps a "certain distortion toward the grotesque" (132). His grotesqueness seems not merely a new strategy to maintain the popularity of the play. Pau Gilabert Barberà mentions in his studies that, "he [Williams] does follow the conventional laws of realism, and his characters, even while being grotesque, still show a clear desire to be credible" (2). Williams' plays are authentic and reflecting everyone's life in the world, and the grotesque elements he uses in his works become unusual and disagreeable situations to present his characters' lives. In my opinion, the protagonists in the play thriving and transforming toward better lives under the grotesque circumstance is successful characterization.

Being one of the important American dramatists in the twentieth century, Tennessee Williams has been a very productive and diverse author, writing not only plays but also prose, novels and poetry. Without a doubt, drama is the most major genre of his career. Williams was born Thomas Lanier Williams in 1911, in Columbus, Mississippi. What influenced him much was his family. He had a difficult childhood, because he lived with a father who was barely home and a lonely mother who tried to control her children's lives. On top of that, he was bullied by classmates and never fit to the groups in school, for he looked ill and weak among peers.

Williams' close company was his sister, Rose Lanier, who also had trouble building relationship with others. This tight connection between Williams and his sibling lasted till Rose passed away. An unpleasant life perhaps was the reason why Williams began writing in a very young age. He incorporated the life experience as a Southerner in his works, and also manifested his compassion toward the flawed and suffering people in the world. In 1944, when *The Glass Menagerie* was premiered, Williams officially started his drama career. The play was very successful, and the following one, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, was a big hit as well and won him a Pulitzer prize. *The Rose Tattoo* was premiered in 1951, though this one was again a success then, it was not appreciated by every critic. *The Rose Tattoo* was composed while Williams was touring in Italy with his Sicilian lover, Frank Merlo (Williams and Mead 173). He loved to travel around the world, and Italy was his favorite country, and thus, the play features Sicilian cultures and people, which he learned from Frank and the journey in Italy. By 1970, Williams' fame had diminished, yet he kept writing till the day he died. Though his later plays are not as popular as his earlier ones, his previous works are still performed around the world. He was found dead in his suite at the Hotel Elysée in New York in 1983 at age 72.

The Rose Tattoo depicts a story of a Sicilian family living on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. There are three members in this family: the father, Rosario, the mother, Serafina, and the daughter, Rosa. Unfortunately, one day Rosario dies in a car accident while he is at work. This heartbreaking news crushes Serafina and breaks the family. What is even worse is that the secret of Rosario's affair with Estelle Hohengarten is revealed. It becomes the reality that Serafina tries to escape. Three

years later, Serafina still cannot forget Rosario and she worships his ashes every day. Serafina sews for living and locks herself and Rosa home. On Rosa's high school graduation day, Rosa cuts her wrist to scare Serafina in order to go out, and she succeeds. In the past few years, Rosario's affair becomes more certain to Serafina, and she is devastated by it. Her grief is interrupted by the emergence of Alvaro, a young and handsome Sicilian man. Alvaro longs for Serafina, and vice versa. She eventually fails to elude her lust. When Rosa catches them in the morning, she is furious and calls Serafina a hypocrite. She then leaves home and go to meet her sailor boyfriend for good. At the end of the play, Serafina feels the burn of a rose tattoo on her chest again. She is finally happy, and ready to start a new life.

In an interview held by Studs Terkel in 1961, Williams confesses that "he has always regarded himself as an incomplete person" (82), and thus he is more interested in that kind of people, whose life experience is difficult and painful. These people belong to his world and he has to write down their stories (82). Williams continues to argue that "he has never met a complete person, and the whole meaning of all his works are that there is no such thing as complete right and wrong" (90). He wants to present this world where the incompleteness is everywhere, and thus, this becomes important concept in his works. While reading *The Rose Tattoo*, readers can observe that Williams' idea of the incompleteness of human being is verified by the characterization, as it is easy to identify the ambiguity and uncertainty in those incomplete figures.

As the title implies, *The Rose Tattoo* conveys the idea of mysterious, wild, and sexual love; additionally, it has other themes concerning crazy affection, restraining

love, and transformation. The protagonists of Williams' previous plays are women either trapped in the past and evading the reality, such as Amanda and Laura Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie*, or tormented by desire, for example, Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo* is in a similar situation since she cannot leave the sorrow of losing her husband, and thus, she deceives herself in her own imaginary world. Williams highlights the absolute centrality for Serafina because it seems that there is not a strong male counterpart in the play. Yet, there is still an invisible patriarchal morality hidden in her husband-worship. The invisible patriarchal morality prevents Serafina and Rosa to pursue their desire and happiness. Trying very hard to adjust herself and Rosa, to be the complete and ideal women in society, Serafina follows the supreme moral and religious standard. However, she realizes that her act suffocates and represses not only their desire but also the prospering future they might have. Among all female characters in Williams's plays, Serafina is not the most important one. Nonetheless, her dedication to the family is sincere though it looks crazy and foolish. Serafina is not like Laura Wingfield, who gives herself up, or Blanche Dubois, who remains in the past glory and happiness, she yields to her mortal defects and is no longer restrained by the inhumane moral code. She accepts the truth of Rosario's affair and stops idolizing him as an unquestionable god. She frees herself and Rosa, and grants the family a future. In this thesis, I argue that the protagonist in *The Rose Tattoo*, Serafina, whose over-indulgence is manifested by Williams' ambivalent symbolism of "rose", finally liberates herself from the patriarchal morality by accepting the incompleteness of humanity.

Critics have discussed aspects about the Dionysian elements, grotesqueness and the global and cultural context of the play in the past 60 years since the play was premiered. The first two aspects, the Dionysian elements and grotesqueness, are mentioned in both Williams' prefaces of the play, and many critics have taken care of them thoroughly. In Judith Thompson's research, she distinguishes two Dionysuses, one is Rosario, who "embodies the play's initial representation of archetypal Dionysian spirit" (55), while the other is the later lover, Alvaro, who acts as the "Demythitized Version of Dionysus" (57). At last Serafina exchanges the deified yet dead Rosario for the mortal Alvaro. Thompson's viewpoint of *The Rose Tattoo* is concluded with the play being a comic celebration and enacting an existential version of the fertility rite of the dying and reviving god (59). Thomas Alder shares the similar idea as he refers the sexual intercourse between Serafina and Alvaro, and the recurrence of the rose tattoo on her chest to be a Dionysian ritual (149).

In addition to the discussion regarding the Dionysian elements in *The Rose Tattoo*, Brian Parker's research focuses on the grotesqueness of the play. He states that "Williams' intention to experiment in new dramaturgy and his targeting of the 'grotesqueness' can help to explain the non-realistic aspects of the play: the loosen structure, repetitive and excessive use of symbolism, and apparent use of sexuality" (Parker). In his opinion, the play's most important technique is perhaps its reliance on symbol (Parker). Critics complain Williams' excessive uses of symbols, especially that the "rose" is overwhelming, but Parker argues that this "exaggeration is certainly intentional and it acts as a grotesque distancing device to ensure a non-realistic environment" (Parker). However, Ruby Cohn holds a slightly different idea about the

effect of the grotesqueness in the play by stating that “[Williams] probably intended *The Rose Tattoo* to be something of a saturnalia, a joyous celebration of sex, but we tend to laugh *at* rather than *with* the celebrants” (Cohn 67).

A more recent study of *The Rose Tattoo* is Robert Rea’s research. He believes that the play’s setting and characterization suggest the fact that this play can be interpreted in a global context (Rea 140). Rea argues that the assimilation of the American culture, which moves her away from Sicilian custom and upbringing, is crucial to Serafina’s transformation (144). Moreover, the influence of the daughter, Rosa, who grows up in an American environment, accelerates and encourages Serafina’s liberation from the conventional moral code. Another study on the cultural context of *The Rose Tattoo* is Rose De Angelis’ work; she discusses the complex Italian cultural reference within the American society in the play, as she states that “unfolding in a reconstituted Sicilian village along the American Gulf Coast, where many Italians settled, *The Rose Tattoo* begins with a chorus of maternal voices and a description of Serafina delle Rose: a woman who embodies the very paradoxes that define southern Italian life and that permeate the play” (De Angelis).

The Dionysian spirits in *The Rose Tattoo* is discussed thoroughly by previous critics. The feature of the use of excessive symbolism, might be the key element of making the play a comedy and a Dionysian celebration. Gilabert Barberà indicates that many critics have examined classical legacy’ influence on Williams (1). He also mentions that “Williams takes advantages of ancient myths, on account of their enigmatic, symbolic and non-contemporary nature” (1). In some research, scholars point out that Williams gestures toward the Greek god Dionysus or Roman god

Bacchus in *The Rose Tattoo* (183). Dionysus is the mythological god who is in charge of wine, creative intoxication, sexuality, passion, regeneration, male sexual potency, and right worship (184). The Dionysian elements in the play include the prayer to the deified Rosario from Serafina, who is referred as the role of “bacchante”, the female follower of Dionysus in the ancient times. Her extremely worship of her virile husband is akin to a worship of male sexual potency (184). Furthermore, the play celebrates its characters’ ardent lives and sexuality. Beside the Dionysian aspects, scholars examine the grotesque elements in the play. Williams tries to present the grotesqueness of *The Rose Tattoo* by using loose structure, repetitive and excessive symbolism, and apparent use of sexuality (Parker). Yet, in some critics’ opinion, the grotesqueness seems to make the play more like a farce than a delightful comedy. People tend to laugh at these characters’ ridiculousness instead of empathizing with their suffering and difficulties.

Although *The Rose Tattoo* is not widely discussed, research of former excellent critics have benefited successors who want to study this play. I agree that Serafina’s Dionysian self, which is her desire, tortures her and Rosa, after the death of Rosario. The grotesque elements in the play are clearly elaborated and offer readers a different way to examine the play. In this thesis, with the help of Freudian theory of the defense mechanism, I would like to analyze Serafina’s characterization and her conversion in the play. I argue that the transformation of Serafina is not merely an awakening from illusion to reality, but also an understanding of freedom. Critics regard Serafina’s change to be the liberation from restraint of the Southern religious faith. I believe that there is one more factor confining Serafina’s life and desire: Serafina’s husband-

worship, or the patriarchal morality. This ritual represents the invisible male-dominated world built by Serafina herself. Being a single mother in this Sicilian neighborhood, Serafina is able to raise Rosa on her own. Even if she encounters problems, she can easily reach help from friends and the community priest. Yet the influence of Rosario still greatly exists even after his death, and it blocks the family's pursuit of love and happiness.

In addition, I want to connect readers' sympathy with Serafina. Readers should be compassionate towards her transformation rather than mocking at her experience and behavior. Williams' aforementioned confession in his interview with Terkel indicates that he wants to write down the lives of the incomplete people (82). I think the difference between the incomplete and complete people is that the former neither fit into the society nor confront the crisis of self-identity; on the other hand, the latter are the perfect models that everyone imagines and tries to achieve to be. Serafina is one of Williams' incomplete protagonists, as she lives in a deceptive life with broken family. Though she works hard to maintain the high moral standard in order to reach the ideal life she yearns deeply, she is still a mortal who possesses human vulnerability. In this mixed society of American culture and Sicilian community, Serafina's act seems absurd to everyone; nonetheless, her struggle is universal, because we all have moments when our desire conflicts with our belief and morality. Serafina finally accepts the incomplete part of herself and greets the freedom she has been awaiting for many years.

