

**A Literary Psychoanalysis of
Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal*: Another Face of a Woman**

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the woman's chaotic psychology that leads to disastrous end. Treadwell's *Machinal* reflects the insufferable status of a woman in a time which is greatly affected by unemployment, low production, and poverty that create intensively sensitive psychology. In this play, Sophie Treadwell looks great not merely in her employment of expressionistic technique, but in allowing audience to pinpoint the troubled psyche of her protagonist. Treadwell, as an American playwright, has dealt with the family as a type of her own society. Then, through the psychoanalysis of *Machinal*, one can discern that it is not always the case where society is responsible for one's depression but a person might victimize himself via his unbalanced psychology.

Sophie Treadwell (1885-1970) a twentieth century playwright, novelist, and journalist, was born in Stockton, California. She was the only child of the Treadwell's family, and her parents' marriage was troubled to the extent that the father abandoned his family. Essentially, the early childhood trauma deeply influenced Treadwell's attitude towards men and it "was reflected in her later writings, which typically featured a protagonist with a dead-beat father" (Furlong- Bolliger, 1). Treadwell's childhood was permanently marked by her family relations, that one might argue that almost all of her works as a writer consisted of an attempt to

settle conflicting impressions and emotional experiences of these early years. As Treadwell matured, she clearly tried to rebuild her life after her independent grandmother, but silently held suspicions that she inherited her mother's flaws and co-dependency. The women who occupy the "central positions in her plays often reflect this ambivalence: they seek lives on their own but frequently stop short of leaving their domineering husband or lover"(Ozieblo&Dickey,97). During her childhood, Treadwell and her mother sometimes lived with her father, sometimes not. Despite all these unstable situations, she attended the University of California at Berkeley from 1902 to 1906. There, she was involved in theater and, despite struggling with poverty and illness, graduated with a bachelor of letters degree(Haley,1).

Though Treadwell never achieved the fame of many of her male colleagues, today she is considered one of the most accomplished writers and dramatists of the early twentieth century. Robert Brustein asserts in his article, "She Plays, American Style" that Treadwell is capable of "leavening her perception of the predatory masculine world with a passion for social justice" (3). Treadwell was a competent war correspondent during World War I, one of the first American women to serve in such risky work. However, this type of dangerous job has shaped her personality to be familiar with life in all its aspects. The decade of the 1930s proved a troubling one for Treadwell on both personal and professional fronts. She experienced escalating complexity of "marketing her plays, and even those that she produced herself were met with indifferent or hostile critical response" (Gainor&Dickey,49). She is never disheartened, on the contrary she vehemently strives to defeat such nonsense. Nevertheless, Treadwell's plays have generally been realistic in meaning and purpose, and they have

generally been received by critics and observers with a definite seriousness (Krutch,1).

Necessarily, before any study of American drama, it can be helpful to remember that the essential quality of any art is freedom. In America, the playwright should be "free to base his play upon a study of the great universal passions, love, hate, jealousy, fear, and doubt, or upon the universal sentiments of pity, terror, and sympathy." (Quinn,655). In 1927, Treadwell attended the murder trial of Ruth Snyder, a sensational event that was headline news for much of the year. Snyder was convicted of conspiring with her lover Judd Gray to murder her husband. Both died in the electric chair; Snyder was the first woman so executed in New York. The resulting murder trial captivated America, thus Jennifer Jones states that:

For eight months the country was obsessed with the Snyder/Gray murder trial; over 180 reporters from across the nation were assigned to the case, and readers hung on every word they wrote. When the two lovers were finally convicted and sentenced to die in the electric chair there was, literally, dancing in the streets(39).

Many writers and reporters are aggravated by this horrible case and they wish to probe its motives. Nancy Edith Wynn declares in her analysis of this murder that " at her trial Ruth Snyder stated that the motive behind her and her lover's murderous act was to take a step towards a larger freedom, a fuller enjoyment of life"(109). In fact, the trial provided the inspiration for Treadwell's most successful play, *Machinal*, produced on Broadway in 1928. The play was produced in London under the title *The Life Machine* in 1931.

