



# Lacanian Psychoanalytical Theories in Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'*

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## Abstract

Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* (1983), is a great American play with psychological basis and it is considered as a feminist play. The present paper investigates it in the light of Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theories which serve as a methodology in psychoanalytic criticism. Lacan knows the human psyche formed by the three interacting 'orders' of the Imaginary, Symbolic, and Real. He argues that the roles of 'father', 'mother', 'Object petit a', 'Jouissance', 'the Name-of-the-Father', 'Big Other' and 'others' are also significant in affecting one's psyche. The characters of *'Night, Mother'* are Lacanian 'subjects' whose lives have been embodiments of Lacan's psychoanalytical theories, especially Jessie whose disorders, behaviors, reactions to the 'others', frustration, committing suicide, and death indicate that many familial, social and mental issues have affected her psyche, and they are crystalized by psychoanalytical theories of Lacan in this paper.

**Keywords:** Imaginary Order, the Lacanian Subject, the Name-of-the-Father, Object petit a, Other, Symbolic order

## 1. Introduction

This paper tends to apply Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytical theories to Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* (1983). Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* has been on stages of many countries and its main character has a complicated psyche leading to a kind of difficulty for readers and theatre-goers to distinguish reasons of her problems and also to perceive the meaning of the conduct and manner she has. In this paper, the ambiguity of her psyche is solved by psychoanalytical theories of Jacques Marie Émile Lacan by answering questions such as how the roles of "the-Name-of-the-Father" and "Other" affect her psyche.

Researches on Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* have been mostly considering feminist issues and gender, because her plays are important ones in feminist theatre. As Grantely asserts, "Marsha Norman's plays have been considered mostly in the category of women plays though she herself did not want this. She said in an interview that she doesn't like to be put in a little box labeled 'women's theatre'" (1995, p. 143). There are some articles investigating each play of Marsha Norman separately; for instance, articles collected in *Marsha Norman: A Casebook* edited by Linda Ginter Brown, and there are rarely articles which elaborate on her plays in general. Of these, the most useful source for analysis of Marsha Norman's plays could be the part which has her name as topic in *American Drama* edited by Clive Bloom. The dissertations done on Marsha Norman's plays have mostly offered feminist readings of her plays with topics such as struggle for identity, or family concepts. One great example would be the dissertation of "Feminist Concerns in Marsha Norman's Plays: A Critical Study" by Hetal Jyotkumar Mehta. In spite of being a psychological and famous play, Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* has not much been the subject of psychoanalytic criticism, and most of the researches done on it are dealt with 'Feminism'. They scrutinize feministic subjects and questions of women's identity, or they deal with the concepts of 'disability' and 'depression'. A dissertation written in 1994 with the topic of "De-tangling the web: Mother-daughter relationships in the plays of Marsha Norman, Lillian Hellman, Tina Howe, and Ntozake Shange" by Karen Foster investigates Norman's *'night, Mother'* through the eyes of Lacan, Freud, and other great psychoanalysts, and its Lacanian reading deals with Lacan's 'Imaginary' and 'Symbolic' orders. The present paper is a specific psychoanalytical study of Marsha Norman's *'Night, Mother'* focusing on not only these two orders with details such as 'Symbolic father' and 'Imaginary mother', but also on other psychoanalytical theories of Lacan's. *'Night, Mother'* has been performed in the theatres of many countries and studied in drama and literature classes, so reading it through psychoanalytic criticism in the light of psychoanalytical theories of Jacques Lacan would expand the knowledge of drama and literature students who read or perform it.

## 2. Lacan's psychoanalysis

Lacan believed that psyche is formed by three interacting orders – the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. In the Imaginary order, a “literal mother satisfies all needs of the child when the child sees no clear distinction between it and the external world; therefore, it sees itself and the mother as a unified whole” (Eagleton, 2006, p. 142). Consequently, “the first sense of identification is created upon an illusion that might continue for a lifetime” (*Écrits*, 1977, p. 517). Then, in the ‘Mirror Stage’, the child sees itself in reflective objects, and realizes itself as an ‘independent being’ separated from mother. It identifies with its picture, and experiences contradictory feelings until Real order. Next, the child enters the Symbolic order, while he is learning language and laws. According to Lacan, it is through language that ‘Desire’ comes into being. Lacan introduces the concept of the ‘Other’ as the necessary structure of the Symbolic order. Moreover, Symbolic order is very important for the development of the child’s character, notably in relation to the ‘others’ and the ‘Other’.