With Freud's psychoanalytic theory of ego defense, I analyze the characterization of Serafina in order to elaborate this character's suffering life and her

struggle in the ascetic world she immerses in. Williams denies the influence from Freud in an interview by Walter Wager by saying that “I think Freud did illuminate many dark areas in the human unconscious, and I think I write mainly from my unconscious mind” (129). Indeed, Williams follows his rule of writing the stories of the incomplete people while featuring his protagonists in *The Rose Tattoo*. Although he declares his playwriting principally from his unconscious mind and his preference over stories of the incomplete people, the interiors and transformation of Serafina can be more lucidly approached from the psychoanalytic perspective. Richard Stevens’ research indicates that “Freud’s *The Ego and the Id* presents a more formalized conceptualization of the psyche or mind as an energy system taking the form of a confluence of interacting forces which may often conflict” (44). There are three forces, or agents in Freud’s structural model: id, ego, and superego. Id is the human’s instinctive drive as well as the source of all instinctual energy, and is rooted in the biological characteristics of the human species (Stevens 44). Taking a child as an example, Stevens explains that after a child grows older, “he is able gradually to ‘internalize’ or to build up a conception of his external world” (45). This aspect of self is ego, which presents the central role between id and the outside world; its job is to balance the conflict between a primitive pleasure and the gradually socialized self. According to Freud, he states that “the ego is not sharply separated from the id; its portion merges into it” (14). When a person grows older, usually the instinct drive is repressed; however, Freud explains that “the repressed is only cut off sharply from the ego by the resistances of repression; it can communicate with the ego through the id” (14). That is, id and ego constantly “talks” to each other and to solve the conflicts

inside our minds. Continuing the example of a child's growth, Stevens explains that when an infant becomes older, he/she learns social rules from his/her significant people through reinforcement and/or punishment (45). Freud points out that behind the origin of superego or the ego ideal, there lies hidden an individual's first and most important identification (21). Superego is formed when a child starts to imitate certain characteristics of the crucial figures, and reflects the internalization of the cultural norms. The purpose of the defense activity is to avoid experiencing painful feelings (Cramer 525). When mind is attacked by terrible experience, ego will use the defense mechanism to protect it from harm. This concept of the defense mechanism is introduced by Freud as a mental function making patients to distort reality through the process of repression, denial, projection, compensation, to name a few.

The news of Rosario dying in the accident and the loss of her new conceived child traumatize Serafina at the beginning of the play. She is very proud of her family and Rosario, and therefore, she refuses to accept her husband's adultery. The first defense mechanism she applies here is the denial of the affair, as she does not want to believe the ugly truth. She would rather lie on bed dreaming the past sexual intercourse and happiness, than going out meeting new people. Another defense mechanism is the repression of her desire. Serafina's superego believing in conventional and religious rules leads her to worship Rosario and to deify their marriage. Though disapproving the men-crazy women's behavior, Serafina is not willing to admit suffocation from her repression. After Rosario died, any sexual eagerness is forbidden to Serafina; accordingly, she represses her own desire as well as Rosa's. Defense mechanism is disarmed when she meets Alvaro, who awakens her

primitive and long-existing libido. Serafina realizes that the once sacred love she believed was a joke, and her eagerness for another man is part of humanity instead of a sin. Reading Serafina from Freud's psychoanalytic theory of defense mechanism helps to understand the ambiguous and complex characterization of Serafina. It reveals Serafina's struggle in the play, as we can see that Serafina denies the reality and represses her desire in order to escape from the unbearable reality. Although this defense activity leads Serafina to another painful experience, it helps her to become a happier person at last. Without the suffering, she will not be able to accept the incompleteness of humanity and liberate herself from the patriarchal morality.

In addition to Introduction, this thesis is composed of two more chapters and a conclusion. In the second chapter, I will focus on the analysis of the "rose" symbolism and other repetitive symbols in the play. Serafina is able to earn a living for the family after the death of Rosario, yet she represses her desire, and builds the patriarchal morality by herself. And the symbol of "rose" presents not only the meaning behind her acts, but also the her over-indulgence on husband-worship. It also serves as an ambivalent yet important factor to the conversion of Serafina. The third chapter will discuss Serafina's eventual acknowledgement of self-identity and transformation. The protagonist was once indulging in the unrealistic world of divine love and religion, and was not aware of what she really wanted, yet the resistance against desire and Rosa's fight for individuality render her to accept human incompleteness of not just her own, but also Rosario's; eventually she is able to understand who she really is, breaks through hardship, and marches to a free and prospering future.

The play is not famous among Williams' early works, and the author himself also admits that it is not important in his career, but as Parker concludes in his article that, "Though *The Rose Tattoo* is not wholly a success, it is a more adventurous play in both tone and experimental dramaturgy than it is usually given credit for" (Parker). This thesis aims to intrigue other's attention toward this innovative play and its sophisticated characterization. *The Rose Tattoo* is not only a comedy that makes people laugh, but also a journey of personal growth for those suffering and incomplete figures.



Chapter Two: The Ambivalent Symbolism of “Rose”

Symbolism is largely used in *The Rose Tattoo*. Parker points out that “nearly every detail in the play is loaded with symbolic significance, but the main thematic symbols are the goat, the watch, and overwhelmingly, of course, the rose” (Parker). Almost every symbol has the effects on portraying Serafina’s character and shaping her transformation. In this chapter, I would like to focus on the discussion of the ambivalent symbolism of rose; every “rose” and rose-related items in the play are significant. They are everywhere in the play; they are the decoration of the house, the bouquets people bring to the funeral, the rose-colored silk shirt the mistress intends to give to her lover, and even the family names of the protagonists. The play’s name is called *The Rose Tattoo*; as the title suggests, the rose tattoo is also an important symbol. According to Judith Thompson’s research, “this central symbol of the play is an emblem of the union of the spirit with flesh” (53). Her view about the rose tattoo indicates the ambiguity of this symbol. Both “rose” and “rose tattoo” are the ambivalent symbols in the play, as they bear several complex representations and delineate Serafina’s characterization.

In this chapter, I argue that Serafina’s over-indulgence on husband-worship is manifested by the ambivalent symbolism of rose and leads her to a suffering life. I will first discuss how those rose-related elements shape and change Serafina’s character, and afterwards I focus on how the power of her husband-worship influences the Delle Rose family, and most important of all, her own life. These “rose” and rose-related symbols usually have various and ambivalent meanings. Although most critics have covered the elaboration of the rose-related symbols, it is

also crucial to draw our attention to the connection between Serafina's transformation and Williams' symbolism of "rose". After the death of Rosario, Serafina is able to earn a living for the family, yet she is restrained in the patriarchal morality because of her husband-worship. The symbolism of "rose" not only reveals her absurd behavior, but also the self-deceiving illusion she believes in. She allows herself to indulge in the husband-worship and blocks herself and Rosa from the real world.

The frequently-mentioned "rose" has its ambivalent traits from different references, as it can represent beauty and passion, and meanwhile it is thorny and hard to get. Thompson points out that "rose, by itself, evokes both secular and spiritual images (53)." It is the flower that people send in Valentine's Day to express love, but it also hurts people. According to Anca Husti and Maria Cantor's research, "rose is a beautiful flower, representing beauty, secrets, life, blood, death, and rebirth (75)." Graziano's studies agree with their insight, as he indicates that "the rose's associations with blood and death were also readily adaptable to a crucified God and the Christian martyrs who followed [Christ] (Graziano)." He points out that as the white rose symbolized virginal purity; on the other hand, the red rose gravitated toward wounds, blood, suffering, and martyrdom (Graziano). That is, Christ's suffering blood can be associated with red roses, which symbolizes his ultimate sacrifice for human being. The symbol of rose also appears in William Faulkner's "A Rose For Emily" and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter*. The rose in the former is probably a homage to Miss Emily Grierson, while the rosebush in front of the prison house symbolizes Hester Prynnes' female tenacity in a patriarchal society. The symbol of rose in the American literature seems to have a plethora of meanings.

Williams' supposedly red "roses" are excessively appearing in Serafina's life and gradually lead her to indulge in their presence. They are always related to Serafina's family or anything around her, for example, her hair accessories and her house decoration in the play. They bear symbolic meanings such as love, dedication, sacrifice, and sometimes desire. The family name, Delle Rose, which means some or any rose, indicates that rose represents the family itself. Additionally, the "rose" itself symbolizes the family as well as the members inside it. These "roses" greatly affect Serafina's life. From the first scene of *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams describes Serafina's first appearance on stage when she waits for her husband's return. She set a lovingly table for supper; there is wine in a silver ice-bucket and a great bowl of roses.

[Serafina looks like a plump little Italian opera singer in the role of Madame Butterfly. Her black hair is done in high pompadour that glitters like wet coal. A rose is held in place by glittering jet hairpins. ...It is apparent from the way she sits, with such plump dignity, that she is wearing a tight girdle. She sits very erect, in an attitude of forced composure, her ankles daintily crossed and her plump little hands holding a yellow paper fan on which is painted a rose. ...

Expectancy shines in her eyes. For a few moments, she seems to be posing for a picture.] (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 143-144)

The passage, which is filled with "roses", reveals a vivid and perhaps a little bit funny first impression of Serafina. The way Williams features her gives us the idea that this woman tries to look elegant, but ends up looking rather vulgar. It seems that she is always trying to pose for a perfect picture or make herself look terrific in life. The

author inserts too many rose elements on Serafina as well as the house decoration; and thus, it somehow makes Serafina a ludicrous and pretentious presence. The overly used “rose” does not only appear in Serafina’s house, but also in her life.

However, apart from her exaggerating entrance, Williams’ delineation of Serafina reveals that Serafina is a traditional wife and mother who prepares every meal for her family and waits for her husband and child to come home. The “rose” symbols, which are Serafina’s family, Rosa, the unborn child, Rosario, or even the rose decorations in the house, serve as essential parts in Serafina’s life. “Rose” symbolizes a conventional family and a supreme obligation she needs to bear. She is happy and proud of what she has. Nonetheless, from Williams’ words, while Serafina is at home, she seems uneasy as she forces herself to sit straight and tight (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 143). The double meaning of the “rose” symbol is that, what “rose” represents is the family that Serafina deeply loves and is willing to dedicate all herself to it; on the other hand, it is the responsibility and pious shrine she needs to guard and protect. Husti and Cantor’s studies explains that, “red rose is supposed to have been born of the blood of Christ, and is linked with blood lost by Jesus when he was crucified on the cross” (76). From the spiritual and religious perspectives to discuss the rose symbol in the play, rose represents blood coming out from the suffering and sacrificed Christ. For Serafina, family is the place where she sacrifices her time, youth and body as being a mother and a wife. The play does not reveal her complaint about the family, but she indeed suffers because of the exhaustion and confinement. Before Serafina loses her husband, she is satisfied being a traditional and perfect housewife. She glorifies her husband, takes good care of their daughter, and occasionally sews clothes for people

to help making the end meet. Nonetheless, when the misfortune strikes the family, she has to change and grow up.