Shortly after moving to New York, and at the beginning of World War I, Treadwell pursued an opportunity to travel to France as a war correspondent. She covered the war from behind the lines and as a result of her wartime journalism, "Treadwell was recognized as the State Department's first credited female war correspondent" (Haley,2). After the war, Treadwell focused her talents on writing and acting to produce numerous well-received plays. Consequently, she became the first woman dramatist who both directed and produced her own plays. At that time, she produced seven one-act plays and three full-length plays. Though she is a clever playwright, "only two of her plays made it to publication: *Machinal* and *Hope for a Harvest*" (Dickey,12). Inspired by the disreputable case of Ruth Snyder, an adulteress who died in the electric chair for the murder of her husband, *Machinal* is the personal tragedy of a gentle individual alien to a crowded, hard society. In this play, Treadwell ignores the involvement of the lover, treats the woman as a neurotic victim of sexual and social oppression, driven to murder as the only alternative to madness and despair(Brustein,1).

As a modern playwright, Treadwell disregards the traditional structure of writing plays. Thus, *Machinal* is told in nine episodes through an expressionistic style, dramatized consistently from the viewpoint of the Young Woman. Each episode portrays a part in the Young Woman's life, usually a situation in which a woman is supposed to be fulfilled. In only one part, the Young Woman finds friendship, peace, freedom, happiness, beauty, or meaning. That famous episode depicts the way she kills her husband and ultimately her own death (Gillis,1). Like many modernist dramatists, Treadwell tries to unveil the real individuality of the American families throughout her marvelous use of theater to mirror the defects of

her society. Jerry Dickey states that most of Treadwell's plays criticize capitalism and applaud the "small, hardworking individual who is tied to the land and sustenance, yet she often preferred life in the city to succeed within the structure of commercial, Broadway theatre"(14). It is through this theater and mainly through *Machinal*, that most of Treadwell's views and visions are demonstrated.

The play opens in a business office where typical office employees work to the ceaseless noise of their adding machines and typewriters. To make the emergence of her main character so exciting, Treadwell invents the gossip device. Throughout this device, the audience learns that the Young Woman lives with her mother and has no social life but that the Boss is sweet and kind with her. One of the characters of this play who is not given a real name only Adding Clerk, confirms that "She [Young Woman] lives alone with her mother"(3). The Young Woman distinguishes herself from the office members by being late to work. She explains that she has to escape the airless crowd of the subway and walk in fresh air. From the beginning, the woman is essentially soft and tender, and the life around her is hard and mechanized. In such a noisy workplace, her Boss proposes marriage, but the Young Woman is repelled by his touch. Although the other girls approve of marrying for security, she is advised by others to avoid such type of marriage(Gillis,2).*Machinal* is mostly viewed from an expressionistic perspective whereas the psychoanalysis of its main character is not approached.

Socially and psychologically speaking, woman at that time was motivated by the idea of marriage to ensure her future in a time of economic depression. Thus, the manner of choosing a proper husband is

complicated, especially if it is encircled by economic and financial security. Because the Young Woman has no fulfillment in work or in her parental home, she tries to find a way for salvation. Her unsatisfying relationship with her mother, who is a dependent widow whose chief entertainment is the daily garbage collection, is revealed to display the Young Woman's terrible difficulty. The Young Woman is skeptical over the convention that women must marry. She tells her mother of her disgust for the boss and about her longing for love, but the two women failed to get in touch with compatibility :

YOUNG WOMAN: Ma! Listen! Listen!- There's a man wants to marry me.

MOTHER: (*Stops clattering-sits*) What man?

YOUNG WOMAN: He says he fell in love with my hands.

MOTHER: In Love! Is that beginning again! I thought you over that!(15).

In fact, hunting an appropriate husband is the happiest moment for the mother to get rid of the heavy burden. However, her mother uses various questions to know the real identity of that man:

MOTHER: Who is he? Where did you come to know him?

YOUNG WOMAN: In the office.

MOTHER: In the office?

YOUNG WOMAN: It's Mr. J.

MOTHER: Mr. J?

YOUNG WOMAN: The Vice- President.

MOTHER: Vice –President! His income must be. Does he know you've got a mother to support?

YOUNG WOMAN: Yes (16-17).

No doubt, love is a sort of spontaneous passion, intimacy, commitment, and it is incorrect to be designed and imposed by others. Thus, thinking of marriage should be formed with precise concentration and contemplation especially if the girl is still immature or psychologically troubled. Related to this issue, John W. Santrock affirms:

Early adulthood is the development period that begins in early twenties and lasts through thirties. It is a time of establishing personal and economic independence, career development, and, for many selecting a mate, learning to give with someone in an intimate way, starting a family, and rearing children(18).

