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# MAD WOMEN ON STAGE: FEMALE INSANITY IN EURIPIDES' *MEDEA,* HENRIK IBSEN'S *HEDDA GABLER* and EUGENE O'NEILL'S *LONG DAY'S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT*

**Meltem CAN***

**Abstract**

Throughout history, women challenging their gender roles have mostly been labelled as hysterical, mad or dangerous by the patriarchal society. This long-seated tendency to associate women with insanity has also been echoed in drama. In that regard, this paper will explore the representation of nonconformist women who transgress the boundaries of imposed normality in Euripides's *Medea*, Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Financially dependent and restless with societal expectations, Medea, Hedda and Mary are tragic heroines of different eras resisting patriarchy that finally brings them on the verge of madness. After having sacrificed their aspirations or relative freedom for their marriages, those atypical female protagonists meet on a common ground in their repudiation of the dictated gender roles and motherhood image, which leads Medea to murder her own sons and Hedda to end her life while leaving Mary no choice than cutting off from reality through morphine.

**Key words:** *Medea, Hedda Gabler, Long Day's Journey into Night, Female insanity.*

# SAHNEDEKİ DELİ KADINLAR: EURİPİDES'İN *MEDEA,* HENRİK IBSEN'İN *HEDDA GABLER* VE EUGENE O'NEİLL'İN *GÜNDEN GECEYE* ADLI ESERLERİNDE KADIN DELİLİĞİ

**Özet**

Tarih boyunca toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine karşı çıkan kadınlar ataerkil toplum tarafından çoğunlukla histerik, deli ya da tehlikeli olarak addedilmişlerdir. Kadınları delilikle bağdaştıran ve süregelen bu eğilim tiyatroda da yankı bulmuştur. Bu açıdan, bu çalışma Eupides'in *Medea*, Henrik İbsen'in *Hedda Gabler* ve Eugene O'Neill'in *Günden Geceye* adlı eserlerinde dayatılan normallik sınırlarını aşan aykırı kadınların resmedilişini inceleyecektir. Ekonomik olarak eşlerine bağımlı ve toplumsal beklentiler karşısında huzursuz hisseden *Medea*, *Hedda* ve *Mary* ataerkilliğe karşı koyuşlarıyla deliliğin sınırlarına itilen farklı dönemlerin trajik kadın kahramanlardır. Tutkularını ve görece özgürlüklerini feda ettikten sonra, bu alışılmadık kadın başkahramanlar dikte edilen toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini ve annelik imgesini reddedişlerinde buluşurlar ki bu karşı duruş Medea'nın öz oğullarını öldürmesine ve Hedda'nın hayatına son vermesine sebep olurken Mary'e gerçekle bağlantısını morfinle kesmekten başka çıkar yol bırakmaz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Medea, Hedda Gabler, Günden Geceye, Kadın deliliği.*

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There has always been a fine line between normality and conformism throughout history, which results in defining those who resist the impositions of the majority as insane or abnormal. Women who challenged the patriarchal discourses regarding them as weak, hysterical and irrational have mostly been labelled as mad and dangerous for the well-being of the society. Drama as one of the oldest and most influential forms of art has treated the tendency to associate women with insanity differently throughout its history. Concerning these, this paper will explore the dramatic representation of women who do not conform to their gender roles and eventually go beyond the boundaries of so-called normality. In that regard, this study will discuss the affiliation between woman and insanity through Euripides's *Medea*, Henrik Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* and Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey into Night* and highlight the rebellions of Medea, Hedda Gabler and Mary Tyrone against patriarchal oppression that eventually bring them on the verge of madness. Since, as heroines of different eras, those female protagonists meet on a common ground in their financial reliance on their husbands and struggles without the support of their parents. Moreover, having identified themselves with their fathers rather than submissive mother figures, those heroines resent their undermined position and entrapment in the domestic sphere, which awakens a strong sense of longing for the past in those women. Hence, in their attempt to challenge the oppressive patriarchal social order, Medea, Hedda and Marry as atypical female protagonists eventually reject their socially constructed selves as wives and repudiate their motherhood, which leads Medea to murder her own sons, causes Hedda to end her life and leaves Mary no choice than cutting off from reality through morphine.

