



BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

IN DRAMA *AUGUST: OSAGE COUNTY* (2007) BY TRACY LETTS

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Abstract

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of Borderline Personality Disorder which is represented by the main character and to know the contribution of the plot, setting, and character in revealing the Borderline Personality Disorder. This analysis is related to the concept neurosis by Freud that is supported by the text-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows the main character has Borderline Personality Disorder that can be seen from the main character's inappropriate emotional reactions and highly self-destructive behaviors.

Key words: *Borderline Personality Disorder, neurosis.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Family is the smallest unit of environment. It is not just a place for a father, mother and children to gather. A family is actually more than that. It carries out its role as a social system that can shape the character and morals of a child. It is a place where a child grows and develops which influences the formation of the child's personality. It is because children's first education starts from parents or family. That's why childhood experience is a very important factor for further development. The attitudes of parents in daily life will be a vehicle for children's moral education, forming children social development and for creating children to be a kind man. A harmonious family will form children to be a good person who follow the norm. If an individual lacks of family and society support, he/she can lead to a poor mental health condition. A mental illness is a health problem that significantly affects how a person feels, thinks, behaves, and interacts with other people. The extent to which person suffer from a mental illness can endanger not only the person self, but also the people near he/she such as her/his family.

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There are several kinds of mental illness; one of them is Borderline Personality Disorder or known as BPD. According to Gale Encyclopedia of Psychology (2001) Borderline Personality Disorder is a long-standing pattern of instability and impulsive behavior beginning in early adulthood that impacts the way people think and feel about themselves. It is a disorder of mood and how a person interacts with others.

There many people who suffer from Borderline Personality Disorder. For example, Nonhle Thema, she is a famous twitter actress from South Africa. According to Ancillar Mangena in *Too Many Suffer In Silence-The Sad Story Of Mental Illness in Africa* Forbes (2017), Thema suffers from mental illness and loneliness because of her society and environment. She tries to fill the void through partying and alcohol.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the play script *August: Osage County* (2007) by Tracy Letts is done through text-based interpretation. Fictional devices such as character, plot and spectacle are used to analyze this play script. These devices are related each other. Character is used to reveal the Borderline Personality Disorder by analyzing character belief, attitude, and behavior or action. Action/plot is used to acknowledge the conflicts the character faced. Then setting is also an important device as it is situation, atmosphere and condition exist in the play script in order to reveal the characters cannot handle her problem and has mental disorder. In addition, these elements are analyzed based on the concept psychological concept by Sigmund Freud: neurosis.

C. DISCUSSION

This chapter analyses the play's dramatic elements such as character, plot (conflict) and setting to reveal about Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). BPD in this analysis refers to the action of the main character of the play who indicates a symptom of BPD. In this analysis, BPD can be seen through two ways; inappropriate emotional reactions and highly self-destructive behaviors.

1. Inappropriate Emotional Reactions

The first indication of BPD suffered by the character can be seen through her inappropriate emotional reaction. The main character easily changes her mood from happy to be angry or also called mood swings. She insults and dehumanizes her daughter whenever she wants. She has a very sensitive feeling.

The protagonist easily changes her mood from happy to be angry. It appears in the following quotation:

Violet: Do you think I'm pretty?
Johhna: Yes, ma'am.

Violet (Curtseys again.) Like ... this?
(Curtseys again.) Like this ... (Curtseys
lower, stumbles, catches herself)
Beverly: Careful.
Violet (Still to Johnna.) You're the house
now. I'm sorry, I ... I took some
medicine for my mussssss ... muscular.
Beverly: Why don't you go back to bed,
sweetheart?
Violet: Why don't you go fuck a fucking
sow's ass?
Beverly: All right.
Violet: I'm sorry. I'll be sickly sweet.
I'm soooooooooo sweet. In-el-abrially
sweet. (4)

