



Educational Institution and Authority in David Mamet's *Oleanna*
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Abstract

David Mamet is renowned as the greatest playwright for offering a real image of the capitalist system of America in his works. Mamet is among the numerous American dramatists who have analyzed the situations of capitalism in America. He tackles the social difficulties of America in detail because of his life experiences and the conditions of people in such a capitalist culture. In so doing, Mamet shows how middle-status individuals are treated with violence and how they attempt to understand their aspirations and dreams. Also, Mamet suggests that, in a capitalist culture, the conflicts between classes take place to get power and dominion. So, this research concentrates on Mamet's *Oleanna*, in which some of these capitalist difficulties can be observed. *Oleanna* is a play about student-professor relation in the educational system, which can be explicated as a superstructure of the capitalist society. This research illustrates that *Oleanna* is basically focused on Louis Althusser and Karl Marx to present its social and economic issues. Having these approaches applied to Mamet's play, the findings of this study show how the main effect of the capitalist system is on the relationship and way of behavior of the main characters and their visions.

Keywords: *Oleanna*, David Mamet, ideology, Karl Marx, Louis Althusser

الملخص

يُعد ديفيد ماميت أحد أبرز كُتّاب المسرح الذين قدموا صورة واقعية للنظام الرأسمالي في أمريكا من خلال أعماله. ماميت من بين العديد من الكتاب المسرحيين الأمريكيين الذين حللوا أوضاع الرأسمالية في أمريكا. يتناول الصعوبات الاجتماعية في أمريكا بالتفصيل بسبب تجاربه الحياتية وظروف الناس في هذه الثقافة الرأسمالية. وبذلك، يوضح ماميت كيف يُعامل الأفراد من الطبقة المتوسطة بالعنف وكيف يحاولون تحقيق تطلعاتهم وأحلامهم. كما يوضح ماميت أنه في الثقافة الرأسمالية، تحدث الصراعات بين الطبقات للحصول على السلطة والهيمنة. لذا، يركز هذا البحث على مسرحية ماميت "أوليانا" التي يمكن من خلالها ملاحظة بعض هذه الصعوبات الرأسمالية. تدور "أوليانا" حول العلاقة بين الطالب والأستاذ في النظام التعليمي والتي يمكن تفسيرها كبنية فوقية للمجتمع الرأسمالي. يوضح هذا البحث أن مسرحية "أوليانا" تستند بشكل أساسي إلى أفكار لويس ألتوسير وكارل ماركس لطرح قضاياها الاجتماعية والاقتصادية. ومن خلال تطبيق هذه المناهج على مسرحية ماميت، فإن نتائج هذه الدراسة تظهر كيف كان للنظام الرأسمالي التأثير الرئيسي على العلاقة وطريقة سلوك الشخصيات الرئيسية ورؤاهم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: أوليانا، ديفيد ماميت، الأيديولوجية، كارل ماركس، لويس ألتوسير.

1- Background of the Study

David Mamet (1947-) is one of the most important and proactive American playwrights who was born in Chicago. Mamet is a famous American playwright who won the Pulitzer Prize for his masterwork *Glengarry Glen Ross* (1984). He also received the Drama Critics' Award as well as garnered four Tony nominations. He wrote more than thirty plays, several essays, poetry, children's plays, as well as more than a dozen screenplays. Mamet is best known for his brilliant use of language and characterizations that pay special attention to the aspects of American cultural poetics. In so doing,



Mamet's plays often reflect "the moral relationship between the public issues of the nation and the private anxieties of its citizens" (Rollyson, 2005, p.554).