Few issues are as longstanding and universal as the patriarchal oppression women have had to face throughout ages, cultures and communities. Thus, despite the evolution of civilisation, the subjugation of women particularly in their marital lives has not greatly changed as *Medea* (431 BC), *Hedda Gabler* (1890) and *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1943) illustrate as works mirroring parallel female experiences in the ancient Greek and late nineteen and twentieth century Western societies. Accordingly, based on its heroine's revenge of her husband who forsakes her and their children to marry the princess of Corinth, Euripides's *Medea* frames the myth of Medea who as the granddaughter of the sun god runs away from her homeland and kills her own brother to elope with Jason. Yet, as one of the earliest and most significant works of Western Drama, *Medea* still continues not only to arouse the interests of critics and historians in its representation of the female condition in ancient times but also stirs controversy with the brutal acts of revenge of its heroine that poisons the bride and her father and slays her own sons. In a society and culture regarding women as less than fully human, Medea who has been formerly a princess in her own country confronts with her legally, economically, socially and culturally subordinate position after her husband has left her and the children to marry the princess of Corinth and attain an economically and politically powerful social status. Moreover, as a foreigner woman, her marriage has no validity in ancient Greece, which makes her more vulnerable and socially inferior. However, although she has murdered her brother, left her family as a traitor and social rank as a princess, resigned herself to secondary position as a foreigner woman that can never be his wife legally, Jason claims that Medea "got more than [she] gave" (Euripides, 1998: 81). In that regard, as Meltem E. Uzunoğlu also suggests; Medea is the "the 'other' both as the barbarian foreigner and the woman" and doubly oppressed due to her gender identity and her Colchisian background (2018: 247). Besides, when Jason remarries and banishes her and their sons from Corinth, Women of Corinth advises her not to "horrow [her] soul", since "If [her] husband has gone to adore [a] new bride in his bed,[...] this has happened before" (Euripides, 1998: 75). However, she laments for her dehumanization into a property belonging to Jason that can easily get rid of in his own good time and now casts her away for his own interests. Hence, despite her willed nature; her sorcery skills and even her existence as a half-goddess, Medea comes to recognise her degradation and objectification due to her financial and judicial reliance on her husband. Moreover, longstanding confinement of women to the private sphere also highlights female subordination by the patriarchy, which is also vividly represented in Euripides's play. As an everywoman in ancient Greece, Medea has no rights or chance to articulate her voice in the public space but trapped in the private domain very much like the slaves of the states. Thus, she highlights the female condition not only to the women of Corinth but also to the audience beyond ages:

> Of all creatures that can feel and think, women are the worst treated things alive [....] For divorce is discreditable for women and it is not possible to refuse wedlock. [...] A man, whenever he is annoyed

> with the company of those in the house, goes elsewhere and thus rids his soul of its boredom. But we must fix our gaze on one person only (Euripides, 1998: 76-7).

Thus, Medea grieves over being a woman in a patriarchal society for the female are to embrace a kind of secondary existence compulsorily bound to the male authority via marriage: "We bid the highest price in dowries just to buy some man to be dictator of our bodies" (Euripides, 1998: 77).

On the other hand, acclaimed as "the father of modern drama", the Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen presents an unusual female protagonist like Euripides in his remarkable four-act play; *Hedda Gabler* (1890). Similar to Medea in her subjugation and objectification, Hedda sheds light onto the oppression of women in the late nineteenth century Europe. Still excluded from public sphere and forced to fit into the stereotypical female images, women at the turn of the twentieth century were stereotyped into certain roles and socially excluded if they refused to conform. Despite taking place in Norway in late 1800s, *Hedda Gabler* has become an iconic play with its heroine that comes forth as the timeless representative of the women who could neither conform to the submissive female image rooted in culture, nor openly rebel against patriarchy. As a young woman of aristocratic descent, Hedda is frustrated by her tedious marriage to a middle class scholar; Jorgen Tesman and realises her economic and social dependency on her husband despite her will for autonomy and freedom. Thus, Hedda is confined not only to marital roles that suffocate her but also to the domestic space as a married woman, which underlines the fact that "women's disproportionate confinement in the private sphere correlates with women's subordinate status" (Code, 2000: 342). To clarify, Hedda is urged to be a submissive and devoted wife that dedicates her self to her husband and family, namely an "angel in the house" rather than those "mad women in the attic" as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar term to underline the two major female images in literature (Bressler, 1999: 177). Upon studying the nineteenth century texts, those two critics underline the stereotyping of women either into an angel or a mad woman, which is vividly portrayed in *Hedda Gabler*. In addition to the social impositions dictating her to take on her gender role as a wife who supports her husband's career and dedicates herself to her family altruistically, the sense of boredom and imprisonment Hedda finds in her marriage also echoes female experience in the late nineteenth century Europe as well as the oppression of women under societal expectations and fear of indecent reputation. Since, married "without love" as "she had danced herself tired" and "not getting any younger", Hedda is disappointed with her powerless state as a wife as her "own destiny does not seem to be under her control" (Spacks: 1962, 156). Having regretted for her marriage, Hedda scolds Brack when he asks if she "happens to love" the specialists by exclaiming: "[B]ah! That nauseating word!" (Ibsen: 1998, 562). In that regard, very much like her gender roles that subjugate her and leave her no room but being a beautiful doll and a supportive selfless angel, her unwanted pregnancy stands for further subjugation for Hedda. Thus, Ibsen's play illustrates what Ellis claims for the nineteenth century literary works: that is, "'growing up" for the heroine means being compelled to choose "between auxiliary or secondary personhood, sacrificial victimization, madness and death" (1999: 16). Thus, Hedda initially attempts to silence her unique self and embrace that "secondary personhood" although her true identity and understanding of the world would be wasted as an "angel in the house" backing up Tesman's academic career. Since, as a typical bourgeois woman in her era, Hedda attempts to maintain the respectability of both herself and her husband. In other words, like Euripides' play, *Hedda Gabler* illuminates an atypical woman that attempts to be typical, which underlines the fact that in Ibsen's work, "[w]hat seems to be a study of an abnormal woman turns into a study of an abnormal society" (Spacks, 1962: 164).