The text above shows that the emotions of the main character change dramatically from being happy to be angry. The setting refers to the tense condition in the house. This is caused by the husband of Violet who hires new maids in their homes. This condition leads to internal conflicts that make her depressed and feel fear she will be replaced by the maid. She has a trauma about with her past. She had been betrayed by her husband; it triggered her and could not control her emotions to her husband. The utterance *Do you think I'm pretty?* shows that the main character wants recognition of herself that she is also beautiful and wants to be praised. The change in atmosphere and the way the main character talks to their helpers compared to the way she talks to her husband shows that she has feelings or emotions that she has held for a long time. The utterance *Why don't you go back to bed, sweetheart?* is points out that her husband tries to treat her well and make amends that made his wife suffers. The answer of the main character *Why don't you go fuck a fucking sow's ass?* shows that the main character has no longer control her emotions and cannot tolerate her husband anymore even though she is treated gently. This shows that a mental burden suffered by the main character is very heavy and makes her behave like a rude person. She uses her words as a way to cut the pain she has. The next sentence of Violet after swearing to her husband: *I'm sorry. I'll be sickly sweet. I'm soooooooooo sweet. In-el-abrially sweet* shows her significant mood swings. She easily changes her emotion and becomes a different person in second.

She insults and dehumanizes her daughter whenever she wants. It can be seen in the following quotation below:

Violet: You're the prettiest of my three
girls, but you always look like a schlub.
Why don't you wear makeup?
Ivy: Do I need makeup?

Violet : All women need makeup. Don't let anybody tell you different. The only woman who was pretty enough to go without makeup was Elizabeth Taylor and she wore a ton. Stand up straight.

Ivy : Mom.

Violet: Your shoulders are slumped and your hair's all straight and you don't wear makeup. You look like a lesbian.

(11)

The quotation above shows how the protagonist insults her daughter. The setting is an irony condition. The conflict is the trauma feeling because of the betrayal of her husband. This external conflict triggerres tension from the main character and makes her vent her emotions to anyone especially her child. The sentence *Don't let anybody tell you different* shows that she is a hypocritical person because she does not want other people to look down on her child, while she does it herself first. The utterance *The only woman who was pretty enough to go without makeup was Elizabeth Taylor and she wore a ton. Stand up straight* indicates that the main character likes to regulate her child's life by pressing and forcing her own will. The main character tries to rule her daughter's style. It shows that she wants her daughter looks beautiful and she will never get the same experience as her past. The utterance *You should be slumped and your hair's all straight and you don't wear makeup. You look like a lesbian* implies that she is a judgmental person by other appearances. She assumes that appearance is the key to has a good life.

Another quotation that supports about insults and dehumanizes her daughter whenever she wants is:

Violet: Where are you living now, Bill?
Do you want this old sideboard?

Bill: I beg your pardon.

Violet: You and Barbara are separated, right? Or you divorced already?

Bill:...We're separated.

Violet: (to Barbara) Thought you could slip that one by me, didn't you?

Barbara: What is the matter with you?

(p.88)

The above quote shows that the main character does not care about a place or situation to insult her child. The setting refers to the sad condition after her husband's funeral. The conflict is the betrayal from her husband in the past. It leads to internal conflicts and makes the main character unable to hold herself back and insults her children's household. The main character likes to corner her

child as a release from her failure household. The sentence Thought you could slip that one by me, didn't you? shows that the main character is a caring person even though she has a sharp tongue. She is a meticulous person for the change, especially her family. The way she corners the relationship of her child's household is actually the impingement of the pain she had received because of her household failure and her husband's betrayal. It can be seen from the next quotation:

Violet: Nobody slips anything by me. I know what's what. Your father thought he's slipping one by me, right? No way. I'm sorry you two're having trouble, maybe you can work it out. Bev'n I separated a few times, course we didn't call it that. (49)

The quotation above shows that she has an agony with her husband. The fact she still maintaining her household shows that she sacrificed her feelings despite being betrayed. This shows that the main character has a deep pain for many years in living her household. The utterance *Bev'n I separated a few times, course we didn't call it that.* show that the main character put aside the pain and suffers for the integrity of his family. She still returns despite fighting many times. She sacrificed for his family. She releases the tense condition by insulting her family.

