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The Curse of Thanatos: A Freudian Approach to Marsha Norman's 'Night, Mother

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Abstract:

Marsha Norman (1947-) is a well-known American playwright who burdens a heavy task to explore the disturbed psyche of women in the American society. Many of those female figures suffer from the fragile troubled psychology due to social imperfections as divorce, abandonment, unemployment, and lack of communication. These acts will be converted into traumas stored in the unconscious mind as reminiscences, which will indirectly lead to self-destructiveness. Freud attributes the emergence of death instinct to frustration, anger, and depression. This paper will focus on the concept of death from a Freudian perspective; in order to highlight the suicide's motives dominated the main character of Norman's 'Night, Mother. It also demonstrates how Jessie strives to gain her subjectivity and liberty to end her life by committing suicide. Norman has attempted to investigate in this play what threatens and destroys the social and ethical texture of the American family.

Keywords: Thanatos, Death, Norman, Freud, Suicide, Jessie.

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Marsha Norman: A Biographical Sketch

Marsha Norman was born in Louisville, Kentucky(1947) and brought up by somehow religious parents. She lived a lonely childhood and she was deprived of playing with other children, watching television, and using other means of communications. Norman held various jobs, "including work at a hospital burns unit and another job with disturbed youth at the Kentucky Central State Hospital (Paige, 2005, p.393). In short, her early life was outlined with deprivation and difficulties. Moreover, all these situations occupied various pages in her writings. With relentless determination, Norman becomes a leading voice in the American theatre as she has a penetrating view into the human insight and conducts. Actually, she was encouraged to become a dramatist by "the artistic director of Louisville's Actors Theatre, subsequently the home of an annual New Plays Festival"(Bigsby, 2004, p.326). Despite her ruthless childhood, she believes that the loneliness that cripples many individuals at times can be healed. Thus, she digs deep to uncover the black spots from which some individuals habitually turn their faces. For her, it is time for female dramatists to verify their presence and interaction with essential social issues. According to Norman, "the appearance of significant women dramatists is a sudden understanding that they can be and indeed are, the central characters in their own lives"(Mel,1983, p. 32). In female playwrights' point of view, women are substantially repressed and that this repression must be stopped.

Norman chooses the actual subjects to be performed onstage because the essential quality of any successful American drama is freedom in tackling social sensitive issues. The playwright should be free in selecting a literary topic which outlines a treatment of "the great universal passions, love, hate, jealousy, fear, and doubt, or upon the universal sentiments of pity, terror, and sympathy"(Quinn, 1923, p. 655). In this respect, Norman's women speak about themselves contradictorily, as men among themselves speak about absent women as spoken objects (Vorlicky, 1998, p. 301). However,

the disparity between men and women is no doubt the basic gap that needs to be bridged through a reciprocal understanding.

Freudian Approach to' Night, Mother

According to Sigmund Freud, all human beings have a life instinct which drives them to a renewal of life and love which is which is related Eros, and a death drive, that is later shaped as Thanatos. The death drive induces human beings to engage in risky and self-destructive acts that could lead to their own death. Thanatos is the demon of death as it is widely mentioned in Greek mythology. Furthermore, Thanatos appears in opposition to Eros and pushes a person towards death or an inanimate state. For this reason, Thanatos is connected with the curse of death. In his book, Beyond the Pleasure Principle, Freud (1961) asserts that there are two famed kinds of instincts: those that lead the living to death, and the sexual instincts which attempt to eternally achieve a renewal of life(p. 40).This idea has gained some critics' approval; thus, many of them have shared Freud's theory. Susan Sugarman(2010, p. 9),for instance, states that "according to the pleasure principle, our mental processes always strive to avoid pain and, when possible, attain pleasure."

