

REPRESENTATIONS OF INFERIORITY COMPLEX AS DEPICTED ON VIRGINIA WOOLF'S *THE DUCHESS AND THE JEWELLER*

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Abstrak

Cerpen Virginia Woolf berjudul *The Duchess and The Jeweller* diterbitkan pertama kali pada tahun 1938. Cerpen ini mencerminkan era masyarakat Inggris yang mengalami perubahan signifikan dalam kelas sosial yang membawa banyak masalah, terutama dalam hal status sosial dan ekonomi. Oliver Bacon, sang tokoh utama, lahir dalam kemiskinan. Kemudian, setelah bekerja keras, dia akhirnya menjadi pengusaha perhiasan terkaya di Inggris. Dia juga terobsesi untuk masuk ke kalangan bangsawan hanya untuk memuaskan perasaan inferiorinya. Inferiority complex adalah suatu keadaan dimana seseorang merasa tidak mampu melakukan sesuatu yang berharga sehingga membuat orang tersebut merasa rendah diri seperti yang dikemukakan oleh Alfred Adler. Lalu, bagaimana inferiority complex digambarkan dalam karakter Oliver Bacon dari *The Duchess and The Jeweller* karya Virginia Woolf? Melalui metode kualitatif, artikel ini menggunakan perspektif inferiority complex untuk menganalisis masalah Oliver Bacon ketika ia naik ke kelas sosial dan menunjukkan inferiority complex-nya karena masa depannya yang buruk. Kesimpulannya, tulisan ini memberikan bukti bahwa inferiority complex bisa terjadi karena faktor ekonomi dan membuat seseorang menjadi social climber.

Kata Kunci: Alfred Adler, Inferiority Complex, *The Duchess and The Jeweller*, Virginia Woolf.

Abstract

Virginia Woolf's short story entitled The Duchess and The Jeweller was first published in 1938. This short story reflects the England society era of significant change in the social class that brings many problems, especially in terms of social and economic statuses. Oliver Bacon, the main character, was born in poverty. Then, after working his way up, he eventually became the wealthiest jeweller in England. He also obsessed to move among aristocrats' circles just to satisfy his inferior feelings. Inferiority complex is a condition in which a person feels unable to do something valuable that makes the person feel inferior as stated by Alfred Adler. Then, how is the inferiority complex depicted in Oliver Bacon's character from Virginia Woolf's The Duchess and The Jeweller? Through qualitative method, this paper uses the perspective of inferiority complex to analyze Oliver Bacon's problems when he climbs up to the social class and to demonstrate his inferiority complex because of his bad foretime. In conclusion, this paper gives proof that an inferiority complex can happen due to economic factors and make someone become a social climber.

Keywords: Alfred Adler, Inferiority Complex, *The Duchess and The Jeweller*, Virginia Woolf.

Introduction

The Duchess and The Jeweller is Virginia Woolf's short story that is delineated into 19th-century English society. It was a time of transition when the elites were falling from power due to their moral depravity and the commoners were coming up. It also tells about Oliver Bacon, a very wealthy and prosperous jeweler in England. Before he became a successful jeweler, he lived in a filthy, small lane, and was nurtured in squalor before becoming a prosperous jeweler (Woolf, 2021). He put a lot of effort into it and employed in both legal and illegal ways to become the richest jeweler in England.

One day the Duchess of Lambourne shows up to offer some faux pearls. In exchange for an invitation to a high society dinner and a weekend with her daughter Diana, she offers to sell him fake pearls. Oliver knows the pearls are phony, but he still decides to take the chance because purchasing the pearls was his ticket to mingling with the upper class (Woolf, 2021). Despite his ambition to be a part of aristocratic circles, he has a preoccupation about his own inferiority. He is extremely wealthy, but due to his being so materialistic, he constantly seeks more money just to satisfy his sense of inferiority complex.

Then, how is the inferiority complex depicted in Oliver Bacon's character from Virginia Woolf's *The Duchess and The Jeweller*? This writing underlines the condition of Oliver Bacon when facing his inferiority complex because of his bad condition in the past. His condition also turns him out to become an ambitious and greedy person in the present.

Method

In order to respond to the question posed in this study, the qualitative method is used to investigate specific concepts and written material. The necessary materials, including books, journals, and articles, are taken from online scripts. As part of the data analysis process, sources are gathered and organized, carefully examined, closely related to other topics, quoting them in writing, and added to the reference list. Virginia Woolf's *The Duchess and The Jeweller* and Alfred Adler's *The Individual Psychology of Inferiority Complex* are the data and the theory of the research. In other words, Adler's theory is a tool for analysis, whereas Woolf's short story is the object. Therefore, the study in this case focused on how Oliver Bacon's inferiority complex was exhibited and evolved him into a rapacious person and a social climber in the short story.