On the other hand, *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1941) also mirrors another woman whose uniqueness has been undermined in her marital home like Hedda. As one of the leading American dramatists, Eugene O'Neill in his work sets forth the story of the Tyrone family in one full day in 1912 and illuminates Mary Tyrone as the central character whom other male protagonists; her husband James Tyrone and her sons; Edmund and Jamie criticize, ignore, resent and desperately need to find peace. Trapped in their pasts, all the members of that dysfunctional family attempt to break themselves free from their memories, the Tyrone men through alcohol whereas Mary via morphine. Interestingly, born out of a relatively modern age, Mary Tyrone is as undermined by the stereotypical image of wifehood and motherhood as the women in the past and illustrates the ongoing oppression of women in the mid-twentieth century. She is the daughter of an era in which women were solely considered responsible for childrearing and expected to assume the role of the nurturers of family due to their

"femininity" and "purity" (Pfister, 1995: 24). Thus, her sons as well as her actor husband all turn to Mary for her sobriety in their restless lives tainted by alcohol and seek relief of their psychological suffering despite her muteness and loneliness, which she voices: "I am alone. I've always been alone" (O'Neill, 1956: 40). The sharp contrast between the language exclusively used by the male and Mary's speech also illustrate her oppressed and isolated state in the family according to Laurin Porter: "Although the playwright has assigned the three male characters numerous allusions, [...] Mary's dialogue includes no allusions, nor do the Tyrones use them when speaking to her" (2008, 37). Thus, as a text structured with patriarchal discourses linguistically, *Long Day's Journey into Night* puts forth a female protagonist who is silenced and de-individuated on the surface; yet she also stands out as a heroine that speaks her own truths rather than relying on the ideologically constructed canon and male-centred discourses. However, despite her idiocratic and unique language, she feels worthless in her family. After years of struggle to assume the roles of a caring wife and mother imposed upon her and fulfil her responsibilities to hold the family together after her return from the rehabilitation, she begins to inject herself morphine as she has never felt warmth or a sense of belonging to her home: "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" (O'Neill, 1956: 38). Nonetheless, as Gerardine Meaney also claims, her husband and sons "wish her to make and to be 'home' for them" (1991: 211). Thus, with marriage, Mary has lost her individuality, ideals and aspirations, become a depressive person and an addict, which is underlined in her remarks to her husband: "You should have remained a bachelor and [...] and entertain your friends and bar rooms. Then nothing would've ever happened" (O'Neill, 1956: 58).

Nevertheless, not only her gender roles as a devoted mother and wife but also the social norms and practises that prioritise male as the breadwinners that deserve to build their careers over the female also confine Mary to the domestic space and exclude her from political and public domains. Unable to leave the house, make friends or feel herself at home due to her actor husband travelling a lot, Mary is stuck in her frustrated adolescent dreams. She only goes out to buy some morphine from drugstores. Accordingly, Porter claims that Mary's confinement to the private sphere is also illustrated visually on stage through the spaces she resides in contrast to the Tyrone men:

> It is no accident that the living room, 'the public space of the play', i.e. the one we see and the one where the family gathers as a whole, is linked predominantly with the male Tyrones, as are the public outside spaces. [...] Mary is essentially confined to the home, and there, associated with offstage paces: the front parlour, the spare room, the kitchen (Porter, 2008: 41).

Hence, Mary's confinement to domestic space, her financial dependence on her husband and her oppression by the patriarchal culture and societal expectations are parallel with the experiences of Medea and Hedda. Thus, despite the diminishing authority of patriarchy, changing views about gender roles and female stereotyping in mid-twentieth century, Mary, very much like the other two heroines, has been forced to the wall by the social pressures that urge her not only to create a perfect home, raise perfect children, serve her husband and support his career selflessly but also deny her own aspirations and individuality.

On the other hand, the struggles of Medea, Hedda and Mary against patriarchy without the support of their biological families are also significant to underline their vulnerability and desperateness despite their atypical personalities. To begin with, Medea can never turn back to her homeland and take shelter in her familial home as she left there as a traitor and murderer of her own brother. In that sense, her desolation as a woman who is already in exile and has no place to go leads Jason to be more cruel and apathetic towards Medea. She addresses to the Women of Corinth to illuminate her doubly inferior position and frailty as a woman in a foreign land, namely a "barbarian":

> your case and mine are not the same. You have your city. You have your father's home. Life offers you the sweet fellowship of friends. I am alone, without a city, wronged by a husband, uprooted from a foreign land. I have no mother, brother, cousin; am without a have from this storm. (Euripides: 1998: 77)

Furthermore, as she has no homeland to take shelter, Medea rejects to resign to her husband's marriage and the king's order to abandon Corinth since leading a lonely life on exile would definitely result in a similar

catastrophe for her and cost her and the sons' lives. On the other hand, having lost her mother at an early age and her father in her early adulthood, Hedda Gabler has nobody in life to turn to or no home that would welcome her. In her marriage to Tesman, she finds nothing but loneliness, which leads her to long for her previous autonomy as a single woman. Similarly, in *Long Day's Journey into Night*, Mary's desolateness triggered by the absence of her parents gives way to her addiction. Since, Mary's attempts to stand her subordinate position in marriage besides her husband and sons' indifference to her misery prove to be hard without the emotional support of a parent.

