

The Nature of Search for Self in Tennessee Williams' *The Rose Tattoo*

LA NATURE DE LA RECHERCHE DE SOI DANS LA ROSE TATOUÉE DE TENNESSEE WILLIAMS

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Abstract: The aim of this study is to show that the nature of search for self, which is the crux of Williams' plays, takes a different shape in *The Rose Tattoo*. As Hooti and Rashidi assert,

Every day we pass one another on the street, yet we do not know each other, and we least bother to enter into relationships. We seem to have lost the sense of communal life as we seem to be phobic to sociability. Eventually, it leads to a world of isolation, a world where man finds himself separated by the cemented barriers of indifference. (2010, p.1)

This study tries to reveal a search for self which is more fulfilling to the characters in the play than the search for self in Williams' other plays. All human dilemmas in *The Rose Tattoo* are resolved, all ideals demolished and all inhibitions uprooted, and to give a more colourful picture of this claim, the study finds it apt where required briefly compare and contrast the characters of *The Rose Tattoo* and *Streetcar Named Desire*. Unlike the characters of *Streetcar Named Desire*, the characters of *The Rose Tattoo* try to adjust to changed reality in terms of the contingency of their circumstances. The study further shows that illusion and reality are not mutually exclusive categories, instead they co-exist.

Key words: Self; *Rose Tattoo*; Identity; *Streetcar Named Desire*

Résumé L'objectif de cette étude est de montrer que la nature de la recherche de soi, qui est le point crucial des pièces de Williams, prend une forme différente dans "La rose tatouée". Comme affirment Hooti et Rashidi:

"Chaque jour, nous croisons des gens dans la rue, mais nous ne nous connaissons pas, et nous ne voulons pas nous donner la peine d'entrer en relation. Nous semblons avoir perdu le sens de la vie commune et que nous semblons être phobiques à la sociabilité ce qui peut éventuellement nous mener à un monde d'isolement, un monde où l'homme se trouve séparé par les barrières cimentées de l'indifférence. (2010, p. 1) "

Cette étude tente de révéler une recherche de soi plus appropriée aux personnages dans cette pièce que dans d'autres pièces de Williams. Tous les dilemmes de l'homme dans "La rose tatouée" sont résolus, tous les idéaux sont démolis et toutes les inhibitions sont éracinées. Afin de donner une image plus colorée de cette allégation, l'étude constate qu'il existe des comparaisons et contrastes brèves des personnages dans "La rose tatouée" et "Un tramway nommé Désir". Contrairement aux personnages de "Un tramway nommé Désir", les personnages de "La rose tatouée" essaient de s'adapter à la réalité échangée en termes de contingence de leur situation. L'étude montre en outre que l'illusion et la réalité ne sont pas des catégories mutuellement exclusives, au contraire, ils co-existent.

Mots clés: Soi; *La rose tatouée*; Identité; *Un tramway nommé Désir*

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INTRODUCTION

The Rose Tattoo first opened on February 3, 1951 at the Martin Beck Theatre in New York. It was directed by Cheryl Crawford. Williams was inspired to write the play after his pleasant and memorable visit to Italy in the late forties. Italy

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is a country which Williams has frequently idealized because it represents to him the embodiment of healthy sensuality. He says: "I have felt more hopeful about human nature as a result of being exposed to the Italians"(qtd. in Hirsch, 1979, p. 40). Williams explicitly admits that the play had an Italian influence, in the sense that it was directly influenced "by the vitality, humanity, and the love of life expressed by the Italian people."(ibid) This play is remarkably different from Williams' other plays like *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* or *A Streetcar Named Desire*. This difference is not merely at an artistic and thematic level, but also constitutes Williams' reaction against his critics, who in a way sought to typify him as a dramatist on the basis that his plays revolved round only the decadent women of the South and he could respond only to the poetry of decay in Dixieland.

