

Attachment Anxiety and Covert Narcissistic Pangs as Reflected in Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie*

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Received: December 27, 2022

Accepted: February 5, 2023

Online Published: February 14, 2023

doi:10.5430/wjel.v13n2p232

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v13n2p232>

Abstract

This paper aims to provide an interdisciplinary space for fruitful debate concerning psychoanalytical representations of attachment anxiety and the fear of abandonment of a covert narcissist within the ambit of narcissism, and its implications in artistic, literary, and health discourses. Researchers in psychiatric, clinical, developmental, personality, and social psychology are interested in the issue of narcissism since its resurgence has hit the world on a pandemic scale in the last few years. Despite the extensive research on the construct of narcissism conducted so far, one of its under-represented clinical subtypes, "covert narcissism," which is intrinsically intertwined with the fear of abandonment and attachment anxiety (Cramer, 2019) remains largely unexplored as opposed to its counterpart, grandiose narcissism. Extending this hypothesis, the primary objective of the current scholarly investigation is to examine the correlations underlying the maladaptive attachment anxiety and fear of abandonment that Amanda Wingfield, the female protagonist of Tennessee Williams's most autobiographical play, *The Glass Menagerie*, wrestles with in her interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. The study's secondary purpose is to further scrutinize and unearth a slew of unconscious yet toxic expressions of covert narcissism that Amanda embodies in her machinations to remain in her 'secure base'.

Keywords: attachment anxiety, covert narcissism, interpersonal fear of abandonment, secure base, and mental health

1. Introduction

Tennessee Williams is one of the very few literary stalwarts who struck a chord with the post-World war generation and explored the "mindscape" and the "intra-psyche milieu," exposing the attachment anxieties, familial discordance, delusions, and disillusionment of fragmented individuals through his works. As a prolific playwright with deep psychological insight, Williams's literary masterpieces are replete with psychological underpinnings and explore possible mental derangements and degradations such as schizophrenia, paranoia, post-traumatic stress disorder, and borderline and narcissistic personality disorders, to name a few. Narcissistic personality disorder (NPD), on the other hand, is regarded as a relatively less severe and clinically more uncommon mental disorder. However, the subclinical narcissistic behaviours such as "grandiose" and "vulnerable" being witnessed by clinicians around the world as a "narcissism epidemic" (Konrath & Bushman, 2008) calls for renewed interest and vigor in the examination of narcissism as a spectrum disorder. Likewise, there has been an escalating interest in the investigation of attachment and narcissism in both therapeutic medical and rehabilitation studies. These two subjects of interest have been the focus of distinguished and discrete research in scholarly pursuits of late, so much so that dedicated manuals and handbooks encompassing the research domain have lately been published (e.g., Simpson and Rholes, 1998; Campbell and Miller, 2011; Meyer & Pilkonis, 2012;). Moreover, the bulk of recent research on attachment and narcissism consistently shows that anxious attachments and vulnerable or closet narcissism, a clinical subtype, are strongly correlated (Dickinson and Pincus, 2003; Otway and Vignoles, 2006; Meyer and Pilkonis, 2012; Miller et al., 2011; Rohmann et al., 2012; Fossati et al., 2014), giving credence to the hypothesis that attachment anxiety leads to covert or vulnerable narcissistic traits and expressions.

Thus, scholarly engagement in the exploration of the uncharted waters of narcissism in general and the lesser researched phenotype, covert narcissism with regard to interpersonal relationships and attachments in particular remains dormant (Day et al., 2020), and academic inquiry on the same has undoubtedly increased of late, infusing fresh literary investigation into the origin, nature, and personal and societal ramifications and implications of narcissism and attachment. (Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010; Miller et al., 2016; Grapsas et al., 2020).

With this brief background, this research paper attempts to integrate both avenues of literary interpretation and clinical inquiry on the fear of abandonment of a covert narcissist and also find out the salient covert narcissistic traits through the reading and critical appreciation of Tennessee Williams's plays' text *The Glass Menagerie*.

2. Material and Methodology

To accomplish the objectives of the critical investigation of Tennessee Williams' play *The Glass Menagerie*, the current study uses both a qualitative and a descriptive methodology. The text of *The Glass Menagerie* is being used extensively as the primary data source to incorporate the required seminal information so as to corroborate the speech content that resonates with the socio-economical, cultural,

familial, and psychological layers of meaning. As for the secondary sources, the investigation was structurally carried out through sources collected from college and university libraries, reviews of published scholarly publications, commentary, media features, and websites. Through a critical analysis of the play's texts, the researcher not only attempts to uncover both the fear of abandonment and the covert narcissistic traits of the lead character but also advances some viable solutions that would otherwise have averted the miserable lot of the female protagonist and preserved her mental health in light of previous and upcoming research on personality, attachment, and emotional experience.

