



Psychological Behaviours of the Characters in Tennessee William's The Glass Menagerie

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Abstract: This paper examines Laura Wingfield's (and the other characters') motivations, fears, and hopes in The Glass Menagerie. The inferiority complex of Laura Wingfield in Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie is the subject of the research. The research examines the causes and consequences of her inferiority complex from a psychological standpoint. It examines how Laura's lack of self-assurance, self-consciousness, fear of shame, and scrutiny have exacerbated her social anxiety and caused her to feel inferior.

Keywords: inferiority complex, social anxiety, social phobia

INTRODUCTION

One of Tennessee Williams' tragedies is The Glass Menagerie. The playwright attempts to come to terms with his tumultuous adolescence and comprehend his rebellion against his family in this memory play. The story takes place in 1944 in a tiny apartment hidden behind a tenement building in St. Louis. It centres on a family of Tom Wingfield, Laura Wingfield, and Amanda Wingfield. The narrative is given from Tom Wingfield's perspective. The two best representations of Tennessee Williams' southern ladies are Amanda and Laura Wingfield. While Laura, her daughter, continues to live in a world of glass decorations, Amanda likes to flee from reality and lives in her world of handsome callers from when she was still young and attractive. The Glass Menagerie is the story of introverted Laura, who battles an inferiority complex and social anxiety. A kind of anxiety condition or social anxiety is the inferiority complex. It was characterised as timid or odd. A condition known as the inferiority complex is characterised by extreme anxiety and excessive self-consciousness in social situations.

People with inferiority complexes have constant, severe, and chronic anxiety about being scrutinised in-depth by others and humiliated by their behaviour. People with phobias experience such

high anxiety levels that they begin to avoid social situations. (<https://www.mentalhelp.net/articles/facts-about-social-phobia/>)

According to Adler, “an inferiority complex develops when a person’s efforts to gain acceptance for his skills and perspectives are unsuccessful.” (Adler 72). When you have an inferiority complex, your normal emotions of inadequacy are amplified, and your efforts to overcome those sentiments take much longer to bear fruit. According to Murray, “an inferiority complex may be triggered by anything about a person that makes him feel inadequate, unappreciated, or unworthy of success.” (Murray 58). The phrase “inferiority complex” often refers to a person’s irrational belief that they are less capable than others. Power, prestige, self-importance, and sway over others play a role. An inferiority complex develops when a person constantly compares himself unfavourably to others. (Uebergang, <http://www.earthlingcommunication.com>). Young people who have an inferiority complex will lead them to seek negative behaviours (Moritz, 2006).

Substance misuse, aggressiveness, and underachievement are some of the socially harmful effects that may stem from an inferiority complex (Dawes, 1994). Frustration is a negative consequence of the inferiority complex. “Resigned conduct, such as giving up on wants, goals, and future orientations, withdrawing from social interactions, isolating oneself, and losing interest in one’s environment, may result from frustration. Exit strategies are common for those who are frustrated.” (Dixit, 1985).

To develop an inferiority complex, one must believe they are less capable than they are. When they enter a room full of high-ranking executives and notice that they are all wearing costly suits, they may feel out of place. She thinks they’re well out of her league. As a result of her imagination, she now feels inadequate. Conversely, one might have an inferiority complex if they consistently feel inferior to others and believe they are superior to them.

In both her physical and mental state, Laura Wingfield is unusually delicate. This girl is very reserved and hypersensitive. Her illness as a youngster has left her with a shorter left leg and a more sensitive personality than average. As a result, she feels the need to assert that she is disabled constantly. Her illness causes her to have what psychologists term an inferiority complex.

Jim: You know what I judge to be the trouble with you? Inferiority complex! Know what this is? That’s what they call it when someone low-rates herself. A lack of confidence in yourself as a person. You don’t have proper faith in yourself (TGM 31).

In reality, the physical impairment is hardly perceptible. She can get about with only a little bit of trouble and discomfort. Her inner personality has changed because of her disability. She has an inherent belief in her inadequacy, which prevents her from accepting the truth. She isn’t confident in herself and doesn’t trust her abilities in the world. She has a unique personality because of the deformed limb she was born with.

Moreover, it has a profound effect on who she is as a person. She loses trust in herself and her ability to navigate the world and feels insecure and fearful. As a result, she becomes an extremely reserved and hypersensitive young lady.

Her inability to overcome her shyness and oversensitivity led to her dropping out of high school. She thinks everyone sees her disability and judges her accordingly. Every step she takes feels like thunder since she knows everyone is staring at her because of her damaged leg.

Laura; Yes, getting upstairs was so hard for me; I had that brace on my leg – it clumped so loud.

JIM: I never heard any clumping.

Laura: To me, it sounded like – thunder.

Jim: Well, I never even noticed.

Laura: And everybody was seated before I came in. I had to walk in front of all those people. My seat was in the back row. I had to go clumping up the aisle with everyone watching (TGM 15)

She can't go to business school because she has a problem with being inferior to everyone else. Because of her anxiety over the next typing exam, she withdraws from business school. She becomes sick in class and has to be helped out of there. She finally mustered up the nerve to tell her mom the truth. She acts like she's off to class but spends her days at the zoo or park. When her mother brings her to the church club to meet other young guys, she completely shuts down, perhaps out of shyness or social anxiety. She wishes Laura could talk to the others, but she can't seem to strike up a conversation with anybody.

