

**Madness as a Feminine Illness: Historical Study With a
Reference to Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into
Night***

الجنون كمرض أنثوي: دراسة تاريخية مع الإشارة إلى رواية يوجين أونيل
"رحلة النهار الطويلة إلى الليل"

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Abstract:

The present study scrutinizes the historical background of madness as being a female theme and its representations in literature in general and theatre genre in particular. ***Gender is one of the most significant component of our cultural structures which constructs our assessment regarding madness.*** For many prior centuries continues to the beginning of the 21st century, madness has been recognized symbolically and metaphorically as a female illness which impacts women only. ***Patterns of normality as well as mental issues may not be comprehended away from cultural values and norms.*** Many works of literature have been influenced by psychiatric medicine vice versa, so as to easily recognized our perception and our understanding of mental illness. The current study scans the development of madness throughout history as a gendered theme as well as its representations to literature and art. The paper examines the depiction of female madness in modern dramatic text by Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into*

Night as well as the cultural and social expectations and conditions of the modern period. The selected play for the present study doesn't inform an orderly story, clear events as well as a straightforward ending. The study displays the play's characters as being struggled and victims to drug abuse, most of them fall prey to oppression and they have been exposed to enough persecution. The study has concluded that in all places of the world as well as over all the times, recurrent images of mental illness regarding females deliver certain stereotype that women in general are dangerous, weak, as well as containment is required. The theme in the selected play displays female's mental illness as a widespread issue with so many suppressive factors which are quite complicated.

Keywords: (woman; madness; deviance; Eugene O'Neill; Mary)

الملخص:

تُعد هذه الدراسة في الخلفية التاريخية للجنون كموضوع أنثوي، وتمثيلاته في الأدب عمومًا، والمسرح خصوصًا. يُعدّ الجندر أحد أهم مكونات ثقافتنا، إذ يُشكّل تقييمنا للجنون. على مرّ القرون الماضية، وحتى مطلع القرن الحادي والعشرين، عد الجنون مرضًا أنثويًا يُصيب النساء فقط، رمزيًا ومجازيًا. قد لا تُفهم أنماط الحياة الطبيعية، وكذلك المشكلات النفسية، بمعزل عن القيم والمعايير الثقافية. وقد تأثرت العديد من الأعمال الأدبية بالطب النفسي، والعكس صحيح، مما يُسهّل فهمنا للمرض النفسي. وتتناول هذه الدراسة تطور الجنون عبر التاريخ كموضوع مُرتبط بالجندر، وتمثيلاته في الأدب والفن. وتبحث الورقة في تصوير الجنون الأنثوي في النصوص الدرامية الحديثة لمسرحية (رحلة النهار الطويلة في الليل) ليوجين أونيل، بالإضافة إلى التوقعات والظروف الثقافية والاجتماعية في العصر الحديث. لا تقدم المسرحية المختارة لهذه الدراسة قصة منظمة، وأحداثًا واضحة، ونهاية مباشرة. تُظهر الدراسة شخصيات مسرحية كضحايا يعانون من تعاطي المخدرات، ومعظمهم يقعون فريسة للقمع، وقد تعرضوا لما يكفي من الاضطهاد. وخلصت الدراسة إلى أنه في جميع أنحاء العالم، وفي جميع الأوقات، تُرسخ صور

المرض النفسي المتكررة المتعلقة بالإناث صورة نمطية مفادها أن النساء عمومًا خطيرات وضعيفات، وأن احتواءهن أمرٌ ضروري. يُظهر موضوع المسرحية المختارة المرض النفسي لدى النساء كمشكلة واسعة الانتشار، مع وجود العديد من العوامل القمعية المعقدة للغاية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: (امرأة، جنون، انحراف، يوجين أونيل، ماري)

Introduction

Madness in general as well as its relationship to women has been considered as a fascinating subject in literature, the suffering of women from certain mental instability are always an attractive topic to search about it (Busfield, 2017). Throughout history, there is no decisive definition which may cover the whole variations of what is madness or deviant behavior could be explained. Madness can be realized as a kind of mind's illness and aesthetically can the term be used as a self-human expression as well as a reflection of society (Little, 2015). The perception to be women in highly patriarchal community has conventionally located them within the domain of pathology and illness. Cultural as well as scientific performances have implemented madness as a signifier to place women in general within a certain social strata as a kind of public regulation (Hervé, 2016). It is said that the most substantial of traditional constructions which form human's opinion of madness is feminine and highly related to gender concept (King, 2002).