The emergence of the death instinct is a remarkable development in Freud's theory of Beyond the Pleasure Principle. It sums up the struggle between life and death. As indicated by Freud, the instinct of death mostly acts in silence within a body. This instinct, however, is Freud's attempt to characterize the force that dominates the pleasure principle. He has observed that the pleasure principle seems essentially to support the death instincts. Actually, "it keeps watch upon stimuli from without, which are regarded as dangers by both kinds of instincts; but it is more especially on guard against increases of stimulation from within, which would make the task of living more difficult" (Freud, 1964, p.338).It becomes rather obvious that Freud's account of the death instinct and its alternative forms, aggression and destructiveness, all stem from the pressures of the hard

reality of life. For Freud (1961), the concept of natural death is quite foreign to the ancient races; they attribute every death that occurs among them to the power of an enemy or of an evil spirit. Consequently, one should turn to biology in order to test the legality of that belief(p. 39). Though Norman's 'Night, Mother(1983) is related to modern drama, ancient mythology and post-modernity are implicitly blended. As a result, Thanatos is portrayed by Freud to be the detestable symbol of death, whereas Eros stands for love and life. Since the opening of the play, the daughter has been dominated and motivated by death while the mother has determined to confidently live her life with its difficulties and pains. To clarify how the theme of death is essential to Freud, Leach (1999) states that:

> The theme of death is central to Freud, especially to the late Freud, the metapsychological Freud. His late theory is centered on the conflict between Eros and Thanatos, between love and death, between the life instinct and the death instinct, which seeks resolution and quiet. Thus in Freudian theory the death drive is one of the fundamental impulses of human behaviour(p.38)

One of the most powerful relationships a woman has is with her mother. Norman's 'Night, Mother has been built upon a condensed discussion between a mother (Thelma) and her daughter (Jessie).That peaceful discussion is devoted to dissuade Jessie from committing suicide. This drama consists of one evening in the lives of the two women. The basic story of 'Night, Mother is that of Jessie's allusion to her determination to commit suicide by using her father's gun (Paige 2005, p. 394).In fact, acts of suicide and their impacts are portrayed as common subjects in modern drama. Some playwrights pursue reasonable justifications for their characters' committing suicide; others look at such an act as a needless loss. Norman has dramatized this matter theatrically to demonstrate the unpreventable impetus that urges the obstinate individual to end her life. The failure of adaptation to reality and hence regression from it is the

central part of suicide. However, the suicide feels the social anguish and uncertainties and even physical pain, moreover, he expected more agony in the future (Jackson, 1944, p.13). Nevertheless, Norman intends to state that the modern helpless woman exemplified by Jessie is powerless to methodize her life properly to the extent that she is lost in pointless situations. Women, by and large, believe that this play talks to them in a more personal style, providing an opportunity to meditation. Obviously, this play presents portraits of psychologically troubled women who emerge to break under pressure. It is true that Norman's essential technique is to exhibit her female figures under pressures, because she is enthusiastic to show their development to handle the emotional tensions which threaten their steadiness(Bigsby,2004, p.329).

In 'Night, Mother, the issue of suicide is still under discussion as it is initially exhibited by Norman. The two main characters of this play(Jessie and Thelma) are given time of discussion for an hour and a half to settle this dangerous traumatic matter. Actually, many familial matters and motherhood in particular are tackled by many dramatists to underline the malfunction of the American family. From Sophie Treadwell's classic 1928 play Machinal through Marsha Norman's Pulitzer Prize winning by 1983 play 'Night, Mother and beyond, motherhood has been a difficult topic that twentieth-century American dramatists have constantly motivated by(Wakefield, 2004, p.45).'Night, Mother deals with a realist matter and it is related to a discussion or thesis drama.