3. Literature Review

The indelible appeal of Tennessee Williams's most autobiographical play, *"The Glass Menagerie,"* is so intensely enduring that it still continues to enchant scholars, authors, filmmakers, clinicians, and mental health practitioners around the world, casting its literary spell all over. Recently, there has been renewed academic and multidisciplinary scrutiny of the masterpiece and the following is a brief review of the cardinal research carried out in the last 7 years.

Chaudry.A. (2014) presents the socioeconomic conflicts of the middle-class society in his article 'Memory, Desire, and the American Dream in Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie,*' critically analyzing the socio-cultural impact of the Great Depression and the trauma of WWII on the postwar generation. Likewise, Employing the dialogic premises described by Weigand in 2009, Nalliveettill & Gadallah, (2016), examined the conventional and non-conventional attributes hidden inside the linguistic patterns of the play's text, *The Glass Menagerie,* while unearthing the effects and meanings of such discourse context on the mental disposition of the round characters like Amanda, Laura, and Tom.

Similarly, Kim and Cho (2018), in their study, examined the concepts and characteristics of metadrama using role-playing as a play within a play technique in *The Glass Menagerie* in terms of theatrical reproduction. Likewise, Sembiring & Helmita (2019) analyzed the notion of an ideal and discriminated feminist and drew the demarcation on the basis of three waves of feminist movements, portraying Amanda as an ideal feminist and Laura as the discriminated feminist from *The Glass Menagerie*. Carrying out a thematic study on illusion vs. reality, Bhawar (2020) posits that the figment of illusion gives Amanda the much-needed psychological space and repose to escape from the harsh realities of a world driven by material prosperity while underscoring the survival instinct such a mechanism provides. In his article titled "Tennessee Williams's Misunderstood Memory Play: Re-Imagining Amanda Wingfield in *The Glass Menagerie,*" Romero (2021) demystifies the character of Amanda Wingfield by critically examining the main perspectives on character analysis and the tradition surrounding Tom Wingfield. Yu, in his paper entitled "Metaphorical Disability in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie*" (2022), delineates the three dimensions of disability, namely the physical, social, and cultural phenomena, reflecting on the vulnerability of Laura, the spiritual struggle of Tom, and the neuroticism of Amanda. By and large, it's fairly evident from the literature review that hardly any research has been done on *The Glass Menagerie* in the context of interpersonal attachment and covert narcissism, on which score the current research assumes greater significance and uniqueness.

4. Overview and Psychological Underpinnings of Attachment and Narcissism

In order to establish the correlation between attachment anxiety and narcissism, a brief discussion of the concepts and an overview of the fundamental theories of attachment and narcissism are necessary; however, a comprehensive investigation of the narcissistic literature with regard to attachment theory is beyond the scope of this discussion. The word "attachment" is an umbrella term that describes the bond or degree of an individual's attachments that exist between children and their primary caregivers, who are typically their parents or guardians. Like many psychoanalytic words, "attachment" has conceptual as well as experiential undertones. Attachment is a normative feeling toward safety and security in close and comforting relationships. Any type of behavioural conduct that leads an individual to establish or maintain intimacy and proximity with another valued and favored individual is considered attachment behaviours which could well be distinguished as 'secure' and 'unsecured' attachments.

A secure attachment gives a child a sense of safety and of being understood. It also helps the child develop a sense of self-awareness, trust, lasting relationships, self-esteem, and empathy, which help in the cognitive development of a child. On the contrary, when a child's needs for security, warmth, and acceptance are not addressed, an insecure attachment bond develops, and an individual who is insecurely engaged might experience a range of emotions, from deep emotional dependency and anger to being haunted by the fear of abandonment by his or her figure of attachment. (Holmes & Holmes, 2014).