So as to trace back the history of madness as a female's trait in art and literature. The current study required to start earlier with the theatre of ancient Rome and Greece, the subject of madness was adopted as a method to indicate the females' statuses (Chesler, 2018). Ancient

Greek dramas such as *Thyestes*, *the Bacchea*, and *Orestes* portray figures with certain symptoms for example murderous, eye rolling, writhing, fever, hallucinations and frothing at the mouth (Spoerl, 1983). The prominent Greek philosophers Hippocrates and Aristotle have tackled the origins of madness as well as melancholia in their writings. Unnatural behaviors and mind disturbances were assumed to be a starter of black depressed comedy (Berson, 2011). Witchcraft and sorcery were familiar in North America and Europe between the late fourteenth century up to the eighteenth century, and the consequences of that is the death and torturing of women in specific. Linder (2005) stated that from 1550 to 1690, Europe witnessed more than 80,000 suspected women as witches were executed. However, when women is regarded in their community as second class, that became a suitable cause of sinful and evil and they were utilized as scapegoats for many reasons. Though, some females have been mad, psychotic or melancholic; as well as other women deviated in certain way from social procedures and norms (Abbott, 2020). Scot. R. in his essay which is written in 1584, "*Discoverie of Witchcraft*" stated,

"... [T]he cause why women are oftener found to be witches than men: they have such an unbridled force of fury and concupiscence naturally that by no means is it possible for them to temper or to moderate the same" (qtd. in Miller, 1990. P: 49).

The method that classified females and considered them to be witches in the eye of their society paved them to be a subject of horrifying agonies, such as stripping, beating, rape and other public shaming (Berson, 2011). Berson, (2011) states that since the fourteenth

century, females were victimized due to their gender in patriarchal society. Additionally in the sixteenth century, women were seriously persecuted and sent to madhouses by their male family members. Later in the second half of sixteenth century, some physicians started to claim that certain females who were assumed to be witchcrafts were severely suffering from mental issues rather than accused to deal with evil spirits. Moreover, some of those physician such as Scot Reginald and Johann Weyer who condemned the oppression practices against those women and suggested not to send them to jail because they are victims and needed to be under medical care for their pathological disease and psychiatric (Deans & Emily, 2011). However, as medical services got some prestigious position in the western world and many developments were gained in the late seventeen and early eighteenth centuries, medical articles were assumed that human madness may lead to more physical as well spiritual troubles.

Madness enactment as well as depictions turn to be an extremely familiar and popular subject in the sixteenth century English theatre. However, Jacobean and Elizabethan theatre have witnessed the representations of madness larger than characters in real life, they have not merely described people's derangement, rather than represented distraction such as feigned madness and love- sickness (Downie, 2005). Spandler and Poursanidou (2019) have confirmed the fact that the Elizabethans' community were familiar to the public scenes of madness. Moreover, someone can observe lunatic or idiot in every English town. The word 'Bedlam' was the colloquial term which was used to address the hospital for the insane people in London. The term

'Bedlam' finally became to identify a state of chaos or madness. People with these symptoms were highly regarded worthless and not more than animals, and the patients were treated cruelly and inhumanely by the citizens which increased their agonies till the beginning of the nineteenth century (Showalter, 1985).

Madness and Civilization is a book published by Michel Foucault in 1961, who portrays patient women at the insane hospitals in Paris. Foucault describes hundreds of insane and incurable females in one asylum at the end of the 18th century, those women have been crowded into cells, enduring completely unsanitary conditions, wet and cold conditions. Foucault comments:

"...[M]adwomen seized with fits of violence are chained like dogs at their cell doors, and separated from keepers and visitors alike by a long corridor protected by an iron grille; through this grille is passed their food and the straw on which they sleep; by means of rakes, part of the filth that surrounds them is cleaned out" (p: 7).

