

Mary Koutsoudaki

THE DIONYSIAC ELEMENT IN TENNESSEE WILLIAMS'S *THE ROSE TATTOO*

Tennessee Williams is recognized as one of the foremost playwrights to have emerged in the American theater in the twentieth century. He was part of the rich tradition of the Old South and one of the most prolific American writers who turned out plays, film scripts, short stories, poems, articles on theater, memoirs, interviews.

His early work consisted of poems, short stories, or one-act plays. As he later admitted, «his longer plays emerged out of earlier one-actors or short stories... written years before. I work over them again and again»¹. Most of his poems, published in *Five Young American Poets* (1944), were revised and incorporated in a later volume, *In the Winter of Cities* (1964). His collection of short stories *One Arm and Other Stories* (1948) reflects, like his poems, Williams's wandering years in grim apartments and city streets inhabited by lost souls. His short plays in the collection *American Blues* (1948) won a prize and an introduction to the literary agent Audrey Wood.

But Williams's emergence as a major dramatist was initiated with the opening of his poetic drama, *The Glass Menagerie*, which was greeted with great enthusiasm in 1945 in New York City. This play promised a new epoch in American stage history, and its opening has been compared to mark the beginning of a new era such as the production of Corneille's *Le Cid* (1636), Molière's *Le Docteur Amoureux* (1658), or Checkov's *The Seagull* (1898).

From then on Williams tried for many decades to create works that appealed to the public. His dedication to writing is remarkable, and he has repeatedly called it his reason for living. The main motive behind his prolific creation was to interpret reality in a universal language. Like O'Neill, he chose for popular theater an ancient Greek myth that dealt with the exposure of suffering; and the South offered him the background for the portrayal of man's primordial suffering in an unfriendly universe.

Williams's use of myth aspires to a symbolic representation of human suffering in our time. The critics seem to agree that three major schemata appear behind Williams's mythic structure: «the ritual myth of the theater, the literary myth of the twentieth century American, and the Freudian-Jungian myth of modern man»².

The ritual legends of the ancient Greeks and particularly the archetypal

1. «Talk with the Playwright», *Newsweek*, L 11 (March 23, 1959), p. 75.

2. Esther Merle Jackson, *The Broken World of Tennessee Williams* (Madison, Wisc.: Univ. of Milwaukee Press, 1965), p. 55.

myth of the «dying god», who bears the name «Dionysus» for the Western World, can be considered Williams's prime source of inspiration. The Christian ritual and the passion plays were later reenactment of the Dionysiac «sparagmos», which is probably the most appropriately chosen example of the archetypal myth of suffering. As for the psychological systems of Freud and Jung, they are both concerned with the apprehensions of modern man and explain them in the light of their archetypal significance with reference to the Dionysiac cycle of birth —«sparagmos»— rebirth.

Where Freud and psychoanalysis provide Williams with an insight for the description of archetypal suffering in humanity (Oedipal and locasta complexes, for example), Jung's more poetic nature also shares with the playwright the belief that art's role is a reconciling symbol mechanism by which the conflicts of life might be resolved. The Dionysiac myth for both its ritual of «sparagmos» that portrayed the archetypal image of suffering, as well as the genesis of theatre which sprang from that ritual, gives to the presentation of the «katharsis» a means of relief from existing tensions and conflicts.

Williams's use of Dionysicism is evident in his theater. A very interesting sample of this use can be found in *Battle of Angels*, *Orpheus Descending*, *Camino Real* and *Suddenly Last Summer*. These plays present various treatments of the ritual and the myth in the playwright's effort to give a universal meaning to the plights of modern man.

However, among his plays, it is *The Rose Tattoo* (1951) that celebrates the complete circle of the Dionysiac rite. Rosario delle Rose, the dominant figure in the play, follows the cyclical pattern of a god who, after his death, is resurrected in the Mediterranean setting of a Sicilian village near New Orleans. He is the play's initial representation of an archetypal Dionysiac spirit. He is strong and handsome and, as depicted by his wife, Serafina, he resembles an eternally youthful god:

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 rose petal³.

Serafina sees her sexual union with Rosario like an ecstatic ritual:

To me the bed was beautiful like a religion... each night for twelve years. Four thousand three hundred and eighty.

Through his mistress, Estelle, we also learn that «this man is wild as a gypsy»⁴.