Withdrawal from the attachment figure, whether actual or imagined, triggers attachment behaviour and anxiety. Thus, the bedrock of attachment is an attachment behavioural system, which is a blueprint of the world that represents the individual, significant others, and how they relate to one another while preserving the specific pattern of relationship that a person exhibits. On this ground, the British psychologist Bowlby (1973) pioneered the theory of anxious attachment in his analysis of how individuals with insecure attachments to their close relationships act and behave. When the structure of a "secure base" (Bowlby, 2012, p. 2) of adults whose interactions and relationships with significant others are disrupted by traumas of separation or bereavement, such adults will find it difficult to face the world and deal with stressful situations because they have devised specific strategies to maintain a sense of proximity and connectedness with their figure of attachment. These emotionally attached individuals are more likely to react with extreme anxiety when faced with separation or grief than other people (Bowlby, 1973, 1982). Thus, the central tenet of attachment theory is that a sense of security and warmth that emerges and blossoms early in life in the context of familial relationships leads to the development of confidence, trust, and dependability when attachment figures like maternal and paternal caregivers are readily accessible and responsive. By means of repeated encounters with the

immediate caregivers, who are a reliable source of comfort and consolation and readily available at times of distress, children learn that they are valuable and that they deserve care and attention. The development of such trustworthy attachment patterns, which are thus defined by positive models of oneself and others, becomes a long-term memory of positive and beneficial experiences. This assurance of the attachment figures' immediate availability alleviates anxiety and unnecessary pain when confronted with difficult circumstances. On the other hand, a person who doesn't have many of these primary caretakers and is confronted with inconsistent nurturing or repeated rejection, humiliation, or abuse is more likely to experience traumatic mental patterns, fear of being left alone, and attachment anxiety. In addition, the internal working systems of an insecurely or anxiously attached child are carried over into the psyche of an insecurely attached adult, where they often work unconsciously to protect the psyche from the perceived threats of day-to-day interpersonal interactions, especially those that cause deep attachment disruptions. (Ganis, 2015).

Moreover, attachment theory postulates that childhood events that shape the interpersonal behavioural conduct of an individual could potentially either increase or decrease the contingency of the development of personality disorders (PDs) (Brennan & Shaver, 1998). It is also believed that attachment processes, or internal working models in Bowlby's (2014) parlance, are the cognitive-affective mental structures that regulate the impact of early events on personality and behavior. Nevertheless, children being exposed to constant rejection or abandonment during their formative years has direct and adverse learning implications in that they tend to develop vulnerable or covert narcissism during their early adulthood. (Cramer, 2019). In responding to parental aloofness, invalidation, and indifference, a child develops "defensive narcissism" as a psychological fortress in the face of prolonged maltreatment and rejection. These recurrent rejections or mistreatments might instill thoughts of being unworthy of continuous nurturing and attention. Moreover, conscious acceptance of "deserving" ill-treatment would be emotionally draining, leading the maturing narcissist to develop an exaggerated self-image of himself or herself so as to alleviate the mounting anxieties about being inadequate. On this stance, Kohut (1971) posits that a deficiency of parental empathy and validation causes children to become narcissistic as adults. Kohut also opines that when the maternal or paternal caregivers fail to provide their children with the necessary mirroring and idealizing experiences, (appropriate empathetic attunement and attachments), the transmuting internalization process is disturbed, resulting in a narcissistic personality disorder (Kumar & Christopher, 2022). It is to be noted that Heinz Kohut, through his Self-Psychology paradigm, introduced the term "narcissistic personality disorder" in literature in 1968 and popularized the "deficit model."

Furthermore, the sense of rejection coupled with a hostile environment leads to the development of anxious-preoccupied attachment patterns, inducing the child to believe that care is not always accessible and that rejection is always a possibility. Hence, he or she ought to maintain close contact with people so as to avoid being left alone or unattended. It is believed that children who have such learning experiences acquire negative self-images. Such compensating or defensive notions of insecurity and inadequacy could likely result in narcissism when inadequate, disengaged parenting is mixed with insufficient praise and validation (Kernberg, 1998). It is also clear that attachment and narcissism are components of an interpersonal and intrapsychic network when attachment theory is employed as a prism to examine the emergence of the many manifestations of narcissism. It is evident from the discussion of the conceptual overview of attachment theory and the narcissistic construct that attachment anxiety and covert narcissism are closely interrelated within the purview of parental approval. Thus, narcissism in general, and the covert type, in particular, is ingrained in attachment bonds with children from childhood. Above all, recent studies using the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) and Pathological Narcissism Inventory (PNI) subscales show that both grandiose and vulnerable individuals share five distinctive narcissistic traits. such as entitlement, exploitation, attention-seeking, grandiose fantasizing, and narcissistic aggression. Davies, R. C. (2016).

