

**The Domination of Mother in August Strindberg's The Father
and
Arthur kopit's Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the
Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad**

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Abstract:

Works of art present several types of mothers one of them is the dominant. This research deals with this type of mothers. It aims at highlighting the bad effect of mother's domination over her children and others. It is divided into three sections and a conclusion. Section one; the introduction illustrates the types of mothers and the patriarchal society during the 19th and 20th centuries. Section two discusses the monstrous mother in August Strindberg's The Father and how her excessive domination leads to the madness of the father. Section three sheds light on the monstrous mother in Arthur kopit's Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad (hereafter Oh Dad) in which the mother turns her son into a killer due to her desire of dominance. The conclusion sums up that both can be considered femmes fatal because of their pernicious impact on those around them, especially members of their families.

**هيمنة الأم في مسرحية اوكست ستريندبرغ على "الآب"
ومسرحية آرثر كوبيت "أوه يا أبي، أبي المسكين، ماما علقتك في
"خزانة وأنا اشعر بالحزن الشديد"**

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الملخص:

تقدم الأعمال الأدبية عدة أنواع من الأمهات واحدة منهم هي المهيمنة. يتناول هذا البحث هذا النوع من الأمهات. ويهدف البحث إلى تسليط الضوء على التأثير السيئ لسيطرة الأم على أطفالها وغيرهم. يقسم البحث إلى ثلاثة أقسام وخاتمة. القسم الأول؛ المقدمة التي توضح أنواع الأمهات والمجتمع الأبوي خلال القرنين التاسع عشر والعشرين. يناقش القسم الثاني الأم الوحشية في مسرحية اوكست ستريندبرغ "الآب" وكيف هيمنتها المفرطة تؤدي إلى جنون الأب. يسلط القسم الثالث الضوء على الأم الوحشية في مسرحية آرثر كوبيت "أوه يا أبي، أبي المسكين، ماما علقتك في خزانة وأنا اشعر بالحزن الشديد" (فيما يلي أوه أبي) التي فيها تحول الأم ابنها إلى قاتل بسبب رغبتها في الهيمنة. تلخص الخاتمة إلى أن كلاهما يمكن اعتبارهما قاتلات بسبب تأثيرهما الضار على من حولهما، خصوصا أفراد أسرهن.

Introduction:

The changes in society often affect the moral values and principles of the family. Moreover, these changes affect the character of the mother and make her capable of impersonating father's character that is emasculated and deprived of any kind of power. The domineering mother makes the presence of the father useless within the family. He does not take any part in the action as if he were dead.

The selfish, greedy, and rude mother is considered a bad mother who is emotionally detached and uses her children for selfish ends. A domineering mother looks frightening and aggressive whose children are abused and forced to do things they do not want (Benjamin 10).

1.1 One Woman- Many Motherly Types.

Many social, political, psychological and economic forces affect the mother's behavior towards her children. These powers create many kinds of mothers. First type is the saint mother who is

the equivalent of the Victorian 'angel in the house'. She sacrifices herself for the sake of her husband, children and home without complaining that makes one think she does not face any difficulties and her life is perfect. In fact, she suffers but for the sake of her children she sacrifices everything. She is the saint and martyr of motherhood because she shows no displeasure or frustration with her mothering duty (Griffin 37). She may be ambitious but gives up her own desires and comfort for the good and relaxation of her children; protecting them from any kind of damage. Therefore, the saint mother is regarded as the figure of Mary. Elizabeth Badinter remarks that "The natural patron Virgin Mary, whose whole life bespoke her devotion to her child" (190).

The second type is the absent mother whether by death or divorce, her absence creates many difficulties for the children and makes them suffer. In fact, her absence affects the children's development in society, thus it is considered a tragic for the children due to the close relationship with their mother in comparison with their father. Although the mother is absent physically, her presence is recreated through allusion in the minds of her children that can strengthen the relationship with the children (Griffin 39). Despite of the great effect of the mother's absence, they can live as separate beings.