Rosario's sexual image is associated with an abundance of floral

3. Tennessee Williams, *The Rose Tattoo* (New York: Signet Classics, the New American Library, 1976), p. 172.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

Dionysiac symbols. Rosario delle Rose means «rosary of the roses»; there is actually a rose tattooed on his chest while he has become for Serafina «the rose of her world!»⁵ The fruitfulness of their union is marked by an identical rose that Serafina feels appearing on her chest when she conceives. The product of this union is a daughter who is beautiful as a rose and consequently named Rosa delle Rose. In her turn, Estelle, Rosario's mistress, has a rose made on her chest. The act of tattooing, like the rose, was also related to the Dionysiac rites. The Meanads who had participated in Orpheus's «sparagmos» were tattooed by their husbands to demonstrate, in this manner, the women's permanent identification with Dionysus⁶. There is a similar use of tattoos by the modern meanads of Williams's play, Serafina and Estelle, on whose body the appearance of the rose tattoo signifies their permanent infatuation with Rosario.

The rose itself, as well as the rosy color, are recurrent erotic symbols throughout the play⁷. In the first act, Serafina waits for Rosario's return. She appears with «a rose held in place by glittering hair pins» and «her voluptuous figure is sheathed in pale rose silk». She holds a paper fan on which a rose is painted. There is wine on the table and a great bowl of roses. This is Serafina's ritual preparation for the coming of her flower-god.

When she is informed that her husband is dead, she plunges herself into a barren winter season that lasts for three years; and, as it happens with Myra-Lady in *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending*, the death of the male Dionysiac figure is followed by the end of the spring season and the sterility of the other sex. Then, against the custom of her church, she orders her husband's body to be cremated and the ashes to be placed in a marble urn. From this point on real problems start to arise for Serafina. Her mythicization of the Dionysiac spirit in Rosario is not in tune either with the true nature of Dionysus or with her own natural instincts. She sees Rosario as an ideal Dionysiac spirit in a monogamous relationship and refuses to

5. The rose is related to the worship of Adonis, the Syrian equivalent of the «dying Dionysus» and the lover of Aphrodite: «The red rose is said to owe his hue to this occasion for Aphrodite, hasting to her wounded lover, trod on a bush of white roses; the cruel thorns tore her tender flesh, and her sacred blood dyed the white roses for ever red». [James G. Frazer, *The Golden Bough* (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1923), p. 336].

6. Robert Graves, *The Greek Myths* (New York: Braziller, 1959) V. I., p. 113.

7. In his earlier play, *The Case of the Crushed Petunias* (1941), which adheres to the plot structure of Lawrence's short story *The Fox*, Williams equates sex with the joy of life. A young man rescues a young spinster from virginity — a fate labelled DEATH UNLIMITED as opposed to sex of LIFE INCORPORATED. The young man is a Dionysus, who symbolically suggests that wild roses, the flowers of Dionysus's Oriental identity as Adonis, should replace the petunias in the young lady's garden in Prinanproper, Massachusetts. «The rosa mystica», as Williams himself testifies, is «the light on the bare golden flesh of a god». It is also «the fruit of the vine that takes earth, sun, and air and distills them into juices that deprive men not of reason but of a different thing called prudence» (*The Rose Tattoo*, p. 21).

take seriously the insinuations of the townspeople about Estelle, his mistress.

At the same time, Serafina tries to confine her own orgiastic impulses by isolating herself from the community and by living like a nun in a cloister. Even before Rosario's death, she had refused to acknowledge any of her libidinous sexuality. When Estelle visits her to order a pink silk shirt for Rosario, Serafina reacts by saying, «I don't know nothing about wild men and wild women»⁸. Appropriately, it is the Strega's goat of which she is most afraid. As the objective correlative of Dionysiac lust, the black goat represents Serafina's unconscious desires⁹. Originally the goat was the embodiment of the god himself; later, when Dionysus tended to become purely anthropomorphic, the myth developed to tell that goats were sacrificed to the god because of the injuries that they caused on the vine.

Serafina is alarmed by the sight of the black goat which threatens to attack her vines. It is the «Maloccio», the evil eye, that appears to remind her of the wildness of the Dionysiac lust, the animal part of the flower-god. When Estelle visits Serafina to order Rosario's silk shirt, she still chooses to ignore her husband's infidelity. The moment, though, that Rosario's mistress pronounces her name, the Strega's goat appears to reveal for the first time in the play the animal aspect of the floral god's nature:

My name is Estelle Hohengarten (A little boy races excitedly into the yard).