David Mamet's works have often been male-dominated, with the limited presence of women on stage. However, in his plays, such as *Oleanna*, there is a focus on matters of gender and sexuality. According to Olah (2009), in Mamet's plays, "women's positions are very precarious. When and if they make an open confrontation, the outcomes are usually disastrous" (p.3). Many critics illustrate that Mamet's plays focus on the myth of masculinity in which his characters' attempt to personify traditional standards of masculinity within primarily male milieus. According to Radavich (1994), women in Mamet's plays are either entirely marginalized or do not appear at all. Instead, the plays concentrate on various kinds of interfaces and relations between men (p.123). He comments on his interview saying, "I do not know anything about women... I am more around men; I listen to more men being candid than women being candid" (cited in Radavich, 1994, p.123). Actually, in most of Mamet's works, his female characters exist if they to help prove or reinforce whatever point he is trying to convey about men. In other words, Mamet is primarily focused on describing male characters in his plays involving "encoded violence and stresses the all but unbridgeable gulf between the sexes" (Bercovitch, 1994, p.65).

Consequently, in Mamet's plays, men characters are often depicted as "deracinated characters, [...] barely able to articulate feelings or thoughts which seem to collapse of their insubstantiality" (Biggsby, 2004, p.17). Mamet's characters are grappling to manifest their emotions and thoughts effectually, which may suggest a sense of voids or lack of depth in their character evolution. So, his characters are "aware of their insufficiencies, the weakness of their grasp on experience choosing to fill the voids in their lives with fantasies, sounds without a clear meaning" (Biggsby, 2004, p.17).

This study will tackle precisely the dynamics of power, control, and communication within the context of academia in David Mamet's *Oleanna*. In essence, it will be a work of literary analysis. Still, I intend to put Mamet's ideas and attitudes towards this subject from a broader point of view, making the study sociological. Additionally, I will be concerned with how power runs in educational institutions, the implications of challenging old hierarchies, and the consequences of language and miscommunication in interpersonal relations.

2. Significance of Study

David Mamet is a renowned and proactive American playwright. As a playwright from the post-World War II era, Mamet aims to describe the social aspects of American society and the ideological features of the 1970s. The significance of this study would be in examining Ideology in *Oleanna* based on the Marxist theories of Louis Althusser and Karl Marx to show its socioeconomic issues using these approaches. Ideology is a vital term that focuses on the political, economic, and educational systems and is filled with ideological aspects. These aspects keep individuals subjected to the ideologies of capitalist cultures. We often perceive individuals as being dominated in any aspect of life, where individuals resort to accepting what is imposed on them in various ways.



3. Reviews of Related Literature

This part is primarily divided into two sections. The first section aims to review some of the research done regarding the Play and Playwright, and then the second section intends to review ideology.

3.1 On Play and Playwright

Weber (2002) suggests in his article, Three Models of Power in David Mamet's *Oleanna*, that instead of centering only on the text, through combination of cognitive contexts and power relation in Mamet's *Oleanna*, Weber (2002) recognizes between what he indicates to as 'power of model' and 'power to model' to examine the social power relation in educational settings. The 'power of model' which the student (Carol) "sees power as the acquisition and possession of knowledge with the lecturer possessing power because he possesses knowledge, and the student acquiring power by acquiring knowledge" (p.122). On the other hand, 'power to model', which the teacher (John) "sees empowerment as an active process in which the lecturer gives the students the power to achieve their own goals" (p.122). Weber (2000) states that "education is not either a 'power of' or a 'power to' or a 'power over' process but all of them at the same time" (p.126). So, through the view of schema theory there is a dynamic tension between social and discursive power, as well as between power as domination and power as enablement; and that this precarious balance can easily be abused, from both sides, by the more powerful as well as the less powerful participants"(Weber, 2002, p.126).

Chiaramonte (2014) explores in his article Power Play: The Dynamics of Power and Interpersonal Communication in Higher Education as reflected in David Mamet's *Oleanna*, the profound themes of power dynamics and interpersonal communication within the social context of higher education, as presented in *Oleanna* by David Mamet. Chiaramonte examines that the play not only focuses on sexual harassment but also reveals the power and how it is controlled through language in social milieus like universities. Chiaramonte underscores that *Oleanna* depicts how language and communication can affect relationships, especially in academic settings where dominance and power are at play. Chiaramonte aims to show force structures within educational circumstances, emphasizing how leadership and interpersonal communication influence individuals in these milieus. Thus, these elements in the play indicate how *Oleanna* can present worthy perceptions of power and leadership in education, making the play intellectually enchanting and socially relevant.