On the other hand, with respect to their relations to their parents in their familial home, father figure comes forth as the determining role model in the lives of Medea, Hedda and Mary. Identifying themselves with the father figure, al the three heroines are exceptional as women in their ages. To illustrate, as a divergent female figure with her assertiveness and her cold blood that leads her to murder her enemies as well as her own children, Medea was believed to be the daughter of King Aeëtes of Colchis and the granddaughter of the sun god Helios, which underlines the fact that as an enchantress, a woman with magical abilities, Medea is always associated or introduced through her patriarchal lineage to define her divinity. Likewise, Ibsen's *Hedda* is extraordinary as a woman that amuses herself through playing the pistols inherited by her general father. The play reveals no information about her mother who probably died in childbirth and presents Hedda as an orphan brought up by her father whom she has taken as a role model. Lastly, Mary's childhood and adolescence is marked by her father's compassion and her mother's critical attitude. Thus, his father whom she has lost due to tuberculosis stands for the only character that really loves, cares and understands her. To illustrate, her "pious and strict" mother constantly blames her father for "spoil[ing] Mary" and "pit[ies] [Mary's] husband if she marries" as she would never "make a good wife" (O'Neill, 1956: 99). Thus, while her mother signifies the burden of her gender identity that forces her to assume socially accepted roles, her father symbolizes the opposite of those gender roles; freedom and autonomy.

Thus, with respect to their attempts to withstand patriarchy, *Medea*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Long Day's Journey into Night* stress the heroines' strong sense of longing for the past due to the realisation of their present secondary position subservient to the patriarch in marriage. In other words, they yearn for the blissful ignorance and relative freedom in their familial home in which they have not realized the fact that maturation for a woman stands for her subordination. That nostalgic turn triggered by their failure to undermine their individuality brings about a present tainted with the past in which those women take shelter. To elaborate, having killed her brother, abandoned her land as a traitor, left her social rank as a princess and resigned herself to a life in exile as merely Jason's wife and the mother of his sons, Medea expresses her regret for her sacrifices and former choices: "Oh, my father! Oh my country! In what dishonour I left you, killing my own brother for it" (Euripides, 1998: 75). Moreover, in her speech to the women of Corinth, she does not merely wails over being a woman but being a wife and mother. Since her remarks underlining labour pain, women's powerless state in judicial and social domain and their entrapment in marriage all suggest her desire to return to her youth, childhood or origins.

In Ibsen's play, failing to affirm her new powerless position as George's wife, Hedda attempts to preserve her autonomy and independency she has been used to before marriage. With respect to her apparent insistence to remain as Hedda Gabler, that is preserving her identity before marrying and becoming Hedda Tesman, Herbert Blau in his article "'Hedda Gabler': The Irony of Decadence" claims that "[s]he remains General Gabler's daughter until the end. But because General Gabler is dead, Hedda is impotent; cut off from her natal source" (1953: 113). Thus, like Medea, Ibsen's protagonist does not regret her sex but her gender role as a wife, which makes her seek a way out in her past. Thus, her futile efforts to return to her pre-marital life illustrate the idea that being female has always been an obstacle against the self-fulfilment and personal growth of women in a society dominated by patriarchal values (Ruthven 1984: 120). Moreover, Hedda's longing for her parental home is also pictured through the pistols she plays with anytime she gets bored or overwhelmed with her social environment that dehumanizes her into a submissive figure. Yet, her desperate attempt to compare her previous self with her undermined status as a wife proves to be pointless, since, her present is "too imperceptible to appreciate it, no less accept it" (Blau, 1953: 113). Concerning the present that is impossible to accept or escape from, O'Neill's female protagonist has also sacrificed her relative autonomy and aspirations to become either a nun or a concert pianist for her marriage. Thus the unrest and frustration of having given up her adolescence dreams in marital life prompt her addiction to opium which recreates her hopeful youth and encourages her "search for her lost

innocence, which she associates with her days in the convent school" (Porter, 1993: 109). Hence, the past turns out to be a character in O'Neill's play transforming Mary into a "ghost haunting the past" in the eyes of Tyrone men and offering a present as unsteady, elusive and ineluctable as memories, which Mary also stresses: "The past is the present, isn't it? It is the future too. We all try to lie out of that but life won't let us" (O'Neill, 1956: 75).