The Boy: Rosa, Rosa, the black goat's in your yard!

Rosa (calling): Mama, the goat's in the yard!

Serafina (furiously, forgetting her visitors): Il becco della Strega! —

Scusi (she runs out onto the porch). Catch him, catch him before he gets at the vines¹⁰.

Whenever an event of «wild nature» takes place, the Strega or her goat are omnipresent, creeping in, listening as it happens, for example, during the arguments of Serafina with her daughter Rose.

8. Williams, *The Rose Tattoo*, p. 150.

9. One of Dionysus's animal epiphanies was in the form of a goat. In Athens and Hermion he was worshipped as «the one of the Black Goatskin» and a legend ran that on certain occasions he appeared clad in the skin from which he took the title. For example, when the gods fled to Egypt to escape the fury of Typhon, Dionysus was turned into a goat. The goat also had a mysterious relationship to the sexual life of women. This relationship between the god and the animal can be felt from the fact that the plants that he loved have received some of their names from the goat. For example, the fig-tree was called «tragos» (goat) in Greek, and «caprificus» in Latin. The vine was in its turn producing goat shoots. Later, in Italy, the skin of the sacrificial he-goat served in the Lupercalia to produce fertility in women. [Walter F. Otto, *Dionysus, Myth and Cult*, trans. and introd. Robert E. Palmer (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1965), pp. 168-69].

10. Williams, *The Rose Tattoo*, p. 151.

(Serafina springs up and crosses to slam the porch door. Rose runs despairingly around the side of the house and leans exhausted with closed eyes, against the trunk of a palm tree. The Strega creeps into the yard, listening).

Serafina: You see what I got. A wild thing in the house¹¹.

Rose delle Rose equally shares the floral and the animal traits of Dionysus. She is fresh and innocent, young and lively, «a twig off the old rosebush»; she defies her mother's moral conventions and tries to pursue her relationship with Jack Hunter, the sailor, in the most human terms possible. Rose's image is precisely defined by her name, she is «the rose of the roses». There are no connotations of Christian puritanism, as is the case with her parents' names: Serafina delle Rose is the «seraphim of the roses», her puritan self always opposing the pagan reality of her natural instincts; Rosario delle Rose is the «rosary» that Serafina tries to idealize before having accepted his Dionysiac sexuality and his breaking of the marriage vow.

Later on, in the second act, while Serafina is agonizing to suppress her natural impulses, the Strega and her goat appear again, the constant reminder of her earth-bound sexuality. Serafina tells the priest she will not go into the house because she is unable to breathe under its tin roof:

Serafina: No, I can't breathe in the house. The house has a tin roof on it and I...

(The Strega has been creeping through the canebrake pretending to search for a chicken).

Serafina: What's that? Is that the...? Yes, the Strega! (She picks up a flower pot containing a dead plant and crosses the yard!) Strega! Strega!... Getta hell out of my yard. (The Strega retreats, viciously muttering, back into the canebrake. Serafina makes the protective sign of the horn with her fingers. The goat bleats¹²).

Her instinctual sexuality makes Serafina feel like Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*. With the sign that she makes, she tries, in vain, to evict the Dionysiac spirit that possesses her¹³.

Eventually, Serafina's liberation from false idols and convictions is attained with the appearance of Alvaro, the young and virile spirit-god: «he is one of those Mediterranean types that resemble glossy young bulls»¹⁴. From the moment that his voice is being heard, the sound of timpani builds up to a vibrant climax until he approaches Serafina. Alvaro is, indeed, the

11. *Ibid.*, p. 161.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 196.

13. «Dionysus is described as a "horned child" in order to particularize the horns, which were goat's, stag's; bull's according to the place of his worship» (Graves, v. I, p. 107).

14. Williams, *The Rose Tattoo*, p. 201.

new Dionysus who is going to revitalize Serafina and drag her out of her long-lasting winter. He is an amalgam of diverse Dionysiac symbols. Compared to a bull, one of Dionysus's epiphanies, he also drives, like Rosario, a banana truck, symbol of the Dionysiac fertility tree. Serafina immediately recognizes the Rosario-Dionysus element in Alvaro: «My husband's body, with the head of a clown»¹⁵.