5. Covert Narcissism and Covert Narcissistic Personality Traits

Modern civilization is concerned with narcissism. Narcissism derives from the mythology of Narcissus, who died of self-admiration and unrequited love. Havelock Ellis (Kenneth N. Levy et al., 2012) was the very first clinical psychologist to exploit this notion. Since then, many psychologists such as Sigmund Freud, Kernberg, and Kohut have extended conceptual framework, contributing to the integration of narcissistic personality disorder in the third edition of the DSM for the first time, along with overt and covert character traits within the abnormal narcissistic attributes in both the DSM-III and DSM-III-R in 1980. (KENDELL, 1980). However, according to The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth and fifth Edition, Text Revision (DSM-IV&V-TR), state that in order for an individual to be diagnosed with NPD, individuals must display "a pervasive pattern of grandiosity (in fantasy or behaviour), need for admiration, and lack of empathy, beginning by early adulthood and present in a variety of contexts..." (American Psychological Association, Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders: DSM-5 2013,p. 669).

Be that as it may, according to a growing body of research, it is found that there are at least two distinct kinds of narcissism: grandiose (also known as overt) and vulnerable (also known as covert) narcissism, rendering the unidimensional definition of the disorder potentially inaccurate: (Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Russ et al., 2008, Meyer & Pilkonis, 2012).

Social psychologists define covert narcissism as "defensive and insecure grandiosity that obscures feelings of inadequacy, incompetence, and negative affect" Davies, R. C. (2016). According to Pincus and Roche (2012) in their clinical diagnosis of covert or vulnerable narcissism, covert narcissism is regarded as a socially reclusive kind of self-regulation marked by "increased sensitivity to ego-threat and subsequent self-, emotion, and behavioural dysregulation," (p. 32). In their perspective, vulnerable narcissists are more likely to be defensive, sensitive, and nervously worried about their inadequacies while still maintaining an undeniable sense of greater than that of their counterparts, grandiose narcissists, who are more likely to be overpowering, self-assured, attention-seeking, and confrontational. They are more concerned about meeting their own needs than other people's issues, which is a predominant preoccupation for both sorts of people

(Dickinson & Pincus, 2003; Wink, 1991).

Besides, covert narcissism, which is distinctively different from overt narcissism, is sometimes referred to as "vulnerable narcissism" or "closet narcissism." Individuals with covert narcissism don't meet the stereotype of narcissism, which is often perceived as having a boisterous and domineering attitude. According to Brogaard (2019, p. 2), covert narcissism "reflects introversive self-absorbedness, high neuroticism, hypersensitivity even to gentle criticism, and a constant need for reassurance". In addition, the following are some characteristics of a person with covert narcissism: low self-esteem, introversion, poor confidence, or uncertainty; defensiveness; avoidance; an inclination to sympathize with or play the victim; and insecurity or a sense of inadequacy.

In addition, the sensitive, "vulnerable," or "thin-skinned," covert type, in contrast to their counterparts, the thick-skinned, grandiose narcissists, who are distinguished by explicit grandiosity, attention-hungry behaviours, entitlements, hostility, and little noticeable depression, is socially restrained, visibly upset, and hypersensitive to other people's opinions while also being persistently resentful and comparing oneself with others. Socially, such individuals regularly exhibit shyness, external humility, and hypersensitivity to external criticism while secretly harbouring a steep sense of grandiosity (Caligor et al., 2015).

Above and beyond, in a recent study on the exploration of the fragile reality of a Vulnerable Narcissist, Travers, (2022) opines that vulnerable narcissists frequently exhibit greater sensitivity while also being unaware of their ability to affect the emotions of those around them. They also have a strong sense of introversion and battle with anxiety and guilt. Additionally, vulnerable narcissists often lose hope in themselves so they can be valued by others. A vulnerable narcissist is also characterized by depressive-like symptoms such as withdrawal, rejection anxiety, and poor self-worth. Since they are more sensitive and emotional, vulnerable narcissists at times are prone to violent or angry outbursts and tend to blame others when something goes wrong.

Moreover, the said characteristics, Cox, L. in her book, *Covert Narcissism: Signs of a Covert Narcissist, Ways to Protect Yourself from Their Manipulation and How to Deal with Their Narcissism* (2019) enumerates the following characteristic traits as Smugness, heightened sensitivity, passive aggression, verbal hostility, blaming, lack of empathy, cold and unsympathetic Relationships. However, both of these subtypes are incredibly self-centered. Furthermore, based on their environment, a significant number of individuals with NPD would alternate between overt, grandiose, and covert, vulnerable states; however, some might also exhibit combined traits as well.