A mother is expected to arrange the disorder but the feminist mothering, which is the other type of mother attempts to live the reality of motherhood chaos. By nature, woman has the skills of mothering work which is hard and exhausting but she accepts it despite of its difficulty. Such a mother refuses to live like Saint Mary, on contrary; she prefers to

depend on the everyday real experience of mothering. According to Joyce Trebilcot, the relationship between such mother and her children is "simple; full of hatred, anger and problems" (1). The feminist mothering has the ability to change the relation with her children as well as every day's struggles. This kind of motherhood allows both the mother and the children to develop themselves as separate, different and equal subjects. They can understand each other regardless of the struggle between them.

Another type of mother is the mirroring mother who focuses on vanity and aims at creating children like her. She fights for power and control over her children. In the mirroring mother, the mother's relationship with her children especially the daughter is closely and emotionally attached; strongly identified with each other and no boundary between them. Such kind of mother cannot recognize that her children are separate beings. Michelle Farrell avers that "the mother's responsibility is to display herself to her daughter, and to elicit from her the desired reflection of herself. Hence, "the mother apprehends herself in the image she succeeds in projecting onto the daughter, her mirror" (97).

From a psychoanalytical view, the extremely close relationship between the mother and her sons, particularly the daughter leads to undesirable and harmful results as the vain mother sees them as children and an extension of herself. Marianne Hirsch remarks that this kind of mother lives through her daughter and controls her just to achieve her desire and ambition (170). Therefore, her extravagant domination destroys the daughter's personality.

The last and the most important type of mother on which the research concentrates is the monstrous one who is recognized by her cruelty in her treatment of her children, her violent behavior and her lack of passion towards them. This mother is dominating, violent and aggressive, willing to consume anyone under her control especially her children (Caplan 127).

From previous ages until current time, there are many examples of such kind of women who killed their children, or destroyed their hopes. Both Ladd-Taylor and Lauri Umansky point out that "Bad mothers of any age reveal the fate of women who violated the gender norms of their time, whether by choice, by fiat, or by the force of circumstance" (6). However, the fathers in both plays *The Father* and *Oh Dad* cannot be considered responsible for turning these mothers into domineering; they are hold responsible.

In the twentieth century, Philip Wylie is the main voice warning the world against the powers and damage shaped by monstrous mother. He warns from the awful effects of a domineering mother upon her children. For him domineering mother makes her children weakened and dependent. She is responsible for harming and destroying her sons; " were themselves

drunken, gossipy, selfish, power-mad women with little capacity for literacy, and they apparently had the ability to defeat people's souls, serving in the capacity of spiritual saboteur" (Wylie 201). The sever disappointment is the main factor that turns mother to become aggressive, hateful and monstrous.

In *The Father and Oh Dad*, both August Strindberg and Arthur Kopit present a monstrous mother as a main character and make an in-depth discussion of the concept of domineering mother who destroys her family and their lives. These two plays show the impact of this type of mother, the domineering mother of 19th and 20th centuries' family and to underline the unfamiliar phenomena that have been brought by the changing aspects of the family relationships. These plays present the situations in which a woman becomes the leader and the head of the family. She ignores the role of a mother as well as the wife and undertakes the part of tyrant, controlling everyone and everything in the house. Both dramatists disclose the role of mother's domination which has bad effect upon the children and often leads to the collapse of the family.

1.2 The Patriarchal Society.

The word patriarchy means the rule of the father. Mostly this notion used to describe specific kind of man-dominated family. (Bhasin 3) Patriarchy refers to a specific society in which man controls not only the woman, children but everything in the home and in society. Man's power is derived from his owning the finance.

S. Walby defines patriarchy "as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women" (20). She describes patriarchy as a system in order to reject the notion of biological determinism. This means that man is in a dominant situation whereas woman in a subordinate one (21). Moreover, Walby states that "two distinct forms of patriarchy – private and public patriarchy" (24). Private patriarchy is based upon family construction as the main place of woman's oppression whereas; public patriarchy is based in public locations like employment and the state. In both kinds, man dominates woman completely.