Haedicke (2008), in his article, considers David Mamet a creative writer. The article is valuable and informative because it provides a precious introduction to the world of David Mamet and his continuing contribution to American theatre. This article unfolds subjects such as Mamet's life, career, and dramatic works. In addition, it examines the characteristics of Mamet's plays, particularly *Oleanna*. This article is a significant source for this study because it focuses on Mamet's plays, themes, and style.

Kurtsoy (2007) examines the interaction between gender and language by closely exploring the relations, speech patterns, and development of characters in society based



on their societal standards in David Mamet's plays *The Woods*, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, and *Oleanna*. It focuses on one-to-one relations as a basis for social relationships. These plays represent how gender is socially constructed and how conventional sexual identities are often indisputably accepted by individuals. In his plays, the theme of the interplay between power and identity, mainly relating to gender matters, appears to be a way in which gender roles are constructed through language and, hence, are subject to transformation.

3.2 On Ideology

According to Althusser (1971), Ideology is a representation of "the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence" (p.109). Ideology is an intricate concept to define. One of the most prevalent definitions of Ideology is that it indicates a body of ideas and beliefs that encourage and reinforce current power relations. In his concept, Ideology can form individuals' identities and make them conceive themselves as specified subjects within society by hailing what others call out to them, stimulating them to recognize certain beliefs or standards (p.116).

Ferretter (2006) indicates in his book the extensive concepts hypothesized by Louis Althusser, concentrating on the result of Althusser's ideas concerning social relations and the state. Althusser confirms that ideologies always exist within a structure, and their application helps to explain their meaning and influence. These apparatuses help as the medium through which ideologies are propagated, continued, and applied. The practices associated with an ideology further clarify its essence, values, and goals. The social practices related to an ideology examine its core, aims, and values. Their action emerges from the Ideology of these apparatuses since the Ideology describes their roles, notions, and molds of behaviors ordered by the social practices. In so doing, according to Ferretter (2006), Althusser emphasizes that "an ideology always exists in an apparatus, and its practice, or practices" (p.87).

In chapter six, Rehmann (2013) outlines in his book *Theories of Ideology: The Powers of Alienation and Subjection*, the theoretical contributions of Gramsci and Althusser on the crucial role of the state and civil society in ideology theory. They present vital opportunities to conceive forms of socialization apart from hegemonic apparatuses. On the one hand, according to Gramsci, politics is not merely expressive of class but also is linked to practices and is an essential part of the fight for predominance. In so doing, Gramsci did not believe in determinism or vanguardism. Instead, he highlighted the significance of ideological and cultural effects in forming society. On the other hand, Althusser's concept of Ideology works unconsciously, which restricts a person's ability to hold collectively while providing each person the sense that they are uniquely dominant and powerful in their uniqueness. Despite this, each person feels dominant and powerful in their uniqueness, giving the basis for Althusser's "subject theory". Ideological dominance is maintained through diverse institutions (ISAs), including churches, schools, the family, and the media, which strengthen the influence of Ideology.

4. Methodology



With its criticism of capitalism, Marxism sheds light on the economy drawn upon from the capitalist system and its impact on society. By revealing the despotic doctrines of capitalism and how they create strains, Marxism highlights issues concerned with stability and community hierarchy. Critics often argue that the solutions proposed by Marxist Ideology tend to swing to the opposing extreme from the matters they struggle to address.

The term ideology was introduced in the late eighteenth century by the French philosopher Destutt de Tracy. It was primarily used to express the "science of ideas", a discipline focused on "a particular understanding of the nature of 'ideas'" (Williams, 2013, p.176). Additionally, in its early conception, Ideology was considered a part related to zoology, emphasizing the scientific and systematic method Destutt proposed to bring to the study of ideas. Progressively, it was with the Pioneering contributions of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in the nineteenth century that 'ideology' became recognized as a state of consciousness, which asserts that "The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force" (Marx & Engels, 2010, p.59).