The Rose Tattoo, it can be said, sprang out of Williams' fascination for Latin characters and their vibrant way of life. There was always a conflict in Williams' mind between the pure earthiness of these Latin characters and the neurotic females of Southern aristocracy. This conflict finally gave way to a character like Serafina, whose life led him to write one of his most vivid and grotesque plays, which blends together, with humour, the tenderness and the pathos of a semi-heroic frenzy of human passions and predicament. *The Rose Tattoo* not only enhanced Williams' prevalent popularity as a playwright, but also widened his creative horizon, by exposing him to a theme quite distinct from that embodied in his other plays. At the same time, the play brought the playwright closer to the basic human instincts. In his equating of sexuality to religiosity, Williams comes very close to D. H. Lawrence. The entire drama in *The Rose Tattoo* revolves round the equivalence Williams has endeavoured to establish between a woman's sexuality and the serenity of religious faith, which implies an instinctive and ritualistic relation to the universe.

The Rose Tattoo depicts the character of Serafina, who is full of feminine vitality and represents a "woman's heart passionately in love" (Gassner, 1958, p. 93). She equates sex in marriage to almost a religion in itself. As a result of her passionate involvement in marriage and married sex, she comes to attach values to her marriage like faithfulness, chastity and purity. Even after the death of her husband Rosario, she continues to worship him in her memory of their relationship. Thus Serafina not only eulogizes and idealizes her husband when he was alive, but also after his death, till her illusion is cracked by the revelation of her husband's adultery. This is the moment of real crisis in her life and not the death of her husband per se. After the death of her husband, Serafina detached herself from the real world and forgot even to take care of herself. She had, as it were, put her "heart in the marble urn with the ashes" (p.120), and started living in the world of past, where she could talk only to the ashes and not to real human beings.

The play, being different from the canon of Williams, quite naturally invited reactions of drama critics. One of the most favourable criticisms of the play was by Atkinson in the Sunday Times, who calls the play a "segment of human life torn out of the universe and put on the stage intact--observed and recorded by an artist and not forced into any pattern." (qtd. in Gassner, 1958, p. 92) *The Rose Tattoo* is a play about human impulses and it is for this reason that it has an earthly rhythm, which could be possible because the playwright could empathize the vibrant life of impulses through his prototype Sicilian characters. Gassner (1958, p. 92) said about the lyricism of the play:

Behind the fury and uproar of the characters are the eyes, ears, and mind of a lyric dramatist who has brought into the theatre a new freedom of style. Out of the lives of some simple human beings Mr. Williams has composed a song of earth.

The play abounds in the bustle of the life of impulse. Serafina in some way comes close to both Stella and Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. She is presented to the audience "tightly" and elaborately dressed, so that she "looks like a plump little Italian opera singer in the role of Madame Butterfly." (p. 94) In fact, she is the local seamstress. She rejoices in being the loved wife of her husband, a mother and a pregnant woman. Her complete faith in her marriage and her husband brings her close to Stella. She treats lovemaking to her husband as an achievement in life. The reason for her almost blind love for her husband, which leads her to idealize him, is that Rosario is the son of a baron. This fact fascinates Serafina and makes her proud of her rose-tattooed husband. Rosario presents to Serafina the mystified 'other,' because she herself is quite coarse. Thus her devotion to Rosario in part springs from the aristocratic background she believes he has. In desiring certain aristocratic refinement, Serafina echoes Blanche, who always glorified the delicacy of aristocratic manners.

The situation in *The Rose Tattoo* seems to be in an opposition to that in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, in which Blanche possesses an aristocratic origin and tries to protect it. On the contrary, in *The Rose Tattoo* Serafina comes from a peasant background, but through her marriage to Rosario dreams of acquiring the aristocratic status. Thus in this play too, like the earlier plays, the quest for identity involves a mental relocation of the protagonist. The coarse origin of Serafina is indicated in Clurman's statement that she is "a hymn of praise to the unfettered sexual instinct."(qtd. in Hirsch 1951, p. 22) Serafina worships sex as a mode of transcendence. She says, "To me the big bed was beautiful like a religion" (ibid). It can be argued that the choice of a protagonist like Serafina is to depict a contrast to the refined consciousness of Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. In other words, Serafina in many ways is an antithesis to Blanche.