Concerning the affiliation between women and insanity in those works, motherhood plays a crucial role in the protests of those exceptional heroines against the male centred social order. Inasmuch as while standing against patriarchal oppression, Medea, Hedda and Mary end with the total rejection of not only their socially constructed selves as wives but also their motherhood. To clarify, *Medea* with its merciless and cruel female protagonist, *Hedda Gabler* that frames a manipulative and self-centred woman as its main character and *Long Day's Journey into Night* presenting a disturbed and addicted female as the central character all offer unfavourable, almost misogynistic portrayals of heroines that have a common problematic relation with motherhood. To clarify, the tendency of Medea, Hedda and Mary to cut themselves from their identities as mothers contributes to their portrayals as unnatural and abnormal women that do not fit to be mothers. Furthermore, prioritising themselves over their children and failing to fit into the stereotypical mother image ascribed to women for ages, those female protagonists with their tragic ends marked with melancholy, depression, murder and suicide also serve as inexplicit warnings to their female contemporaries. With respect to the female lunacy illustrated through the failed motherhood, Euripides's play is probably one of the most controversial works in drama history. Preferring to "stand there three times in battle holding up [her] shield than give birth once", Euripides' Medea forms a total contrast with the mystified mother image in art and culture particularly with her final, horrid act towards his sons (Euripides, 1998: 77). Although she attempts to justify her plot by claiming that she cannot "leave [her] children for [her] enemies to trample down", she is sure that "they have to die, and since they must" and suggests that their deaths should "be by the hands of her who gave them life" (89). Thus, as an act transforming her into an antagonistic figure in the eyes of the audience, Medea slays her sons as "[i]t is the supreme way to hurt [her] husband" and make him pay off for his betrayal (94). Furthermore, regarding the boys as the reminder of their father, Medea wishes to put an end to her suffering as well as taking revenge; since, through her children's death, she is able to leave her husband's memory, her sacrifices and his infidelity behind: "Cursed sons, and a mother for cursing! Death take you all – you and your father" (75). Thus, with its female protagonist, *Medea* presents a motherhood image which is not only disturbing and intolerable with its atrocity, but also unusual and disputable in its emphasis on the idea that motherhood is immanently related to female body in which nobody but the woman herself has a say. Hence, the play dehumanizes Medea from a victim of patriarchy into a symbol of cruelty and female insanity that deserves all her husband's villainy but no pity of the audience.

On the other hand, in *Hedda Gabler*, the female protagonist cannot even stand the implication of her pregnancy, which suggests that for Hedda, being a mother stands for her further subordination and loss of control over her life and body rather than a dream of everywoman. To elaborate, Ibsen's heroine despises the idea of being the mother of George's child, gets angry and immediately changes the subject when her husband asks his aunt to check if she looks pregnant. Moreover, when Brack mentions her about her "new", "solemn challenge of responsibility" to bear her husband's children, she angrily silences him through clarifying that "[y] ou will see nothing of the kind." (Ibsen, 1998: 564). Thus, as an exceptional female figure for the nineteenth century Europe, Hedda is delineated as a deviant woman due to her repudiation of being a mother, which turns her into a timeless representative of the peculiar women like Medea. Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey into Night* is not dissimilar from the other two heroines due to her failure to assume the altruistic mother identity. She is actually one of the absent mothers in O'Neill's plays as Alan Downer underlines: "Again and again we meet the mother idealized, romantically beautiful, mystically associated with the symbolic forces of nature; yet also curiously remote, unsympathetic with her sons" (1961: 118). Thus, as idealized and remote as Downer states, Mary cannot realize the unrealistic expectations of the society or fit in the traditional mother role, which not only arouses a sense of guilt in her but also triggers her addiction. To illustrate, after losing her two-year-old son when she went on a tour with her husband, Mary tortures herself for leaving her baby boy to join her husband and thus failing to be a good and responsible mother. Besides the loss of her baby, her relation to Edmund and Jamie is also problematic due to her dry and disinterested attitude towards her sons, which is mirrored not only through her resentment to Jamie for being jealous of her brothers as the eldest son and intentionally

causing Eugene's death but also via her denial and indifference to Edmund's illness. To clarify, when Mary learns of Edmund's consumption, she initially attempts to deny and then accuses him of faking his illness, of being "dramatic and tragic" and "mak[ing] a scene of nothing": "...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, 1956: 37). Furthermore, as an echo of her conscious attempt to forget about her sons, their alcohol addiction and miseries beyond their small talks, Mary resigns into silence more and more throughout the play, which is also underlined by Edmund: "You know something in her does it deliberately – [...] to be rid of us, to forget we're alive! It's as if, in spite of loving us, she hated us!" (121). Thus, she can neither accord with the altruistic mother image nor internalize the exalted and mystified idea of motherhood.