Characters in Elizabethan era were stimulated to visit Bedlam where insane people collected so as to create their figures. Furthermore, some patients at Bedlam used to performed certain dramatic scenes. Community at that time was familiarized to observe the mad who are performing strangely or with bad mood (Hattori, 1995). The three well-known tragedies of Shakespeare, which are *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, and *King Lear* represented a new method of assessing the mad which is completely recognized him from other previous descriptions who made differences between supernatural and natural as well as feigned and actual madness (Neely, 2019).

First of all, in “*King Lear*”, William Shakespeare masterfully differentiates among the many kinds of madness. Firstly, a type of madness is represented when the king's fall into idiocy from grief and indignity, that reflects the disorder of the kingdom in general. So as to portray the disordered state of mind in the main character of the play, Shakespeare displays Lear's language which transfers as his personality develops and moves toward insanity (Neely, 2019). The study can summarize that King Lear's images of madness are presented masterfully with more secure than the old samples of madness.

Then, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the playwright differentiates the unusual madness of the witches which is portrayed, that they were falling into dementia (Capelli, 2017). The retrograde of the witches' mental health, because of their paranoia and anxiety, is described in several scenes and acts of the drama during their confusing language as well as their hallucinations. Lady Macbeth as being gentlewoman was really disturbed by her lunacy which forced her to consult a medical practitioner. Furthermore, the physician then proclaimed that Lady Macbeth's worries are naturally psychological and not supernatural impact which is beyond his practice (Capelli, 2017).

Finally, in Shakespeare's tragedy, *Hamlet*, one can discover a unique sample of artificial madness as being prominent and different from the ordinary madness as presented in *Macbeth* and “*King Lear*”. Hamlet adopted inconsequential as well as irrational language when he was speaking to all characters in the play (Duffin, 2012). The disordered language of Ophelia was the main prove of her mental illness, she usually appears as beautiful and young, with a frail look. The reason

and the cause of Ophelia's mental illness is unclear. Ophelia's madness might be the cause of her unrequited love, or a result of her declaration of herself as a revolt against patriarchal system (Showalter, 1985). Therefore, this is the time by which one can observe, Shakespeare's literary products, a new method for representing the confused mind. Shakespeare made for himself new style to differentiate between real and feigned madness as well as between female and male madness (Neely, 2019).

To trace back the history of madness, the current study reaches to the nineteenth and twentieth century whereas the ideal role or existence of woman at that time in general was restricted to house duties with total submission. However, one can observe the oppression of individualism in general (Hattori, 1995). Woman was managed the responsibilities and burdens of the whole house by herself; that may include child caring as well as schooling, responsible for preparing all food, clothes and any nursing and illness (Menzies, LeFrançois & Reaume, 2013). The basic domestic duties of woman made her obedient, passive and dependent to her father and husband, she was not allowed to have independency to do any action. Consequently, all these accumulations made females in general to have a sense of aggressive and hostility that might have led to a level of depression as well as mental illness (Beresford, 2020). Duffin (2012) stated that all these factors created and developed the melancholic aesthetic of woman where illness and woman's attractiveness were connected, and they were essentially the main reasons of her real sickness and largely her poorly health. Woman in the Victorian era was completely socialized so as to reflect certain

feminine attitudes and behaviors to avoid the aggressive of the patriarchy in general. Furthermore, the result of that kind of socialization produced many females with a type of oppression and low self-esteem so that they dedicated all their lives to support the needs of their males (Downie, 2005).

In the literature of twentieth century, female's madness became an essential subject to express woman's repressed rebellion; the theme of "madwoman" has reflected the domination of patriarchy in general. move toward describing of woman's madness in literature in general and drama in specific continues to twenty first century (Maier & Ayres, 2020). The modernist American playwright, Eugene O'Neill who usually embodied mental disorders from a psychological perception, with prominence attached to the reasons of the woman's illness. Moreover, in many of his plays, most of his characters are mentally unstable, depressed and totally neurotic to represent the emotional damage modern family construction (Busfield, 2017).

"LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT"

It is a play with a four acts by Eugene O'Neill, an American playwright, which is written between 1939– 1941. The play is considered one of the best plays of the twentieth century, it covers a single day in August 1912, the setting is "Monte Cristo Cottage" (Bloom, 2004). O'Neill skillfully portrays and concentrates on one family's complicated history. Eugene's drama describes an American middle class family that is affected by ethnic, class and gender conflicts (Fifer, 2013). James Tyrone, (the father of the family) is a character from the romantic era;

an Irish working class man who lives with his wife Mary as well as two more sons, the older son is Jamie who is an alcoholic and the younger son is Edmund who is sick with a consumption (Karim, 2010). Moreover, Mary; (the mother of the family), the central character of the current study, this paper presents all the characters who are involved with her to display her mental disorder. However, the first scene of the play presents, Mary who has just come back from a "cure" after more pains and suffers of more than twenty two years of addiction to morphine (Munshi, 2011).

The family is completely mired and plagued with guilt, blame and addiction, and as the play moves forward, Mary, the mother who is the linchpin

of this fragile family, returns to drug addicted and the other family members back to their drug and alcohol as well (Fifer, 2013). Al-Lehaibi (2015) states that Mary's severe addiction, not merely a mental illness, it evolves certain pathological impacts upon the environment where she lives and causes neurosis which later leads to much more hallucinations. Mary's incapacity to face the life as well as the reality to satisfy her responsibilities as a mother and a wife leads her to have more isolation, loneliness and to be a drug addicted. However, other family members are familiar with her delicate status and they expect her to get better soon and take care of her position in the house as a wife and a mom (Wagle, 2020).

As time moves forward, many dynamic changes have been appeared to fulfill the needs of the modern life. Moreover, 20th century witnessed a time of establishing new familial standards, such as the

prominent of woman status comparing with the previous century accompanied with declining the patriarchal power so that the new family is controlled purely by feminine space (Bardales, 2021). In specific, a breadwinner father who is the sole supporter of the family did not exist easily. However, new procedures have been adopted which switched the role of man and exchange it with the woman and revolt the old traditional role within the family scope. The women sphere was merely restricted to their homes and some basic duties. The new changes offer new thoughts about gender stereotyping, male and female started to occupy new positions which are suitable to their different statuses (Fifer, 2013). The self-sacrificing matriarch of the family was granted unbearable mission to fulfill her house, that she needed to be pure, tranquil and cheerful. Mary's basic duties was to serve all her family members, her denials and sacrifices of her own desires needs as well as own ambitions, while shifting her abilities and wishes onto the other of her family members in her life (Faiz, Colonel & Khalili 2023).

For Eugene's female protagonist, Mary, by which her home is not the place where she could find herself respected and comfortable, rather she feels misery and full of liveness. Mary is accused by all the family's issues and she feels abandoned, they charge her for all Tyrone's failure and miserliness to construct a stable and solid house for them (Karim, 2010). Mary from the first scene complains bitterly and say: "I've never felt it was my home. It was wrong from the start. Everything was done in the cheapest way. Your father would never spend the money to make it right. It's just as well we haven't any friends here. I'd be ashamed" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 25). She doesn't feel

to have any stable connection or an identification to family or home at all. Mary is not qualified with the new criteria and standards that modern life has established, regarding family construction and the flourishing role of women inside the family. Consequently, Mary fails to maintain the perfect job which is required (Gonzalez, 2018).