Although *The Rose Tattoo* is different from *A Streetcar Named Desire* in terms of the background of the protagonist, the trajectory of search for self in the play is somewhat similar to that in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. What makes the search

for self in the play comparable to that in *A Streetcar Named Desire* is the fact that illusion obstructs the perceptions of life in both the plays. Serafina lives in a world of illusion, as does Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, about the imagined perfection and conjugal fidelity of her husband Rosario. She believes that her husband is as devoted to her as she is to him. Perhaps the difference between Serafina and Blanche lies in the fact that unlike Blanche, Serafina tries to adjust to a changed reality in terms of the contingency of her circumstances. There is a serious identity crisis in the life of Serafina, because even after the death of Rosario, she continues to admire him as her ideal hero. Through the memories of her companionship with Rosario, Serafina creates an imaginary world for herself in which she lives, putting her "heart in the marble urn with the ashes" (p. 120). It is interesting to observe that while in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, Blanche's quest for self involves a tragic relocation of self from past to present, in *The Rose Tattoo* Serafina seeks to relocate herself from present to past. Serafina's emotional dependence on the memories of lovemaking to Rosario is a necessary device, which sustains her 'self'. It is evident from the reading of the play that Serafina's search for self is more complex than that of any other characters of Williams. This is because Serafina's mental relocation is not just a one-way journey. After the death of Rosario, she is cut off from the present and is transported into the world of past. However, when Rosario's true character is revealed to her, she is once again brought back to the present reality. Thus the significance of *The Rose Tattoo* lies in the process that exhibits a complete cycle in the process of search for self. While Blanche is a victim of her ideal image of aristocracy and Belle Reve; Serafina can be seen as a victim of her past experiences rather than of theoretical notions of life. The element of illusion in Serafina's character lies in her idealized memories of Rosario, though the married sex with him is very real. Thus in *The Rose Tattoo* Williams has depicted a complex interrelationship between illusion and reality. Unlike in *A Streetcar Named Desire*, illusion and reality in this play are not mutually exclusive categories. Instead, they co-exist, thereby simultaneously problematizing and facilitating the quest for identity.

Serafina's life after the death of her husband becomes temporally frozen, in the sense that she is unable to accept the reality of her husband's death. While Blanche found solace in seeking young men to resist death, through desire, Serafina has created a world of memories to live with. In this world of memories, Rosario becomes a legend for her. She decides to live a chaste life, negating her sexuality and also imposes this idea of chastity on her daughter. Her sexuality expresses itself only in her memories, as she says:

I remember my husband with a body like a young boy and hair on his head as thick and black as mine is and skin on him smooth and sweet as a yellow red petal. At night I sit here and I am satisfied to remember, because I had the best...And I would feel cheap and degraded and not fit to live with my daughter or under the roof with the urn of his blessed ashes, those ashes of rose ... I know what love-making was. And I'm satisfied just to remember. (Williams, 1968, p. 104)

Thus like in other plays of Williams, in this play too there is a powerful impact of the dialectics of past and present on the 'self' of the protagonist. Serafina's denial of her present loneliness could also be, in part, due to her inability to find a substitute for Rosario. That is why she prefers to live a simple and chaste life, like that of a nun. This is evident when she says:

... if after that memory, after knowing that man, I went to some other, some middle aged man, not young, not full of young passion, but getting a pot belly on him and losing his hair and smelling of sweat and liquor – and trying to fool myself that was love-making... (ibid)

Serafina has been so fulfilled in married love with Rosario that she has reached the point of renunciation. In a sense, she enjoys the memories of her relationship with Rosario more than the actual living moments she spent with him. There is an idealization of Rosario through memory and Serafina feels insecure to come out of this world of self-sustained illusion.

ARGUMENT

It is a well known fact that Williams was a kind of hypersensitive and neurotic person. His works truly reflect his inner self. As he was frustrated and lonely, he could reach into the problems of persons with psychic aberrations. He tried to present the spiritual and emotional inner world of his characters. As Williams himself said:

I've always regarded myself as an incomplete person, and consequently I've always been more interested in my own kind of people, you know, people that have problems, people that have to fight for their reason, people for whom the impact of life and experience from day to day, night to night, is difficult, people who come close to cracking. That's my world, those are my people. And I must write about the people I know. Perhaps that limits me, I'm sure it must limit me as an artist, but nevertheless I couldn't create believable characters if I moved outside of that world (qtd. in Terkel, 1986, p. 83).