The ghost of death is really dominating most of the dialogues of the two female characters, and as a result it controls the audience's thinking. Jessie asks: "Where's Daddy's gun?"(Norman,1983,p.10).This foreshadows that something serious and dangerous will occur .The gun in this play is the instrument of " Jessie's self-destruction. She is cleaning it at the beginning of the play and looking for the box of bullet" (Whited, 1997, p. 70). Jessie begins her part in this play in search of a weapon, explaining to her mother that

she needs it for protection. Yet, she means protection from her real situation and life, a fact which her mother and the audience cannot understand. As a mother, Thelma's role is regarded a reactive and a responsive one to change Jessie's strange decision. Actually, the fundamental element of any successful drama is dialogue. It is used by Norman in this play to be in the form of a discussion between the two central characters upon an imminent event. Jessie asserts to her mother that she is going to kill herself:

> JESSIE. And I told you… The gun is for me.
>
> MAMA. Well you can have it if you want. When I die, you will get it anyway.
>
> JESSIE. I'm going to kill myself, Mama(p. 13).

It seems that it is so difficult for the mother to convince her daughter to abandon the idea of killing herself. Jessie's statement is the pivotal matter that raises an argumentative case with her mother. Gray (2004) states that: at the center of the play there is a woman in her forties, who tells her mother that she plans to commit suicide. Jessie outlines her reasons for killing herself despite her mother's dissuasion (p. 720). One of the reasons that obstruct their agreement on any matter is the difference in age; the mother is in her sixties whereas Jessie is in her forties. Shneidman (1996) argues that a psychological type called egotism when self-killing occurs due to "a debate, disposition, or dialogue within a mind which is usually the suicide of the psychotic, gifted, or excessively neurotic"(p. 14).

The focus is on the mother's style for dissuading her daughter. For Thelma, Jessie's decision hovers over the house like a curse especially when Jessie announces:

> JESSIE. Shot myself in a couple of hours.
>
> MAMA. It must be time for your medicine.

JESSIE. Took it already.

MAMA. Then what's the matter with you?

JESSIE. Not a thing, feel fine.

MAMA. You feel fine. You're just going to kill yourself.

JESSIE. Waited until I felt good enough, in fact.

MAMA. Don't make jokes, Jessie. I'm too old for jokes (p. 14).

In the course of the short time of argument, the reader realizes that Jessie is a victim and vulnerable to hard tribulations of life despite her equivocal motives. She is divorced, has a teenage addict son, and is epileptic though she has had no attacks for a year. It can be said, therefore, that there is a strong tendency "towards the pleasure principle, but that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure"(Freud, 196, p.3). Jessie has become isolated from everyone, even her mother, with whom she shares the house. She is abandoned by not "only one but three men: her late father, whom she loved; her husband Cecil, who left her; and her son Ricky, who lives in facility for juvenile delinquents"(Whited, 1997, p.67). While Thelma attempts to create a session for negotiation through a lovely and calm dialogue, the lack of communication keeps them far away from one another. But it remains the start point to communicate and ask questions which are seen as possible efforts to find a satisfactory agreement for both.

The purpose of exhibiting such horrible idea upon a stage is to sting the audience thinking in particular and the society in general. Norman points out that "what I want to present is the theatrical equivalent of once upon a time…which lifts you up off the stage and sends you back into yourself for the reference points"(Mel,1983. P. 33). Many males who

watch the play leave their seats quickly at the end of the play whereas women stay contemplating on Jessie's end and on Norman's message of female autonomy (Paige, 2005, p.394). For women, autonomy is a central concern that they aspire to obtain. Jessie lacks the meaning of life and even her relation with her mother is valueless, therefore she requires power, autonomy over her destiny.

Remarkable signs of successful conversation depend more on the flexible attitudes of characters toward specific issues. In this play, the two main characters are entirely different in their attitudes due to their background, age, and culture. It seems evident through Thelma's fruitless devices to convince Jessie to change her mind. Jessie believes that her future is dark, so she may end it as soon as possible rather than to live on without a glimpse of hope. The inadequate presence of society in the individual's life is the hazardous state and unhealthy atmosphere that might be appropriate for suicide to occur. Thus, she gives herself justifications for her irrational decision:

JESSIE. Jesus was a suicide, if you ask me.