Therefore, in Mamet's play, Carol has an ideological perspective, mainly compared to John's viewpoint. At the beginning of *Oleanna*, Carol attempts to confirm her agenda using neutral language, while John's language remains solidly deep-rooted in a traditional, masculine perspective. Furthermore, in capitalist culture, the ruling class employs its authority over material resources to accumulate wealth and form the ideas, beliefs, and values that preserve control and uphold the existing social order. The ruling class in society controls the material production and also holds power over people by reinforcing ideas and cultural standards that justify their dominance (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 59). Thus, individuals belonging to the ruling class will have authority over other classes because the latter are the ones whose ideas and beliefs "lack the means of mental production [and hence] are on the whole subject to it" (Marx and Engels, 2010, p. 59). In other words, the working class, according to Marx, lacks control over the means of mental production, being formed by the controlling ideologies disseminated by the ruling class.

According to Marx and Engels, the concept of Ideology is defined by the collective social relations among individuals in societies. These social relations are stimulated and directed by capitalist production to shape the economic structure of society. In other words, in their social relationships, men "enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, relations of production which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive forces" (Eagleton, 2013, p.4). In addition, Marx views that an individual's consciousness is not the sole driving force in the society in which he lives. Instead, their social conditions and interactions play a vital role in molding their social being and consciousness of the world around them. In other words, "the sum total of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which rises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness" (Eagleton, 2013, p.4).



This view examines Marx's idea about the 'base' and 'superstructure' concerning the social structure, highlighting the prominent role of the economic structure in forming society. According to Marx, the individual consciousness is formulated by one's social being, which, in turn, is subjective by the broader economic base that underlies all societal practices. In so suggesting, Marx views the economic structure of society as the real base, and the legal, politics and social ideas are based on and reflect this economic foundation (Jakubowski, 1936, p.14). Because "historical materialism gives this determining importance to "economy," it is often described as economism or as an economistic interpretation of history, comparable with all kinds of other materialist interpretations of history which are based on natural elements such as geography, race, climate" (Jakubowski, 1936, p.10).

For Marx, the ideology model is based on a historical-materialist view, concentrating on the material circumstances that form the basis of social consciousness. These material realities determine the restrictions of substantial ideas within a particular social framework. Therefore, according to Marx, the construction of society relies on human productive labor. In a capitalist society, acquiring natural resources to produce goods forms the basis of social existence. Within the mode of production, the significant social relations are explained among the working class members as they "engage in productive labor, as well as the relations between the working class and the capitalist class, which owns the means of production (such as factories and machines)" (Stoddart, 2007, p.195). For a society to exist, there should be a capitalist class imposing its power on the other classes to seize the labor of the working classes, which in turn should undergo the Ideology of the ruling class.

Furthermore, Marx proposes that resisting Ideology must appear mainly in a tangible way. It is inadequate to scrutinize ideological systems from a theoretical or academic view. In so doing, Marx explains, "All forms and products of consciousness cannot be dissolved by mental criticism . . . but only by the practical overthrow of the actual social relations which gave rise to the idealistic humbug" (Stoddart, 2007, p.197). In other words, Marx underscores that resisting and overcoming dominant ideologies demands more than just an academic standpoint or philosophical critique. It requires a tangible turn of the social relations, economic structures, and power dynamics that create and continue these ideologies. According to Marx, political actions should concentrate on individuals actively engaging in endeavors to bring about social transformation within the economic structure. According to Stoddart (2007), individuals must be involved in actions that are targeted at restructuring the economic foundation of society to dismantle capitalist Ideology (p.197).

In late philosophical works, there has been a change like Ideology, especially underscored by the view of a prominent philosopher, Louis Althusser. Contrasted with earlier perspectives that depicted Ideology in a negative light as preventing the reproduction of life, Althusser presents a new explanation. According to Althusser, Ideology is an apt tool for producing and supporting economic and social realities. In the view of Selden et al (2005), Althusser claims that "Ideology as a representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence", it is



regarded as imaginary because it reflects individual perceptions and the real social relations in the real world (pp.97-98). According to Althusser's view (1971), the primary purpose of Ideology is that it means to "hails or interpellates individuals as subjects"(p.119). In other words, Ideology hails individuals by recognizing themselves as subjects within a particular social structure.