6. Finding and Discussion of Attachment Anxiety and Covert Narcissistic Pangs in the Glass Menagerie

The Glass Menagerie was first performed in Chicago in 1944, and it was later presented on Broadway in New York City in 1945. The book was also released in 1945 and won Williams his first New York Drama Critics Circle Award. *The Glass Menagerie*, which is acclaimed as one of Williams' most important works in the history of American theatre in the 20th century, assumes greater significance both historically and dramatically. *The Glass Menagerie* is highly autobiographical in nature, as Williams draws parallels to his own life story throughout. As such, Amanda, the female protagonist of the American drama, is just a theatrical replica of his own mother, Edwina Estella Dakin. The whole melodramatic story of the Wingfield family, headed by Amanda Wingfield, is poignantly narrated by Tom from his memory. Williams, through his mouthpiece, Tom symbolically paints a graphic picture of his own familial saga: the covert narcissistic machinations of Amanda, her insecure attachment anxieties, predominant fear of abandonment, the relational conflicts that existed between him and his mother, the neurotic vulnerabilities of his physically challenged sister Rose aptly represented by Laura, and the marital discordance, delusions, and dissolution that the family suffered in the pronounced absence of his father Mr. Wingfield in "one of those vast hive-like conglomerations of cellular living units that flower like warty growths[...] symptomatic of the impulse [...] to exist and function as one interfused mass of automatism,"(p.7) the author writes.

A psychoanalytic examination of the play considering attachment theory and covert narcissism reveals that Amanda, the protagonist, clearly grapples with insecure attachments and covert narcissistic pangs as Tom, the eldest son, unearths the personal intrigues of the Wingfield family while amply delineating Amanda's histrionic maneuvers to keep him and his vulnerable "crippled" sister Laura under her wing of 'careful custody'.

Amanda, a single mother, and an elderly Southern belle had already been deserted by her spouse and is now left to fend for herself and two children, Tom and Laura, as the story is unravelled by the narrator Tom. Amanda's dream of "happily married ever after" burst like a bubble soon after the abrupt desertion of her itinerant husband, Mr. Wingfield. Amanda is clearly resentful of her husband's abandonment of her and spends much of her time fantasizing about her yesteryears as a popular and attractive lady sought after by many prospective gentleman callers in Blue Mountain. Gripped by an enormous sense of insecurity and fear, Amanda recurrently expresses overt concern over her children as well as her own future. Given this harsh reality, Amanda gradually develops a progressive sense of alienation, anxiety, and insecure attachment to her children, to the point where she becomes a benign narcissistic control freak who literally orchestrates every "more" and "move" of her grown children under the guise of maternal care. Her obsessive ministrations with her children are only telling manifestations of her own inner void, poor self-esteem, inadequacy, insecurity, and a conspicuous fear of being left alone, which are the glaring traits of a covert narcissist expressed in humility and self-effacement. The following conversation that takes place between Amanda and her son Tom during the supper at the very outset of the melodrama bears evidence of this stance that in the pretext of motherly protection, Amanda actually clips the wings of Tom and her daughter bearing her naked vulnerability of deep-seated sense of incompetency to exercise her motherly concerns when her children wish to flutter their wings of freedom and soar into their own world of individuality and self-identity.

"AMANDA: We can't say grace until you come to the table!

TOM: Coming, Mother. [He bows slightly and withdraws, reappearing a few moments later in his place at the table.]

AMANDA [to her son]: Honey, don't push with your fingers. If you have to push with something, the thing to push with is a crust of bread. And chew — chew! Animals have secretions in their stomachs that enable them to digest food without mastication, but human beings are supposed to chew their food before they swallow it down. Eat food leisurely, son, and really enjoy it.

TOM: I have not enjoyed one bite of this dinner because of your constant directions on how to eat it. It is you that makes me rush through meals with your hawklike attention to every bite I take. Sickening — spoils my appetite — all this discussion of — animals' secretion — salivary glands — mastication!

AMANDA [lightly]: Temperament like a Metropolitan star! [Tom rises and walks toward the living room.] You are not excused from the table.

TOM: I am getting a cigarette.

AMANDA: You smoke too much" (Williams & Bray, 1999,1.19-20).

A peripheral observation of Amanda's chidings of Tom might border on the inculcation of good manners. However, a closer examination of the episode reveals a hardnosed covert narcissist that Amanda really is and that she engages in devaluation and narcissistic aggression. Amanda's repeated devaluation of Tom, which is a symptomatic narcissistic trait, is intrinsically associated with ideas of humiliation and social withdrawal, which in turn are the manifestations of narcissistic vulnerability (Davies, R. C,2016).

Likewise, the narcissist in general, the covert narcissist in particular has an inordinate inclination for attention-seeking, grandiose fantasizing, and caring entitlement in the face of emotional adversity. The following extract sheds light on the covert narcissistic traits substantiating Kohut's (1968) claim that narcissism is characterized by the need for admiration from close family members while the desire for acknowledgment only signifies an unwanted dependence on others

"TOM: I know what is coming!