Serafina's children are referred as her precious roses, yet they are also her sweet burden, because life for a mother is never easy, not to mention that it might be harder for the mother of an immigrant family. Rosa is her "rose," whose name is a self-apparent token, which means rose in Italian. Moreover, while Serafina tells Assunta that she has conceived a child, she insists that there is another "rose" growing in her body (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 146). The unborn baby is a rose too. After Rosario dies, the neighborhood and Rosa's high school teacher think Serafina is crazy, because she locks Rosa home, and will not allow her to attend the graduation. She is not appreciated by others, even Rosa cannot tolerate her. However, she is not a terrible mother. Serafina loses a child on the day Rosario passes away, but she does not forget to look after Rosa. Though being raised with an extremely religious and controlling way, Rosa still flourishes into an independent girl. Williams does not mention whether the family's finance is poor or fine; but judging from the scene that Serafina takes the work of sewing every Sicilian girl's prom dress in the neighborhood, the family is not rich. Nonetheless, she is capable to support the family. Serafina tries to protect Rosa from every seduction and harm from the American-style world. She demands Rosa to follow her rules and to live basically like a nun. Yet, Rosa is deeply immersed in the American culture, and she rebels to Serafina's suffocating parenting in order to take back the control of her life. Serafina feels lost while her girl, who used to be her little flower, leaves her for good, but she is still willing to release her daughter as well as frees herself from the restricted and tedious regulation.

The influence of Rosario, another “rose” blossoming in Serafina’s heart, leads Serafina to her later suffering as well as final transformation. “Rose” represents Rosario, and Serafina’s strong love toward him, as she describes Rosario as “my rose of the world” (199), and his ashes as “the ashes of a rose” (173). The image of Rosario, is eternal and divine, but it also signifies passionate desire. In Williams’ introductory essay of *The Rose Tattoo*, he emphasizes that the play “is the Dionysian element in life, its mystery, its beauty, and its significance” (Williams, *Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana* 55). Following this statement, it is shown that Rosario plays the Dionysus role in the play. Thompson argues that, “unable to acknowledge an unalloyed sexuality in human nature, however, Serafina attempts to imbue the Dionysian spirit with religious significance in her elevation of Rosario” (55). For Serafina, Rosario is like Dionysius, a god of wine and ritual madness. She thinks that their union is pure and joyous. Serafina once states that, the big bed where they make love is beautiful like a religion (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 196). In J. Michael Walton’s research, he points out that “Dionysus the character is like the religion itself, as seductive and benign as he is destructive and beyond morality (190).” He is as ambivalent as the rose symbol. Serafina’s life was once filled with Rosarios; she also reveres him. However, the existence of the mythicized Dionysus Rosario is the crucial reason why Serafina becomes a more religious and conservative woman who used to confine her own desire in an extreme way.

In the play, Serafina turns to the Catholic doctrines, which is from her Sicilian upbringing, for comfort. Ever since the death of Rosario, Serafina becomes more

obsessed with religion, and follows its moral codes strictly. According to Rea's research, "to overcome her grief and return to the fold of community, Serafina must reconsider the way Sicilian custom informs her traditional stance on sexual intimacy" (144). It seems that religion has become a sanctuary and the best way to connect her to the Sicilian society. However, Serafina's way of worship is different and considered wrong by many people. What Serafina does seems like a religious ritual, but it is actually disapproved by the church. Father De Leo informs Serafina that she breaks the church law as she incinerates Rosario's body. It is inappropriate that she "sets up a little idolatrous shrine in her house and gives worship to a bottle of ashes" (William 194). Regardless of the fact that praying to Rosario's ashes urn next to Lady Madonna is improper, Serafina continues her seemingly pious deed. Alder points out that "her religion is more pagan superstition than Catholic" (148). And that is true as the neighbors do not regard her as a religious person. Serafina's ambivalent and contradicting personality is revealed here, for her manic adoration of the Lady and Rosario's urn is not acceptable in the religion. In addition, the priest blames her appalling appearance and behavior in the neighborhood. Evidently, though Serafina might try to comply to the Sicilian custom and the religion also demands her to do so, she still fails to acquire respect and sympathy from the Sicilian community.

In addition to the rose symbols in the play, the symbol of the rose tattoo is crucial as well, as it helps us to understand the personalities of Williams' protagonists, especially Serafina's. I have elaborated the connotation of the "rose." However, in order to understand the title of this play, and likewise we should interpret its significance in the play, the "tattoo." Laura Buss and Karen Hodges indicates that "no

discussion of tattooing would be complete without considering that much of the modern attitude toward it, not only in China and Japan but also in all highly developed societies, is a negative one” (11). Buss and Hodges also suggests that “there has been a taboo surrounding tattooing” (11). People sometime associate tattoos with gangster activities and a way of intimidating others. In the play, Rosario and Estelle actually represent the negative sides of the rose tattoo, as one is an implied smuggling criminal and the other is a mistress who sabotages the peace of a family respectively. Besides the negative image of tattoo, the process of marking a tattoo on one’s body is not pleasant as it is literally carving someone’s skin.

Every protagonist’s rose tattoo reveals how they relate to Serafina’s suffering and change. Tattoo embodies many adverse aspects, and it is mysterious with various representations, such as commemorating the lost ones or showing affection and passion toward someone. Especially in modern society, there are more and more young people are getting tattoos. Cyril Siorat’s research shows that “within most tattooing communities, tattoos underline a particular inquiry and positive engagement of the individual with their suffering” (368). Take Serafina for example. Her rose tattoo is not a “real” rose tattoo piece but a change of her complexion on her chest whenever she feels that she is pregnant. It appears while she feels the burning pain of the rose tattoo on her chest (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 146), and that is, she is celebrating and expecting a newborn. In Thompson’s opinion, she “assumes all of the diverse meaning—the secular and miraculous, the corrupt and regenerative—as it reflects the unfolding awareness of life’s ambiguities in the mind of Serafina” (54). Among the main characters in the play, there are four people who have the rose tattoos on their

chest; they are Serafina, Rosario, Estelle, and Alvaro.¹ Their rose tattoos embody various symbolic meanings as they could be the miracle of someone conceiving a child, romantic love or even betrayal. The rose tattoo is crucial for Serafina's conversion, for it symbolizes differently to these characters, and affects the way Serafina perceives and reacts to the world.

Firstly, Serafina's rose tattoo represents her libido and a great responsibility of having children. Serafina sees the rose tattoo when she is having sexual intercourse with Rosario. Yet when the husband dies, her libido is repressed and disappears. At the beginning of the play, Serafina talks to Assunta about one night she wakes up and finds that she suddenly has a rose tattoo, the one that is identical to Rosario's, on her chest. This rose tattoo comes with a burning pain (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 146), and is gone immediately. In Serafina's understanding, she insists that this is the sign of her conceiving a child, and also a representation of the couple's union of love. It later turns out Serafina's maternal instinct is real, as the fact shows that she does conceive Rosario's child. Although she is thrilled by the baby's coming, it cannot be denied that the birth of a newborn comes along with a burning pain, and so is getting a tattoo in real life. That is, Serafina's rose tattoo, symbolizing the child, means heavy responsibility from the family. The process of conceiving this child is unrealistic, but Serafina treats her rose tattoo as a sacred being and miracle. Nonetheless, the cherished rose tattoo is not that precious for Rosario. When Serafina tells him her

¹ Although Rosa is one of the main characters, unlike Serafina, Rosario, Estelle, and Alvaro, she does not have a rose tattoo. In my opinion, she herself is a rose, as indicated by her name. Moreover, she does not have a rose tattoo because she seems to be intentionally designed by the playwright not be related in the rose tattoo entanglement.

vision, Rosario only laughs (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 146), and pampers her as if she is just a naïve child. It appears that this sign is just a joke to him.

Secondly, Alvaro's rose tattoo means his passionate love and bold desire toward Serafina. Compared to Rosario's oblivious attitude toward the rose tattoo, Alvaro Mangiacavallo sees its value and importance. According to Serafina, this man is good-looking, and has Rosario's body, but with the head of a clown (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 205). Thompson argues that Alvaro acts as the demythicized version of Dionysus (57). For Serafina, Alvaro is not very like Rosario, the man who plays the role of a perfect husband and father, but rather, he looks stupid and ignorant. Yet he is still a very attractive man for a lonely woman like her. When Alvaro hears about the dead husband's tattoo, he immediately arranges one for himself, and shows it to Serafina in order to win her heart. His tattoo and persistent pursuit awake Serafina's deepest craving for love and for men, and lead to her transformation. Alvaro is not simply a replacement or a degraded version of Rosario, for he actually plays the pivotal role who pulls Serafina out of her fantasy. He helps her to face Rosario's adultery, and pursues her and gives her love madly.

Thirdly, the meaning of the rose tattoo for Rosario is that it serves as his love for the traditional family that he and Serafina have; however, it is the exciting and erotic desire he and Estelle share. Although Rosario does not really appear in the play, and although there is not much description of him, we can still acquaint this person from other characters' lines. Serafina praises him to everyone and she absolutely adores him. Rosario is the pride of the family. While Serafina talks to Assunta, she implies that Rosario is much better than anyone in this Sicilian neighborhood, because she

claims that he is a baron. One other fact we know about Rosario is his secret illegal job besides delivering banana with a truck. He sometimes earns money by smuggling illegal goods. The day Rosario dies is actually the last day of the smuggling. For the family's sake, Rosario promises Serafina that he is going to have his own truck and starts a business. It seems that Rosario is a man who has a plan for their future and takes good care of his family; nonetheless, the ugly truth of the adultery between Rosario and Estelle is exposed after his death. Rosario's rose tattoo has two sides and he shows them differently to his wife and his mistress. It is complicated and twisted, as it is mixed with his betrayal to the family. The dishonest implication of the rose tattoo becomes more obvious when we later find out that Estelle has the same rose tattoo. Rosario's characterization is implicit, as he never shows in the play. Nevertheless, he is the person who has the original and the very first rose tattoo in the play. He is the representation of the rose tattoo; and his different faces toward the wife and the lover reflect the ambivalent traits of this symbol.

Estelle Hohengarten, Rosario's mistress, also has a rose tattoo. Her rose tattoo is their love symbol and represents her wildness and bravery. On the other hand, it is not only the emblem of their forbidden love but also the symbol of deception and a broken family which Serafina dreads very much. Furthermore, Estelle's rose tattoo is a evidence of her adultery with Rosario. The day Estelle telling Serafina about her rose tattoo is the day she realize that the rumor of his husband's affair is real.

The voice: Don't you remember? I brought you the rose-colored silk to make him a shirt. You said, "For a man?" and I said, "Yes, for a man that's wild like a

Gypsy!” But if you think I’m a liar, come here and let me show you his rose tattoo on my chest!

[Serafina holds the phone away from her as though it had burst into flame. Then, with a terrible cry, she hurls it to the floor. She staggers dizzily toward the Madonna. Alvaro seizes her arm and pushed her gently on the sofa.] (Williams, Rose Tattoo 236)

This passage repeats Estelle’s first conversation with Serafina. It provides a different perspective of Rosario. Serafina thinks Rosario is wild like a Gypsy (Williams, Rose Tattoo 150), while the statement totally contradicts to Serafina’s image of Rosario, and upsets her. The day Rosario dies, she goes to Serafina’s house and asks her to sew a shirt for her lover. From the conversation between her and Serafina, it is obvious that she is the opposite of Serafina. Estelle is the bold and sexy mistress while Serafina plays the role of a docile and legit wife. Estelle’s act of visting the wife’s house and asking her to sew a shirt for her husband is careless and daring. Unlike some mistresses who will secretly observe the wives, Estelle chooses to confront Serafina, perhaps because she wants to figure out what her competitor looks like. The discussion below shows readers the contradiction between Estelle and Serafina.

Serafina: A woman should not encourage a man to be wild.

Estelle: A man that’s wild is hard for a woman to hold, huh? But if he was tame—would the woman want to hold him? Huh?