MAMA. You'll go to hell just for saying that, Jessie!

JESSIE. (Genuine surprise.) I don't know I thought that (p. 17).

Mama (Thelma)warns or reminds Jessie against the consequence of her unexpected decision to kill herself. Though Jessie is Christian, she pays no attention to the dutiful warnings; the only thing she cares about is to get rid of her private pains. With steady insistence, she is going to kill herself so coldly regardless of her mother's refusal.

The act of suicide is the only option left to Jessie as she lives in her unbearable situation. This dreadful act comes as "attempts to resolve to an internal conflict by translating the unverbalized statement into action"(Litman, 1970. p.294). The most important shocking matter one

should know about Jessie is that she is not desperate or neurotic. She is much more organized and self- possessed than her mother yet she never accepts any advice or instruction even that of her mother. In this respect, Freud (1961) also confirms in his book, Beyond the Pleasure Principle that one needn't to feel deeply troubled in "judging or speculation upon the life and death instincts by the fact that so many bewildering and obscure processes occur in it, such as one instinct being driven out by another or an instinct turning from the ego to an object, and so on"(p. 54). Thoughtfully, she is obsessed with the idea of killing herself.

The disappearance of moral values that is characterized by the mother-daughter relation reflects the actual image of the American family. Whatever the mother has done to get in touch with her daughter, the convergence between them is no longer available. Jessie is content that there is no development in her life:

> JESSIE. Mama … I'm just not having a very good time and I don't have any reason to think it'll get anything but worse. I'm tired. I'm hurt. I'm sad. I feel used.
>
> MAMA. Tired of what?
>
> JESSIE. It all.
>
> MAMA. What does that mean?
>
> JESSIE. I can't say it any better (p. 22).

She is going to kill herself because she feels that life is not trustworthy and this is the only way to get rid of this everlasting miserable situation. Thelma is so powerless to convince Jessie to change her mind. According to Jessie, she has constant aptitude to rationalize the act of suicide for the sake of her mother more than for herself(Abbotson,1983, p. 69).

The mother-daughter relationship is complicated to be understood, as each has looked at life from a different perspective. Thelma chooses to live just as Jessie wishes to die. No doubt, Thelma suffers isolation and she is in an urgent need to Jessie," stay with me just a little longer. Just a few more years… and as soon as I'm dead, you can do whatever you want"(p. 48). Nevertheless, Thelma fails to win her daughter's sympathy to live together far away from the suicide threat. Yet, Jessie's declaration of suicide is inseparably related to the issue of autonomy(Higonnet, 1986, p.74). The audience however, is in contact with Freud's theory of instincts of death and life. In many books and particularly in "The Ego and the Id", Freud argues that the mental apparatus consists of two instincts: the sexual instinct or Eros and the death instinct or Thanatos:

> We have to distinguish two classes of instincts; one of which, the sexual instincts or Eros, is by far the more conspicuous and accessible to study[and] … a death instinct, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state … . (Freud, 1962, p. 380).

Apparently, Thelma is infatuated by life, whereas Jessie is obsessed with death. Both the mother and the daughter are equal in their loneliness; Thelma is a widow and Jessie is a divorced young lady. In addition to the motherhood tie, they are alike in deprivation and are supposed to be enthusiastic to come across fruitful dialogue and mutual understanding. The contrast between the two characters is understandable in their attitudes towards life; Thelma wishes to drink life to the least and Jessie prefers to die immediately. This lack of convergence specifies the insincere ties of the American family.

A fully insightful reading of the text or watching of the drama onstage reveals that Jessie's insistence on committing suicide comes as a result of anger. She is provoked by her brother (Dawson) when he interferes in her privacy [e-mail] and her mother's threat to call her brother(Paige, 2005,

p.395). Thelma unsuccessfully negotiates with her daughter to forget the idea of suicide. Instead of obediently listening to her mother's instructions, Jessie suspects her mother's fear. Hence, she says:

> JESSIE. I have to go in the bedroom and lock the door behind me so they won't arrest you for killing me. They'll probably test your hands for gunpowder anyway, but you'll pass.
>
> MAMA. Not in my house! (p. 17).