In his Memoirs, Williams said: " A man must live through his life's duration with his own set of fears and anger, suspicions and vanities and his appetites, spiritual and carnal. Life is built of them and he is built of them" (qtd. in Allen, 1956, p. 246).

Hence, Williams through his pertinent characterization in *The Rose Tattoo* has given a very vivid picture of the *Nature of Search for Self* in the play, especially by presenting the contradictory values. Williams (1978) said that his intention of presenting the conflicts between values is to get the best out of the running time. Tischler (1997) claimed that Williams' characters are like aliens with peculiar hunger and unfulfilled needs. Williams' alienated characters are in ceaseless struggle to find their self, and the nature of their struggle and their values remain eternal. Accordingly Hooti (2010, p. 89) gives apt comments on 20th century heroes, which can quite pertinently include Williams' characters as well, as he says "the heroes portrayed are the persons who are neurotic, mentally and emotionally crippled. There is an atmosphere of moral unease and uncertainty, a collapse of faith in the accepted patterns of social relationships".

In the depiction of the inner life of his characters, Williams has employed supreme craftsmanship. This is evidently found in Serafina's complex character. The complexity of the character of Serafina lies in the fact that Williams has been successful in depicting the rise of an earthly character like Serafina to a spiritual level. Her sexual experiences with Rosario have been transformed into a spiritual experience. She can be seen as a woman who is the victim of sex in head, rather than in body, in D. H. Lawrence's paradigm. The nights spent with her husband have had a tremendous psychological impact on Serafina. The memories of these nights have become a kind of religion for her. This shift in sexuality from a physical dimension to a mental level is the most vital aspect of search for self in the play. In the words of Hirsch (1979, p. 42), "a tempestuous yet oddly chaste sex-singer, she celebrates the body with a kind of virginal astonishment." Serafina's pious and spiritual attitude to sex indicates that she believes in the transcendental power of sex. In a sense, it is the death of her husband which foregrounds for her the spiritual possibilities of sexuality. Serafina's discovery of her sexual needs is closely linked to the loss of her husband.

The real identity crisis in Serafina's life arises after the death of her husband. As long as Rosario was alive, Serafina always felt protected and fulfilled. In a sense, Rosario was the defining force of her identity as a woman who likes to surrender before her husband, as does Stella in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The death of her husband changes her stable reality and exposes herself to a contingent situation. Stella, Blanche and Serafina can be seen as being interconnected, in the sense that these three women exhibit the different possibilities of feminine identity in the presence and absence of men in their lives. In spite of the intrusion of Blanche, the happy married life of Stella remains intact. Blanche is eliminated from the scene and Stella continues to have the presence of her dominating husband. If the similarities in the characters of Stella and Serafina are acceptable, as a corollary it follows that *The Rose Tattoo* provides in the character of Serafina a hypothetical extension of Stella's character. Serafina could never have thought of the possibility of being deprived of the companionship of Rosario. She tries to cope with this loss in two stages. At first, she lives in the memory of her past experiences and then seeks a practical outlet to her grief in the form of her encouragement to another man.

The element of illusion enters in Serafina's construction of her 'self' with reference to the idea of perfection of her marriage and her husband. She victimizes herself by creating a false impression of Rosario as the ideal man, who can not be substituted by another man. The search for self in *The Rose Tattoo* takes a slightly different trajectory in contrast to other plays of Williams. In *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams intends to be different in his portrayal of Latin characters and wishes to highlight the extreme earthiness of his characters. However, he ends up in depicting their spiritual transcendence, in the character of Serafina, which differentiates the play from his other plays. Serafina's isolating herself from the society indicates a situation where she has no alternatives, though this may be her illusion. Her worship of Rosario is not merely a reflection of her conjugal fidelity; it also reveals the ideal image of man she has created in her mind. She firmly believes that no other man in this world can meet the criteria of her image of a perfect man. That is why she withdraws herself into loneliness, in contrast to the promiscuity of Blanche.