In spite of the disputable dialogue between the mother and her daughter, eventually the Young Woman (Helen) marries the Boss. Certainly, such experience of marriage is a failure since it is built on a mother's illusion in which she believes that will finance her daughter's future. Although her new husband is not cruel, he is vulgar. He is insensitive to her reticence about undressing but is prudish about keeping the curtains closed when his bride is trying to get a breath of fresh air. The first problem is established when the bride feels that she is cornered and caged. He attempts to know his wife's reaction by using provoking words:

HUSBAND: You aren't afraid of your husband, are you?

YOUNG WOMAN: No,-- of course not—but I thought- maybe- Can't we go out for a little while?

HUSBAND: Out? What for?

YOUNG WOMAN: Fresh air—walk—talk (24).

The Young Woman does not find fulfillment neither in her marriage nor in her workplace, therefore she instantaneously names her mother as a supporter to protect.

The young girl who has not successfully and sufficiently moved away from parental ties may have difficulty in both interpersonal relationships and a career. One has to consider the mother who overprotects her daughter, persists to support her financially, and does not want to forsake her "when things do not go well in her relationship with a young man, she may go crying to her mother" (Santrock,472). The working women in the play hold low-paying service jobs from which they consider escaping through the other acceptable servitude, marriage. Although men are the apparent breadwinners, it is the responsibility of the unmarried daughter to provide for her widowed mother. Helen's mother, the yielding female, considers selling her daughter to the Boss as a worthy solution to end their economic problem.

Treadwell's complicated feelings of marriage were shaped by her parents' troubled life and the financial hardships that caused incompatibility. As a result of the wrong choice of a husband, Helen's psychology becomes most terrible. Thus, she informs her mother that her marriage is a failure, " I don't love him". In this situation, the mother mocks her daughter by saying " Love!... what does that amount to! Will it clothe you? Will it feed you? Will it pay the bills?(17). In *Machinal*, everyone from the young woman's co-workers to her dependent mother urge Helen to escape the stresses of the urban workplace by accepting an offer of leisurely marriage from her boss. Helen realizes that her acceptance of this undesired marriage and "the subsequent birth of a daughter has resulted not

in liberation but an even more stifling form of domestic entrapment" (Gainor&Dickey,46). The daughter-mother relationship is one of the recurrent themes which has dominated most of the modern American plays. Thaddeus Wakefield proclaims that motherhood has been a complex topic that twentieth century dramatists have basically focused on. A large number of critics either denounce mothering as oppressive, or praise it as an exceptional value in twentieth century American society(45). The role of mother is effectively shown when she marries off her daughter to the man without caring for her daughter's feelings.

To compensate her swiftly failed marriage ,Helen decides to pursue daily pleasures regardless of the dangerous consequences. To prove that she is unbeaten, she says" I'll not submit any more- I'll not submit any more- I'll not submit any more"(31).Actually, Helen is a real representative of Treadwell who enthusiastically believes in the progressive advances in sexual equality and woman's independence (Gainor&Dickey,58). With her decision to be free, Helen has ended the terrible phase of marriage. More importantly, and to conquer all hardships, Helen should appear with a new face to confirm her competence in creating the life she is fighting for.

Under the psychological pressure, Helen attempts to please her whims and desires. Her pursuit of pleasure as an outlet of the unsuccessful marriage stimulates her to accompany the First Man who talks about his love of travel and freedom. He describes escaping some outlaws in Mexico after filling a bottle with small stones and beating his captors to death with it. This type of nonsense encourages Helen to think of killing her husband. He seduces Helen by describing her as an angel, that is why she agrees to

go with him to his apartment. Figuratively speaking, he waters her withered passions:

FIRST MAN: You're different from girls like that other one – any guy'll do her. You're different.

YOUNG WOMAN: I guess I am. ...

FIRST MAN: Don't you like me?

YOUNG WOMAN: Yes.

FIRST MAN: Then what's the matter?

YOUNG WOMAN: Do- You- like me?

FIRST MAN: Like yuh? You don't know the half of it- listen- you know what you seem like to me?

YOUNG WOMAN: What?

FIRST MAN: An angel. Just like an angel.

YOUNG WOMAN: I do? (43).