'Night, Mother is not entirely about the principles of suicide but about the individual's right to control her destiny. According to Richard Gray(2004), Jessie is deprived of many things and by committing suicide she "is taking control of her life"(p. 720). Some psychologists confirm that suicide ideation and suicide efforts are connected with subjective pain, social loss and increased amounts of mental illnesses(Goodwin &Marusic, 2003, p. 553). Yet, in this play, no symptoms of abnormality are seen except the mother's speech about the Jessie's epileptic fits when she was a child.

It is possible that the relationship between the feeling of shame and suicidal ideation attempt differs among youth with various mental deficiencies. To escape intense feelings of low self- esteem, rejection, and painful isolation from society, the individual would hasten his end. In this regard, Jessie wishes to know:

> JESSIE. How many fits did I have?
>
> MAMA. You never hurt yourself. I never let you out of my sight. I caught you every time…
>
> JESSIE. But you didn't tell anybody.
>
> MAMA. It was none of their business.
>
> JESSIE. You were ashamed.

MAMA. I didn't want anybody to know least of all you (p. 46).

Jessie is unable to alleviate her inner conflict, which is a significant impetus in designing her self-destruction. Her depressing reminiscences stick to memory to the degree that she wishes to die rather than to be reminded. Herbert Krauss (1976) points out that Freud has stated in another essay that:

Probably no one has the mental energy required to kill himself unless in the first place he is, in doing this, at the same time killing an object with whom he has identified himself, and in the second place, in turning against himself a death wish which had been directed against someone else (p. 32).

Despite her pretension of being in a good state, Jessie is a victim to implicit frustration, anger, and depression. Karl A. Menninger (1948) argues that any individual who commits suicide is frequently motivated by one of the three elements of suicide which are "the wish to kill, the wish to be killed, the wish to die"(p. 33). Killing the self occurs when the individual is extremely frustrated, raged, and disappointed.

As a part of her pride and narcissism, Jessie tells her mother about her plan to kill herself. She declares to her mother " I only told you so I could explain it, so you wouldn't blame yourself, so you wouldn't feel bad. There wasn't anything you could say to change my mind. I didn't want you to save me. I just wanted you to know"(p. 48).She never asks for help or to be stopped. Jessie sees her intentionally willed death as marking a moment of control. By choosing to die "she can choose retrospectively to shape her life. She must resist her mother's effort to deflect her as one more attempt to snatch that control from her"(Bigsby, 2004, p. 330). Nevertheless, suicide is the only way to escape such a reality. The frequent statement that 'the aim of life is death' is based on "Freud's belief in terminology- that all life strove toward a reduction of tension to an inorganic zero point."(Hutcheon & Hutcheon, 1999, p. 269).

The trauma of suicide is utilized by many researchers to find reasonable motives that urge Jessie to end her life. As she is presented to the audience, she is quiet, intelligent, normal, and in a full control of her behaviours. Throughout her conversation with Thelma, no marks of misanthropy, grudge, and hatred to any of the male figures are tested. Nonetheless, her catastrophic defect that hastens her end is the obstinacy that blinds her to see the proper way of salvation. Freud(1962) also asserts in his book, Civilization and Its Discontents, that the death instinct can take the form of a merciless force, especially when one lives under the pressure of the hard reality of life. In this respect, Freud indicates the proceeding of the two principles:"We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body…from the external world…and finally our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from the last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other"(p. 24). The motive behind suicide, to Freud, is hostility replaced from being against someone to being against oneself especially when the person has been repressed. He also asserts that the repressed figure is more vulnerable in responding to the unconscious impulse :

Co-operation between a preconscious and unconscious impulse, even when the latter is intensely repressed, may come about if there is a situation in which the unconscious impulse can act in the same sense as one of the dominant trends. The repression is removed in this instance, and the repressed activity is admitted as a reinforcement of the one intended by the ego(Freud, 1964, p.199).