In the Symbolic order which is the world governed by father, we learn how to use language. We use language to fill our gaps created when we have entered the symbolic stage where we are required to learn language in order to communicate with our environment. Lacan’s Symbolic order is mostly based on communication and exchange that are formed by language and speech. In this relation law, culture, and structure play important roles which are expressed by language (*Seminar IV*, 1994, p. 153).

In Lacan’s pre-war papers, the term 'subject' seems to mean no more than human being.” (*Écrits*, 1977, p. 75). In 1945, Lacan distinguishes between three kinds of subject. Firstly, there is the impersonal subject, “independent of the other”. Secondly, there is the “anonymous reciprocal subject who is completely equal to and substitutable for any other”, and who recognizes himself in equivalence with the other. Thirdly, there is the “personal subject, whose uniqueness is constituted by an act of self-affirmation” (*Écrits*, 1977, pp. 207–208). It is always this third sense of the subject—the subject in his uniqueness that constitutes the focus of Lacan’s work.

The realm of the-name-of-the-father is the linkage of the child's entrance into language and the incest taboo that leads to castration. Lacan distinguishes between Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real father. The Imaginary father, being the real biological father or not, can be either ideal or terrible, and it is considered as omnipotent.

Lacan’s concept of Real father is quite obscure. The real father is not a biological one, but a symbolic father that is related to the real concept of language or law. The most important role of father is related to Symbolic one that exists during the all phases of symbolic order like Oedipus complex or even behind the Imaginary father in mother’s privation. The position of Symbolic father can be occupied by any subject who exercises the paternal function like others’ discourse, and nobody can completely fill this position. In simple words, symbolic father is not a certain person but a position that causes law and order for subject. The father’s name does not replace the body or presence of the mother, but the absence of the mother.

As Lacan writes in *Écrits*, it is the mother who first occupies the position of the big Other for the child, because it is she who receives the child’s primitive cries and retroactively sanctions them as a particular message. The castration complex is formed when the child discovers that this Other is not complete, “that there is a lack in the Other” (1977, p. 33).

The *objet a* is something we are lacking and missing from our lives, and we are searching to find replacement for it. As Homer maintains, “The *objet a* then is at once the void, the gap, the lack around which the symbolic order is structured and that which comes to mask or cover over that lack” (2005, p. 88). *Objet petit a* is any object which sets desire in motion, especially the partial objects which define the drives. The drives do not seek to attain the *objet petit a*, but rather circle round it (*Seminars VIII*, 1960-61, p. 179). The *objet petit a* is not the object itself but the function of masking the lack.

## 3. A Lacanian Reading of Marsha Norman’s ‘Night, Mother

In Norman's *Night, Mother*, Jessie as a Lacanian subject, is stuck in the complication of Lacan’s interrelated orders, and is annoyed by such senses as alienation, frustration, pain, and loss that consequently force her to commit suicide. The first of Lacan’s orders is the Imaginary order which is the order of an imaginary completeness and satisfaction for the child. Jessie is away from this, and she thinks her mother can fill the loss she has suffered from due to being away from the Imaginary order, but this mother cannot match the mother that she had in her mind with whom she could feel safe and secure, since this image of the mother in the Imaginary order completely differs from the mother she has now. This causes some disorders in Jessie's personality described in detail here. As Reuning believes, “Jessie emphasizes her lack of hope as one of the main justifications for her eventual suicide” (2002, p. 61). She decided to get married, but this act, as an object of her desire, could not satisfy her needs. She was not able to have a good marital life and she divorced; thereby, she shifts her desire to having a child through which she might find solace and the real condition she is seeking in life, but her son turned to be addicted and also a thief, and with him, she can never have the same satisfaction she had in the imaginary order because she knows that her son shall never become a good person. And finally, she finds death the only way to find her real place. For Jessie, suicide is not a joke. She really wants to commit it because she is frustrated. As Drew writes, “Nothing in the universe makes her believe that time will improve things. Thus, she embraces suicide as her way of triumphing over time” (1996, p. 87).