Hence, concerning all their nonconforming and adverse portrayals as cold-hearted, wrongful, self-centred or oversensitive female protagonists, their resentment to be dehumanized into a property in marital life and lastly their problematic relation to motherhood, it is evident that that those three women are exiled to the margins in the hands of patriarchy and socially constructed gender roles, which urge them to commit acts that bring about their downfalls. In that regard, as women uncomfortable with the social expectations placed on them, Medea, Hedda and Mary meet on a common ground in their marginalization into senseless, frenzied, weak, mentally ill women for their nonconformism despite being the heroines of different ages, lands and cultures, which illustrates the idea Phyllis Chesler also suggests in his *Women and Madness*: "What we consider 'madness' [...] is, either the acting out of the devalued female role or the total or partial rejection of one's sex role stereotype" (1997: 93). Hence, the ongoing subjugation and dehumanization lead them to commit homicides, suicide or drug addiction by reason of their inability to tolerate patriarchal oppression anymore. Accordingly, as a play about "'barbarism' and 'womanhood' in Greek world", *Medea* delineates the eventual rebellion of woman against the male-centred culture and society with bloodshed (Uzunoğlu, 2018, 247). To clarify, ending with the female protagonist's murders that she commits by poisoning her enemies and slaying her sons, Euripides's work illuminates Medea's controversial attack on the patriarchal order that attributes Jason the power to remarry and cast her away while urging her to bow to her husband's will. In that sense, the heroine's counteraction to her subjugation as a woman and foreigner transform the play from a work about "those done to [Medea]" or a play "about woman's rights" into a work of drama about "those done [...] by her" (Knox, 1977: 211). As "a woman of some knowledge, versed in many an unsavoury skill" and "dangerous" as Creon describes, Medea plots to poison the king and her daughter and kill her sons rather than acting impulsively or in a hysteric moment (Euripides, 1998: 77-8). Thus, stuck in the fragility of her gender role, Medea is represented as more clever and stronger in character than most male around her. Thereupon, Jason and the Chorus address her as "[w]oman of stone, heart of iron, [d]isconsolate woman" and define her as a threatening, divergent and an inhuman character that is beyond normal (93). Admitting the formidability of her plans, Medea even foreshadows her misery after murdering the boys: "My heart dissolves [w]hen I gaze into their [the son's] bright irises […] Why damage them in trying to hurt their father, and only hurt myself twice over?" (89). Nonetheless, she disregards others to seal her own fate and refuses to be victimized as underlined by the nurse of the sons: "She meant some mischief and [...] she'll not stop raging until she has struck someone" (76). In that regard, as "a good friend, but a dangerous enemy", Medea is beyond a lunatic woman but a strong-willed, intelligent female that can cause great agonies and atrocities when she is wronged (77). Thus, as an unusual woman that does not fit into the stereotypical female image in her age or mother figure throughout the history, "Medea neither behaves as someone inferior nor keeps her silence against injustice as Greek women do. Rather she cries, threatens and makes plans for revenge" (Uzunoğlu, 2018: 249). At the closure, the play pictures Medea's escape towards the sky with a chariot driven by winged dragons, which highlights the playwright's faith in "Medea's innocence more than Jason's who blames Medea completely instead of searching a mistake in himself" (246). To eleborate, when Jason accuses her of being a heartless murderer of her own children, Medea exclaims that "it was [his] pride: the lust of [his] new love" that "killed and struck them down" which points out Jason's part in that tragedy (Euripides, 1998: 95). Nevertheless, despite her attempts to get back at Jason, she inflicts one of the greatest sorrows upon herself by killing her own children. Thus, Medea ends with the tragic downfall and punishment of the female protagonist rather than a mere sense of victory for devastating her husband. Moreover, she is also punished with being a symbol of villain woman who will pose a danger to the society if given power. Therefore, due to her disrespectable social status as a woman and foreigner, her ruthless murders, and her power atypical for women of her age, she is foregrounded as an

inhuman figure at the closure of the play, which is also highlighted by Anne Burnett in her "Medea and the Art of Revenge":

> Medea is no longer a woman when she appears in the chariot, but she has been one... Killing her sons cost her....a suffering beyond that of all another women and by inflicting that suffering upon herself she has tainted her human victory while she became at last a truly impersonal alastor... (Burnett, 1973: 22).

Hence, her divine ancestry, cunningness and sorcery skills transform her from a suicidal meek victim into the "mad woman" that cannot be imprisoned into attic. In other words, Euripides' play turns the female protagonist from a possible vulnerable victim into a monster that mercilessly murders its own offsprings to attack the patriarchy that has enslaved and silenced her. That is why even today "[t]he incensed hurt of woman continues to find voice via Medea" (Steiner 1984, 129).

On the other hand, very much like Medea in her repudiation of the "meek" wife image, Hedda is particularly noteworthy as "the first 'modern woman' that predecessor of all those inhibited and neurotic souls who have haunted our stages since the death of chivalry unsexed" (Blau, 1953: 112). In other words, she is one of the "mad women" in drama due to her attempts to be herself in the nineteen century society, which is clearly portrayed in the title of the play. That is, she strives for remaining as Hedda Gabler despite the social tyranny that forces her to embrace her secondary personhood as Hedda Tesman and defines herself in relation to her husband. Since, even before marriage, she has been deeply dissatisfied with the traditional female image prompted by the society and enjoyed the freedom ascribed to the male, which is communicated through her pre-marital affair with Lovborg she regards as a little peep to the male world: "Do you find it so strange that a young girl- when she can do so, without anyone knowing [...] that she wants to take a peek into a world which- [...] she is not supposed to know anything about?" (Ibsen, 1998: 568). On the other hand, although she has married Tesman as she had no other option than marriage as a woman in the nineteen century, her marriage "bore[s] [her] to death" and makes Hedda realize the impossibility of self-fulfilment as a wife (565). Thus, as a woman seeking for male autonomy in the patriarchal world, Hedda assumes masculine hobbies as she does not know "what to do with [her]self" and kills time with her pistols inherited from her general father, which signifies her desire for power and her eccentric female self that contrasts the stereotypical female image of her time (561).