Although there may be parallels in Serafina's search for self to other characters in Williams' plays, there is a point of departure from the familiar to the unfamiliar. The most striking aspect of Serafina's quest for her identity is the process of her adjustment to the reality. Unlike Blanche, Serafina is able to sustain the loss of her illusions about the past and positively seeks a working solution to her loneliness. It is as though Williams has presented the problem of self through characters like Stella and Blanche and leaves these characters unsuccessful in discovering their identity. However, in *The Rose Tattoo*, Williams presents almost a familiar problem in the life of a woman and completes her search for self. Serafina's life shows that a woman cannot discover her self either through a complete surrender to her man, as does Stella, nor can she experiment with many men, a solution which Blanche seeks. Instead, the search for self lies between the two extremes represented by Stella and Blanche. Williams proves this hypothesis in *The Rose Tattoo* through the character of Serafina, who is able to balance her obsession with a single ideal man in her life with a realistic solution, without following the dangerous path of promiscuity.

Serafina's notions not only influence her social life, but also percolate down to her relationship with her daughter Rosa, who is in love with a sailor. Serafina becomes so obsessed with her sexual spirituality that she does not allow her daughter to experience the usual girlhood romance. After the death of her husband, Serafina's behaviour towards her daughter points to several complexities. The prescriptive attitude of Serafina towards her daughter points to her maladjustment. There is a duality in Serafina's relationship with Rosa. On the one hand, she attempts to impose her inevitable renunciation on Rosa, on the other hand it is likely that she feels jealous of her own daughter. Rosa has her lover with her,

whereas Serafina has lost her husband/ lover. This duality in her treatment of her daughter depicts a crisis in Serafina's search for self. Her inability to understand the emotional and romantic needs of a grown-up daughter confirms the maladjustment of her personality.

As has been discussed, after the death of her husband, Serafina's search for self manifests two stages. In the first stage, she struggles hard to maintain the memories of her conjugal experiences and turns into almost a nun. In the second stage, she has to cope with the revelation of her husband's adultery and his being a smuggler. The second stage proves to be the real testing ground for Serafina's patience. The revelation of Rosario's unfaithfulness completely shatters the legend, which Serafina has woven in her memory about the perfection of her man. This crisis accelerates her search for self. She finds it difficult to tolerate a more severe loss in her life than her husband's death, which is the loss of her pleasant memories about him. At this juncture, Serafina feels a vacuum in her life, because the spirituality of love has been shattered. Alvaro, though by no means is a match for Rosario, provides her the much needed relief from her melancholy. It is the revelation of Rosario's true character and the entry of Alvaro prompts Serafina to adjust to the reality. As has been said by Tischler (1961, p. 171), "With the prospect of a fresh love in her life, Serafina lays aside her despair over Rosario... Again we see her sitting primly, as in the first scene, looking plump and ready for love".

The Rose Tattoo provides a new dimension to the search for self dramatized in the play. While the other plays only depict the identity crisis of characters who are perpetually trapped in the dialectic of illusion and reality; *The Rose Tattoo* offers a pragmatic solution to this problem. Serafina's shattering of the illusion of perfection about her marriage does not leave her a broken character, like Blanche in *A Streetcar Named Desire*. On the contrary, this crisis leads her to seek an alternative mode of existence, which is a fine balance between a spiritual escape from reality and an uncontrolled indulgence. Serafina's choice suggests that many complexities of life can sometimes be resolved through simple choices, which are otherwise overlooked.

Although the crude and rustic truck driver Alvaro can, at his best, be the parody of the aristocratic refinement of Rosario, his role in Serafina's quest for self is crucial. The presence of Alvaro initiates the process of Serafina's adjustment to reality and brings her out in the open from her self-created prison of loneliness. There are some superficial resemblances between Rosario and Alvaro. For example, he has as impressive physique as Rosario had and like Rosario, he too is a truck driver. However, apart from these superficial similarities to Rosario, there is nothing graceful in the character of Alvaro, which would make him a complete substitute for Rosario. The only significance of Alvaro in the play is that he is simultaneously responsible for hurting and soothing Serafina. He says to her, "Love and affection is what I got to offer on hot or cold days in this lonely world ... and is what I am looking for." (Williams, 1968, p. 119) It is also interesting to observe that after the entry of Alvaro, *The Rose Tattoo* seems to degenerate from a high drama to a farce.