Results and Discussions

The Chronicles of Oliver Bacon's Encounter

The short story of *The Duchess and The Jeweller* by Virginia Woolf tells about the life of Oliver Bacon and his encounter as a famous jeweler in England. At the beginning, it is clear that Oliver was a highly wealthy jeweler in his community. He was a young, single man who was well known among London's aristocratic households by following the main rule;

"... he would rip his letters open with his long pointed nails and would extract thick white cards of invitation upon which the engraving stood up roughly from duchesses, countesses, viscountesses and Honourable Ladies." (Woolf, 2021)

Behind his popularity between the upper class neighbor and an experienced jeweler, Oliver Bacon worked hard all his life to reach that. Even yet, he used both legal and illicit means to get there. He also showed that he had grown up in a corrupt and materialistic environment and was a representative of the working middle class. Those are asserted in the quotations;

"He had once thought that the height of his ambition—selling stolen dogs to fashionable women in Whitechapel." ... "Then he had gone behind a counter;

had sold cheap watches; then he had taken a wallet to Amsterdam.” (Woolf, 2021)

Even when he has become England's most well known jeweler, his nature is not content. He continuously seeks greater financial wealth. He is an ambitious person that will never satisfy himself at all. Therefore, Oliver always indicates his appearance to make him look like a famous and riches person in England. Those are shown in here;

“So the great jeweller, the greatest jeweller in the whole world, swung down Piccadilly, perfectly dressed, with his gloves, with his cane; but dissatisfied still, till he reached the dark little shop, that was famous in France, in Germany, in Austria, in Italy, and all over America—the dark little shop in the street off Bond Street.” (Woolf, 2021)

Almost all people in England know how much Oliver points out his wealth. Again, he is unsatisfied with showing off his wealth. He immediately took a box containing his favorite jewelry and diamonds as soon as he arrived at his jewelry shop. It is situated in following;

“Then he touched a spring in the wall and slowly the panelling slid open, and behind it were the steel safes, five, no, six of them, all of burnished steel. He twisted a key; unlocked one; then another. Each was lined with a pad of deep crimson velvet; in each lay jewels—bracelets, necklaces, rings, tiaras, ducal coronets; loose stones in glass shells; rubies, emeralds, pearls, diamonds. All safe, shining, cool, yet burning, eternally, with their own compressed light.” (Woolf, 2021)

After that, The Duchess then arrived at his jewelry store. However, before Oliver is ready to see her, he makes The Duchess wait for him in ten minutes. It was a huge accomplishment for a boy who used to live in a dirty, tiny alley to be waited by a Duchess. He got the impression that by making her waiting as he was indulging in a substantial meal. Those are explored here;

“The telephone buzzed obsequiously in a low muted voice on his table. He shut the safe. “In ten minutes,” he said.” (Woolf, 2021)

“... The Duchess of Lambourne waited his pleasure; the Duchess of Lambourne, daughter of a hundred Earls. She would wait for ten minutes on a chair at the counter.” (Woolf, 2021)

Ten minutes later, Oliver was ready to see the duchess. The duchess then conveys what she needs. It is to hawk her ten imitative pearls and be sold for £20,000. The Duchess mentions The Prime Minister to interrupt Oliver as he attempts to verify the authenticity of the pearls. Oliver then creates a check with the amount of the money. Nevertheless, he seems hesitant to write it. He feels it was wrong but then he signs the check completely because The Duchess interrupts him again by telling him that he can have a horse ride together with Diana. Those are explored in the following;

“He would ring for Spencer or Hammond. “Take it and test it,” he would say.” ... “You will come down to-morrow?” she urged, she interrupted. “The Prime Minister—His Royal Highness . . .” She stopped. “And Diana . . .” she added.” (Woolf, 2021)

“... “Twenty thousand,” she moaned. “My honour!” ... “Twenty—” he wrote. Then he stopped writing.” ... “Oliver!” she warned him. “Have sense! Don’t be a fool!” ...” (Woolf, 2021)

“... “You’ll come for a long week-end?” Alone in the woods with Diana! Riding alone in the woods with Diana! “Thousand,” he wrote, and signed it.” ...” (Woolf, 2021)

The Duchess was already gone from his shops. Oliver directly checks the legality of the pearls from the duchess. As seems as he feels his bad feeling before, he knew that the pearls are mock. Then, he feels sorry to her mother to represent his wrongdoing by having the fake pearls. Those ideas are as explored here;