Suicidal figures are desperately troubled, unbalanced, and odd, yet, one realizes that Norman undermines such responses because Jessie is presented as none of the above(Abbotson, 1983, p.69). For women, marriage fights depression, offers high psychological aids and finally lowers the risk of suicide. Moreover, suicide is characterized by many psychologists and critics as a cowardly act, and a dark path with which many women are highly familiar. In this respect, the suicidal figures who are not aided by

others' advice and guidance are weak to endure the psychological pressures. Hence, the individual who cannot resist the psychological troubles of his frustrated needs welcomes suicide and wishes death(Schneidman, 1966, p.157). Not only psychological factors are seen to be the actual motives of suicide but also social factors are more devastating.

The main point of the linking attempt between social and psychological factors in egoistic suicide is the good ground for individual's isolation. Sometimes, society frustrates the individual to the extent that he begins to embrace a sense of hostility and guilt against it. Consequently, his suicide is an appeal for love and hostility against others(Giddens, 1971, p. 103). For Jessie, the pleasure principle no longer suits her life, yet she seeks such pleasure in death. Therefore, the ideation of suicide is the only remaining option. Freud (1961) confirms that life instincts have much more contact with "our perception- emerging as breakers of the peace and constantly producing tensions whose release is felt as pleasure- while the death instincts seem to do their work unobtrusively" (p. 57). In other words, for Jessie, the pleasure principle helps to activate death instinct instead of life instinct. As a result of Jessie's decision to commit suicide, Thelma's family is exposed to the imminent curse of Thanatos. Thus, Thanatos is taken in this study to mean the death wish more than death itself and this leads to a sort of contrast with Eros by Freud in Beyond the Pleasure Principle.

The concept of time in this play is important. The two central figures (Jessie and Thelma) are bounded by time and Norman has provided the stage with a clock as a reminder for Thelma to end her ineffectual attempts of persuasion and for Jessie to fulfill her plan of suicide. Zander Brietzke (2007) demonstrates the importance of clock in Norman's play as it presents the constant visual reminder that Jessie's suicide is imminent. Without its presence in this play, "the action, most of which is mundane conversation, loses urgency and dramatic interest… the clock in 'Night Mother functions as a bomb set to detonate in sync with the end of the play and Jessie's

final exit to her bedroom" (pp. 24-25). For Jessie, time is important as she says :"(standing up.) it's time for me to go Mama"(p. 56). Blinded by an inflexible obstinacy, Jessie forgets that she is a mother and simultaneously Thelma is in need of her care. Herbert Krauss (1976) explains Freud's view that suicide results "when an individual, enraged by his having been denied a cherished goal or relationship, destroys the representation of that goal or object within himself and thereby destroys himself"(p. 32). On the contrary, it is realized that for happily married women, the benefits have; more adequate relationships with their spouses and children. Additionally, they are emotionally healthier, experience less despair and they are less expected to commit suicide.

Conclusion:

The act of suicide as a social malady knows no borders; it is timeless, placeless, and ageless. The history of mankind is full of different types of suicides starting from the old ages till the present time. The exploration of suicide is vague, in that it is very much an element that hovers between the conscious and unconscious, playing back and forth and never fully in focus by available perspectives. It is perceived that the ideation of suicide thrusts the psyche outside of its apparent boundaries, obliterating the region that gives a sense of community. Furthermore, it deforms the senses, alters the perception of people, occupies an unchallengeable moment, and shatters the mind's concentration.