Serafina: I am a married woman in business. I don’t know nothing about wild men and wild women and I don’t have much time—so... (Williams, Rose Tattoo

150)

They have different opinions regarding men. Estelle wants a man to be wild, or she will lose interest in him, while Serafina hopes men and women to be gentle and docile respectively. Estelle is ambitious in love relationship, for she prefers a more challenging lover so that she can conquer his heart. Regardless of other's contempt and abuse, she still shows up in Rosario's funeral in order to mourn for his death. When Serafina demands her the truth of the affair, Estelle is not intimidated, but rather, provokes Serafina by saying that she has Rosario's tattoo on her chest.

The rose-colored silk shirt which Estelle designates to give Rosario is also an important item symbolizing variously in the play, and it shows us different perspectives to observe the characters. It is the rose-colored silk which Estelle brings to Serafina so to sew a shirt in a very short notice. It is a gift for Rosario, but ironically Serafina does not know its purpose then and efficiently finishes the job in time. Estelle does not come back to fetch the shirt, and it is left to Serafina. The symbolic meaning of this rose-colored shirt varies when it is owned by these characters, for example, Serafina and Estelle. Not only are their concepts of the ideal men completely different, but their styles of fashion are disparate as well. There is a disagreement about the rose-silk between the two:

Estelle: I got the piece of silk with me. I want it made into a shirt for a man I'm in love with. Tomorrow is the anniversary of the day we met...

Serafina: Che bella stoffa! Oh, that would be wonderful stuff for a lady's blouse or for a pair of pyjamas!

Estelle: I want a man's shirt made with it.

Serafina: Silk this color for a *man*? (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 150)

Serafina dislikes the idea of this rose-colored silk for a man's shirt, because it is not masculine enough for a man, while to Estelle it seems to be a perfect anniversary gift for her lover. Here the rose-colored shirt amplifies the distinction of these two women who are both in love with the same man. For Estelle, this shirt has double meanings as it is a gift that represents her love gesture toward Rosario, yet it is also a proof of disloyalty.

For Serafina, the shirt also bears two interpretations, as it is something Serafina disapproves originally but it becomes a mixed token combining love, betrayal, and self-redemption. It is a detested object at the beginning; however strangely, when Serafina meets Alvaro, it immediately comes across Serafina's mind, and is handed to replace Alvaro's broken one. This once anniversary gift between Rosario and Estelle suddenly becomes a present to Alvaro, the other male lover, in his first meeting with Serafina. It is intriguing that Serafina changes her idea about the rose-colored shirt as she attempts it to give to Alvaro. She does not think the color is not masculine enough anymore. Her peculiar behavior shows Serafina's very ambivalent attitude toward the unfaithful marriage Rosario causes. It seems that Serafina turns a blind eye to Rosario's adultery when he is alive, but after his death, she wavers between accepting the affair or living in the memory. In the last scene of Act Two, Serafina states that, "Rosario, forgive me! Forgive me for thinking the awful lie could be true!" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 219). She considers her attraction to Alvaro is a way of cheating on

Rosario. Giving Alvaro the shirt is a gesture of revealing her longing for an affair with him. From the idea that Serafina changes her attitude toward the rose-colored shirt, we can observe that she is no longer the same person who used to dislike the feminine shirt. When she meets Alvaro, everything starts to alter, and Serafina is aware that her abstinence from sex is cracking little by little.

The real rose, the names and family members of rose, the rose tattoo, and rose-colored shirt recur throughout *The Rose Tattoo*. The over-abundance of rose-related symbols unveils Serafina's reliance and over-indulgence on them. It seems that she is always attracted by "roses" and has the longing to own them and control them. In their house, there are roses everywhere. Serafina and Rosario name their daughter "Rose" in Italian. Additionally, Serafina cannot resist Alvaro having a rose tattoo and is charmed by him. She considers Estelle's rose tattoo as an important proof of her husband's adultery. These all show her obsession of these rose-related objects. Williams intentionally places them in the play so as to relate to Serafina's major issue in her personality, the husband-worship.

I believe that Serafina's husband-worship derives from the invisible patriarchal morality and results in her and her daughter's suffering. Patriarchy, by definition, is "social organization marked by the supremacy of the father in the clan or family, the legal dependence of wives and children, and the reckoning of descent and inheritance in the male line" ("Patriarchy"). The patriarchal morality could mean the strict doctrines that teach women how to behave in certain society. In Serafina's case, patriarchal morality not only confines her to stay home to be a good wife and mother, but also controls her sexuality. It imposes restraints on Serafina, under whose context

the husband-worship is established. The husband-worship is that the wife blindly believes in the husband's words and dedicates herself fully to the man without considering her own personal interest and desire. In Thompson's studies, she refers Rosario as the "archetypal Dionysian spirit" (55). Serafina's words and behavior reveal the fact that she thinks her Rosario is a god and she will glorify him.

From the very beginning of *The Rose Tattoo*, Serafina boasts how great and amazing her husband is, and even though she knows that Rosario's job of hauling illegal goods under banana truck, she does not ask him to stop. When Assunta admonishes that she should not indulge in those pretty words and the fantasy of Rosario, Serafina still sees him as a perfect figure. Assunta warns Serafina that she should pay more attention to the risk and danger of his job, for the black veil, the death, to her family is foreseen, yet Serafina ignores her words. Serafina's description of Rosario always seems too good to be true; moreover, it contradicts with others' opinions. While Bessie and Flora, two unfriendly customers from the neighborhood, insult Rosario by saying he is a "Wop of a gangster," and unveil the rumor of him "shot smuggling dope under a load of bananas" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 172), Serafina defends her husband and assures his status as a noble baron. She tells people their satisfactory sex and that Rosario is the "first best and the only best" husband (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 172). Arguing against Bessie's and Flora's flippant remarks on men, Serafina boldly praises Rosario's body and compares his skin to the smooth and sweet yellow rose petal (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 173). When it comes to men, Serafina always mentions and remembers the merits of Rosario. One of Williams' stage direction for Serafina when she speaks of him is that she should act "religiously"

(Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 171). It is apparent that the husband's presence to her is godly.

When Rosario passes away, Serafina is trapped in the eternal memory of her husband, and even deifies his dead presence to a higher level. He is deeply mourned by his wife, but people will anticipate the widow to move on gradually. Alder's research points out that "their love, [Serafina] deceptively believes, can stop time; it is not subject to change and loss" (148). And thus, the husband-worship does not disappear after the tragedy, and instead, it becomes stronger. There is a change of understanding what sexuality and love truly are when Serafina loses Rosario; sexuality was worshipped, and it "upgrades" after Rosario's death, as it becomes holier and more sacred than ever. His dead presence does not only represent joyous and carnival, as Dionysus is usually suggested, but it is also elevated to a higher position as a god who stands next to the Lady Madonna, and is included in the part of the religion Serafina creates, a pagan one.

Even though Serafina is able to financially support her family, she is still overly indulging herself in the unwittingly husband-worship, which leads her and Rosa to a struggling life. For the Delle Rose family, the role Rosario performs has the absolute power over Serafina and Rosa. He used to be the main financial source, and seemed to make a decent amount of money to provide the family. When he passes away, Serafina starts to earn money on her own by sewing clothes. She replaces Rosario and becomes the main and only contributor of the family. It is supposed that Serafina should rid of the patriarchal morality and the rigid rules she has been following for many years, but she apparently immerses herself more in the sanctuary where she builds, and meanwhile forces Rosa to behave the same way. In Serafina's case, this

patriarchal morality is invisible, because she initially and intentionally blocks out the truth about Rosario, for instance, the adultery, and blindly believes in his loyalty. It seems that patriarchal morality has deeply rooted in Serafina's mind that she learns not to question about it. Not noticing the fact that the influence of Rosario still harms the family, Serafina somehow sabotages her and Rosa's welfare and future by continuing to deceive herself.

The common traits of Williams' female protagonists seem to be lacking confidence and security, which sometimes are a characteristic possibly originating from the playwright's Southern connection. These features are usually associate with their relationship with men. Blanche Dubois in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is self-absorbed and aggressive, but she has her own vulnerability and would rather receive kindness from strangers (Williams 418). She despises Stanley Kowalski's insolence and refuses to completely rely on men's help. On the contrary, Blanche's sister, Stella Kowalski is submissive to her husband, Stanley, even though she suffers from his violence. Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie* might be the character who is most similar to Serafina, as she has to raise her two children without her husband. She is afraid that Tom, her son, would leave her, and thus, tries to manipulate his life. She would do whatever it takes to make her son stay, yet eventually she fails. Amanda also worries about the future of her daughter, Laura, and decides to control her life decisions. Nonetheless, it turns out that her daughter's life after her interference. Serafina has done the same thing to Rosa as well. Laura Wingfield is "terribly shy" (Williams 187), and fragile. Her love incident with Jim O'Connor might be similar to Serafina's blindness in marriage, as Laura seems to love and worship Jim

unconditionally. Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is troubled by her husband's gender identity and the fact that they are not having satisfactory sexual intercourse and are still childless. Therefore, she acts wildly and constantly interferes with his decision. Apart from Laura Wingfield, these women are as aggressive as Serafina, yet they share the same insecurity and lack of confidence while they face marital problems and conflicts with others. In my opinion, they usually have tough persona, but on the other side of their personality, they are all as soft and fragile as Laura. They are Williams' incomplete characters, who are sad and suffer in all sorts of relationship with others.

Williams is keen to embed his Southern connection into playwriting, and this context might explain why his female protagonists are lack of confidence and insecurity. Many of his protagonists either come from or are related to the South. These female characters might be southern belles, or marry to a plantation owner's son. They used to have blossoming lives when they were young, but their happiness and youth are devoured by the cruel time and several wrong men. Critic Stefanie Quinlan indicates that "Williams' southern women—most prominently Blanche, Amanda, and Alma—are often cited for their difficulties in enduring a harsh environment different from the genteel dream world whose loss they lament" (Quinlan). Serafina, like those southern belles, laments her noble baron husband and the dream of past glorious life. She originates in the southern Italy and immigrates to the American South. Although she does not belong to Williams' typical southern women, her story fairly connects to the American South. Quinlan believes that "these famous plays' portrayal of southern women goes beyond nostalgia: critics have traced ways in which Williams exposes the southern belle ideal as an unrealized dream"

(Quinlan). In other words, Williams' depiction of those southern belles is not only a longing for the great past, but also an illustration of the unfulfilled desire and dreams from the South.

Serafina's insecurity must be more intensive than other female protagonists, since she is a totally stranger in this country. One significant distinction that separates Serafina from the aforementioned female characters is her identity as an outsider in this country. She always emphasizes the fact that her husband is a baron back in Sicily. Yet, her words cannot be trusted, as Assunta says that, "The wife of a baron? Serafina! In Sicily, they called his uncle a baron, but in Sicily everybody's a baron that own a piece of the land and a separate house for the goats!" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 147). Assunta implies that back in their hometown, gentry is common, and Rosario might only be the nephew of a gentry. It is reasonable to assume that people in the Sicilian community must have already known that Rosario is not as glorious as Serafina has pictured him. Furthermore, Rosario's illegal smuggling job and adultery with Estelle also destroy his reputation. He is not different from other men in the neighborhood; he is merely a normal immigrant who has no privilege and needs to earn money like everyone else. This means that Serafina's pride is a lie; however, she always chooses to believe in the false information.