Jessie’s mother has not ever noticed how incomplete their mother-daughter relationship has been. Now, the daughter has decided to kill herself, so the mother tries to say something to prevent her from doing this. She says the gun is too old to work, but Jessie does not accept this and continues being prepared to kill herself with it. Thelma warns her that if

she kills herself, she will go to hell, but Jessie criticizes this religious belief. Thelma tries to create a hope in Jessie to discourage her from committing suicide, but it is useless. Thelma is unsuccessful in discouraging her from killing herself and says "Who am I talking to? You're gone already, aren't you?" (Norman, 1983, p. 51). This statement by Thelma establishes her realization that Jessie has now smashed the mirror that bonds them together (Ginter Brown, 1996, p. 82). After seeing this uselessness, she also tries to do something physically for prevention, but Jessie does not accept any of her trials because of her deep personal losses; therefore, feelings of depression and abandonment force her to commit suicide. Brustein asserts that "Jessie wants to use her last moments to explore her relationship with her mother and recall their past. She is full of recrimination" (1996, p. 160).

Jessie is so frustrated and hopeless that she says, "I'm tired, I'm hurt. I feel sad. I feel used." (Norman, 1983, p. 22). When her mother criticizes Jessie's husband for leaving her, Jessie explains, "Mama, you don't pack your garbage when you move." (p. 41). Knowing herself as garbage shows her deeply embedded suffering and the vainness of life in the world outside and the world within her.

Another prevailing Lacanian theory in the play is 'master/slave relation' which allows the subjects to achieve other's recognition. To get recognition as a master, the subjects have to impose their idea upon an "other". On the one hand, this other also desires recognition of being master; thus, he does the same and hence, there would be an aggressive battle between them. Even after determining positions, the aggressiveness will stay as a result of slave's feeling of disappointment, envy, and injustice. This fight for recognition will be a "fight to the death" (*Écrits*, 1977, p. 259). On the other hand, the master needs an "alive being" as "slave" to recognize and confirm her or him as master. The characters' speeches and behaviors in *Night, Mother* depict their desire for being master. Such as Thelma's kind of speech that defeats Jessie repeatedly to gain the authority for being pure master.

**MAMA:** Jessie! (*In quiet horror*) How dare you... how dare you! You think you can just leave whenever you want, like you're watching television here. No. You can't, Jessie... (Norman, 1983, p. 55).

**JESSIE:** Don't try and stop me, Mama, you can't do it.

**MAMA:** (*Grabbing her again, this time hard*) I can too! I'll stand in front of this hall and you can't get past me. (*They struggle*) You'll have to knock me down to get away from me, Jessie. I'm not about to let you ... (*MAMA struggles with JESSIE at the door and in the struggle, JESSIE gets away from her and ...*) (p. 57, 1983).

The type of Thelma's talking to Jessie shows that she is always demanding and asking her to do something for her, and in spite of using kind words, she has control over her. She wants Jessie to paint her nails, she orders "hand me that basket hon" (Norman, 1983, p. 55). "Now my glasses, please" (1983, p. 11). "Measure this for me" (p. 11). Jessie desires to regain autonomy by asserting her identity in her own way. Meanwhile, in *Night, Mother*, Thelma follows the life determined to her. She has to eat sweets and watch television although she admits: "I don't know what I'm here for, but then I don't think about it". (p. 34). Here, it can be seen that Thelma is acting passively towards her role and identity in life. She has chosen the easy way to avoid struggle and disturbance and tries to impose this way of living to Jessie, but Jessie is a self-assertive and determined character in spite of being destructive. She assumes control of her life and chooses death rather than to face an unfulfilled life like her mother's. She refuses to submit to society that forces its rules on her, and her attempt to commit suicide is a desire to prove her identity. While Jessie finds a way in committing suicide to have control over her life, she tells her mother:

**JESSIE:** I can't do anything either, about my life, to change it, make it better, make me feel better, make me feel better about it. Like it better, make work. But I can stop it ... It's all I really have that belongs to me and I'm going to say what happens to it. (p. 26).

Jessie says "It's time I did something about it" (p. 25). The important point is that she has chosen this particular night to end her life. Ironically, she gains control over her own life by taking control of when and how she will die. Her suicide as Browder asserts "arms her with a power, a sense of control over her life" (1989, p. 110). Suicide is a victory for Jessie.

For Lacan, language is the point at which the subject or identity is constructed through interactions with the Other and the others who determine our identity as a subject. Here, the others and Other give the subject an identity through which he recognizes the identity given to him. In this process of alienation, entering the Symbolic order, the subject is forced to accept the existence of the Other since the subject is now empty and without identity, and it is through his interactions with the others that his identity is created and recreated. The subject has no identity by itself except by the social statue he receives in the society. It has to obey the rules and values upon which a society is founded.