Indeed, rereading Norman's 'Night, Mother denotes the movement from the pleasure principle into the reality principle, rather echoing, seems effectively available. To a certain extent, Norman creates a character that breaks out of the traditional psychological mode that characterizes the disordered individual. By creating an obstinate character that sees life as worthless; Norman has elevated the divorced and epileptic woman to be an argumentative matter. The troubled Jessie is a victim of the triviality

of her everyday life. She is one of those who are victimized by their age circumstances, and need to be identified by social institutions to recognize their own potentials as real human beings.

Due to their background and culture, none of the two female figures has used a diplomatic way of persuasion. Though their time of discussing a dangerous issue lasts for only an hour and a half, the mother fails to persuade her daughter just to delay her decision of committing suicide. Consequently, the time of conciliation is devoid of any positive response and this reflects the modern woman's rigidity and cruelty that push her to receive her mother's beseech with a deaf ear instead of being dutiful and obedient. In this regard, Jessie revolts against the real, rational, and logical notions suggested by her mother. For her, the pleasure principle is in death and particularly in the act of telling her mother that she decides to commit suicide when she is calm and in a good mood. This behaviour however, reflects Freud's theory of death instinct that drives the individual to hasten his end.

Responding to certain directions and instructions, people are different according to age, sex, educational attainment, and social status. Additionally, the personal situation may play a considerable role in the human behaviour, which is largely determined by the nature and the characteristics of the situation itself rather than by the characteristics of the person. It becomes quite obvious that Freud's account of death and its alternative forms, aggression and destructiveness, all stem from the pressures of the hard reality of life. In the average home, a woman's job is full of interruptions; and so, unless she sets out to methodize her life, she is more vulnerable to go through many traumatized actions.

From a social perspective, the idea of suicide is a universal vital phenomenon in the modern world. The fragility of family ties and psychological conditions of the troubled individual would facilitate the occurrence of this nasty act. Thelma, as a mother, is supposed to be able

to convince her daughter not to commit suicide, partly out of love (Eros) which she was not able to express, partly out of abandonment later on that she will face after Jessie's death(Thanatos), and also partly out of remorse, a sense of liability and complicity. Such a traumatic act would undermine and paralyze not only the family texture, but also the society as well. To confirm her loyalty to family and society, Jessie ought to think responsibly as a part of her milieu, no matter how hard it may be. Yet, it is seen by Norman that it is easy for a number of American women to end their suffering and frustration by committing suicide rather than making collision with men. This reference comes out as Jessie avoids direct confrontation with her undutiful son and his irresponsible father. Norman's superb play proves the liberating power of drama and her own aptitude of modern American playwright.

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لعنة ثاناتوس: دراسة في مسرحية مارشا نورمان (طاب مساؤك أمي) من وجهة نظر فرويد

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ملخص البحث:

ركزت الكاتبة المسرحية الأمريكية مارشا نورمان (-1947 ...) في أعمالها على استكشاف النفس المضطربة للمرأة في المجتمع الأمريكي؛ إذ تعاني تلك النساء من انتهاكات اجتماعية كالطلاق، والهجر، والبطالة، ونقص في التواصل الاجتماعي. هذه الأفعال تحولت إلى صدمات مخزنة في ذاكرة اللاوعي، والتي سوف تؤدي بشكل غير مباشر إلى التدمير الذاتي. حيث أكدت نورمان أن رغبة الموت هي واحدة من المشاكل الرئيسة التي تسكن الشخصية النسائية في مسرحيتها (طاب مساؤك أمي). يفسر فرويد ظهور رغبة الموت كنتيجة للإحباط والغضب والاكتئاب. لذا سيركز البحث على دراسة الدوافع والتبريرات لفعل الانتحار كتعبير عن الاستقلال الذاتي وحرية اتخاذ القرار عند الشخصية المسرحية (جسي) لإنهاء حياتها. تسعى نورمان من خلال هذه المسرحية للتحقق من الأسباب التي تهدد وتدمر النسيج الأخلاقي والاجتماعي للعائلة الأمريكية.

الكلمات الدالة: ثاناتوس، الموت، نورمان، فرويد، الانتحار، جسي.

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