According to Althusser (1971), Ideology highlights the prime influence of several societal structures and institutions in shaping the beliefs and perceptions of individuals within a capitalist structure. Althusser emphasizes that Ideology in all its forms of legal, political, ethical or religious ideologies depends on the social framework. Workers should be cultivated "by the capitalist education system and other instances and institutions" (Althusser, 1971, p. 88). In addition, according to Althusser's view, the education system plays a role in maintaining the approval of the predominant Ideology among labor powers while teaching those in power how to control that Ideology. In other words, it includes that both the labor class and those in positions of exploitation and repression are indoctrinated in a way that supports the dominance of the controlling class. In so doing, the education. In so doing, the education system should include "the reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers, and a reproduction of the ability to manipulate the ruling ideology correctly for the agents of exploitation and repression, so that they, too, will provide for the domination of the ruling class" (Althusser, 1971, p. 89).

Furthermore, Althusser affirms that people are what Ideology assumes for them through the societal structures; he asserts that the relation between base (economic structure) and superstructure (cultural, legal, and political institutions) is interwoven. He asserts that the societal standards and conditions around us shape our actions, perceptions and beliefs. Althusser's perspective sheds more light on how capitalism maintains the workers it needs through not just on wages but also by shaping them through education system (Hamadi, 2017, p.158). Furthermore, Althusser asserts that educational institutions and other ideologies generated by the controlling class transmit skills and knowledge that help people fulfil specific roles within the production process. In so doing, he gives educational institutions an essential role because these institutions are designed for "rules of respect for sociotechnical division of labor and ultimately the rules of the order established by class domination" (Hamadi, 2017, p.158).

According to Althusser's perspective 1971, schools play an essential role as institutions in providing knowledge and supporting social class disparities, shedding light on the power dynamics between the educated and the working classes. Basically, children are taken to school at a young age to absorb the dominant ideology, which they should internalize and obey. The educational institutions leave no space for the children to escape ideological capitalist values, since it takes the children from all social class, from a very young age. During this time, children are most "vulnerable' squeezed between the family state apparatus and the educational state apparatus" (p.104). This group of children will be imparted specific skills and knowledge, such as scientific or literary culture, that are directly relevant to diverse roles within the workforce.



Basically, children are taught subjects that provide them with practical capacities that can be used in different job tasks (Hamadi, 2017, p.158).

Thus, Althusser claims that in the social structure, the role of each member becomes clear, being determined by the capitalist system. There will be the role of the exploited people, who should be equipped with highly developed, moral, civil, professional, national and political realization. There is also the role of the agents of profiteering, who should be endowed with the ability to direct the workers and speak to them, which is a process intertwined with the dynamics of power relations. The conclusive role in the supporting and reproduction of the capitalist is that of the repressive agent, which is summed up as the "ability to give orders and enforce obedience 'without discussion', or ability to manipulate the demagoguery of a political leader's rhetoric" (Ferretter, 2006, p.86).

5. Discussion

Oleanna by David Mamet, performed in 1992, provoked a significant discussion because of its depiction of the dynamics between a university teacher and his student. The play tackles the themes of power, privilege, and the effects of misunderstanding. In so doing, the title of *Oleanna* generated two features: "its indictment of political correctness on college campuses in America and its treatment of sexual harassments" (Badenhausen,1998, p.1). In other words, Mamet's *Oleanna* is often viewed as a critique of the shifting dynamics in academic milieus where issues of power, authority and communication play a significant role in the play. *Oleanna* confronts the idea of political correctness and promotes questions about academic freedom and the borders of discussion within educational environments. As Bigsby (1992) claims that "institutional authority comes up against gender politics the language of political correctness impacts on that of a presumed liberal humanism. such was their sensitivity of the issues, indeed, that the play was frequently received by partisan audience dividing along gender lines" (p.232).