In my opinion, Serafina's husband-worship and self-absorbed trait come from her insecurity and her perplexed self-identity as an outsider in a foreign country. Although she lives in a Sicilian community, a place where people share the same culture with her, she seems never to notice what happens outside her family. She acts as if she rejects everything from Americans, but before Rosario's death, she was

actually looking forward to a new life in the United States. We are not informed what kind of life the Delle Rose family had back in Italy, but for sure, it might not be wealthy and happy, or otherwise they would not leave their hometown. Serafina always emphasizes Rosario is a baron, as if she needs this assurance of having a noble husband, or she will be ashamed of her plain origin. Her proud boast of the “perfect” Rosario seems to come from the insecurity as well as her inferiority complex about herself. Like most of Williams’ southern belles, Serafina shows her perseverance and craziness; yet her vulnerability is hidden behind her tough persona. Her insecurity and vulnerability are reasons causing her husband-worship. To Serafina, Rosario is the safety net. She uses it to protect herself from the harm of the malicious attack, which she refers to as “lies” and “men-crazy things” of the outside world (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 171). Rosario’s death makes the safety net disappear for a while, but Serafina later builds one herself with her husband-worship.

Serafina’s over-indulgence on husband-worship is revealed by Williams’ symbolism of “rose-related” items, and it has always been the critical reason for her and Rosa’s suffering. The main rose and rose-related symbols in the play build protagonists’ characterization and influence their lives have been discussed, especially Serafina’s. By using the “rose” symbolism, Williams successfully creates vivid personalities for each character, and thoroughly portrays the complicated relationship among them. The significantly used “rose” symbol has its ambivalent traits from different references, as it can represent passion and prickliness. It is also Serafina’s family, her children and her husband. In addition, it can be her sweet burden as being a mother in the family. The symbol of rose tattoo has disparate definitions for

characters in the play, and it relates to Serafina's struggling and change. It could be a miracle of having a baby or the affection toward someone. On the other hand, it is the passionate romance or the exciting yet devastating betrayal. These rose-related symbols explicitly introduce Serafina; its excessively symbolism in the play offers us an clearer picture of her over-indulgence on husband-worship.

The ambivalent trait of the rose-related symbols draws our attention to Serafina's agony in the play. "Rose" notably symbolizes Rosario. It is actually responsible for Serafina's suffering and final transformation, as the existence of the deified Rosario leads to Serafina's problem of husband-worship. Her husband-worship derives from the invisible patriarchal morality along with her lack of confidence. She shares some of Williams' female protagonists' traits, for example, a strong sense of insecurity, and an intense inclination to control others. Moreover, Serafina's foreign origin brings more challenges for the Delle Rose family; as she might face the crisis of self-identity and not be aware of what she really wants. Her life and her daughter's life are unhappy because of the damage from husband-worship. If she wants to regain joy for herself and Rosa, she will have to change.

Chapter Three Serafina's Final Acceptance and Transformation

Deeply influenced by the power of the patriarchal morality, Serafina was once indulged in the unrealistic world of sacred love and religion. However, she liberates herself from the patriarchal morality and her suffering life by accepting the incompleteness of humanity; eventually, she is able to transform into a happier and more unrestrained person. Unlike other plays by Williams in which the female protagonists usually confront the opposite strong male influence, for example, Amanda in *The Glass Menagerie*, Blanche in *A Street Car Named Desire*, or Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, Serafina in *The Rose Tattoo* constructs her male enemy by herself, which can be referred to the husband-worship. Breaking this internal obstacle, or her obsession, is a difficult task, especially when Serafina is initially not aware of its existence. Furthermore, her lack of confidence and crisis of self-identity make her more insecure, and thus more self-centered. In her neighborhood, she barely communicate with others. The process of changing requires her understanding of who she really is and acceptance of her incompleteness as well as Rosario's imperfectness. In this chapter, I argue that three crucial factors lead to Serafina's acknowledgment of her desire and identity in the play. The first one is the American cultural influence on both Serafina and Rosa along with Rosa's individuality and resistance. Next will be her encounter with Alvaro Mangiacavallo, and her subsequent surrender to his charm. Because of him, Serafina gradually releases her long-restrained Dionysian desire. The last factor is the role Alvaro plays in Serafina's change. With his help, Serafina is able to figure out the true yet ugly adultery Rosario was engaged in, and she is willing to accept

the lie which has haunted her for years. These three factors lead to her transformation, and help her to finally abandon the husband-worship.

Although *The Rose Tattoo* is an American play, it is rich of its Italian context. Williams traveled around the world, and when he went to Italy with his very beloved Sicilian lover, Frank Merlo, he had the idea of “bringing the Italian back to his own home ground, the American Gulf Coast, and it became *The Rose Tattoo*” (Williams and Mead 171). The characterization of these Sicilian roles in the play is inspired by Williams’ favorite person and country. Another scholar, Rose De Angelis, thoroughly explains the cultural context of the play. In her work, “*The Rose Tattoo: Reading Tennessee Williams’s Play in a Cultural Context*,” De Angelis indicates that “*The Rose Tattoo* contextualizes the Italian immigrant for its reader/viewer.” She introduces Serafina as “the historically agrarian Italian immigrant who arrived in America with limited education, no language skills, and idiosyncratic cultural beliefs.” Being the first generation of the immigrants, Serafina lives in an Italian neighborhood with other Italian folks. De Angelis points out that “in the communities of the Gulf Coast, as in other American communities in which they settled, Italians tended to re-create their home villages, duplicating the customs and traditions of their particular towns and villages.” These people have strong connection in culture, languages, and religion. They support and take care of each other, but meanwhile they judge and gossip about their lives.

Williams’ *The Rose Tattoo* is imbued with such positive and negative traces of Italian cultural impact. After Rosario dies, Serafina behaves crazily and refuses to associate with others. However, she is not entirely alone, since Assunta and Father De

Leo sometimes visit her and persuade her to leave the house to communicate with others or to meet new people. The Italian mothers often provide jobs by asking her to sew clothes for them. They condemn Estelle's behavior when she comes to Rosario's funeral. This can be seen as a gesture to protect Serafina's feeling and the harmony of their Italian community, which can also be regarded as a sign of their bonding and caring for their own kind. On the other hand, they also judge the way she raises Rosa; furthermore, they do not appreciate Serafina's craziness and reclusiveness. They sneer at her praise and obsession of Rosario, and despise his adultery. Serafina belongs to their community, but only few people want to interact with her.

Even though Serafina is "the person who will establish the continuity of Italian traditions in America for future generations" (De Angelis), she is unavoidably influenced by the American culture. I believe that the immigrants go to a foreign country for the sake of better lives, and the Delle Rose family is not an exception. In order to live happily and comfortably, Serafina needs to fit into the different society, and to learn how to embrace all the new things and accustom herself and the family to them. After the death of Rosario, Serafina turns to her culture and religion, rejecting American culture. However, in the beginning of the play, Williams shows the audience that Serafina used to have an American dream of picturing the family living with dignity in the new country and having their own business and a house with electricity (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 139). It seems that Serafina shuts the door of the new world because of her sorrow; however, against her will, the impact of the American culture, through Rosa, continues to determine her life.

Serafina's liberation is influenced by American culture, embodied by Rosa's individuality, rebellion and relationship with Jack. Rosa belongs to the second generation of the immigrants in this Italian American context. She grows up and is educated in this new world, and thus she is not as conservative as her mother. She believes in the knowledge she learns from school rather than Serafina's Italian superstition. The mother and daughter always have disparate concepts observing the new world. When Rosa was a child, the next-door woman, who Serafina refers as Strega, the witch, let her goat intrude Serafina's house, Rosa disapproves her mother idea.

Serafina: Rosa! You go in the house! Don't look at the Strega!

Rosa [refusing to move]: Why do you call her a witch?

Serafina: She has white eyes and every finger is crooked. [She pulls Rosa's arm.]

Rosa: She has a cataract, Mama, and her fingers are crooked because she has rheumatism!

Serafina: Malocchio—the evil eye—that's what she's got! And her fingers are crooked because she shook hands with the Devil. Go in the house and wash your face with salt water and throw the salt water away! Go in!

Quick! She's coming! (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 152)

Being the superstitious defender of the tradition, Serafina instinctively regards her neighbor as a witch. In her eyes, the "Strega" fits every criteria of a witch, as she is undoubtedly insane with her weird look and behavior. However, for Rosa, a girl who

has already been educated in this country, the woman is not a witch; instead, she is just old and ill. The different recognitions of their neighbor indicate the gap between these two generations and the different education of the immigrants.

Another scene which unfolds the distinction between Serafina and Rosa takes place on Rosa's graduation day. When the other Sicilian women come to Serafina's house demanding gowns for their daughters' big day, they find out that Serafina locks Rosa home. Rosa's teacher, Miss Yorke, intending to bring Rosa to the graduation, has a conflict with Serafina. This noisy and chaotic scene reveals critical information regarding Serafina, Rosa, and the Sicilian neighbors. Rosa does not trust her mother thinking she is a freak of the neighborhood. In addition, this scene also manifests that Serafina is not like other mothers, for she holds a stronger disapproval of the American education than other mothers do. In this scene, Rosa accuses her mother as an unreasonable mother.

Rosa: *Lasciami stare* [Leave me alone], Mama! I'm so ashamed I could die. This is the way she goes around all the time. She hasn't put on clothes since my father was killed. For three years she sits at the sewing machine and never puts a dress on or goes out of the house, and now she has locked my clothes up so I can't go out. She wants me to be like her, a freak of the neighborhood, the way she is! Next time, next time, I won't cut my wrist but my throat! I don't want to live locked up with a bottle of ashes! [She points to the shrine.]

(Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 162)

Rosa is educated perhaps more culturally than Serafina, and therefore, she refuses to live the same life as her mother does. She specifically points out that her mother's worship of her dead husband's ashes has tremendously bothered her. The arguments between Rosa and Serafina might explain Serafina's repel toward everything from the American-style culture, such as its education and the more open-minded attitude of the youngsters' relationships. Serafina is a conventional woman and not as well-educated as Rosa; moreover, she is not easy to be changed.

Her repulsion becomes more serious when she finds out Rosa's encounter with Jack Hunter, who Rosa meets at school dance event. Serafina accuses Miss Yorke by saying "you make me sick! Your school, you make all this trouble! You give a dance where she gets mixed up with a sailor" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 163). She is furious and gives Miss Yorke a speech.

Serafina: Teacher! Teacher, senti! What do you think you want to do at this high school? Sentitie! Per favore! You give this a dance! What kind of a spring dance is it? Answer this question, please, for me! What kind of a spring dance is it? she meet this boy there who don't even go to no high school. What kind of a boy? Guardate! *Asailor that wears a gold earring!* That kind of a boy is the kind of boy she meets there! —That's why I lock her clothes up so she can't go back to the high school! (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 165)

Rosa's relationship with Jack panics Serafina and renders her to lock the girl home. Serafina's distaste to the opener and freer way of building relationship with others is one reason why she rejects Rosa being involved with Jack. She opposes the common

American high school dance and the picnic the high school students attend after the graduation. For Serafina, these events are full of joy and the release of youth's desire; she does not want Rosa to lose her virginity there. This is what Serafina fears the most: her precious angle is not innocent anymore. She believes that sexual intercourse is divine, and hers with Rosario is the perfect model. She would not want Rosa to be easily involved with any stranger.