Alvaro's last name, Mangiacavallo (eat-a-horse), is also very Dionysiac; it is a pun on the animal-god Dionysus represented as «eater» of bulls or goats¹⁶. The intimacy that grows between Alvaro and Serafina illustrates one of Williams's favorite Dionysiac propositions — that physical love is life's supreme gift. During their first courtship scene there occurs the interlude of the goat chase with «a quality of crazed exaltation». At that moment Serafina is at the peak of suffering from denying her human limitations. She imitates the bleating of the goat identifying with the animal-goat in herself:

Alvaro runs out the front door and joins in the chase. The little boy is clapping together a pair of tin pan lids which sound like cymbals. The effect is weird and beautiful with the wild cries of the children and the goat's bleating. Serafina remains anxiously halfway between the shutters and the protecting Madonna. She gives a furious imitation of the bleating goat, contorting her face with loathing. It is the fury of a woman at the desire she suffers¹⁷.

This entire scene greatly resembles the grotesqueness of a Dionysiac rite; at last the goat is very appropriately captured by Alvaro who is about to release Serafina from the restraints of her sexual taboos. He helps her to confirm Rosario's infidelity, which frees her from her constrictive role as a widow. Serafina's liberation is marked through the ritual of breakage of the marble urn filled with Rosario's ashes. Catholic puritanism cannot exert any more influence on her, and her so far cherished Madonna seems to be «a poor little doll with paint peeling off». Upon this realization Serafina becomes a «true Maenad»;

(She looks about her, seeming to gather a fierce strength in her body. Her voice is hoarse, her body trembling with violence, eyes

15. *Ibid.*, p. 205.

16. Among the Dionysiac rites «there is the strange spectacle of a god sacrificed to himself on the ground that he is his own enemy. And as the deity is supposed to partake of the victim offered to him, it follows that, when the victim is the god's own self, the god eats of his own flesh. Hence the goat-god Dionysus is represented as eating raw goat's blood; and the bull-goat Dionysus is called «eater» of bulls. On the analogy of these instances, we may conjecture that whenever a deity is described as the eater of a particular animal, the animal in question was originally nothing but the deity himself». [Frazer, *The Golden Bough. A Study in Magic and Religion*. Adonis, Attis, Osiris (3rd ed. Vol. V. London: Mac Millan and Co., 1919), pp. 391-392].

17. Williams, *The Rose Tattoo*, p. 217.

narrow and flashing, her fists clenched). Now I show you how wild and strong like a man a woman can be¹⁸.

Upon hearing the goat bleat again Serafina declares her animal-self in the open: «Sono una bestia, una bestia feroce»¹⁹. The second act concludes with Serafina's yielding to her private desire as she happily becomes intimate with Alvaro.

The final act is the culmination of both Serafina and Rosa's emancipation. The latter, suitcase in hand, no longer restrained by her mother, supposedly joins her own lover. As for Serafina, she is ready to accept fully the animal aspect of Alvaro as a reborn Dionysus. This aspect is emphasized in the scene of Alvaro's spying on the sleeping Rosa. His cries, «Che Bella», echoed by the antiphonal responses of the goat's bleating, «Baaa», reaffirm his libidinous and indiscriminate sexuality²⁰. However, this time Serafina is very content to accept Alvaro's predominant animal-self as well as she had received his floral nature, marked with the rose tattoo inflicted on his chest, that he assumed in order to please her.

The play ends with Serafina's discovery of a rose on her chest, symbol of her restored fertility. The regenerative cycle of the Dionysiac spirit is completed in a spectacular rite.

The Sicilian women, like true Maenads, toss to each other Rosario's silk shirt, now Serafina's gift to Alvaro!

With a soft cry, Serafina drops the shirt, which is immediately snatched up by Peppina. At this point the music begins again, with a crash of percussion, and continues to the end of the play. Peppina flourishes the shirt in the air like a banner and tosses it to Giuseppina, who is now on the embankment. Giuseppina tosses it on to Mariella, and she in her turn to Violetta, who is above her, so that the brilliantly colored shirt moves in a zigzag course through the pampas grass to the very top of the embankment, like a streak of flame shooting up a dry hill. The women call out as they pass the shirt along:

Peppina: Guardate questa camicia! Coloro di rose

[...]