Therefore, as a manifestation of her revenge from patriarchy, her lust for power and her deep-down yearning for emancipating herself from her powerless position triggered by her gender identity, Hedda attempts to manipulate others emotionally. Like the effect of the pistols, exercising her power over Tesman, Thea and Lovborg eases the unrest of her tedious marital life and gives her a sense of control over her fate. Since, through "hav[ing] power over a human destiny" by subjugating others, she attempts to be an individual in life rather than a doll in man's world victimized for her naivety (Ibsen, 1998: 570). To exemplify, Hedda not only hinders Lovborg's attempt for artistic creation through burning his manuscript, which is "the child" Lovborg and Thea, but also motivates him to commit suicide by giving the desperate man her pistols instead of dissuading him. Accordingly, for Patricia Meyer Spacks, Hedda retreats into an imaginary state to feel the sense of authority over others and "her control depends on her withdrawal from reality for the sake of illusion" (1962: 158). She attempts to "remain in the form of illusion" to escape from the "the real world of responsibility" of a married woman such as "the basic functions of women- marriage, motherhood" (158). In that regard, it is clear that "Hedda's perversity stems from not only her assertion of power but also her reluctance to take responsibility" (158). Thus, her refusal to embrace the role of a devoted wife and mother and give in to patriarchal oppression not only leads her to withdraw from the dictated reality of male-centred culture and futilely exercise control over others but also turns her into a heroine both fascinating and wily, yet not a villain with a wicked nature but a "monster-woman embody[ing] intransigent female autonomy" (Rice and Waugh, 2001: 158).

In that sense, like the closure of *Medea*, Hedda's tragic end communicates both a strong sense of loss and triumph. After she vainly attempts to assume the power in the male-centred culture and eventually causes Lovborg's death, Judge Brack reveals her role in Ejlert's suicide and implies his newly attained power over her, which leads Hedda to shoot herself. Thus, Hedda dies by her own hand to repudiate Brack's authority over her

life and body: "In your power, all the same. Dependent on your will. Servant to your demands. Not free! [...] No, I can't stand that thought! Never!" (Ibsen, 1998: 582). In that regard, it would not be wrong to suggest that Ibsen's heroine kills herself as her deep frustration of her vulnerable position as a woman and the dread of a scandal leave her no choice than suicide in the end, unlike Medea who turns her anger towards others. She refused to be like Thea Elvisted who willingly submits to masculine power or yield to Brack's authority, but acts as she desires, yet she cannot find a way out than taking her own life. In other words, Hedda intends to "make Brack serve" her, but "ends by almost serving him... and her only escape is that of suicide" (Blau, 1953: 115). In that respect, Hedda does not die by her own hand but by the hand of the patriarchal society. Hence, her retreat to illusions of control and her suicide signify her attempts to attack patriarchal culture that entrap, subjugate and de-individuate women (Hirsch, 1983: 28).

The last heroine as broken, unclear and unsettled as Medea and Hedda; Mary Tyrone turns her anger outward, towards the reality tainted by years of oppression. Unable to turn back to her adolescence dreams, Mary annihilates her rational self via morphine and cuts herself off from the outside world that has made her suffer. Having become addicted after the treatment of an unqualified doctor during the difficult pregnancy of Edmund, Mary attempts to seek relief in morphine due to her traumatic loss of her baby. After two months of recovery, Mary restarts to inject herself the drug upon Edmund's consumption, an illness that has also killed her father. Gradually getting more delusional in the course of the play due to the frustration of her broken dreams and the possibility of losing Edmund as she has lost her father and baby, she turns to opium as "there is no other that can stop the pain- all the pain..." (O'Neill, 1956: 74). Yet, her pain is beyond a posttraumatic stress, since her tendency to blame herself for Eugene's death and accuse Jamie of intentionally infecting the measles to his brother displays her deep misery for her inability to be a good mother, save her child and raise her sons with love and care. Thus, as the central figure of her dysfunctional family, Mary cannot fulfil her gender role as a wife and mother yet she is unable to voice her despair and protest to her husband and sons who have undermined her for long years, demanded the satisfaction of their emotional needs and ignored her addiction. Since, while accusing her of not being a strong-willed or attentive mother, Tyrone men never search the spare room where she uses morphine or refuse to drive her to drugstore. Thus, Mary stands for "'the monster' that may not only be concealed behind the angel, she may actually turn out to reside within [...] the angel" (Rice and Waugh, 2001: 160). In that regard, morphine functions not only a way of escape from reality but a means for "the monster" to disturb Tyrone men and articulate her objection. Edmunds begs Mary to "stop talking" since her words reveal her despair and depression that threaten their blissful ignorance about her mental state (O'Neill, 1956: 58). Nevertheless, as Meaney also underlines; Mary "has long ceased to be silent object of the son's discourse" and "utters strange truths" in her delusional state (213, 216). Thus, as the mouthpiece of patriarchal ideology that has muted her, the Tyrone men are disturbed by Mary's remarks that manifest her protest. It is also worthy of notice that "[t]he mother's search for her own story, even if her search in thwarted until it becomes no more than a desire to return to oblivion through morphine, de-realizes all of the diverse literary, philosophical and personal stories told by the men" (Meaney, 1991: 212). Hence, against that unconscious act of that "de-realisation", the patriarchy marginalizes and situates her in the periphery, which is mirrored at the end of the fourth act in which Jamie draws attention to Mary's drugged state upon her entrance: "The Mad Scene: Enter Ophelia!" (O'Neill, 1956: 151). Thus, from the male gaze, she is as psychologically disturbed as Ophelia, which triggers her alienation and isolation in her own family: "God Mother of God, why do I feel so lonely?" (O'Neill 82). Therefore, her addiction to morphine for which her sons and husband blame her helps her to "retreat into a time before marriage" and "deny the reality of her husband and sons" (Meaney, 1991: 211). Hence, morphine serves not only as a shelter for Mary who recollects and realises her undermined true self in her drugged state but also a challenge to her gender role of being a selfless, nurturing mother, which stirs feelings of inadequacy and turmoil in her soul.