Though Helen is married and an experienced woman, she never hears such admiring comments, thus, she is easily tempted by that man's sweet words. For the first time, someone, concerned with her feelings, asks her “You like me — don't you, kid?”(44). Accordingly, she goes with him to his apartment and she feels happy and free. For a moment, freed from submission to the duties of life, she gives herself without any opposition. A part of his devilish purpose, this man gives her a lily in a pot of pebbles and this will be undeniable evidence which indicates her crime. The only time the young woman experiences a sense of freedom in *Machinal* is during her gathering with that strange man. John W. Santrock expresses his own thought about love- deprivation when he shows how the unreciprocated love has an effect on a person's emotions:

Being in love when love is not returned can lead to depressing obsessive thoughts, sexual dysfunction, inability to work effectively, difficulty in making new friends, and self-condemnation. Thinking clearly in such relationships is often difficult, because they are so coloured by arousing emotions (475) .

Being with a strange man in one bed is possibly a response to her disordered psychology rather than enjoying ecstasy. They talk more about the man's life and travels. She asks if they will stick together, " We belong together! We belong together! And we're going to stick together, aren't we"(47). Impulsively, she asks for a bowl filled with pebbles and a lily that the man has in his window. He gives it to her, she bids him goodbye and thanks him. It seems that she decides to do something secretly against her husband as she has been driven by her lover's words. Passionately, Helen justifies her being with the new lover as she states that, " because you told me I looked like an angel to you! That's why I came"(47). Through her speech one can infer that Helen lacks the sense of belonging to her nuclear family. For this reason, Helen seeks her lost freedom by forming wrong ways to satiate her desires. The play expects "the fear of punishment for such empowerment in swift, unrelenting episodes of society's retribution" (Gainor&Dickey,48). Jill Dolan asserts that the scene in which Helen and her lover are depicted in one bed is a sort of adultery. The romance of the adultery scene, in which the Young Woman "is seduced by a handsome man who offers her escape fantasies of the west coast and Mexico, devolved into sentimentality that made their situation appear unique rather than structural" (97).

Though written in 1928, *Machinal* is still relevant to be exhibited in present time. No doubt, a young woman is viewed as an individual who seeks independence and freedom in a male-dominated society. She is so repressed by the mechanized lives of the people that frame the world of this play in which she is driven to dangerous action. This play marvelously attributes a woman's decline into a troubled psychology to her subjugation and powerlessness. To create a sense of suspense, Treadwell suddenly shifts from the moments of the Young Woman's happiness to the courtroom

episode. Neither the spectator nor the reader is told about how the act of killing her husband is achieved. The major event of each episode in the life of the Young Woman happens offstage. For instance, the proposal, the achievement of marriage, the birth of daughter and the murder of her husband are not shown. Indeed, The scenes on stage reflect the troubled psychology of Helen's life especially while she is cross-examined about her husband's death:

LAWYER for DEFENSE: Now, Mrs. Jones [Helen], will you tell the jury in your own words exactly what happened on the night of June 2nd or the morning of June 3rd last, at the time your husband was killed.

YOUNG WOMAN: I was awakened by hearing somebody, something- in the room, and I saw two men standing by my husband's bed(64).

All through the scene, reporters give differing interpretations of her testimony and character. Encouraged by the lawyer of defense, she attempts to misguide the court that she sees two men standing over her husband. Women who kill evoke fear because they challenge societal constructs of femininity, control, and the female criminal, to create the act. Her conduct must be abnormal, or wild, if it is to be understandable. And understandable it must be; "her crime cannot be seen as societally-driven if the cultural stereotypes are to remain unchallenged" (Jones,6). The Young Woman is already obsessed with the idea of killing from the time when she listens to her fake lover's lie as he claims killing two robbers by a bottle filled with pebbles.

Treadwell gives the police investigators a remarkable role in probing Helen's disordered psyche. The Lawyer for Prosecution pays an accurate attention to Helen's response towards his provoking questions:

LAWYER for PROSECUTION: Mrs. Jones, do you remember about a year ago, a year ago this spring, bringing home to your house- a lily, a Chinese water lily?

YOUNG WOMAN: No, I don't think I do. ...

LAWYER for PROSECUTION: I'll show you this bowl, Mrs. Jones. Does that refresh your memory?

YOUNG WOMAN: I remember the bowl- but I don't remember the lily(72).