(Bursts of laughter are mingled with the cries of the women. Then they sweep away like a flock of screaming birds...)²¹

The tossing of the shirt by the Maenadic dance represents Serafina's acceptance of Dionysicism as a communal religion opposed to Apollonian

18. *Ibid.*, p. 237-238.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 238.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 247.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

individualism. She relinquishes her exalted social status as «Baronessa» and, a happy, pregnant woman rejoined with her lover she is also united with the community. «In this play, the annual rebirth of the Dionysiac spirit is a ritual successfully reenacted in a fully human version»²².

The Rose Tattoo opened in New York in 1951: Williams wrote it, as it were, as a form of thanks to Italy and Sicily for rejuvenating him. The play transmits the poetic vitality that the author himself had experienced in the warm and bright Mediterranean setting:

The Rose Tattoo is the Dionysian element in human life, its mystery, its beauty, its significance. It is that glittering quicksilver... It is the dissatisfaction with empirical evidence that makes the poet and mystic, for it is the lyric as well as the Bacchantic impulse and although the goat is one of its most immemorial symbols, it must not be confused with mere sexuality. The element is higher and more distilled than that. Its purest form is probably manifested by children and birds in their rhapsodic moments of flight and play [...] the limitless world of drama. It is the *rosa mystica*...²³.

Williams's lyrical preoccupation with sexuality is obvious in the play. He writes that «the element is higher and more distilled than that». His Dionysiac approach views sex as a liberating force of creation and reproduction «manifested by children and birds». The «*rosa mystica*» is not only a symbol of the sexual act but a revelation of the mystery of life. And Williams continues: «Dionysus, being mystery, is never seen clearly. He cannot be confined to memory nor an urn... the blood of the wild young daughter was better, as a memorial, than ashes kept in a crematory urn».

In *The Rose Tattoo* Williams chose the myth of death and rebirth in order to illustrate the fleeting quality of the Dionysiac mystery of life. In the preface, «The Timeless World of a Play», he explains his effort to snatch «the eternal out of the desperately fleeting», which is «the great magic trick of human existence»²⁴. The use of myth offers the means to capture «a world without time». The Dionysiac myth, in particular, seems more appropriate to suit the image of the common man as hero in modern tragedy. In the preface, Williams also refers to Arthur Miller's *The Death of a Salesman*. The latter in his plays and essays («Tragedy and the Common Man» and «The Nature of Tragedy») demonstrates the universality of the common twentieth century man. Williams's protagonists in *The Rose Tattoo* are also simple people: a

22. Judith Thompson, «Symbol, Myth and Ritual», *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute* ed. J. Tharpe (Mississippi: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1977), p. 699.

23. Williams, «The Meaning of the Rose Tattoo», *Where I Live, Selected Essays*, ed. and introd. Christine R. Day (New York: New Directions, 1978), pp. 55-56.

24. Williams, *The Rose Tattoo*, p. 131.

seamstress, a truck driver, a sailor. Whenever they try to exalt their social status, as in the case of Serafina, they are unhappily alienated from their community.

The Dionysiac myth and its ritual reenactments represented also for ancient Greece the religion of every man, who shared equal joy with the nobility in dance, music, wine and love. And the tragedy as a genre which sprang from the rites is either «the song of the goat» or «the song of the grain», concrete symbols of Dionysus's fertility that ensured the multiplication of animals and the regeneration of plants. In *The Rose Tattoo* the floral and animal reincarnations of the god serve as archetypes of the everyday modern man whose drama faithfully follows the same cyclical pattern of death and rebirth of his ancestral prototypes.

Where *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending* are classified among Williams's «dark plays», *The Rose Tattoo* is written in the form of a «satyrikon», the satyr-play, which together with three tragedies, was part of the tetralogy that each playwright had to submit at the festival of the Great Dionysia in classical Greece. The emphasis on the presence of the goat in *The Rose Tattoo* corresponds not only to Dionysus's animal epiphany, but also to the physical appearance of the goat-footed satyrs, who were the god's initial dithyrambic chorus. Moreover, *The Rose Tattoo* has a happy ending that follows the plot structure of the satyr-plays, which always ended with a lovers' reunion or a wedding.