In *Night, Mother*, the psychological continuity between the staged Jessie and Thelma scenes reveals first, that the process of internalizing social norms holds the very depth of Jessie's relationship to herself and others, and second, that the family is the first and most vicious site wherein certain "emotional restrictions" (Miller, 1986, p. 95) become instituted and regulated. Considering Jessie's family background, she is divorced, she suffers from epilepsy, her son has turned into a drug addict and thief, she has tried to hold a job but she could not, and she has no friends. She decides to commit suicide. Jessie's husband left her because she was accustomed to smoking. According to Ginter Brown, "This smoking is an oral fixation" (1996, p. 79) which means that she wants to go back to her Imaginary order, but she is unsuccessful. Morrow believes that "Jessie associates smoking 'with power and self-determination'... smoking offers Jessie a sense of predictability and control—if only negative control—over her destiny" (1996, p. 29). She coolly tells her mother that she plans to kill herself later that evening.

**MAMA:** (*Coming over, now, taking over now*): What are you doing?

**JESSIE:** The barrel has to be clean, Mama. Old powder, dust gets in it ...

**MAMA:** What for?

**JESSIE:** I told you.

**MAMA:** (*Reaching for the gun*): And I told you, we don't get criminals out here.

**JESSIE:** (*Quickly pulling it to her*): And I told you ... (*Then trying to be calm*) The gun is for me.

**MAMA:** Well, you can have it if you want. When I die, you'll get it anyway.

**JESSIE:** I'm going to kill myself, Mama.

**MAMA:** (*Returning to the sofa*) Very funny. Very funny.

**JESSIE:** I am.

**MAMA:** You are not! Don't even say such a thing, Jessie.

**JESSIE:** How would you know if I didn't say it? You want it to be a surprise? You're lying in your bed or maybe you're just brushing your teeth and you hear this... noise down the hall?

**MAMA:** Kill yourself.

**JESSIE:** Shoot myself. (Norman, 1983, pp. 13-14).

Jessie's mother is the first 'Big Other' for her who has imposed many of her problems on her. Thelma says at the end of the play that "I didn't know! I was here with you all the time. How could I know you were so alone?" (1983, p. 57). Jessie had to deal with this 'Big Other' at first, but this mother who was the first one imposing rules on her, could not help her make proper connections in the society, and in the Symbolic Order, Jessie did not learn how to help herself. She knows her mother guilty because of not giving her enough information about her epilepsy.

Considering the-Name-of-the-Father, Jessie's Imaginary father is a good image in her mind as a father, but not a good image for her mother as a husband because Thelma did not ever love him and Jessie is quite aware of this. It seems that Jessie's father had been a good father for her, because Thelma says, "Oh I see. He died and left you stuck with me and you are mad about it." (p. 33). And Jessie replies, "Not any more. He didn't mean to" (p. 33). Or if he had been a bad father, Jessie justifies it, and it shows that the laws and rules imposed on her in the Symbolic order made her lose self-esteem and accept her bitter fate. All supports and aids she could have taken from patriarchal forces and "others" are now castrated, and she feels so helpless that she wants to kill herself. Lacan says that "the real father is the agent of symbolic castration" (*Seminar XVII*, 1969-70, p. 160), so her real father, being her biologically dead father, or just a symbolic one, is of no help to her to continue. Although she has married, her last name is still 'Cates' showing that her father had a great role in forming her characteristic. He is dead and she is suffering from this absence of father. The position of Symbolic father can be occupied by any subject who exercises the paternal function like others' discourse; nobody can completely fill this position; So, Symbolic father is not a certain person, but a position that makes law and order for subject. The Symbolic father for both Jessie and Thelma, are all those patriarchal forces in the society and in the house that have put them in this situation as described by Jessie in an ironic sentence, "I didn't have to come here. We've been through this" (Norman, 1983, p. 33). By depicting all Jessie's problems, Norman reflects the patriarchal forces that drive a normal woman to the point of extreme anxiety, because of which Jessie wants to kill herself than allow those forces to kill her.

In '*Night, Mother*', Jessie also confronts a community of 'others' as well as her own past self, and struggles to find the proper responses to each. The play provokes us to think about the existing social systems, influences and realistic consequences. The reality about Jessie is that she has few choices and most of them are unattractive. '*Night, Mother*' reveals to what a great extent, an individual's life is influenced by the society. Jessie suffers from physical, mental, emotional and social humiliation, and there is also a deeper familial background which the society has shaped for her. As she has suffered a series of personal losses, she is not only depressed, but she is also feeling betrayed and abandoned. Or as she first explains: "I'm tired, I'm hurt. I'm sad. I feel used" (1983, p. 14).