Another reason why Serafina rejects to acknowledge Jack might be that she does not like his occupation as a sailor. She deeply believes that she marries to a baron; and that is how she identifies herself with a "baron's wife" and maintains her self-esteem. Therefore it is unacceptable for their daughter to fall in love with a sailor. Mothers in Williams' plays seem to have a controlling issue with their children. Take his famous mother character in *The Glass Menagerie*, Amanda Wingfield for example. Amanda always makes decisions for her children. Just like Amanda, Serafina tends to take control of Rosa's life as well. In her opinion, marrying Rosa to a man who constantly needs to travel on the sea is definitely not a good idea. Moreover, it is not a magnificent job that she can brag about. If Rosa marries to him, it will harm her reputation as a baron's daughter. Serafina is not content about his education level either. She attacks Jack's education and thinks a sailor without high school diploma is not good enough for Rosa. Her judgement about Jack's low education profile reveals a contradictory fact that even though Serafina does not want Rosa to go back to high school, she actually thinks that high school diploma is important; otherwise she would not worry about Rosa not having her diploma after the graduation. The foreign culture affects Rosa's values and amplifies the gap

between her and Serafina. Meanwhile, Serafina is influenced by the American values through Rosa. Her conflict with Rosa does not diminish the cultural impacts, but rather, it encourages Serafina to think differently from her own culture.

Apart from the foreign environment, Rosa's individuality and rebellion are significant keys to Serafina's transformation. Rosa is educated, and smart enough to skip the final examination and still graduate from high school. She is independent and embraces the American culture. Rosa is the combination of Serafina and Rosario. She is loyal and passionate in her relationship with Jack, and this behavior resembles Serafina's obsessing attitude toward Rosario. On the other hand, she is as wild and romantic as Rosario, for after the school picnic, she is eager to give her virginity to Jack. There are some traits of Italian culture which Rosa inherits from her parents; however, it is the difference between Rosa and Serafina, such as their education and background, that encourages the change of these Delle Rose women. Although Serafina indulges herself deeply in the husband-worship, she cares very much about Rosa and is inevitably affected by her, because the girl is her only beloved family member. She surrenders to Rosa's rebellion as she finds out the girl's act of self-harming. This act of her daughter scares Serafina which consequently softens her anti-American attitude. She agrees to meet Jack because she loves Rosa and is willing to make her happy. Serafina is a typical and conservative first generation of immigrant, she will and has to accustom herself to Rosa's thinking and behavior if she wants to win her heart and trust. The blending and conflicts among the American-style culture, traditional Sicilian custom and Serafina's crazy obsession are the important signals for Serafina's conversion.

The entrance of Jack Hunter gives Serafina a different idea about men. It is interesting that Jack Hunter, the sailor of whom Serafina has a bad impression, is actually a very decent young man. And Rosa is the wild one, according to Jack, in their relationship. When Jack visits Serafina for the first time, it breaks Serafina's first impression about this boy, as she finds out that Jack is rather traditional and a virgin like Rosa. To protect Rosa's innocence, Serafina asks Jack to vow in front of the Lady that he will respect Rosa's innocence (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 189). Jack makes the promise and determines to keep it; this promise at last becomes one of the reasons making Rosa to leave her home. When Rosa catches her mother having a night with Alvaro, she explodes and decides to abandon Serafina. She cannot bear that her mother always praise her loyalty to the dead husband and her traditional belief, but it turns out she can have casual sex with other men. It is not Serafina's desire that Rosa detests, but rather it is her pretense she despises. Thompson argues that, "finally Rosa's exposure of the hypocritical disparity between Serafina's public image and her private desires, between her moral affections and sexual needs, not only frees Serafina from social pretense but also leads her to psychic wholeness and self-acceptance" (58). Rosa's leaving does offer an opportunity for herself and Serafina to begin a new life.² Serafina no longer needs to take care of Rosa; in other words, she liberates herself as well as Rosa physically. Rosa's disclosure of Serafina's hidden desire frees Serafina mentally. As in the end of the play, Serafina is fine with Rosa's determination to leave her. Most important of all, she is ready to love Alvaro and herself again.

² The play ends without telling us what happens to Rosa after her departure. In my opinion, Rosa's departure for going after Jack symbolizes her total liberation.

Serafina liberates herself from the patriarchal morality because of her innate Dionysian desire awakened by Alvaro and Rosa's relationship with Jack. Her Dionysian desire, which has been buried in her truly wild self, is one trigger of her transformation. Thompson points out the two beings of Dionysus' representatives in the play, Rosario and Alvaro, and Serafina's Dionysian desire (55, 57). Although Serafina's image in the play is suggested to be a traditional and uptight mother who follows the moral code of the Catholic church; she is, on the other hand, a passionate and wild woman. The word, wild, is always used to portray Rosario and Rosa; and it seems that Serafina plays the opposite of this depiction. However, her blind husband-worship, hysterical and unpredictable behavior also implies her wildness. She has strong sexual needs, too. While Serafina is giving a lesson to the two customers who mock her obstinate morality, she tells them that "they had made love together every night of the week till the day Rosarios dies" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 171). In her words, we observe that she is a woman who possesses much desire, and Rosario could satisfy this strong desire before. What continues to maintain her fidelity is the patriarchal morality and the love to the family. Even though Serafina emphasizes that "she is satisfied to remember" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 173), she is actually losing the ability to control her long-existing libido.

After Rosa and Jack leave Serafina alone in the house, Serafina, for the first time in these years, comes out to the porch and meets Father De Leo. When Father De Leo asks her to bring some water for him, Serafina refuses and seems to be rather unsettled.

Father De Leo: I am thirsty. Will you go in the house and get me some water?

Serafina: Go in. Get you some water. The faucet is working. –I can't go in the house.

Father de Leo: Why can't you go in the house?

Serafina: The house has a tin roof on it. I got to breathe.

Father De Leo: You can breathe in the house.

Serafina: Not, I can't breathe in the house. The house has a tin roof on it and I...

(Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 195)

In the house where Rosario's urn is inside and a place where Serafina can remember and cherish her memory of him, she claims that she is not able to breathe there. I think the incident of Rosa cutting her wrist and the fact that her little girl has become a woman and has fallen in love with someone must be too overwhelming for Serafina. Additionally, watching Rosa's relationship with Jack might have prompted her strong desire, and it also faltered Serafina's faith on Rosario's love, as she keeps praying for a sign from the Lady. One cannot be certain what kind of sign Serafina is praying for at this moment; it can be Rosa's future with Jack or perhaps the truth of Rosario's relationship with other women. Nevertheless, the next scene while she meets Father De Leo reveals what she is eager to know, and that is whether Rosario has betrayed her or not.

One explanation for Serafina's suffocation in the house might be that she is no longer able to repress her libido. Denial and repression are the two defense mechanisms Serafina applies to protect herself from the unbearable reality. Usually,

denial can be an acceptable way of coming to terms with disturbing emotion for children (Stevens 51). However, in Serafina's case, she uses it to avoid the ugly and painful reality, which is Rosario's adultery; moreover, her denial propels her husband-worship. Immersing herself in the crazy husband-worship leads Serafina to deify their relationship. So that she becomes a bacchante and celebrates Rosario insanely. She connects his existence with the Catholic church principles, and follows the sacred rules of maintaining her loyal to the dead husband. By doing so, Serafina withdraws herself from meeting new people. She strictly represses her sexual desire, and fails to continue her normal life. The denial of any insulting words to Rosario and the religious elevation of him result in Serafina's another defense mechanism: repression. In order to honor Rosario and her religion, she hides her longing and represses it till she cannot do it anymore.

Richard Stevens argues that in Freud's defense mechanism, "the most pervasive and significant of all defense mechanisms is repression" (47). He continues to explain that "impulses which in some way are disturbing are shut out of consciousness" (48). Serafina's sexual desire is in fact something she is not ashamed to discuss, according to the previous bold conversations she has with others. She is willing to admit that the sexual intercourse in her relationship with Rosario is divine and significant. However, this intimate desire will be besmirched if she engages with other men. Her distaste of the "men-crazy" women who constantly talk about men shows Serafina's disapproval of random and casual relationship. Falling in love with other men challenges Serafina's concept of a sacred marriage. She convinces herself that, making love is not a sin, but making love with other men is. Therefore, in these

years, her way of honoring her religious moral codes, is to forbid herself from releasing the desire she always possesses.

Stevens elaborates that “in repression, the individual has no consciousness of his need” (48). That is, Serafina is not aware of the process of repression, but when she leaves the house, she finally realizes that she can breathe out there. A great pressure can be detected in Serafina, since her restrained libido keeps torturing her life.

Because she refuses to believe Rosario’s affair as well as to accept the imperfect image of Rosario, she suffers in these years. Moreover, she locks herself mentally and physically with the power of her religion and husband-worship; however, it seems that she never feels peaceful inside her house. This might explain why she does not look like the woman we see at previous scene when she is waiting happily for her husband to come home. After many years’ of staying home, she has turned to a weird and crazy woman. Watching Rosa’s self-mutilation and arguing with the teacher and other mothers, Serafina is exhausted. She also hears the rumor of Rosario’s adultery again and again on the same day, but no one would comfort her by denying the gossip, not even Father De Leo. Moreover, she witnesses Rosa’s openness toward relationship and joy of loving and caring for someone. It surely reminds Serafina of the delight of embracing someone in real life. Everything that happens earlier in this very day becomes the prelude of Serafina’s exploding Dionysian desire. Her loyalty to her dead husband is starts to crack.

Serafina’s transformation is triggered by her encounter with Alvaro and the similar suffering experience they share. Furthermore, Alvaro helps her to move on from the obsession of Rosario. While Serafina is at home begging a sign from the

Lady, Alvaro knocks on her door, and accidentally enters her house. The first meeting with Alvaro is absurd, for he cries after the fight with the salesman in front of Serafina. Although she cares about a man's manner and masculinity very seriously, she accepts Alvaro's weakness and does not repel his fragility and rudeness. According to Serafina's illustrations of Rosario and Alvaro, they are quite different men. Rosario has a relative who is a baron back in their hometown while Alvaro only has three dependents in his house (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 213). One thing the two men share, however, is their appearance. The resemblance between Rosario and Alvaro is that they both drive trucks delivering bananas, and this definitely intrigues Serafina. When Alvaro takes off his jacket for her to sew, she notices that he looks like a clown but equipped with Rosario's body (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 205). For Serafina, Rosario's body is associated with the sacred sexual intercourse they used to have. While she sees the familiar body, it is difficult for her lonely soul to repress the wild and strong desire any more.

However, it is not just Alvaro's very "good-looking face, massively sculptured torso, bluish-black curls and charming awkwardness" that catch Serafina's attention (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 203). Their first meeting is pleasant, as these two sad and incomplete figures talk about their lives and seek comfort from each other.

Alvaro: My name is Mangiacavallo which means "Eat a horse." It's a comical name, I know. maybe two thousand and seventy years ago one of my grandfathers got so hungry that he ate up a horse! That ain't my fault. Well, today at the Southern Fruit Company I find on the pay envelope not "Mangiacavallo"

but "EAT A HORSE" in big print! Ha, ha, ha, very funny!-- I open the pay envelope! In it I find a notice.-- The wages have been *garnishee!* You know what garnishee is? [Serafina nod gravely.] Garnishee!-- Eat a horse!-- Road hog!-- All in one day is too much! I go crazy, I boil, I cry and I am ashamed but I am not able to help it!-- Even a Wop truck driver's a human being! And human beings must cry...

Serafina: Yes, they must cry. I couldn't cry all day but now I have cried and I am feeling much better.-- I will sew up the jacket... (206 Williams, *Rose Tattoo*)

Serafina has a tiring and terrible day, and Alvaro is also suffering from work and stressed out because of his job and the three dependents he needs to take care of. Alvaro is not like other people from the neighborhood who always ask Serafina to leave Rosario behind, or who always point out what wrong she has done. He does not mock her behavior and look. Their attraction is mutual: as Serafina is drawn by his look and resemblance to Rosario, likewise Alvaro seems to understand her ridiculous act and he desperately wants to impress her. Alvaro wins Serafina's approval by justifying her putting Rosario's ash in the urn, even though they both know it is against the church law. Alvaro explains that "the body would have decayed, but ashes always stay clean," (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 210) and therefore, it is proper to keep the ashes. Serafina is content to hear his comment. Everyone in the world seems to oppose her all the time, but Alvaro is different. He listens to her problems and agony instead of treating her like a crazy woman. They are both lonely and unhappy, and are enticed by each other eventually.