She has a very sensitive feeling. It can be seen from the quotation below:

Barbara: Three days ago... I had to identify my father's corpse. Now I'm supposed to sit here and listen to you viciously attack each and every member of this family --
Violet rises, her voice booming.
Violet: Attack my family?! You ever been attacked in your sweet spoiled life?! Tell her 'bout attacks, Mattie Fae, tell her what an attack looks like! (87)

The text above shows that the main character is very sensitive and easily offended by her child's words. She cannot accept and admit her mistakes. The setting refers to a sad situation. Conflict in this situation is the death of her husband. Her daughter's sentence *Three days ago... I had to identify my father's corpse. Now I'm supposed to sit here and listen to you viciously attack each and every member of this family* – shows that all family members are sad and depressed due to Mr. Beverly's death. This leads to the internal conflict of the main character, it makes her became very sensitive and irritable. Her husband's death with her daughter's words scrapes the trauma of her past. The treatment of her parents in the past made her save fear and trauma. It leaves behind permanently. She becomes a

person who links everything to something else and will not be blamed. The utterance *Attack my family?! You ever been attacked in your sweet spoiled life?! Tell her 'bout attacks, Mattie Fae, tell her what an attack looks like!* shows that she has been treated so badly in her childhood. How she thinks about the attack is not only has an argument but also a torture. It implies that she had a terrible childhood. She had a nightmare experience. The trauma about the past makes her very sensitive and links every word with her experience.

The other quotation that supports the main character has a sensitive feeling is:

Violet starts to break down, sits on the lidded toilet.

Violet: Yes, I'm in pain. I have got...gotten cancer. In my mouth. And it burns like a... bullshit. And Beverly's disappeared and you're yelling at me.

Barbara: I'm not yelling at you.

Violet: You couldn't come home when I got cancer but as soon as Beverly disappeared you rushed back --

Barbara: I'm sorry... you're right. I'm sorry.

Barbara kneels, takes her mother's hand.

(37)

The quotation above shows the mental fragility of the main character. The setting here refers to a sad atmosphere. Conflict is the main character's daughter is cares less to the main character. This triggered an internal conflict that makes her breakable. The quote You can't come home when I got cancer but as soon as Beverly disappeared you rushed backas well as showed a deep jealousy of the main character to her daughter's treatment toward her husband. Her children love her husband more than to her. The main character wants attention and affection because of her illness. She wants her child to take care of her in her old days and her illness. The utterance Yes, I'm in pain. I have got...gotten cancer. In my mouth. And it burns like a... bullshit. And Beverly's disappeared and you're yelling at me, shows a physically and mentally affliction. The physical suffering is a pain because of the mouth cancer she has. Mental suffering is a burden that must be borne by her because there is no place to share. The fact that her husband disappeared makes her feel lonely. Her daughter does not care about her condition; it adds more sadness so she became very sensitive. The sentence of her daughter I'm not yelling at you, it shows that the main character feels everyone attack her and hate her. This is caused by the lack of love and happiness from her family. She is full of fear and sorrow.

In summary, the character's inappropriate emotional reaction is the essential thing that indicates someone has Borderline Personality Disorder. The dominant

settings here are sad and tense conditions. The tense condition refers to the mental oppression such as fear, loneliness, trauma, sadness, and sorrow. The external and internal conflict can be seen in the way the main character acts and release her suffering. The inappropriate emotional reaction of the character is strongly shown in her actions and words in her daily life. Moreover, her inappropriate emotional reaction can be seen through her mood swings, the way she insults her daughter whenever she wants, and her sensitive feeling.

2. Highly Self-Destructive Behaviors

The Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) from the character's tendency to highly destruct herself. Addition to pill consumption and heavy smoking habit are two indications of BPD. She takes a lot of pain killer and gets addicted. She manipulates her doctor to get a lot of painkillers. She smokes a lot of cigarettes. She smokes every time she has a chance.

She takes a lot of pain killer and being addicted can be seen from the quotation below:

Barbara: You're a drug addict.

Violet: That is the truth! That's what I'm getting at! I, everybody listen... I am a drug addict. I am addicted to drugs, pills, especially downers.

Violet: Y'see these little blue babies? These are my best fucking friends and they never let me down. Try to get 'em away from me and I'll eat you alive.