*"... "Are they false or are they real?" asked Oliver, shutting his private door."
... "He held them under his lens to the light. . . . This, then, was the truffle he
had routed out of the earth! Rotten at the centre—rotten at the core!"
(Woolf, 2021)*

*"... "Forgive me, oh, my mother!" he sighed, raising his hand as if he asked
pardon of the old woman in the picture." (Woolf, 2021)*

The citations and explications of the short story above indicate the existence and the background of Oliver Bacon as a distinguished and affluent jeweler in England. It depicted his arrogance, ambition, and materialistic person when being the richest jeweler in England, especially when he wants to rise to the upper class. Yet in the midst of his popularity, wealth, and ambition, he is just an ordinary person who is easily fooled by The Duchess at the end of the story.

Inferiority Complex in Psychological Matters

Literature and psychology are strongly related since both deal with humans' lives and their responses. Human lives are filled with many issues. Both internal and external issues are present in that situation. Internal issues originate from within, particularly from psychological and physical causes like despair, addiction, inferiority complexes, or physical limitations (Suari, I. and Hapsari, 2022). Meanwhile, external issues come from outside, such as finances, social situations, or natural calamities (Suari, I. and Hapsari, 2022). On the other hand, these human issues could not be detached from human feelings. Practically everyone encounters human's difficulties on a regular basis, which occasionally causes him or her to worry about what might happen in the future. People are afraid of things like bad luck, failure, embarrassment, and other emotions that refer to inferiority feelings (El-Haleem, 2023; Lamberson & Wester, 2018). Peoples experience the feelings of inferiority in the psychological conditions. People who may have low self-esteem tend to be difficult in making decisions for their progress, and slowly they will marginalize themselves from their communities (Marta et al., 2018). Those emotions also referred to be a symptom of an inferiority complex (Husniyati, 2019).

Inferiority complex is a condition in which a person feels unable to do something valuable that makes the person feel inferior. Alfred Adler, a French psychologist, invented the phrase "inferiority complex" in the 1920s (Adeka, 2019; El-Haleem, 2023). Some psychiatrists and psychologists have coined the phrase, especially those who subscribed to Adler's early psychoanalytical theories and who believed that many neurotic symptoms could be linked to an overcompensation for this sensation. Later, the word "complex" evolved to refer to a group of emotionally charged, partially or even entirely repressed ideas that are centered on and associated with these self-esteem problems.

Adler asserts that all people have inferiority complex and spend the rest of their lives attempting to overcome them (McCord et al., 1956). A type of psychological barrier called an inferiority complex typically develops throughout puberty. Its causes are complex, and its effects are negative and destructive. Adler contends that inferiority complex develops when a person is exposed to criticism or rejection for his or her qualities by others (Mardiyah & Rahmawati, 2023; McCord et al., 1956). When efforts to overcome inferiority are severely hampered, inferiority complex develops as a magnified version of those natural sentiments of inadequacy. In addition, inferiority complex is brought on by anything about a person that is below average, that invites criticism, or that makes him or her to feel powerless or unqualified to any society.

The conscious or unconscious belief that one is inferior to others is known as an inferiority complex (Marta et al., 2018). Along with concepts such as traits, the unconscious, and self-actualization in psychology, the concept of inferiority complex is used to explain personality. People with a fundamental inferiority complex never get over their strong and enduring childhood

emotions of inferiority. A secondary inferiority complex develops when an adult believes success is unattainable (Kenchappanavar, 2012). A person with an inferiority complex may also display actions that are meant to demonstrate their superiority to others, such as an obsession with vanity and appearances or expensive material things. It is well acknowledged that abusive or unfavorable childhood experiences—the repercussions of which can linger long into adulthood—are the root cause of an inferiority complex. Nevertheless, it is not the only reason that may exist. An inferiority complex is a multi-layered problem with multiple root causes, similar to the majority of psychological problems (Mardiyah & Rahmawati, 2023; Sumarso, 2019).

When a person has a perceived sense of inferiority, he or she may develop an inferiority complex. For instance, when someone goes to his city's wedding of the mayor's son. He or she walks into a room full of well-known politicians and businesspersons and notices that they are all wearing fancy dresses or suits. The situation may shape lack of confidence around him or her. He or she believes that he or she is in a completely different class from them, one that is better. His or her perception of the feeling makes him or her feels inadequate. Nevertheless, when a person feels inferior, he or she believes that others are not preferable. Then, it can be argued that the person has an inferiority complex.