Mary is completely restricted psychologically in this social modern build of family, by which females are medically molded, patterned and squeezed by a fake completeness. However, her incapacity to cope and comprehend the unreal role of the modern mom leads her to escape from that unrealistic expectations; Mary retreats to certain chronic illness as well as she blames others for her bad fate (Wagle, 2020). Mary couldn't live and sustain with the guilt and torment of her disturbing previous life. Her family members are independent people and demand Mary to be their stabilizer upon which they might construct their own entities. Members of Tyrone family react to each other with hostility and blame and their relationships are shallow (Faiz, Colonel & Khalili 2023). Gonzalez (2018) states that all Tyrone family members are narcissistic. None of them may hear and feel the suffering and pain of other members of the same family which leads to the hostility and hatred. Scene by scene the audiences and readers can observe the emotions of the family, many of their conversations are deviated to a diverse painful quarrel. The heavy usage of intoxicants by all Tyrone's family shows that they are undesired to communicate with each other or to have certain familial relations (Wagle, 2020).

The play's incidents shows that the female protagonist, Mary uses morphine increasingly so as to retreat from her home in specific and the

reality in general, the other men of the family does the same thing by using more and more liquor to escape from the fact of her drug addiction (Gonzalez, 2018). Despite all the disagreements as well the collective destructiveness among the four members of Tyrone's family, they remain united as one structure in one family. Mary insists to hide the facts of her drug abuse, but the Tyrone men are completely aware of her addiction and content to give her the chance to do so to assist her to recover (Wagle, 2020). Eugene O'Neill, the playwright has related and considered Mary's serious suffering as well as anguish with many things such as, the death of her new born baby Eugene and the hard pregnancy of her older son, which results and leads to be an addicted to morphine. Consequently, Mary selects the instant relief and other intoxicants morphine to fight her injustice state (Karim, 2010). Moreover, the highly changeful environment which is surrounded by Mary represented by her family that gives her many emotional anguish. Lastly, she is extremely familiar with the disgust and contempt that her sons and hubby feel because of her addiction of morphine (Gonzalez, 2018).

So as to hide her drug abuse to the surrounding people, Mary tells the maid Cathleen that she needs to go to the drug store by herself, "It's a special kind of medicine. I have to take it because there is no other that can stop the pain—*all* the pain—I mean in my hands" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 43). Morphine addiction has turned to be a kind of a stigma which is completely destroyed the sign of motherhood for Mary's two sons. Mary's inconvenient marriage as well as her disrespected sons were the main reasons of her agony and anguish. She is forced to

select morphine as a substitution for any kind of engagement with her harsh realities or the family members (Bloom, 2004). She is completely aware that all her family members won't trust and have faith in her, she doesn't forget her early status, and she will always be doubtful in their opinion. Mary chooses morphine because that drug grants her direct transportation to a certain world by which she could return to a previous time before marriage and sons when she was safe and content with her life when she planned to enjoy her life as a nun (Wagle, 2020). She immediately accuses Tyrone as well as her marriage for her exhausted life when she states, "You should have remained a bachelor and lived in second rate hotels and entertain your friends and bar rooms. Then nothing would've ever happened" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 55). Doubtless Mary blames her husband, Tyrone for the death of her son, Eugene, and he was the reason for all her broken dreams as well as her addiction.

O'Neill has represented Mary to be an accurate sample of 19th century addiction of morphine. Furthermore, most of the addicted people were housewife women, white and normally from the middle- upper class (Gonzalez, 2018). People were using morphine to treat a range of maladies and illness, such as anxiety, insomnia, as well as exhaustion resulting from overwork or stress. With the beginning of 20th century, the rate of addicted people is decreased as a result of the introducing new alternative treatments to illnesses which has been adopted with the improvement of general public health (Wagle, 2020). However, the neurosis of Mary is displayed by her anxiety as well as her strong narcissism. Moreover, her indifference towards her sons and husband

because she is worried about her self- interested assessment of reality. Consequently, Mary continues to survive as a disappointed woman, she does not show any kind of empathy for her son Edmund when he informs her of his sickness. In the first Act, she unpleasantly replies to his anxiety when she says: “Oh, I’m sure you don’t feel half as badly as you make out. You’re such a baby. You like us to get worried so we’ll make a fuss over you” (O'Neill, 2009. P. 55). Later in the third Act, Mary was taking morphine in regular way to sustain life and comprehend the fact of Edmund’s severe illness. Mary unsuitably responses to her son: “You’re so like your father, dear. You love to make a scene out of nothing so you can be dramatic and tragic” (O'Neill, 2009. P. 61).