(90)

The text above shows that the main character destroys herself by consuming drugs over the limit. The setting refers to the tense situation due to a fight. This is caused by the family of the main character who never existed for her when she needs them. This makes the main character feel depressed and suffering. She always feels alone and has no place to tell her problem. This makes her release the pressure by consuming the pills. The sentence *These are my best fucking friends and they never let me down.* shows that the main character used has a miserable life so her only friend is a pill. The fact that she was dependent on the pill shows that she had taken it quite a long time without supervision. This shows that the main character has not been properly cared for by her family. The words they *never let me down* points out that the main character feel upset because of her family. She doesn't care about her health. She just wants the pain she was carrying away. Both physical and mental. The main character chooses to run away from the problems she has and vent her grief to the pill so she escapes from reality. The utterance *Try to get 'em away from me and I'll eat you alive.* shows that the main character is stubborn and does not want to listen to what others suggest, even

though it is for her own good. The main character curses and yells at others as a defense for what she wants even though she knows the pills destroy her.

Another quotation that supports about takes a lot of pain killer and being addicted can be seen in the following quotation:

(She takes a pill.) That's for me...one for me... (She picks up...Meadowlark, flips to the dedication.) "Dedicated to my Violet..." (She drops the book on the desk. She takes a pill.) ...You think I'll weep for you? Think I'll play that part... (She takes a pill.) You made your choice. You made this happen (58).

The quotation above shows that the main character takes a pill in terrible doses. The setting refers to the sad condition. This is caused by her husband's death. In this passage, the main character is unable to process her sadness and anxiety. She unable to face the fact of having to take care of the bills and house all by her now that her husband is gone. She realizes that she will be the one who will run the house. She unable to deal with the fear feelings that come with the responsibility. Taking pills is the way to ignore her thought about her responsibility after her husband's death. The utterance *You think I'll weep for you? Think I'll play that part* shows that she tries to deny her sadness. She pretends like she is fine with her husband's death but the reality is she cannot hold her agony.

Another quotation that supports about takes a lot of pain killer and being addicted can be seen in the following quotation:

Violet: Gizza cig ... some cigezze? Cig-zezz, cig-zizz. cig-uhzzz. (She laughs at her own inability to speak. Sheriff Gilbeau takes a Pall Mall from his shirt pocket, hands it to her. She stands, sways, holding the cigarette in her mouth. He lights it.) In the archa, archa-tex? I'm in the bottom. Izza bottom of them. Inna ... ell. (She shuffles (30)

The text above shows that she has the inability to control the effect the drugs are having on her body. The setting refers to the sad condition. This is caused by her husband's death. The drugs have taken over her capability to do so, thus causing her to murmur her words. The utterance *Gizza cig ... some cigezze? Cig-zezz, cig-zizz. cig-uhzzz...* implies that she murmurs her words because she is under drugs influence. She is unable to handle the possibility of her husband disappearing forever. In trying to escape her own situation, she gets unconscious by the pills. This desperate attempt to escape reality is shown through her uncontrollable and

murmured speech. Along with her speech, the main character's major actions in this play also prove her need to escape reality with drugs.

She manipulates her doctor to get a lot of pain killer can be seen from the quotation below:

Ivy: Here's how she does it: she sees a doctor for back spasms and gets a prescription. Day or two later she goes back, says she lost her pills and he writes her another one. Then next week she pulls a muscle, more pills, then the dosage is wrong, more pills, over and over, until she makes one too many trips and he says I'm not prescribing anymore. And she pulls a sheaf of prescription receipts out of her purse and says, "I'll go to the AMA and have your ass in court for over-prescribing me." She genuinely threatens these men and they give in to her.

(53)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that the main character manipulates the doctor to satisfy her desire to take drugs. The setting refers to the tense atmosphere. This is caused by doctors who give many prescriptions to the main character. The physical pain of the main character makes her addicted to sedatives. Coupled with the pain of feeling betrayed by her family makes her, even more, want to have peace in the wrong way. It is by taking a sedative pill. The main character is a smart person. This can be seen from the shrewdness in manipulating the doctor to get the sedative. As shown by the phrase Day or two later she goes back, says she lost her pills and he write her another one.

She smokes a lot of cigarettes can be seen in the quotation below:

Violet: Like a son-of-a-bitch. My tongue is on fire.

Ivy: Are you supposed to be smoking?

Violet: Is anybody supposed to smoke?

Ivy: You have cancer of the mouth.