In '*Night, Mother*', the female characters are controlled by a male-centered belief system, and while Thelma has satisfied herself with her silent existence, Jessie chooses to confront authority, take control of her life, and kill herself. According to Ginter Brown, "Jessie has no standing in the community either. Isolated ... she cannot hold a job" (1996, p. 80). There is no patriarchal force to help her. Her husband has left her. Her son is a thief, and "The other man in her life, her brother Dawson, offers her no familial sense of community" (Ginter Brown, 1996, p. 80). With all these social problems, "not surprisingly, Jessie recedes from society" (Reuning, 2002, p. 60). Through her suicide, she denies her identity imposed on her by others. Browder believes that without the sense of oneself apart from others, one's sense of meaning is defined by other choices (1989, p. 111). This is true about Jessie whose life has lost its meaning. Jessie and Thelma in '*Night, Mother*' both have been denied autonomy. Thelma had to tolerate a loveless marriage, and Jessie's separation from her husband forced her to live with her mother. Her disease prevents her from the ability to work and form relationships:

**JESSIE:** You know I couldn't work, I can't do anything. I've never been around people my whole life except when I went to the hospital. I could have a seizure at anytime. What good a job? The kind of job I could get would make me worse. (Norman, 1983, p. 26).

Thelma and Jessie are isolated in Thelma's house. Their house is a metaphoric prison in which both women are imprisoned. Consequently they are denied from their identity in that masculine society and must accept the identities constructed for them by patriarchy. Kundert-Gibbs believes that "Jessie's suicide will, in fact, rupture the anesthetizing cocoon of isolated routine to which the two have grown accustomed, a daily ritual that protects the women, yet at the same time cuts them off from the outside world" (1996, p. 50). Jessie represents a group of women who are fed up with their bitter life and insist on defining their identities by resisting oppression. Jessie finds in committing suicide a way to have control of her life. She tells her mother:

**JESSIE:** I can't do anything either, about my life, to change it, make it better, make me feel better, make me feel better about it. Like it better, make work. But I can stop it .... It's all I really have that belongs to me and I'm going to say what happens to it. (Norman, 1983, p. 26).

Like Jessie, Thelma has no place in the society. As Kundert-Gibbs asserts, "By the end of the play, there almost seems to be no outside world for Thelma to contact" (1996, p. 50). In this play, Norman presents women as victims of larger and complex structure of authority and judgment, the restrictive system beliefs, norms, and standards of patriarchal society which is the source of entrapment. From the very beginning of the play Jessie makes clear that she is performing a deliberate act to take control over herself and her own life. Her suicide is not a matter of ending a life that has no meaning; rather, it is the matter of acquiring autonomy and independence over herself, of doing something entirely for herself and without thinking of anyone else as she has been doing throughout her whole life. By committing suicide, "she is taking hold of her life. She is making a decision" (Porter, 1989, p. 56). For the first time in her life, Jessie does not play the role the others want her to be: as she dies, she finally gets to be who she really is.

Regarding what Lacan believed, in finding ourselves again in the Imaginary order, we try everything in our life to get the same satisfaction we had in the past. Yet, our desires are always deferred for another desire and object *petit a*. According to Evans, *object petit a* is the object which can never be attained, which is really the cause of desire rather than that towards which desire tends (2006, p. 125). Also, it is a title given to the lack produced after the infant's entry into the symbolic; that which is lost when the individual becomes a subject. As such, it is both the object of the subject's desire and its cause. As we are full of unquenchable desires to be satisfied, our satisfaction we get from every desire is not enough and we desire something more. We think it should be more in order for us to experience more pleasure and satisfaction. This wanting more and more is called *Jouissance*. In the play, Jessie tries to reach that sense of pleasure in life but her emotional life is dominated by a sense of helplessness, hopelessness, and an uncontrollable lonely feeling. She expresses her feeling through the following lines:

**JESSIE:** I can't do anything either, about my life, to change it, make it better; make me feel better about it. Like it better, make it work. But I can stop it. Shut it down, turn it off like the radio when there's nothing on I want to listen to. It's all I really have that belongs to me and I'm going to say what happens to it. And it's going to stop. And I'm going to stop it. So. Let's just have a good time." (Norman, 1983, p. 26).