Alvaro is not as perfect and noble as Rosario, but he can serve as a “demythified” version of Dionysus (Thompson 57). Rosario, with whom Serafina shares a godly love, is the mythified version Dionysus. His presence and affection are supreme. Their desire for each other is elevated to a more spiritual place by Serafina’s husband-worship. On the other hand, Alvaro is the demythified Dionysus. It does not mean that he is the totally opposite side of Rosario; rather, he is the one that will share a more humane love with Serafina. As he is sexually attracted to Serafina and constantly reminds her of Rosario, Alvaro plays the role of a less divine adaptation of Dionysus. Besides, since a sacred yet restrained passion toward Rosario becomes something she cannot handle anymore, and thus, Serafina can engage herself into the earthy and sexual relationship with Alvaro.

Both Serafina and Alvaro praises love and they need it very much. Serafina connects marital love with religious purpose, and glorifies it. Alvaro celebrates love, believing that love is what he longs for and the only thing he can offer to the world.

Alvaro: I am hoping to meet some sensible older lady. Maybe a lady a little bit older than me. —I don’t care if she is a little bit plump or not such a stylish dresser! [Serafina self-consciously pulls up a dangling strap.] the important thing in a lady is understanding. Good sense. And I want her to have well-furnished house and a profitable little business of some kind...

Serafina: And such a lady, with a well-furnished house and business, what does she want with a man with three dependents with the parshesi and the beer habit, playing the numbers!

...

Alvaro: Love and affection is what I got to offer on hot or cold days in this lonely old world and is what I am looking for. I got nothing else. Mangiacavallo has nothing. In fact, he is the grandson of the village idiot of Ribera! (Williams, Rose Tattoo 214)

Alvaro is a poor man with great burden on him, yet he looks for love. Love and affection is what he can give to Serafina (Williams, Rose Tattoo 214). His offering, or his courtship is strong and difficult for her to resist, especially for a woman who is troubled by her desirous need but can only seek love in memory. She does not oppose intimate contact with him; when he touches her, she acts shyly rather than shutting him away. Regardless of Alvaro's sincere words, Serafina's response to him still reveals her doubt and uncertainty.

In the scene they first meet, Serafina offers Alvaro the rose-colored shirt which Estelle meant to give to Rosario before. Although Serafina always denies Rosario's adultery, I believe that it is possible that she already knows that the rose-colored silk shirt might be meant for Rosario. Serafina witnesses people accusing Estelle at Rosario's funeral; moreover, her reaction to the shirt is weird as she asks Alvaro not to name the owner of this shirt. This shirt is the evidence of Rosario's infidelity, and it also symbolizes the destruction of Serafina's sacred marriage. She chooses not to throw the shirt away because she has doubt about the truth; surprisingly, she decides to give the shirt to Alvaro. This gesture implies potential revenge from Serafina to both Rosario and Estelle by taking away their love symbol; furthermore, it suggests an act of Serafina "having an affair" with Alvaro, or put simply, an act of breaking

her marital loyalty.

Serafina finally liberates herself from patriarchal morality and her husband-worship through her acknowledgement of human incompleteness. Alvaro serves as the last straw to end Serafina's self-deception, which forces her to confront the truth. Serafina has been asking for signs from her religious sanctuary ever since more and more people tell her about Rosario's adultery, yet no one actually helps her to figure it out except Alvaro. She senses his kindness, and she invites him to come over the house again. Later the same day, Alvaro comes and is determined to win her heart. Serafina "wears a gown that she has not worn since the death of her husband, and with a rose in her hair" (Williams, *Rose Tattoo* 223). She puts on her girdle, the garment which has definitely revealed her body shape, to greet Alvaro's coming. She is expecting him. This scene is a *deja-vu* of the beginning of the play when Serafina is waiting for Rosario. When Alvaro appears in front of her, she notices he has got rose oil in his hair, just like the one Rosario used to have. To Serafina's astonishment, Alvaro manages to gain a rose tattoo on his chest as well. She seems to be thrilled by his gesture, but meanwhile she resists his courtship. When she finds out his rose tattoo, she says "no, no, no! — Not a rose!"(228) as if she is hiding her feelings.

Facing this romantic man, Serafina is again aware that she cannot breathe here. In fact, she is overwhelmed and suffocated by her own desire. When Alvaro is trying his best to charm her, a condom falls on the floor and alerts her. She becomes alert and demands him to leave angrily. Although Serafina is struggling about whether she should accept Alvaro, and although she seems closely to yield to her desire, she is annoyed by his bold sexuality. She still wants to continue her husband-worship and

protect her dignity. I think this episode shows the dilemma Serafina has confronted, for her consciousness and desire are contradictory to each other. She is sexually attracted to the man, yet she cannot abandon her religious beliefs and the social moral codes she has been following for years. Deep inside her heart, she knows that she should not trust Alvaro, who is poor, ill-cultured and attached with three dependents. Moreover, Serafina considers his intention to be close to her is filthy and immoral. However, she cannot deny that Alvaro's charm and his resemblance to Rosario, though less noble, reminds her of her past satisfactory love relationship with her late husband.

What later gives Serafina determination to transform is the confrontation between her and Estelle Hohengarten. She has heard the rumors about Rosario's affair, but she always denies it and resents the crowds who talk about it. When she asks help from the priest, he would not answer her. She then turns to religion, and it seems that the Lady sends her Alvaro. He helps her to contact Estelle, and accompanies her to deal with the anger and frustration. When Serafina confirms the adultery, she is overwhelmed by the truth. She "seizes the marble urn and hurls it violently into the furthest corner of the room" (237). Her breaking the urn signifies her violent severance from the husband-worship which has confined her for years. As a revenge, out of betrayal and hate, Serafina claims that "now I show you how wild and strong like a man a woman can be!" (238). She invites Alvaro to stay the night with her. Before Alvaro comes back to meet her, Serafina blames the statue, the Lady.

Serafina: Ora (now), ascolta (listen), Signora! You hold in the cup of your hand this little house and you smash it! you break this little house like the shell of a bird in your hand, because you have hate Serafina? – Serafina that loved you! No, no, no, you don't speak! I don't believe in you, Lady! You're just a poor little doll with the paint peeling off, and now I blow out the light and I forget you the way you forget Serafina! [*She blows out the vigilil light.*] Eco –fatto!”

(William 239)

In addition to the betrayal she receives from Rosario's affair, Serafina considers that she is abandoned by her religion. In the past, she believes in the Lady and worships her glory with full heart, and she sincerely prays for the sacred blessing on the Delle Rose family. Yet, when Rosario turns out to be a cheater, it seems that the once respectable God could not promise her family any hope and blessings. The religious power over Serafina is gone; and she loses her faith in it. The double treachery exhausts Serafina and renders her to turn to Alvaro.

Serafina's husband-worship gradually breaks down on the day when Rosa has a big fight with her. At the same day, she meets Alvaro, and finds out the betrayal of religion and Rosario. All the incidents swamp her and wear her out. The moment Serafina concedes her late husband's adultery, she breaks Rosario's urn; and the ashes inside are blown away. As the ashes disappear, she says “a man, when he burns, leaves only a handful of ashes. No woman can hold him. The wind must blow him away” (Williams, Rose Tattoo 251). She is in peace now. She can abandon her devoted side and at last accept who she really is. Once she stops fooling herself, she

recovers from her self-indulgence. The perfect image of Rosario is gone, and thus, she does not need to be bothered by her incompleteness. Admitting her sexual desire and longing to be loved by someone, Serafina may not be confined in pursuing the spiritual and holy love from Rosario. She can accept the incomplete yet real passion from Alvaro. Alvaro, a love giver, compared to Rosario, is a more vivid and alive person to both Serafina and the audience alike. Although he is an incomplete figure and not an ideal husband, he understands Serafina and helps her to free herself. She learns that she is not a woman who should confine her libido and sacrifice her connections with others because of Rosario or her religion. She falls in love with Alvaro afterwards. I agree to Thompson's argument regarding Alvaro being the "demythified version of Dionysus" (57). Serafina seems to match herself with a lower or degraded man, but it is more important that she is happy after all. Additionally, Serafina's new relationship with Alvaro might help her to rid of her husband-worship. Alvaro is not someone she will glorify; she has witnessed his tears and vulnerability. Serafina knows that she is a poor man with dependents; likewise he understands her loneliness. Their relationship will be more normal, or more "human." The *deja-vu* scene of her conceiving a child happens again. The coming of her unborn child symbolizes a new life toward her. At last, she can embrace her true self, and march to a new future without looking back.

In sum, three important factors directly and indirectly lead to Serafina's final transformation in the play. They are the cultural difference which influence both Serafina and Rosa, the encounter of Alvaro, who allures Serafina's desire with his charm, and the disclosure of Rosario's adultery helping Serafina to realize Rosario's

and her incompleteness. These three factors gives her power to finally abandon her husband-worship. Williams's *The Rose Tattoo* presents American and Italian cultures, and brings out their impacts on its characters. The play not only reveals the conflicts between the two cultures, but also displays the compromise and assimilation immigrants have to make. Serafina is a stubborn woman, but she needs to change while living in the new country. With the help of Alvaro, her transformation is accelerated. Once she finds out the truth that Rosario is not as perfect as she has imagined, she can eventually leave her obsession behind. Because of the power of husband-worship, Serafina was trapped in the unreal world of religious love. However, her struggling life makes her return to who she really is, that is, an ordinary woman with desire and longing to be loved. In the end of the play, Serafina frees herself from the restrained husband-worship and past struggling life by accepting her incompleteness as well as Rosario's imperfectness. She is ready to embrace her new life with Alvaro.

Chapter Four: Conclusion

This thesis argues that Serafina's over-indulgence on husband-worship is manifested by Williams' ambivalent usage of the "rose" symbols, and in the end of the play, Serafina is able to liberate herself from the patriarchal morality by allowing herself to accept the human incompleteness. *The Rose Tattoo* ends prosperously, as Serafina conceiving a child is a repeated yet new page for her. Nonetheless, the hardship and struggle of the play's protagonists, especially Serafina's, are important and need thorough examination. I believe that Serafina thriving and transforming toward better lives are successful characterization conducted by Williams. In addition, Williams' excessive symbolism of "rose" reveals a clearer picture of Serafina's over-indulgence on husband-worship and explains why she is living a sad life. The rose-related elements in the play indicate not only Serafina's characteristics, but also show how powerful the husband-worship weighing on Serafina and the Delle Rose family. The "rose" symbolizing the family along with its members, and the "rose tattoo" representing differently to these characters both greatly affect the way Serafina perceives the world. Most important of all, through the discussion of these rose-related symbols, it unveils that Serafina's serious husband-worship, which derives from the invisible patriarchal morality, causes her suffering life. Moreover, there are more explanations for her struggling experience. For example, Serafina's lacking confidence and insecurity resulting from Williams' typical Southern female protagonists setup and her foreign background. The "rose-related" symbolism are everywhere, and they give its characters several mixed meanings that I tried to elaborate in this thesis. The over-abundance of the rose-related symbols in the play

brings out Serafina's over-indulgence on husband-worship. It also renders Williams successfully depict Serafina's as well as Rosa's agony and how the husband-worship affects their lives.