In *Machinal*, many of the characters are defined by their occupations not by their real names. This device suggests that the Young Woman's struggle can be seen as the plight of any woman. Her journey is a succession of confrontations in a reality faded by convention. The world of the play is portrayed through her eyes and she struggles to find enlightenment despite the mechanization of American life in general. When female workers are exploited by their bosses to impose marriage without love, the outcome would be disgust and separation. Moreover, when they are unable to work, many individuals experience emotional distress and low self-esteem(Santrock, 457). Confronting the questions of the Lawyer for Prosecution, Helen tries to deny having seen a lily bowl, but she breaks down after an affidavit from her lover is read that describes their affair and the lily bowl and pebbles he gave her.

Hearing and seeing tangible evidence push Helen to confess. Throughout her conversation with Judge, she unfolds her motives behind killing her husband:

JUDGE: You confess you killed your husband?

WOMAN: I put him out of the way- yes.

JUDGE: Why?

WOMAN: To be free.

JUDGE: To be free? Is that the only reason?

WOMAN: Yes.

JUDGE: If you just wanted to be free- why don't you divorce him?

WOMAN: Oh I couldn't do that! I couldn't hurt him like that!(75).

It is an ironical use of words to expose the disordered psychology of Helen. She gives herself a freedom to kill her husband but not to hurt and upset him. Treadwell's *Machinal* is an expressionistic play; as such it focuses on revealing the emotional reality of its main character rather than a literal or naturalistic representation of her life's events. In doing so, the playwright may implicitly intends to use an expressionistic style to scrutinize the troubled consciousness and psychology of her female character. This sort of technique has emphasized subjective feelings and emotions rather than a detailed or objective depiction of reality. *Machinal*, the 1928 play for which Treadwell is best known was rescued from obscurity by a production of 1990(Jonas,3).

As Helen goes to execution, she begs for more time to know her own daughter and to teach her about life: "Wait! Mother, my child; my little strange child! I never knew her! She'll never know me! Let her live, Mother, Let her live! Live ! Tell her-"(81). Simultaneously, she refuses to submit even to the barbers who must forcibly shave patches of her hair to place electrodes. Her last words "Somebody! Somebody"(83) leave the audience wondering whether the words are a cry of self-pity or a cry for someone to teach her child. Her desire for freedom is a failure which only leads to her tragic end. Helen dies as she has lived; isolated, but her cry for somebody and her dying wish for somebody to tell her own daughter to live and enjoy life, speak to a generation of younger women who have the potential to free themselves and perhaps their society.

Although the prison scene portrays the defeat and imminent death of Helen, it also conveys her constant confrontation. In the midst of

preparations for her execution, "Helen prefers defiance to passive acceptance of her punishment" (Gainor & Dickey,48). Treadwell builds her play on a well-known story to attain the audience's appreciation. Linda Ben-Zvi states the importance of this play as it is derived from an actual murder:

Machinal, is loosely based on one of the most sensational murder cases of the 1920s: Ruth Snyder and Judd Gray's killing of Snyder's husband. ... Treadwell turns this tabloid hysteria on its head. Her Ruth is neither aberrant nor insane; she is ordinary, unexceptional, exactly someone's mother, wife, or sister, worn down by the societal machine of the title (142).

The viewers look at Helen as an individual struggling for rebirth to force herself as an independent woman despite her tremendous mistakes. It is an individual who has been suppressed, oppressed, and subjugated by a patronizing, patriarchal society. The economic hardships accompanied by social problems have the deadly impact on any individual's psychology. The economic pressures can put harsh emotional trauma on social relationships and marriage in particular. Those who are most flexible when faced with economic pressures are those who show shared "supportiveness, who listened to each other's concerns, tried to help, were sensitive to each other's point of view, and expressed approval of each other's qualities"(Papalia et al,510).