LAURA: Yes. But let her tell it.

TOM: Again?

LAURA: She loves to tell it. [Amanda returns with a bowl of dessert].

AMANDA: One Sunday afternoon in Blue Mountain — your mother received — seventeen! — gentlemen callers! Why sometimes there weren't chairs enough to accommodate them all? We had to send the nigger over to bring in folding chairs from the parish house.

TOM [remaining at the portieres]: How did you entertain those gentlemen callers?

AMANDA: I understood the art of conversation!..... My callers were gentlemen — all! Among my callers were some of the most prominent young planters of the Mississippi Delta — planters and sons of planters! [Tom motions for music and a spot of light on Amanda. Her eyes lift, her face glows, and her voice becomes rich and elegiac.] [Screen legend: "Ou sont les neiges d'antan?"] There was young Champ Laughlin who later became vice president of the Delta Planters Bank. Hadley Stevenson who was drowned in Moon Lake and left his widow one hundred and fifty thousand in Government bonds. There were the Cutrere brothers, Wesley, and Bates. Bates was one of my bright particular beaux!" (Williams & Bray, 1999,2.12-22).

This viewpoint of a covert narcissist's predisposition to self-admiration and external validation is further reiterated by Kernberg's notion (1970) that narcissists need appreciation to uphold a special status of entitlement (Davies,2016).

It's apparent that Amanda in and through the guise of her motherly commitment more often than not clings to her own anxious attachments and greater reminiscence of a fantastic past by sheer exploitation of motherhood as a mere 'strategy' of recreating "the legend of her youth" (87) (Levy, 1993).

Shaming is a strategy that a covert narcissist would employ to maintain their sense of superiority over others. The grandiose narcissist would be more overt in their methods of getting the advantage, including a vociferous attitude, rudeness, criticism, and sarcasm. On the contrary, the reclusive, vulnerable narcissist would use a kinder tone and engage in blame games, emotional exploitation, or even claim to be the victim of your actions in order to gain approval and confidence (Jodi Clarke, 2022). Covert narcissists tend to play the victim so that they could get the attention of their dear ones and anchor them within their radius for their sense of safety and emotional attunement. The below-given excerpt vividly captures that moment of confession of a narcissist's poor self-worth and inadequacy.

"LAURA: Please do not stare at me, Mother.

[Amanda closes her eyes and lowers her head. There is a ten-second pause.]

AMANDA: What are we going to do, what is going to become of us, what is the future? [There is another pause.]

LAURA: Has something happened, Mother?

[Amanda draws a long breath, takes out the handkerchief again, and goes through the dabbing process.] Mother, has — something happened?

AMANDA: I will be all right in a minute, I'm just bewildered— [She hesitates.] — by life..." (Williams & Bray, 1999,2.25)

Amanda's temperament of lack of empathy and domination which are clear red flags of a covert narcissist is evidently projected in the following passage where she keeps throwing cold water on Tom's aspiration of becoming a writer in the fear of financial bankruptcy as Tom was the sole breadwinner emotionally exploiting his genuine devotion to his mother and sister. Amanda very cleverly yet subtly exercises her narcissistic penchant for domination demanding absolute subservience.

"AMANDA [shrilly]: Do not use that —

TOM: — supposed to do!

AMANDA: — expression! Not in my —

TOM: Ohhh!

AMANDA: — presence! Have you gone out of your senses?

TOM: I have, that's true, driven out!

AMANDA: What is the matter with you, you — big — big — IDIOT!

TOM: Look! — I've got nothing, no single thing —

AMANDA: Lower your voice!

TOM: — in my life here that I can call my OWN! Everything is —

AMANDA: Stop that shouting!

TOM: Yesterday you confiscated my books! You had the nerve to —

AMANDA: I took that horrible novel back to the library — yes! That hideous book by that insane Mr. Lawrence. [Tom laughs wildly.] I cannot control the output of diseased minds or people who cater to them — [Tom laughs still more wildly.] BUT I WON'T ALLOW SUCH FILTH BROUGHT INTO MY HOUSE! No, no, no, no, no"

"AMANDA: Come back here, Tom Wingfield! I'm not through talking to you!

TOM: Oh, go —

LAURA [desperately]: — Tom!

AMANDA: You are going to listen, and no more insolence from you! I'm at the end of my patience! [He comes back toward her.]" (Williams & Bray, 1999, 3.34-38).