The American Psychological Association (APA) also defines an inferiority complex as a basic feeling of inadequacy and insecurity (Akers, 2022). These emotions could be a result of actual or imagined shortcomings in some aspect of the person's life. It could be a flaw or deficit in either one's mentally or physically foundation. In other terms, an inferiority complex is the perception people have in themselves that they are not significant, smart, as good as others, up to standards, capable, deserving, or acceptable (Akers, 2022). Adler discovered that when someone feels weak or incompetent, he or she is more inclined to strive to compensate by excelling at something else (Adler, 2015; Kapur & Naik, 2022). He or she tries to establish a fictitious aim that is enormous, thorough, and powerful to make up for this shortcoming. As a result, a person's end destination lessens the pain of inferiority feelings and points them in the direction of either success or superiority.

In such circumstance, people might not even be aware that they are compensating to themselves. Compensation is defined as excelling in one area to make up for real or perceived deficits in another area (Cherry, 2022). Compensation involves making up for deficiencies and feelings of inferiority and inadequacy in one area by excelling in another for the sake of satisfaction. This action if done excessively can also be referred to as overcompensation (Adler, 2015; Cherry, 2022). The same idea underlies overcompensation; one attempts to atone for feelings of inferiority by striving for greatness in the same or a different subject.

Overcompensation, on the other hand, occurs when a person goes beyond compensating for inadequacy and instead is motivated by objectives such as aiming for power, dominance, control, and superiority over others—all of which have the potential to be negative for one's conduct and personality (Kapur & Naik, 2022). In other words, when someone exhibits excessive conduct, inferiority may be the motivation behind it. This explains why some individuals appear to be fixated on reaching particular objectives. The root of the issue is not actually resolved, though. The explanation will be the main focus to analyze how Oliver Bacon reveals his inferiority complex throughout the short story.

Elucidation of What Encourages Oliver Bacon to Have Inferiority Complex

The short story of *The Duchess and The Jeweller* by Virginia Woolf tells how the main character named Oliver Bacon, who lived with misery and the worst conditions in the past, became a riches jeweler in England. This study focuses on how the main character shows his inferiority complex, even though he is already beyond his terrible foretime then become a successful person. Here are a few of Oliver's justifications for making changes in his life and developing an inferiority complex.

First, Oliver Bacon's backstory helps him obtain the wealth he acquired by doing something legal and illegal ways. Many people are unaware of Oliver Bacon's tragic past, which helped him shape who he is now. Because of that, he was so consumed with his devotion that he forgot about his prior issues and considered embracing his dark side the first step toward realizing

his ambitions to become the prosperous jeweler in his country. His actions showed in the beginning of the story that how Oliver gain his wealth in some quotation;

“Behold Oliver,” he would say, addressing himself. “You who began life in a filthy little alley, you who. . .” ...” (Woolf, 2021)

“... But he dismantled himself often and became again a little boy in a dark alley. He had once thought that the height of his ambition—selling stolen dogs to fashionable women in Whitechapel. ...” (Woolf, 2021)

“... Then he had gone behind a counter; had sold cheap watches; then he had taken a wallet to Amsterdam. . . . At that memory he would chuckle—the old Oliver remembering the young.” (Woolf, 2021).

An inferiority complex is a lack of self-worth, a doubt and uncertainty, and feelings of not measuring up to standards (Kabir, Syeed et al., 2017). This approves and happens because of Oliver Bacon’s ambition. Behind his popularity among the upper class neighbor and an experienced jeweler, Oliver Bacon worked hard all his life to reach that. Even yet, he used both legal and illicit means to get there. He had grown up in a corrupt and materialistic environment and was a representative of the working middle class. Because of that ambition to be a rich person, he represent his inferiority complex by always remembered his foretime.

Second, Oliver Bacon’s inferiority complex is also revealed when The Duchess come to his jewelry shop. Even if Oliver Bacon has emerged as England's most well liked jeweler, his nature is not content. He continuously seeks greater financial wealth. It is exhibited when The Duchess arrived at his jewelry store. However, before he is ready to see her, Oliver remembering his condition in the past just to satisfy his feelings of inferiority as the commoner who has recently become England’s richest jeweler and make the duchess wait for him in ten minutes. His measures are denoted in the middle of the story in how Oliver makes a wait for The Duchess that is shown in here;

“The telephone buzzed obsequiously in a low muted voice on his table. He shut the safe. “In ten minutes,” he said. ...” (Woolf, 2021) “... ”

And again he dismantled himself and became once more the little boy playing marbles in the alley where they sell stolen dogs on Sunday. He became that wily astute little boy, with lips like wet cherries. ...” (Woolf, 2021)

“... The Duchess of Lambourne waited his pleasure; the Duchess of Lambourne, daughter of a hundred Earls. She would wait for ten minutes on a chair at the counter. ...” (Woolf, 2021).