The first part of the 20th century has witnessed a flourishing era in many fields of academic life regarding sciences in general and psychology in specific. Furthermore, psychoanalysis became a traditional force because of the marvelous development in the fields of psychology and science (Wagle, 2020). This period has witnessed also the emerging of the prominent an Austrian neurologist, Sigmund Freud who wrote in 1915 his significant book entitled “*Mourning and Melancholia*”. The book is indicated as a noteworthy variation from previous centuries regarding thought in both our understanding in general as well as the psychoanalytic theory in specific of how individuals reacts to countless types of loss (Bardales, 2021). O’Neill’s four acts play *Long Day’s Journey into Night* can be observed and analyzed under the lens of Freudian’s book and its principles. Mary, the protagonist who lives in a state of everlasting grief, because of her inconvenient marriage as well as the loss of her son, Eugene, which breaks all her dreams and

ambitions (Gonzalez, 2018). Mary's melancholic state makes her live alone in her house and she can't have friends; she usually charges herself for the decease of her son and she always thinks that the Virgin Mary is torturing her because she was disobedience (Bloom, 2004). All her loses lead to be incapable to love others and to sink in depression and finds out that taking of morphine is the only way for solace.

Sigmund Freud states that the state of melancholy is highly recognized with a "lost" things. Recurrently during the drama, she is searching for a lost things when she says: "What is it I came looking for? I know it's something I lost" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 74). By concentrating on her losses, Marry can rebuke herself more and more. With the start of the last act of the play, Act IV, Mary has completely fell down into perturbation because her extensive use of morphine drug. At the last act, Mary appears extremely hallucinating and delusional person who is different from the one at the beginning of Act II, approximately five hours earlier (Wagle, 2020). In that act too, Edmund comes to her in an desperate attempt to grab her arm and shouts, "Mama! It isn't a summer cold! I've got consumption!" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 88). For a moment, Mary backs to her mind and senses, but later she back into her morphine imaginational life. She considers, her son, Edmund as a foreigner and considers herself as a lady comes from a convent. "You must not try to touch me. You must not try to hold me. It isn't right when I am hoping to be a nun" (O'Neill, 2009. P. 88). The play ends when Mary carries with her wedding dress which signifies the real start when all her dreams are destroyed and the beginning of her sorrow.

Conclusion

The current study focused on mental illnesses that effected female in general and impacted her life and made her life full of disturbance. Furthermore, this paper chooses O'Neill's play "*Long Day's Journey into Night*", and paid all the attention upon the female protagonist, Mary. The American playwright, Eugene O'Neill has skillfully presented the figure of Mary to be an outstanding sample of how mental illness was expressed and comprehended in the early 20th century on the stage. The play proves that the playwright is really familiar with human's psychology and he adopted his experiences and knowledge to describe the incidents of Tyrone family. According to Freudian's principles, Mary might be seen as a melancholic state that is related to field of psychology rather than gynecology as earlier was comprehended. Mary was a failure housewife in her first job as she was disobedient wife and indifferent mother if we compare her to the women and their basic duties in the nineteenth century. Mary ignored the domestic requirements of raising her kids so as to implant to them the merits of frugality, industry, and honesty, and as a result, none of her children has any of these features.

One of the most important characteristic of the twentieth century is altruism, that Mary as a mother was expected to sacrifice all her dreams to satisfy the needs of her family. Mary is very narcissistic and she doesn't have the ability to cope with realistic expectations of the conventional mother job to service others; she was brought up as a vain young lady and then moved directly from the convent to marry to occupy new life, she didn't have a chance to adapt the new traditional circumstances. Mary has lost her own identity from the very beginning,

because of she was separated from her own mom and family members. Mary finds out that taking morphine is the only way to depart her illness as well as to instantly transport to a place and a time of security. Throughout the play, Mary doesn't have a voice to express her illness, but her struggle with madness was the only way to rise her voice and existence. Nevertheless, finding a her voice does not authorize her to change her destiny.

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