As a matter of fact, "women are either totally powerless or totally deprived of rights, influence, and resources" as G. Lerner remarks (239). For these reasons, woman fights strongly to free herself from all these bad practices against her identity and development in the world. Woman realizes that patriarchy is man-made, unnatural and unjust social system that must be stopped and ended forever (Hartmann 8). Woman rejects patriarch society as the family has changed and her conception about herself also has changed. She starts to think about herself, her role and

aspiration in the society, feeling as good as any man. She has the ability to hold the responsibility at home like man.

In modern world, woman refuses to be dominated and subordinated; therefore, she rejects patriarchy that hinders her to go forward in society. She considers the patriarchal institutions and social relations responsible for her inferiority and minority position. Woman struggles against patriarchy that deprives her from her rights and freedom. She refuses to be humiliated or considered an object. For Hartmann patriarchy is "a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence or solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (33).

2. The Monstrous Mother in August Strindberg's *The Father*.

August Strindberg (1849-1912), a Swedish playwright, discusses deeply the concept of mother's domination over her children and its bad effects upon them which lead to the downfall of the family. It is impossible to separate Strindberg's life from his works, and this is shown clearly in his play *The Father* (1887) which is translated by Michael Myer and is an autobiography of his life since he himself suffers from his wife who ruined their marriage because of her evil desires. Strindberg wrote to Axel Lundegard; "It is to me as if I were walking in my sleep—as if creation and life were mingled. I do not know whether *The Father* is a creative work, or whether that was my real life"(Meyer 3). In this play Strindberg wants to say that because of woman, man can be driven to mental instability. Thus, *The Father* is a reflection of his own life because he himself was accused of being insane by his wife (Lane 1041).

In *The Father*, Strindberg concentrates on the theme of the domination of the mother. The father and the mother, each one seeks to dominate the other but mother's domination is more powerful and leads to father's destruction and death. The main protagonists are the husband Captain Adolph and his wife Laura. The play portrays the tragedy of a father and a mother struggling for controlling their daughter Bertha. The father is an army officer of the cavalry, an intellectual man and a freethinker whereas, the mother is narrow minded, selfish, immoral and dishonest in her speech as Emma Goldman remarks (45).

The Captain struggles hard to establish his identity not only as a good father but also as a loyal sincere husband, hard- working researcher and scholar and above all a man with strong morality and convictions. The Captain struggles to maintain a male-identity as a father, husband and eventually a man. He is neither prepared nor willing to surrender this

identity. He lives with his ideas, philosophy, science and genius to determine his real identity. But his quest for identity clashes with his wife's quest for power and domination. He goes too far in his desire to protect or serve both his wife and his daughter. But because of his wife's domination he becomes a frustrated father and husband as well.

There is a disagreement between the Captain and his wife concerning the education of their daughter, Bertha. The father wants her to be a teacher thus, she has to go to the town whereas, the mother wants her to stay at home and become an artist. The Captain insists on sending his daughter to the town saying that the law supports him since the woman loses her rights after marriage and makes her all the time resentment. This argument creates conflict between the wife and the husband.

Many social, political, economic and religious reasons cause the prevalence of male dominated societies. Patriarchy is a social system in which man has complete power, domination, social privilege and control of property over woman and children. It is clear that patriarchal society gives woman limited rights on contrary to man who has absolute rights.

Because of the significant changes and developments that took place in modern society, woman begins to reject man's domination. She fights to achieve her independence and self-realization. Now woman starts to think about herself and her freedom. Man enslaves her and being the master of the home whereas, she is considered a minor or marginal person. Woman used to do whatever the husband wants without objection. Now, she rebels against these rules by using whatever means she can afford.