Amanda: I put her in business college – a dismal failure! Frightened her, so it made her sick to the stomach. I took her to the Young People's League at the church Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody; nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is a fool with those pieces of glass and play whose worn-out records (TGM 15)

Being a girl with such a high sensitivity sets her out greatly from the average young lady. She's just so weird and off in her little universe. She is paralysed by the crippling emotion she has. She goes inside her little bubble, her little glass menagerie. When confronted with a world she cannot comprehend, she creates her glass menagerie as a means of evasion. She uses her glass decorations as a distraction from her life. As a disabled young woman, she lacks the will and fortitude to confront the harsh realities of life. That sets her apart from other females and makes her so odd.

Tom; In the eyes of strangers, she's shy and lives in a world of her own, and those things make her seem peculiar to people outside the house (TGM 20).

As a mature daughter, Laura understands her mother's expectations of her. She is aware that her mother enjoys relating the story of the seventeen guys who visited her when she was a young woman. Since she has vivid memories of her youth, she is certain this will bring her peace. Tom, her brother, is asked to indulge her mother's recurring need to reminisce about happier times.

Laura, Tom's sister, is the one who enjoys focusing on her brother the most. She has feelings for him and knows what will happen to Tom. She knows Tom's dissatisfaction with his life at home with the family and works at the warehouse. She takes in her immediate environment and stewes over it in her mind. She weeps at Tom's disappointment and agitation. (TGM 14).

She may be sobbing because she has come to terms with her actions causing stress for her loved ones. She is aware of Tom's ongoing conflict with her mother. Every argument the family has can be traced back to her; she is fully aware of this. She realises that she negatively influences Tom and the rest of the family. Laura's pain stems from her illness and the weight of her mother's high hopes for her and her place in the family. Her mom thinks she has the potential to be charming and outgoing. She won't accept that Laura has a disability. It's unreasonable of her to put so much pressure on Laura. She hopes this will teach her how to behave and provide her with the flexibility to deal with any scenario that may arise. Unaware of her daughter's personality, she hopes Laura will find a successful man to marry and elevate her social standing. She has unrealistic expectations and does not even know it. Without a doubt, Laura's weaker self fails to live up to her mother's high standards. She has always felt inferior to everyone else, preventing her from living up to her mother's expectations. Laura's mother causes her considerable embarrassment. Her mother sends her to a Christian youth group, but she has trouble connecting with the other teens there. Because of this, she cannot form friends and receives little social interaction. Another source of Laura's shame is her mother's decision to send her to a school for business administration. She feels nauseous and anxious on her first day since she can't control her emotions.

Rather than adapt to her new surroundings, Laura would rather remain in her familiar house. The Glass Menagerie is her favourite place to stay. Her mother, however, does not get her. She abandons

her in a completely different setting, one that might be quite humiliating to her. Laura is considerably different from Amanda Wingfield, her mother. Amanda can adjust to many environments. She has the potential to woo others with her charisma and exuberance if she puts in the work, but Laura's charisma is distinct from Amanda's. When her mother arranges for Jim O'Connor to be her gentlemen caller, that's when her natural beauty shines through. They may have a friendly exchange of words. She's so beyond her physical flaw that she may ignore it altogether. She doesn't feel inadequate in Jim's presence. Since he reacts differently to her, she feels comfortable responding. To become a normal girl, as the shattered unicorn represents, she only needs to believe in herself. Because of its injury, the unicorn's horn falls off, becoming just another horse. But her newly found confidence crumbles when she learns that Jim is engaged to another woman. She returns to her usual routine, secure in the knowledge that she will never hear from Jim again and that there will be no second chance at a date. She lives alone in her little world with her glass menagerie.

That attitude of inferiority has kept her from engaging with society at large and has even kept her from reaching out to the person of the opposite sex who captures her interest. If she sees a clothed female chatting with a guy, she'd rather not risk rejection by striking up a conversation with the opposing sex. Amanda, Laura's mother, thinks that she wants Laura to ask Tom to look around for a prospective future spouse for her, and this is another example of how Laura's social anxiety manifests itself. So, Tom has his coworker Jim O'Conner around for supper. After Tom and Jim ring the doorbell, Laura continues to ignore them. Her daughter has her mom take the call. Seven times she had to ask her mother to do it. Assuming, of course, she comes to see that she doesn't have a choice. Jim comments on how icy Laura's hands are as she answers the door and welcomes him. To get away from Jim, Laura swiftly moves to another room. She immediately changed the subject by leaving the room. Laura is so stressed over eating that she ends up in the hospital just before dinner. She rises from her seat at the dinner table. That's a typical reaction for someone who suffers from social anxiety.

Disabilities like Laura Wingfield's damaged leg may lead to feelings of inferiority. Laura is certain that they all stare at her leg when she walks in front of other people. Her insecurity about her worth prevents her from making friends in her community. She is withdrawn from society and lives in her bubble. Her isolation from other people is a defence against the truth she cannot bear. Her status in the family contributes to her feelings of inadequacy. She blames herself for Tom and Amanda's problems and feels like she's a burden on the family. She must also confront her mother has unrealistic expectations of her.

For this reason, many previous attempts to interact with her community have failed. The character of Laura Wingfield, created by Tennessee Williams, is a compelling literary representation of a person with social phobia. If you want to see someone who lacks self-confidence in action, go no further than Laura. Laura's social anxiety and accompanying acute shyness may be attributed in large part to what psychologists call an "inferiority complex."

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