The analysis of Amanda's impact on Laura is even more intriguing. Amanda only wrecks more damage than any good in the psyche of Laura in her desperate attempts to make her a gentle-woman worthy of marital prospects. Unknowingly, Amanda employs her mother's anxiety concerning Laura's lack of wedding prospects, unconsciously drawing parallels to her own yesteryears when she was a much-admired southern belle visited by many prospective suitors. In essence, Amanda transforms Laura into a kind of mirror that reflects her own motherly, grandiose self-image. To that end, she should transform herself into a psychological mirror that reflects Laura's shortcomings. This significant analogy is presented by the play itself. Amanda tells Laura to stand before an actual mirror after assisting her with her grooming and getting dressed:

"AMANDA [impatiently]: Why are you trembling?

LAURA: Mother, you've made me so nervous!

AMANDA: How have I made you nervous?

LAURA: By all this fuss! You make it seem so important!

AMANDA: I do not understand you, Laura. You could not be satisfied with just sitting at home, and yet whenever I try to arrange something for you, you seem to resist it. [She gets up.] Now, look at yourself... Now, look at yourself, young lady. This is the prettiest you will ever be! [She stands back to admire Laura.] I have got to fix myself now! You are going to be surprised by your mother's appearance!" (Williams & Bray, 1999, 6.55).

A closer examination of this episode reveals the actual intent of Amanda: that she has persuaded Laura that she looks absolutely stunning in the outfit and that she will never look that good again. But Amanda's vicarious musings over her own "spectacular appearance!" (p.87) are only heightened by Laura's inadequacies as a psychically challenged person brimming with an "inferiority complex" that is squarely evident here. Laura's physical reflection of her own image serves as a metaphor for her mother's grandiose assessment of her one-time good looks as a much sought-after lady. No matter how kind and benevolent Amanda's intent seems to be in this situation, she does a masterful job of making comparisons that force Laura to think about how her own body is "worse" (p.118) than her mother's. thus, it is her mother, Amanda who inoculated a horrible sense of self-consciousness and a "crippled" mentality in Laura more than that of the physical challenge she confronted with (Levy, 1993).

Amanda, as a covert narcissist, is fully aware that the self-identity of both her children, Tom and Laura, is metaphorically hampered by their deep-seated emotions of "guilt" in Tom and "fragility" in Laura, and that her own frailty paradoxically is wrought in the fear of being abandoned by them. She, therefore, skillfully manipulates these two emotions so as to keep herself grounded in the event of confrontations

with her children in general and Tom in particular by fueling guilt in Tom and a feeling of inadequacy in Laura. In this regard sayers (2019) affirms that Narcissistic parents may become even more demanding and controlling as they believe they own their children.

The ensuing conversation depicts how punctiliously Amanda ingrains and perpetuates the seed of guilt in Tom as and when possible.

“AMANDA: We have to be making some plans and provisions for her. She’s older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along.

TOM: I guess she’s the type that people call home girls.

AMANDA: There’s no such type, and if there is, it’s a pity! That is unless the home is hers, with a husband!

TOM: What?

AMANDA: Oh, I can see the handwriting on the wall as plain as I see the nose in front of my face! It’s terrifying! More and more you remind me of your father! He was out all hours without explanation! — Then left! Goodbye! And me with the bag to hold. I saw that letter you got from the Merchant Marine. I know what you’re dreaming of. I’m not standing here blindfolded. [She pauses.] Very well, then. Then do it! But not till there’s somebody to take your place ... I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home of her own, independent — why, then you’ll be free to go wherever you please, on land, on sea, whichever way the wind blows you! But until that time, you’ve got to look out for your sister. I don’t say me because I’m old and don’t matter! I say for your sister because she’s young and dependent.” (Williams & Bray, 1999,4.42)

“AMANDA: What right have you got to jeopardize your job? Jeopardize the security of us all? How do you think we’d manage if you were —

TOM: Listen! Do you think I’m crazy about the warehouse? [He bends fiercely toward her slight figure.] Do you think I’m in love with the Continental Shoemakers? You think I want to spend fifty-five years down there in that — Celotex interior! with — fluorescent — tubes! Look! I’d rather somebody picked up a crowbar and battered out my brains — than go back mornings!” (Williams & Bray, 1999,3.33).