Accordingly, in the closure of the play, Mary appears to be totally delusional and ignorant towards Tyrone men who turn out to be, as O'Neill pens, "familiar things she accepts automatically as naturally belonging there..." (1956: 150). Thanks to her hallucinatory memories, Mary appears to be "so youthful" as "[e]xperience seems ironed out of" her face assuming "a marble mask of girlish innocence" (150). Thus, unable to recognize Edmund, Mary scolds him not to touch her as she assumes herself as the young girl in the abbey: "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" (154). Besides, the wedding gown she carries in her hands suggests her wedding day that marks the end of all her dreams and the beginning of her suffering: "That was in the winter of senior year. Then in the spring something happened to me. Yes, I remember. I feel in love with James Tyrone and was so happy for a time" (156). Hence, she retreats into her past when she has been a hopeful young girl with plans for a happy future so as to emancipate herself from her current lonely presence initiated by her failed dreams and the indifference of Tyrone men. In other words, rather than grieving over her state, Mary turns a deaf ear to her self-centred alcoholic husband and sons and acts in a "blank" mode, namely "a bank of fog in which she hides and loses herself" (121). In that respect, she "transgresses a fundamental interdiction on women in patriarchy" even under the influence of morphine (Meaney, 1991: 212). In other words, her drugged state reveals her abnormal self cherishing her free existence, her true "monstrous" self unshaped and untainted by the patriarchal ideologies and marital and maternal responsibilities. Thus, Mary stands against Tyrone men and their patriarchal mindset and oppressive attitudes by refusing to feed their emotional needs and make a home out of their house: "in establishing her own "mad" relation to origin, Mary Tyrone denies her men the possibility of any sense of home" (212). Therefore, with respect to Kate Zambreno's definition of female insanity, it would not be wrong to suggest that Mary with her "alienation, [her] breakdown that is about the confinement, or even death, of the self" is as mad as Medea and Hedda, and many others on stage and pages (2012: 78).

To conclude, *Medea* mirrors the hypocritical patriarchal social order and its dictated gender roles as the true evils turning its female protagonist who rejects to be victimized into an anti-heroine committing dreadful actions. Thus, Medea who speaks her voice and conveys her inner turmoil via theatre gains the sympathy of the audience that is urged to mediate upon her motives and unspoken emotions. In her rebellion, Medea acts on revenge and loses her humanity by killing her children and consequently dehumanizing herself into a deity or alastor, rather than a woman. On the other hand, resisting the patriarchy that has imprisoned her through manipulating others, Hedda ends her life upon her realization of the impossibility of assuming a hegemonic masculine role in a patriarchal social order and the fact that maturity means restriction and loss of autonomy for a woman. Lastly, Mary's addiction is the manifestation of her attempt to speak her silenced voice even in her delusions; since only through her hallucinatory state, she can express her marginalized true self. Through her dreamy world, she annihilates her self as an act of refusal to live the reality of patriarchally designed gender roles as a wife supporting her husband's career and caring for her sons rather than her own reality as an individual. Thus, deviating from the boundaries of their gender roles and resisting the cherished images of selfless wives and nurturing mothers, Medea, Hedda and Mary have questioning restless minds which are hindered, silenced and forced to insanity by the society. Through assuming the role of "the monster", Mary, Hedda, Medea all meet on a common ground in their attempts to speak their voices rather than being the voice of the mother, wife, thus, striving for realizing their true selves in male discourse, language and world rather than remaining in their comfort zones. Thus, in all the three plays, the objections of the female protagonists to their secondary positions in marital life and submitting to their husbands' will serve to their portrayals as brutes, evils or addicts and justify their eventual punishment to exclusion, death or a presence cut off from real world. In that regard, the long-seated "mad women" on stage are not the manifestations of the intrinsic abnormality and hysteric nature of women but the heralds of the fear of the society of the woman who demands an equal and 'normal' existence in life.

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