According to Adler, a person with an inferiority complex may use a superiority complex as a way to escape from his or her obstacles (McCord et al., 1956; Syaefianti, 2018). This demonstrates what Oliver was doing to The Duchess with his superiority by making her wait for ten minutes. It is because he perceives that being a new rich person did not necessarily become an upper class. That is why he was very ambitious to go into aristocratic circles. In addition, it was a huge accomplishment for a boy who used to live in a dirty, tiny alley to be waited by a Duchess. Oliver got the impression that by making her waiting, he was indulging in a substantial meal by showing his supremacy to cover up his low self-esteem.

Third, another Oliver Bacon’s insecurity complex appears when The Duchess wants to sell the phony pearls for £20,000. The Duchess mentions the prime minister and her daughter Diana, the girl Oliver adores, to interrupt Oliver as he attempts to verify the authenticity of the pearls. Oliver then creates a check with the amount of the money. However, he seems hesitant to write it and see the eyes of the old woman as a represented portrayal of his mother. He feels it was wrong

but he then signs the check completely, because The Duchess interrupts him again by telling him that he can have a horse ride together with Diana. Those are explored in the following;

*"He would ring for Spencer or Hammond. "Take it and test it," he would say."
... "You will come down to-morrow?" she urged, she interrupted. "The Prime
Minister—His Royal Highness . . ." She stopped. "And Diana . . ." she added.
Oliver took his hand off the bell. ..."* (Woolf, 2021)

*"Twenty thousand," she moaned. "My honour!" ... "Twenty——" he wrote.
Then he stopped writing. The eyes of the old woman in the picture were on
him—of the old woman his mother. "Oliver!" she warned him. "Have sense!
Don't be a fool!" ..."* (Woolf, 2021)

*"You'll come for a long week-end?" Alone in the woods with Diana! Riding
alone in the woods with Diana! "Thousand," he wrote, and signed it." ..."*
(Woolf, 2021).

Afterwards, his overcompensation and the feelings of worthlessness are also depicted when The Duchess has already gone from his shops. Oliver directly checks the legality of the pearls from The Duchess. As wrong as he feels his bad feeling before, he knew that the pearls are false. Then, he dismantled himself with feeling of sorry to her mother. Oliver Bacon again shows his inadequacy and remembering his foretime as a little boy who lived in a filthy little alley. Those are indicated in the following quotations;

*"Are they false or are they real?" asked Oliver, shutting his private door." ...
"He held them under his lens to the light. . . . This, then, was the truffle he had
routed out of the earth! Rotten at the centre—rotten at the core!"* (Woolf,
2021)

*"Forgive me, oh, my mother!" he sighed, raising his hand as if he asked
pardon of the old woman in the picture."* (Woolf, 2021)

*"And again he was a little boy in the alley where they sold dogs on Sunday.
"For," he murmured, laying the palms of his hands together, "it is to be a long
week-end.""* (Woolf, 2021).

An inferiority complex occurs when the feelings of inferiority are intensified in an individual through discouragement or failure (Sultana & Kabir, 2021). This shows that Oliver also encounters his fault because of his negligence by The Duchess. Adler said that 'if people feel inferior and weak in one area, they try to compensate for it somewhere else' (Adler, 2015). Feelings of mental and physical inferiority might include feelings of weakness, longing, and overcompensated frustration. These emotions can be real or imagined. Oliver's actions in the short story demonstrate how his inferiority causes him to overcompensate, which increases his ambition to elevate himself to the upper class by using an invitation from The Duchess as an instant ticket.

Due to this, he also becomes careless and keeps falling back into the darkest abyss. Oliver Bacon failed to fight for his class to get into the aristocracy and losing his money in vain. In the end, between his avarice and pretentious characters, and his popularity as an affluent jeweler and his wealth, he always dismantles himself. In consequence, he feels unable to do something valuable which makes him feel unworthy.

Conclusion

Analysis of Virginia Woolf's short story *The Duchess and The Jeweller* demonstrates how an inferiority complex can alter a person's personality to the point of overcompensation. The main

character in this study yearns to rise to a better class in order to realize his ambition. Because social status was a significant factor at the period and lower classes could have needed to be acknowledged. This study also found that although lower-class people can work hard to succeed, it is still challenging for them to be noticed by the higher class, which can also make them feel inferior. It is obvious that the main character of this short story experiences an inferiority problem as well. Low self-esteem can be fueled by the desire to improve; nevertheless, if this motivation persists, it poses problems, one of which is overcompensation.

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