Furthermore, Amanda repeatedly engages in narcissistic manipulation using projective identification in an attempt to keep her son Tom succumbing to her whims and fancies by subtly exploiting his genuine brotherly concern for his physically challenged sister Laura and instilling a sense of "guilt" and "responsibility," thereby shirking her own bound duties as a mother. Furthermore, on account of her husband's desertion of her, Amanda equates rejection with responsibility and makes conscious attempts to completely ignore this relational dimension of responsibility on her part by all means. In doing so, she could avoid abandonment, thus protecting her from needless pain and estrangement. In this regard, Mikulincer & Horesh, (1999) makes the following observation individuals who behave in this fashion spend a lot of time persuading those around them to take care of them because of their conviction that exchanges of this kind provide the foundation for long-lasting interpersonal relationships.

In corroboration of this stance, Maroda (1987) further posits that narcissistic individuals experience excessive anxiety about ageing and continue to be dissatisfied, anxious, and afraid of being left alone despite achieving credible success and attachments. Such individuals would seek to gain "relief" and "hope" by transferring their expectations and fears onto their children, like Amanda. On this token, Pistole (1995) proposed that the different forms of insecure attachment, characterized by varying degrees of avoidance and/or anxiety, may actually have the same purpose in that they are manifestations of defense mechanisms employed by individuals high in narcissistic vulnerability. It’s equally imperative to take note of Tom’s reluctant choice of dwelling in the Wingfield apartment, which is equivalent to isolating behind an illusory pane of glass, primarily Amanda’s self-serving mirror of maternal attachment to alleviate her fear of abandonment. So, to live in the house for Tom is to be a part of Amanda’s make-believe world of parental care and unconditional love, which he no longer wishes to cling to as a free-spirited lad.

7. Conclusion

A psychoanalytic examination of Tennessee William’s play *The Glass Menagerie* through the lens of attachment theory and covert narcissism reveals that the Female protagonist Amanda Wingfield conspicuously suffers from attachment anxiety and the subsequent repercussion, covert narcissism with her symptomatic characteristic traits such as a sense of insecurity, poor self-esteem, anxiety, bewilderment, predisposition to self-admiration, attention-seeking, emotional exploitation, domineering attitude, all well encapsulated in her docile, goody-goody façade of self-sacrifice. It’s not to be denied that Amanda’s efforts to safeguard her children and secure them a prospective future genuinely stem from her unconditional love and motherly care for her children. It’s also true that the unexpected desertion of her husband, Mr. Wingfield literally got the wit out of herself traumatizing her desolation and aggravating her precarious economical dependency on Tom all the more validating the claim that adverse economic recession takes a humbling impact on narcissists (Bianchi, 2018).

Moreover, single moms frequently experience a sense of hopelessness and loss of identity due to divorce or widowhood, since these women's entire identity had previously been linked to their husbands' dominant identity, many of them have experienced a tremendous sense of personal failure. The guilt, anxiety, bitterness, and aggression that have experienced become so strong that they leave them completely thrusting an ever-growing sense of uncertainty and disillusionment about the future. (Josephine,2013). On this ground, Bennet et al (2005) observe that the profound feeling of loss experienced by such single parents due to the untimely death or abrupt desertion of their spouse is so excruciatingly severe that the subsequent anguish and mental oral is tantamount to losing a child to premature death. Despite her best

efforts Amanda unconsciously sinks into the pool of self-admiration and self-centeredness. Her outright lack of empathetic concern for both Tom and Laura, and her inordinate exhortations to make them better only accentuate her deep-seated inadequacy and fear of being left alone as a result she feels alienated and couldn't establish any meaningful, lasting relationship with anyone around her. Amanda's covert narcissistic histrionics only aggravates the simmering conflicts between Tom and Laura propelling the former to leave her forever, and the latter to dwell in her own delusional world of the glass menagerie. Had Amanda exercised some "vicarious introspection," as it were, in the parlance of Kohut, and shown "empathetic attunements" with her kids, giving them their due space and maternal validation, she could have built a congenial and meaningful rapport, curbed her fear of abandonment, and preserved her mental health and well-being as Heinz Kohut puts it in his study on *How Does Analysis Cure?* published in 1984, "Empathy is the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person." (p.144).

The current psychoanalytic study of *The Glass Menagerie* has a few limitations that should be addressed in future research. First, as mentioned earlier, the present psychoanalytic scrutiny of attachment and covert narcissism seeks to forecast the pathological behaviour patterns of a female single parent in a literary context. Furthermore, prospective research on the impact of parental attachment anxiety and covert narcissism could be carried out on a macro level in real time for larger cross-cultural community populations involving different age cohorts (Paris, 2014). Moreover, the current investigation offers a limited scope. In that it primarily focused on the relational dimension of narcissistic attachments, other facets such as etiological, communal, vocational, and marital factors leading to such pathological manifestations of attachment and narcissism remain latent for future research.

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