Before the entry of Alvaro, Serafina appears to be a maladjusted character. The function of Alvaro in Serafina's search for self is to force her to face the reality of her husband's unfaithfulness and seek an alternative and contingent fulfillment of her *self* through Alvaro. This function of Alvaro is indicated by the fact that right from the beginning, Serafina and Alvaro seem to make a good match for each other. As Tischler (1961, p. 171) says, in Alvaro, Serafina finds "her husband's torso supporting the head of a half-wit." Moreover, other accompanying events force Serafina to entertain Alvaro. She has already lost the pride in her husband's purity after talking to Estella Hohengarten, when she comes to know about her deceased husband's infidelity. The only hesitation in her mind in allowing proximity to Alvaro is the fear of social reaction, particularly, the fear of her daughter Rosa's reaction. However, she finds a way out to this dilemma, in welcoming Alvaro secretly through the back door, after sending him out from the front door.

Alvaro has been presented as a foolish character. It has been depicted in the play that Alvaro has a family tradition of idiocy. His grandfather was the village idiot and his father was born out of the union of an idiot with a woman who stumbled on a rock while running away from him. Alvaro lacks manners characterized by aristocratic refinement and his seduction of Serafina appears more comic than romantic. For example, while groping in his pocket, he drops a contraceptive on the floor. This outrages Serafina and she orders him out. Before leaving Serafina's house, he reveals to her the rose tattoo on his chest, thinking that it would certainly impress Serafina. Alvaro has his own materialistic considerations in pursuing the widow. He obviously evaluates the prospect of financial security through his union with Serafina, having lost his job. Irrespective of his coarseness and a calculated approach, Alvaro plays the role of a catalyst in Serafina's search for self.

Alvaro's presence brings out Serafina's dormant character, which is quite distinct from the other Southern women of Williams. The action of the play shows that Serafina is not really thwarted by the death of her husband, as far as love-making is concerned. Her initial hesitation and withdrawal from the world was due to the fact that she had created an ideal image of her husband's loyalty and love to her. After the disclosure of her husband's unfaithfulness, she is now emotionally free to welcome Alvaro. The substitution of Rosario by Alvaro has a deeper symbolism, than it appears, regarding Serafina's search for self. Rosario represents an ideal, through his aristocratic refinements. In accepting Alvaro as an alternative to Rosario, Serafina manifests two important things. First, her acceptance of Alvaro indicates the curing of her social maladjustment. Second, in accommodating the idiotic Alvaro, she abandons all the aristocratic hypocrisy, characteristic of Rosario, and embraces the absolute earthiness in love, represented by Alvaro.

Alvaro completes Serafina's search for self by compelling her to get rid of her shame in falling in love with another man. At first she attempts to keep her affair with Alvaro a secret, particularly from her daughter Rosa. However, Alvaro foils Serafina's efforts to maintain a secrecy about their relationship, which out of his foolishness, he makes public. At the end of the play, Alvaro is seen standing at the top of a hill, displaying his bare tattoo chest, while the whole community laughs at him, as he openly declares his love for Serafina. Kerr noted "The heroine.... has been presented to us as a quicksilver compound of physical passion, intense idealism, and hysterical religiosity. That a single sexual act should reduce these qualities to a happy harmony is implausible." (qtd. in Hirsch, 1979, p. 43)

However, what *The Rose Tattoo* depicts is the tangible completion of the search for self, unlike the ambivalence of the other heroines in Williams' plays. As Hitchcock (1993) commented, Williams' characters are in incessant search for the complementary 'self'.

Serafina is able to evolve and accept alternatives and although she exhibits slavery to illusion and maladjustment, she is able to emerge out of them victoriously. Her decisions reveal that as an individual and as a woman she has realized her needs. Alvaro certainly helps her to shed off the last impediment in her self-awareness, in the form of shame, when she has already lost her daughter Rosa, metaphorically though, before whom she particularly feels ashamed of her affair with him.