Violet: Ivy. I have enough to worry about right this minute without you getting on me about my smoking (11)

The quotation above shows that the main character always tries to ignore her child's anxiety because of her smoking habit. The setting refers to the irony

situation. This is caused by the main character's smoking habit. She continued to smoke even though she knows it is harmful for her health. The main character is very stubborn and does not listen to other people's suggestions. This is evidenced by the quote *Ivy. I have enough to worry about right this minute.* This sentence shows the main character understanding that she has a wrong and dangerous habit. Smoking is an escape for the main character from all the burdens she suffered; physically or mentally. She tries to behave as if everything is fine and she is not sick. This shows that the main character is not ready to face the problems that lead to running away from smoking. The sentence *I have enough to worry about right this point out that the main character is aware and knows about her actions.*

Another quotation that supports about the character's strong smoking habit can be seen in the quotation below:

Violet: Gizza cig ... some cigezze? Cig-zezz, cig-zizz. cig-uhzzz. (She laughs at her own inability to speak. Sheriff Glbeau takes a Pall Mall from his shirt pocket, hands it to her. She stands, sways, holding the cigarette in her mouth. He lights it.) In the archa, archa-tex? I'm in the bottom. Izza bottom of them. Inna ... ell. (She shuffles (30)

The quotation above shows that the main character smokes a lot of cigarettes whenever she has a change. Setting refers to the sad condition. It is caused by her husband's death. It leads to the internal conflict of the character. She feels she has lost her husband forever. The agony of being alone in the future makes her unable to hold the pain by herself. She still wants to smoke even though she is under influence. The utterance *Gizza cig ... some cigezze? Cig-zezz, cig-zizz. cig-uhzzz.* shows that her mind still wants to smoke even though she is unconscious.

In conclusion, highly self-destructive behaviors are another symptom that indicates the character has Borderline Personality Disorder. The dominant settings are sad conditions and tense conditions that surrounded the character life. It is caused by the death of the main character's husband. She carries the misery and fear feeling being alone in the future after her husband death. She releases the pain that she suffers by destructing herself. She becomes addicted to the drugs. She manipulates the doctor to get the pills. She smokes a lot of cigarettes. All of her acts are harmful for her health and all confirmed the BPD she suffers.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The play *August: Osage County* (2007), written by Tracy Letts, reflects Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). The Analysis of this play deals with the concept of Freud which is the neurosis concept. It refers to the actions of the main character that indicates she has the symptoms of BPD. It can be seen from her inappropriate emotional reaction and her highly self-destructive behaviors.

The character's inappropriate emotional reaction is the essential thing that indicates someone has Borderline Personality Disorder. She has mental oppression such as fear, loneliness, trauma, sadness, and sorrow. The external and internal conflict can be seen in the way the main character acts and release her suffering. The inappropriate emotional reaction of the character can be seen through her actions and words. She thinks more about pain rather than struggle. She cannot seek change to change the way of life. She is a pessimist person that full of fear, trauma, and affliction. The character's inappropriate emotional reaction can be seen through her mood swings, the way she insults her daughter whenever she wants, and her sensitive feeling.

Highly self-destructive behaviors are another symptom that indicates the character has Borderline Personality Disorder. The external conflict is the death of the main character's husband. It makes the main character carries a burden and agony because of her lost. She carries the misery and fear feeling being alone in the future after her husband death. She takes a wrong way to release her pain. She destructs herself and becomes addicted to the drug. She manipulates the doctor to get the pill and consumes it out of control. She has a bad smoking habit and ignore her health condition.

The borderline personality disorder is characterized by psychological instability in several areas such as interpersonal relations, behavior, and identity. In this analysis, the symptoms of BPD are done by the main character. She has an unpredictable mood. She cannot control her emotions. She easily swears to the other. She insults everyone especially her daughters. She destructs herself with a harmful habit. She takes a pain killer as a drug and being addicted. She ignores the suggestion from other. She is a stubborn person. She does these activities to release the pain she has. She has a trauma with her childhood. She got violent abuse by her parents. She is cheated by her husband. She has sorrow because of the betrayal of her husband with her sister. She is lack of her children's love. She releases all of her sorrow in the wrong way. These symptoms emphasize that the main character has a Borderline Personality Disorder.

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