Serafina was once indulged in the unrealistic world of sacred love and religion, but the struggling experience and her desire for others' love lead her to acknowledge human incompleteness. In chapter three, I argue that because of the influence of the American culture and a new romance with Alvaro, Serafina finally faces her desire, and abandons the husband-worship, which has confined her for a long time. In order to embrace her Dionysian desire and who she really is, she needs to liberate herself from the patriarchal morality and adopt the foreign culture, which is embodied by Rosa's individuality, rebellion and relationship with Jack. Serafina becomes a different person after she meets Alvaro. Understanding that they are both struggling and sad figures in the world, she does not feel lonely anymore. When Alvaro helps her to accept Rosario's adultery, she can eventually break her own confinement; meanwhile she accepts her incompleteness and also Rosario's imperfectness.

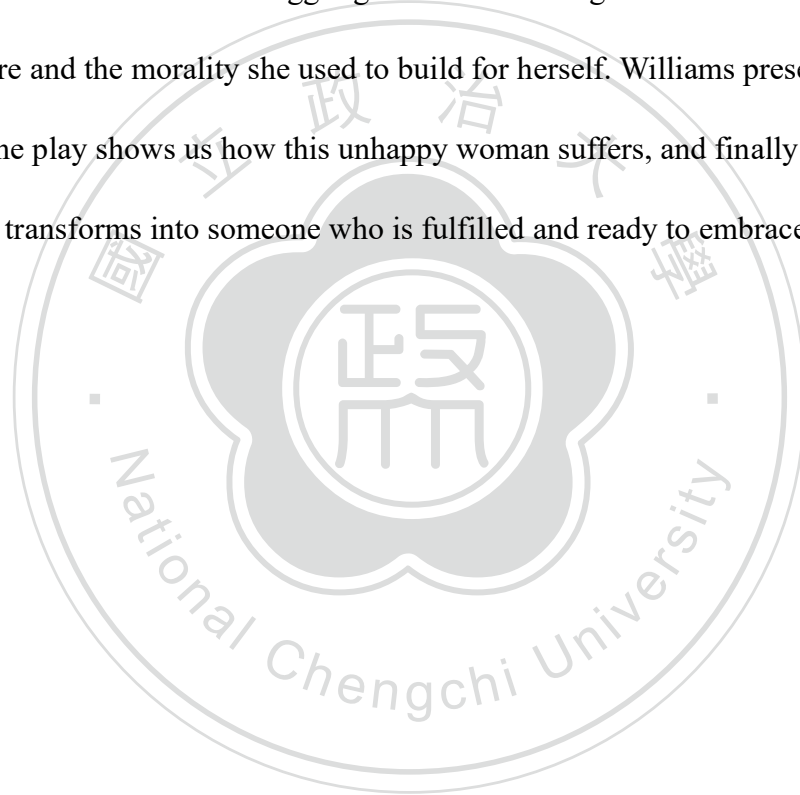
This thesis focuses on Serafina's characterization and her liberation as well as some other incomplete figures in the play. Williams features Serafina as a quirky, ambivalent and stubborn woman. Her husband-worship comes from the fact that she is lost in her old world of Sicilian custom build by the patriarchal morality. While in a new world of the opener American culture, Serafina sacrifices her life to Rosario and the family in a traditional way even after her husband's death, she faces the crisis of self-identity, and is unhappy. She is certainly not adorable, and is disrespected by others. Nonetheless, she is one of Williams' incomplete figures, but she refuse to

acknowledge that human beings are far from perfect, i.e., they more or less have their own flaws, including her husband and herself. Perhaps most characters in *The Rose Tattoo* reflect their deepest and most fragile flaws on us. For example, Rosario used to be the best husband for Serafina, till Serafina finds out that he is actually an imposter. Rosa is an incomplete character too. She is born as the second generation of the Sicilian immigrants in the USA, and she is totally accustomed to the new life style here. However, she always has conflicts with her first-generation immigrant mother. To her most disappointment and tragedy is that while she is desperately to release and enjoy her first-time sexual pleasure, she is stopped because Serafina makes Jack to keep her virginity intact. She is involved in the clashes of cultural difference, and is eager to be free and be who she genuinely is. Additionally, Alvaro is an incomplete figure as he is lonely and has great pressure from his family. He is desperate for love and company; therefore, when he wins Serafina's heart, he is full of happiness.

Knowing that mankind is far from complete and perfect is the crucial part of Serafina's transformation, which is also why this play, unlike *The Glass Menagerie* and *Street Car Named Desire*, ends happily. In her relationship with the daughter, Rosa, Serafina is different from Amanda. Serafina learns to compromise with Rosa's individuality and rebellion instead of trying to trap and control her life, like what Amanda does to her children, Tom and Laura. Furthermore, unlike Blanche, who always indulges herself in her glorious illusion and is finally sent to an insane asylum, Serafina accepts her imperfect past, and is willing to move on.

Some might likewise assume Serafina's transformation may be another maniac love loop she jumps in, since her love towards Alvaro begins in an impulsive way.

Nevertheless, the two lovers seem to be equal in this new relationship. She is no longer the woman who worships her husband and tries to conceal her desire; moreover, she is content that she is loved by someone who really adores her. Williams portrays a story of a sad and incomplete figure attempting to have a satisfactory and ideal life, and he reveals her misery, which surely deserves some sympathy from others. It is debatable whether Serafina and Alvaro will live happily ever after. Yet, their union unveils Serafina's struggling while confronting the dilemma between her sexual desire and the morality she used to build for herself. Williams presents a happy ending as the play shows us how this unhappy woman suffers, and finally liberates herself and transforms into someone who is fulfilled and ready to embrace a new life.



Works Cited

- Alder, Thomas P. "Tennessee Williams in the 1940s and 1950s: Artist of Fugitive Kind." *American Drama, 1940-1960: A Critical History*, Twayne Publishers, 1994, pp. 147-149.
- Anca, Husti, and Cantor Maria. "Sacred Connection of Ornamental Flowers with Religious Symbols." *ProEnvironemnt*, 2015, pp. 73-79.
<http://journals.usamvcluj.ro/index.php/promediu>. Accessed 11 July 2019.
- Buss, Laura, and Karen Hodges. "Marked: Tattoo as an Expression of Psyche." *Psychological Perspectives*, vol. 60, no. 1, Jan. 2017, pp. 4-38. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1080/00332925.2017.1282251. Accessed 15 July 2019.
- Cardullo, Bert. "Realism, Naturalism, Modern American Drama—and Modern American Dramatic Criticism." *American Drama/Critics: Writing and Readings*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007, pp. 4-5.
- Cohn, Ruby. "The Garrulous Grotesques of Tennessee Williams." *Modern Critical Views Tennessee Williams*, edited by Harold Bloom, Chelsea House Publishers, 1987, pp. 55-70.
- Cramer, Phebe. "Understanding Defense Mechanisms." *Psychodynamic Psychiatry*, vol. 43, no. 4, Dec. 2015, pp. 523–52, doi:10.1521/pdps.2015.43.4.523. Accessed 10 November 2018.
- De Angelis, Rose. "The Rose Tattoo: Reading Tennessee Williams's Play in a Cultural Context." *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, issue 13, 2012,
<http://www.tennesseewilliamsstudies.org/journal/work.php?ID=114>. Accessed 9 November 2018.

Freud, Sigmund. *The Ego and the Id*. Translated by Joan Riviere, revised and edited by James Strachey, W.W. Norton & Company, 1962, pp. 14-21.

Graziano, Frank. "Miracle of the Rose" *Wounds of Love: The Mystical Marriage of Saint Rose of Lima*, January, 2005. Oxford Scholarship Online, doi: 10.1093/0195136403.001.0001. Accessed 15 January 2019.

"The Rose Tattoo." Drama for Students, edited by David A. Galens, vol. 18, Gale, 2003, pp. 176-206. Gale Virtual Reference Library, <http://link.galegroup.com/apps/doc/CX3420200020/GVRL?u=nccu&sid=GVRL&xid=e494f981>. Accessed 27 Apr. 2019.

Gilabert Barberà, Pau. "Literature and Mythology in Tennessee Williams's Suddenly Last Summer: fighting against Venus and Oedipus." Dipòsit Digital de la Universitat de Barcelona, 2006, pp.1-11, <http://hdl.handle.net/2445/12135>. Accessed 25 April 2019.

Parker, Brian. "The Rose Tattoo as Comedy of the Grotesque." *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, issue 6, 2003, www.tennesseewilliamsstudies.org/journal/work.php?ID=52. Accessed 14 August 2018.

"patriarchy, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, December 2019, www.oed.com/view/Entry/138873. Accessed 20 January 2019.

Quinlan, Stefanie. "The Gnädiges Fräulein: Tennessee Williams's Southernmost Belle." *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review*, issue 11, 2010, <http://www.tennesseewilliamsstudies.org/journal/work.php?ID=100>. Accessed 15 January 2019.

- Rea, Robert. "Tennessee Williams's *The Rose Tattoo*: Sicilian Migration and the Mississippi Gulf Coast." *The Southern Literary Journal*, vol. 46, no. 2, Spring 2014, pp.140-154. doi:10.1353/slj.2014.0009. Accessed 10 April 2018.
- Siorat, Cyril. "The Art of Pain." *Fashion Theory: The Journal of Dress, Body & Culture*, vol. 10, no. 3, Sept. 2006, pp. 367–380. EBSCOhost, doi:10.2752/136270406778050978. Accessed 15 July 2019.
- Stevens, Richard. "Chapter 5: Psychodynamics." *Freud and Psychoanalysis*, Open University Press, 1983, pp. 44-56.
- Terkel, Studs. "Studs Terkel Talks with Tennessee Williams." *Conversation with Tennessee Williams*, edited by Albert J. Devlin, Press of Mississippi, 1986, pp. 78-94.
- Thompson, Judith J. "Introduction." *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol*, University of Kansas of Humanistic Studies: vol. 54, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York, 1987, pp. 2-12.
- . "Chapter Three: *The Rose Tattoo*." *Tennessee Williams' Plays: Memory, Myth, and Symbol*, University of Kansas of Humanistic Studies: vol. 54, Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., New York, 1987, pp.53-59.
- Wager, Wager. "Tennessee Williams." *Conversation with Tennessee Williams*, edited by Albert J. Devlin, Press of Mississippi, 1986, pp. 124-133.
- Walton, J.Michael. "Dionysus: The Victorian Outcast." *Victorian Review*, vol. 34, no. 2, Fall 2008, pp. 185–200. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1353/vcr.2008.0049. Accessed 15 November 2019.

Williams, Dakin, and Mead Shepherd. *Tennessee Williams*. Arbor House, New York
1983, pp. 171.

Williams, Tennessee. *The Rose Tattoo. Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The
Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana, New American Library Classics*, 1976,
pp.129-253.

---. *A Streetcar Named Desire. The Theatre of Tennessee Williams Volume 1*, New
Directions Books, 1971, pp. 418.

---. *The Glass Menagerie. The Theatre of Tennessee Williams Volume 1*, New
Directions Books, 1971, pp. 187.

---. "The Timeless World of a Play" *Three by Tennessee: Sweet Bird of Youth; The
Rose Tattoo; The Night of the Iguana, New American Library Classics*, 1976, pp.
129-133.

---. "The Meaning of *The Rose Tattoo*." *Where I Live: Selected Essays*, edited by
Christine R. Day and Bob Woods, New Directions Publishing, 1978, pp. 55-57.