Rosa can be seen as an inverted self of Serafina. The dramatic function of Rosa is to hypothetically project the trajectory of Serafina's search for self. Rosa is initially subdued by her mother, who does not allow her the normal romance of puberty. Serafina attempts to force Rosa also to live a life of renunciation, as she herself leads after the death of her husband. Serafina after the cremation of her husband keeps his ashes in a marble urn. She behaves as if she is demented. For three years she sits at a sewing machine and never puts a dress on nor goes out of the house. Once she has her daughter locked up naked for a week. In utter desperation her daughter cuts her wrist.

She wants me to be like her, a freak of the neighbourhood, the way she is!, next time, I won't cut my wrist but my throat. I don't want to live locked up with a bottle of ashes! (Williams, 1968, pp. 35-36).

Serafina locks up the clothes of her daughters so that she cannot go out to meet her boyfriend. She does not even allow Jack to come to her house to meet Rosa. Rosa says: "I'm so ashamed I could die... She never puts on a dress, she stays all the time in that dirty old pink slip! And talks to my father's ashes like he was living" (p. 38).

She imposes a forced separation from her lover on Rosa. She even hides Rosa's clothes so that she cannot take her final exams. Serafina's overall presentation makes Rosa feel embarrassed. She says to Serafina, "Mama, you look disgusting." (p. 101) These words further accelerate the process of Serafina's self-realization. She becomes over-possessive about Rosa after she is informed by two "female crowns" about Rosario's being a thief and an adulterer. Her shaken belief in Rosario makes her suspicious of Jack, Rosa's lover; that is why she takes a promise from him to honour Rosa's innocence, while Jack and Rosa were to go on a picnic with the graduating class.

Rosa, contrary to her mother's expectations, is a passionate female and desperately desires to fulfil her love, before her sailor lover leaves. Rosa thus represents the *carpe diem* motif in the play. She does not live by empty ideals. Her concern is with the immediate reality before her. The following conversation between Jack and her, reveals Rosa's liberated psyche.

JACK: I – feel like a – heel! I feel like a rotten heel!

ROSA: Why?

JACK: That promise I made your mother.

ROSA: I hate her for it

JACK: Honey – Rosa, she – wanted to protect you. (p. 127)

Rosa does not heed to her mother's warning because despite Serafina's efforts to maintain secrecy, Rosa knows about her mother's clandestine involvement with Alvaro. In a sense, in her outrageous behavior towards her mother, Rosa seems to be blackmailing her mother for the affair with Alvaro. Whatever, may be the truth, Rosa starts her girlhood without any inhibitions of romantic ideals. Her approach to fulfillment in love is very pragmatic.

CONCLUSION

Williams wants to express a shock which, seems to derive from his sense of the vulnerability of the social world, the delicacy of the membrane that separates us from pandemonium. Williams (1986) stated in *Delvin* that man is the victim of the circumstances and he is not responsible for what he does. He prefers to step outside of time altogether, for him the modern world is as a menace, its political parody, its physical oppressiveness and its spiritual and sexual debilitations leave the individual with nowhere to go but to a reinvented past. The past is a place of the safe haven where there is no corruption and where life can finally exist as an aesthetic gesture. This oscillation between present to past shows the conflict between man's private self and public self. As Maleki and Hooti (2010, p. 178) comment, "the need for search

for self arises due to the conflict between the private self of individuals and the stereotypical public self, which becomes a necessity for survival of the characters”

But as far as *The Rose Tattoo* is concerned Williams’ calculations about the importance of present and past are different. *The Rose Tattoo* presents a search for self which is more fulfilling to the characters in the play than the search for self in Williams’ other plays. All human dilemmas in *The Rose Tattoo* are resolved, all ideals demolished and all inhibitions uprooted. By the end of the play, the characters are able to reach the pinnacle of self-awareness, including even the rustic fool Alvaro, for whom the only path of salvation in life is to win Serafina’s love. Similarly, both Serafina and her daughter are able to reconcile to their present stakes in love, irrespective of their past notions and memories. As in an interview, Williams commented that his work “is always a struggle to achieve cathartic purity” (qtd. in Faryad, 1971, p. 210).

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