In *Oleanna*, John is a family man and successful lecturer, and "preoccupied with his own affairs" (Bigsby,1992, p.232). Carol meanwhile, is a lower-middle-class student. She seems "bemused by her studies comes to see her professor.... She seems to have only the most tenuous grasp not only of the course but of human relationships" (Bigsby,1992, p.232). Mamet in *Oleanna* highlights an intricate dynamic between John, as a male academic, and Carol, as a female student, within the educational setting. John, benefiting from his gender privilege, can "employ the discourse of the academia and by that language sustains his social, cultural, and economic power and status"(Kurtsoy, 2007, p.92). Meanwhile, Carol, as a female attempting to progress her life through education, confronts challenges in accessing the academic discourse that John possesses. In so doing, to attain similar privileges, Carol desires to understand the academic language that John practices. Carol's goals are opposite to John's interests, because "John wants to exert and sustain power through his role as a teacher therefore needs to extend her apprenticeship, but to teach Carol that language means her independence" (Kurtsoy, 2007, p.92).

CAROL: (Pause) What is a "term of art"?



JOHN: (Pause) I'm sorry...?

CAROL: (Pause) What is a "term of art"?

JOHN: Is that what you want to talk about?

CAROL: ...to talk about...?

JOHN: Let's take the mysticism out of it, shall we? Carol? (Pause) Don't you think?..... (Mamet, act 1, p.1)

In the opening Act I of *Oleanna*, Carol appears as a weak subordinate student who always depicts herself as stupid in front of John. He does all the talking while she listens to him attentively, taking notes, seeking his help. John depicts a strong and masculine persona at the beginning of Act I. In this play, Mamet reflects the social aspects and power relations through the social distance between John and Carol. John's speech preserves his authority, control and confidence as a teacher who keeps interrupting or ending Carol's sentences. During his initial meeting with Carol, he nearly all of the talking in long sentences. This condition appears when John talks to Carol while he is talking to a female student; meanwhile, he continues to refer to a general college student with a masculine pronoun (he):

JOHN: I'm not lecturing you, I'm just trying to tell you some things I think.

CAROL: What do you think?

JOHN: Should all kids go to college? Why...

CAROL: (Pause) To learn.

JOHN: But if he does not learn.

CAROL: If the child does not learn?

JOHN: Then why is he in college? Because he was told it was his "right"?

CAROL: Some might find college instructive. (Mamet, Act 1, p.20)

On the other hand, the same parameter reveals the power relations between masculine and feminine and reveals how they converse and behave as two gender-discrepancy beings in society. The "The organization of conversation reflects the power discrepancy between men and women, especially when we compare the empirical findings about the distribution of turns between males and females with the traditional stereotypes about who does more talking than whom." (Lakoff, 2003, p.93). In *Oleanna*, Carol seems shy, uncertain and hesitant in using her words; she is always attempting to find the proper words to convey her speech, and she talks in phrases rather than whole sentences.

I don't understand. I don't know what it means. I don't know what it means to be here ... you tell me I'm intelligent, and then you tell me I should not be here, what do you want with me? What does it mean? Who should I listen to ... I ... (He goes over to her and puts his arm around her shoulder.) NO! (She walks away from him.) JOHN: Sshhhh. CAROL: No, I don't under... (Mamet, Act 1, p.21)

In the opening Act II of *Oleanna*, the change in Carol's situation in Act Two means she is more powerful, as she is holding the conversation rather than John. This is especially obvious when Carol reports about John to the tenure committee, which challenges John's sense of authority and control. Carol attains complete victory through



dominance. She asks him if he hates her, and his answer is yes. However, John appears very weak in this position; he turns to the only outlet that he has left as a man, which displays physical power:

CAROL: Why do you hate me? Because you think me wrong? No. Because I have, you think, power over you. Listen to me. Listen to me, Professor. (Pause) It is the power that you hate. So deeply that, that any atmosphere of free discussion is impossible. It's not "unlikely." It's impossible. Isn't it?