However, Williams's joyful moments in Italy do not seem to permeate his other plays the majority of which are «dark tragedies». *Camino Real* (1953) is one of the few exceptions that, in spite of the tragic mood of the wasted world that it portrays, definitely ends with a personal as well as social rebirth.

From the time that the playwright was very young, he alternated between psychoanalysis and writing as forms of therapy and «purification of his sickness». His ritualization of ordinary experience in drama does not remain restricted in the author's private world; on the contrary the synthetic myth — thematic or technical — that he created, bears immediate relevance to the major concerns of our time. Through the rite of his theater, Williams universalizes man's existential struggle from the American point of view. His choice of the Dionysiac myth reveals the playwright's optimism in a world where violence and death should be always followed by the hope of rebirth. Depending upon different circumstances in Williams's life, his works reflect the absence of rebirth, only a promise of resolution, or a complete renewal of the situation that ends the play.

From this point of view, *Battle of Angels* and *Orpheus Descending* are non-generative plays. *The Rose Tattoo*, on the contrary, completes the Dionysiac circle by celebrating the birth of the new god, where *Camino Real* expands the rather domestic miniature of rebirth in the former play and gives a universal meaning to the «dying god's» resurrection. As for *Suddenly Last*

Summer there is no rebirth but only the hope that the «sparagmos» might alert mankind towards a Dionysiac awareness.

A similar ritualization of the life of modern man appears in the structure of most of Williams's plays. In *A Streetcar Named Desire* (1947) Blanche «dies», and there is promise of a rebirth in Stella's unborn child. In *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955), Maggie's opening soliloquy prepares for the ritualistic approach in the play:

In her long speeches she has the vocal tricks of a priest delivering a liturgical chant, the lines are almost sung, always continuing a little beyond her breath...²⁵

Later on in the play, there are primitive incantations of children and servants, as Williams attempts to reintroduce into the drama an original ritualistic identity:

Skinamarinka-dinka-dink
Skinamarinka-do
we love you.
Skinamarinka-dinka-dink
Skinamarinka-do²⁶

Williams's mythicization of themes and stage ritualization demonstrate his belief in the Shakespearean perception of «the world as a stage», where universal truths could be revealed. Williams deals with the Dionysiac double — that dominated the first theatrical stage — as it is mirrored in modern man's dilemma: his choice between life and death, body and soul, and all the dichotomies that American arts and letters reflected at the end of World War II.

25. Williams, *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*, p. 15.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 52.

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μαρία Κουτσοудάκη, *Το Διονυσιακό Στοιχείο στο «Τριαντάφυλλο στο Στήθος» του Τεννεσσή Γουίλλιαμς*

Το «Τριαντάφυλλο στο Στήθος» (1951) είναι ένα από τα πιο «χαρούμενα» έργα του συγγραφέα. Το δημιούργησε σαν ένα μεγάλο «ευχαριστώ» στη Σικελία και Ιταλία για τις όμορφες στιγμές που πέρασε εκεί. Ο Μεσογειακός χώρος και η ζεστασιά των ανθρώπων τον οδήγησαν σε ένα εξαιρετικά αισιόδοξο χειρισμό του Διονυσιακού μύθου, πολύ διαφορετικό απ' ό,τι στ' άλλα του έργα — όπως *Ορφέας στον Άδη*, *Βασιλική Οδός (Camino Real)* και *Ξαφνικά Πέρσυ το Καλοκαίρι* — όπου ο κύκλος της ζωής του νεαρού θεού που ξαναγεννιέται κάθε άνοιξη ή παρουσιάζεται φανερά λιψός ή κρύβει μόνο μερικές ελπίδες.

Μια πανδαισία από μυθικά σύμβολα — από την παρουσία του θεού στον κόσμο των φυτών και των ζώων — περιβάλλει τους Σικελούς αποίκους του έργου του Γουίλλιαμς, που κάπου εκεί κοντά στη Ν. Ορλεάνη χαίρονται τη ζωή μόλις συνειδητοποιήσουν το διονυσιακό μεγαλείο της.

Το ρόδο — κυρίαρχο διονυσιακό σύμβολο και ψυχή του έργου — εκφράζει τον αντιήρωα του σύγχρονου θεάτρου που καταφέρνει να ισορροπήσει κάνοντας αποδεκτό ένα λυρικό ερωτισμό που οδηγεί σε μια τελειωμένη αντίληψη του μυστήριου της ίδιας της ζωής.