In the course of tracing the events' sequence and through what the playwright has really exposed about the protagonist(Helen), the critics are motivated to explore the period and particularly the twentieth in which the play was written. This period witnessed highly demands for feminism to give woman her actual status in society. Consequently, the literary writings which dominated that era overvalued the female characters to

present them as pivotal figures. It seems that Helen's personality is one of the voices that strongly wants to express her feminine protest against the male-dominated authority. This protest is viewed as a refusal mixed with unconsciously concealed enmity against the male's power(Oltmans&Emery,428) . *Machinal* depicts the life of a woman who has been oppressed and marginalized by her patriarchal society. The protagonist's early life is shaped by her father-mother fragile and disordered relation. Helen has extremely suffered because of the father's repressed power against the lack of obtaining her rights and enjoying freedom. However, the hard childhood experience has its influence on a person when s/he grows mature and old as it is shown through the psychoanalysis. Freud asserts that the individual's personality appears since his childhood as a result of the nature of treatment and interaction between the child and his parents. A child attempts to get a maximum of ecstasy through satiating the (Id) demands, whereas the parents as representatives of society intend to impose the demands and restraints of morality(Butcher et al,46).Thus, Freud thinks that the childhood experiences are important to the extent that the adult's personality is formed and crystallized in her/his five years old. In fact, many of the nervous cases that the adults suffer have connection with childhood.

The core of troubled psychology is obviously incarnated in Helen's personality who faces painful experiences in her childhood. Not only Helen's disordered psyche has influenced her conduct but more importantly the economic Depression that America lived which caused negative impact on people as they lived in poverty and deprivation((Hansel& Damour,46). Helen's own suffering exemplified in her inability to satiate the (Id) motivations obliges her to displace the

enmity towards father since she cannot express it, and hide it to another individual (the boss). Once woman is oppressed by certain man, she will hide repression, aggression, and enmity against all men(Nevid et al,40). Through the speech with her mother and later on inside the court, Helen admits that her husband has treated her kindly and lovely. Such a lovely treatment is not enough to change her repressed enmity towards the father and society. Thus, killing her husband is viewed as an opportunity to express her scream and protest against all types of power and restraints. The act of killing which has been interpreted as the defense mechanism the individual exploits to transform her/his hostility from a person he/she fears such as the father to another person is to mitigate tension. If the individual involves in many displacements, the absolutely hidden tensions will be compiled and consequently the individual intensively moves to seek new ways to decrease such tension(Schultz,46).This idea echoes in *Machinal* when Helen kills her husband as a result of her unjustified tension.

The individuals have unconscious desire for death as Freud suggests. There is an essential cause for the death instinct which is characterized by its aggressive motive. This motive is not directed against the individual himself, but it forces a person to defeat and kill(Gleitman,615). It has controlled Helen's personality because she has the hidden desire to expose repressed enmity against a man as an expression of an alternative desire of her enmity to her father. This sort of desire is exposed in another scene inside the court when Helen has been questioned, and when she has accused two men of killing her husband. Certainly, such an accusation is another expression of her repressed aggression towards another sex. Here, Treadwell perhaps exhibits the women's scream against men's power and authority, and she uses Helen to be her spokesperson to advocate her sex as

independent and free human beings. The playwright is one of the American female dramatists who is concerned with the plights of her sex in her society. She emphasizes how much the psychological disorder affects people to the extent of being aggressive and more as happens to Helen who has been driven to kill her husband. To conclude, *Machinal* stands for early modern women protest against patriarchal dominance. The time is an opportunity of women's rights and their revolt to achieve liberation and independence ,realizing that the pressure to be successful becomes crushing in an era whereby hard work no longer guarantees any reward. Eventually, Treadwell's play reflects the climatic situation of a woman in a time which is greatly affected by unemployment, low production, and poverty that collectively create a disordered psychology.

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تحليل نفسي أدبي لمسرحية صوفي ترد ويل (الماكنة): وجه آخر لامرأة

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المستخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى سبر اغوار النفسية المضطربة لامرأة أدت بها إلى نهاية مشؤومة . وتعكس هذه المسرحية مكانة المرأة في معاناتها التي لا نطاق في زمن تفشي البطالة وتدني الإنتاج والفقير المدقع مما أدى إلى ايجاد نفسية شديدة الحساسية . وقد بدت صوفيا تريد ويل رائعة بتوظيفها للتقنية التعبيرية في هذه المسرحية وبإجازتها للمتفرج بدقة تحديد معالم النفس المضطربة للشخصية الرئيسية. تعاملت هذه الكاتبة مع العائلة كأنموذج لمجتمعها. وبذا امكن للمرء و من خلال التحليل النفسي (للماكنة) أن يدرك بأن المجتمع ليس بمسؤول عن اكتئاب الفرد وإنما قد يكون المرء ضحية لنفسه المعتلة.