After all her failures in life, Jessie's unconscious mind finds suicide a rational action. She describes it as private, personal and freely chosen. Jessie's will power and mental state seem unchangeable from the beginning-- she has no desire to be saved, and her object *petit a* or her objects of desires turn to be suicide as she has such constant sense that something is lacking or missing from her life, and as Mama occasionally recognizes, she is already gone. Brustein writes that Jessie "waited and waited to fulfill the promise of her childhood, but it never happened" (1996, p. 160). Jessie confesses that:

**JESSIE:** I found an old baby picture of me. And it was somebody else, not me. It was somebody pink and fat who never heard of sick or lonely, somebody who cried and got fed, and reached up and got held and kicked but didn't hurt anybody, and slept whenever she wanted to, just by closing her eyes. Somebody who mainly just laid there and laughed at the colors waving around over her head and chewed on a polka-dot whale and woke up knowing some new trick nearly every day and rolled over and drooled on the sheet and felt your hand pulling my quilt back up over me. That's who I started out and this is who is left. (*There is no self-pity here*). That's what this is about. It's somebody I lost ... it's my own self. Who I never was. Or who I tried to be and never got there. Somebody I waited for who never came. And never will. So, see, it doesn't much matter what else happens in the world or in this house ... I'm what was worth waiting for and I didn't make it. Me ... who might have made a difference to me ... I'm not going to show up, so there's no reason to stay, except to keep you company, and that's ... not reason enough because I'm not ...very good company (Norman, 1983, p. 50).

All through her life, Jessie has been living a life that she feels was not really hers, but somebody else's. She has been trying hard to be someone she truly is not. Jessie's life is full of loss and lack, loss of a spouse, loss of a father, estrangement because of her brother and son, and a physical disability. She always tries to realize and satisfy her desires but gets disappointed, and if there is any kind of satisfaction, it is not the one she has expected and is never enough she always thinks that there is something more, something she has missed out on, something more she could have had; this something more according to Lacan is *jouissance*. Jessie says "It feels good to be right about it" (p. 34). She means it feels good to be right about her miseries and losses. This being right is a lack and torture, and Jessie says that she feels well with being right about it. This is the point of "*Jouissance*" for her. She feels well with deciding to kill herself. She does not really know what it is but assumes that it is there or must be there because she is always dissatisfied. Fink

discusses “Object a as . . . remainder of the hypothetical mother-child unity to which the subject clings in fantasy to achieve a sense of wholeness, as the Other’s desire, as the Jouissance object” (1995, p. 83).

Furthermore, we generally attribute this lack and desire to the Other; the Other is believed to experience a level of enjoyment beyond our own experience. In Marsha Norman’s *Night, Mother*, the image of loss and lack is converted and adapted to depict the life and death struggle that takes place on stage in real time as Thelma tries to prevent Jessie from committing suicide and Jessie tries to gain control of her own life by ending it. This clash between mother and daughter permits the truth to be visible and voiced for the first time. We know from the first few lines of dialogue that Jessie intends to kill herself and finds out that the only way for her to survive is to complete a task that gives meaning to her life. Lynda Hart points out that “as the play opens, Jessie has exhausted all the images that might have sustained . . . she has long awaited the arrival of a self to call her own” (1987, p. 75). For Jessie, death is her object of desire. There are many objects that are causes of her desire, but the cause itself is hidden from the direct view; therefore, it is ineffable and elusive, and this reveals the reality of a void or lack in her world. This lack further creates a separation or split in her subjectivity and leads her to her favorite way to gain power i.e. to committing suicide at the end.

#### 4. Conclusion

In Norman's *Night, Mother*, Jessie as a Lacanian subject, is stuck in the complication of Lacanian interrelated orders (Imaginary, Symbolic, and the Real), and is annoyed by such senses as alienation, frustration, pain, and loss, and her *Object petit a* is never gained, so her object of desire turns to be ‘suicide’. These all consequently force her to commit suicide.

In *Night, Mother*, Jessie confronts a community of ‘others’ as well as her own past self, and struggles to find the proper responses to each. *Night, Mother* reveals that an individual’s life is influenced by the society and what imposed on him or her in the Symbolic order. Jessie suffers from physical, mental, emotional and social humiliation, and there is also a deeper familial background which the society and the Symbolic father have shaped for her. As she has suffered from a series of personal losses, she feels so miserable and abandoned that she ironically feels well in being right about her miseries, and this shows the point of Lacan’s ‘Jouissance’ for her. Jessie is the ‘slave’ among many masters that are ‘others’ who have imposed many cruel issues on her. These ‘others’ are patriarchal forces and also her mother who has been the first “Big Other” for her. Jessie’s suicide is the matter of acquiring autonomy and independence over herself.

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