JOHN: Yes.

CAROL: Isn't it...?

JOHN: Yes. I suppose. (Mamet, Act 1, p.38)

According to Weber (2002), there is a dynamic struggle between social and discursive power, also between power as control and power as enablement. This vulnerable balance can be misused by people with more powerful and also by the less powerful (p.126). In other words, the one power type changes as circumstances change. The following conversation between them reveals that Carol's power is the type of power over, because she makes her choice and special effects at the same time on John's persona. At the moment, John is the one who requests clarification of words or asks her to repeat he does not understand.

JOHN: Please, wait a sec...

CAROL: I cannot come to allow...

JOHN: If I may ... If I may, from whatever you feel is "established," by...

CAROL: The issue here is not what I "feel." It is not my "feelings," but the feelings of women. And men. Your superiors, who've been "polled," do you see?... (Mamet, Act 3, p.35)

Nevertheless, Mamet sheds light upon the difficulties women still face in accessing to entering the educational atmosphere. In *Oleanna*, Carol fights to be recognized by John because he was proud of his patriarchal authority. The violent conclusion of *Oleanna* exhibits the resistance and opposition confronted by Carol when facing established societal norms. Copenhaver (2002) suggests, "the traditional audience reaction to cheer when Carol is beaten perhaps suggests that although her message may have been good, her approach diminishes the legitimacy of her words and negates her entire argument" (p.350). Therefore, *Oleanna* depicted the bold lines for the behaviour of men and women, revealing what happens when men and women step beyond the old gender behavior limitations. John appears to be boasting about his knowledge and job as a college professor. Whereas Carol was limited by her status as a woman and student at the university, her unclear behavior embodied the nature of a sheltered woman. Despite this changing and shifting in their behavior as the play progresses, Carol struggles to maintain her newfound power and assert herself effectively within the system, hindering her ability to wield her power constructively and bring about meaningful change. As Copenhaver's view (2002), "*Oleanna* presented the harshest consequence for the characters. Their power and their pursuit of a goal destroyed them both. John ultimately punished Carol for her willingness to challenge his authority, but for John, the victory was hollow and came with a price



(p.370). In introducing Carol in this instance, she was the ultimate sufferer of man's anger because she was physically beaten for her exhibit of power and authority.

Conclusion

In presenting *Oleanna* as such, Mamet reflects the shifting power dynamics between John and Carol. John practices empowerment over his student Carol; he is a male academic and successful, so he feels confident and comfortable on several occasions. In contrast, at the beginning of the play, Carol is a powerless female trying to elevate her life through education, depending entirely on John's approval not to be unsuccessful in his class. As she mentions him, her estimation could make her future because she does not have a privileged background.

Mamet tackles in *Oleanna* the bold lines for the behaviour of males and females, sending a message about what occurs when men and women step beyond the old gender behaviour borders. John was powerful both as a man and in his career as a professor. In contrast, Carol was restricted by her status as a woman and student in his office; her unclear speech and her behaviour made her seem fragile. The change in power and in behaviour characteristics between John and Carol from the strong to the weak, or conversely, so, leads to power distribution. While John assumed to be a professor, he would have power over Carol in terms of her success in his course, Carol has used the university's system of accountability to get significant power over John.

In *Oleanna*, Mamet motivates the audience to question where authority lies in an educational institution and what constitutes an abuse of that power. In the play, Carol writes a formal complaint about the professor's abuse, and she feels that the professor is sexist. In addition, she claims that his physical contact is a form of sexual harassment. Consequently, there is no absolute power and no absolute controller. There is a consistent shift of standards and rules that individuals gain the power to attract new agents to impose their force. The realm of the educational system is grounded on a network of power. Empowerment and knowledge connect together; dominance, standard, and relations are all based on the process of power. When there is oppression, there is often resistance. Indeed, power is not possessed; it is experienced everywhere at every time. In other words, power is not confined to specific places or limited to particular relationships; power relations exist in all parts of society.

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