In this play, Laura as a dominating mother intends to achieve her self-recognition and identity through her daughter Bertha. She refuses the suggestion of the father about the daughter for she denies his right in this matter. Moreover, she tries to convince the family that her husband is a mad man for he thinks of discovering life on another planet by looking through a microscope. She tells the doctor that she finds a letter written by the Captain in which he confesses his fear of being mad (Strindberg 31). It is obvious that Laura is an evil and monstrous mother who destroys anyone who stands against her desires. Such kind of mother has the ability to use even immoral or illegal means in order to achieve what she wants regardless of the cost she might pay.

The Father is considered a tragedy. It concentrates on family conflict over domination. Here the Captain refuses his wife's forces, both spiritual and physical; i.e. the interference in the future of their daughter. Therefore, she completely turns against him. She is willing to overwhelm anyone who

hinders accomplishing her desire; thus, the evil and the force shaved the house. She refuses to send their daughter to the town as she wants to keep her at home under her own complete influence and dominance. Here, we notice that the father is more liberal and rational than the mother as he gives his daughter the chance to build herself away from any interference. Whereas, we find the mother is so restricted and her behaviors based on traditional beliefs of society of not allowing woman to be free and stay at home. Indirectly, Laura serves to internalize these old traditional beliefs.

Throughout his life, the Captain suffers from domineering women. First, his mother rejects him, then his wife though by marrying her he seeks a double role, a mother and a wife. However, she has driven him to hysterical madness. The father's intention is to take his daughter away from the influence of both her mother and her grandmother who wants to teach her spiritualism. He feels that his daughter will face the same fate like him if she stays at home saying:

This house is full of women who all want to have their say about the child. My mother-in-law wants to make a Spiritualist of her. Laura wants her to be an artist; the governess wants her to be a Methodist, old Margret a Baptist, and the servant-girls want her to join the Salvation Army! It won't do to try to make a soul in patches like that. I who have the chief right to try to form her character, am constantly opposed in my efforts. And that's why I have decided to send her away from home (33).

Oland Edith says, it is very difficult to live in a house dominated by a woman referring to the Captain's complaint from living in a house filled with dominating women, not only his wife but his mother in law and the childhood nurse; " He is sensible, rational and sensitive but not shrewd unlike all the women who are confined to religious or spiritualism"(12). This means that he and his daughter are under the violent domination of the mother.

By sending his daughter away, the father can save her from this house and from the domination of the women especially her mother so she can grow up in a healthy environment. He wants her to educate and support herself.

I want her to be a teacher. If she remains unmarried she will be able to support herself, and at any rate she wouldn't be any worse off than the poor school-masters who have to share their salaries with a family. If she marries she can use her knowledge in the education of her children (44).

From his speech, the father is shown to be more civilized and open minded than his wife. He is more interested in defending the rights of his daughter in order not to be copy of her mother. His aim in life is the development of his daughter on contrary, to the mother whose concern is mainly in the possession of the daughter. Therefore, she used all the violent and wicked means to possess Bertha for herself only.

Here the mother is more repressive and traditional than society itself. She denies the rights of the young generation to develop themselves and to achieve self-realization. The female characters internalize the traditional image of woman by refusing to allow the daughter a chance to depend on herself and shape her future without depending on others.

As a monstrous mother, Laura insists on destroying the father completely by implanting suspicion in his mind that Bertha is not his daughter. Moreover, she drives him into madness convincing everyone including the Doctor that he is insane. No woman in the house takes his side. All of them stand against him even his old nurse betrays him. She is the one who slips the straitjacket over him. By this horrible act, she adds the last touch of disloyalty and betrayal.

It is obvious that Laura accepts the motherly role at the beginning of her marriage but she hates the role of the wife thus, she decides to avenge on her husband by destroying him. She used all evil forces to prove that he is a mad man. She forges and distorts his scientific welfares which she cannot understand. Her evil instincts make her involve their innocent daughter in the conflict regardless of the harm she may cause to her. Laura's only aim is to see him wearing the straitjacket so she can get rid of him. This act is so harmful and it might affect the reputation of her daughter in society. She even does not care about her reputation. In fact, she ruins her daughter indirectly.

During her waiting for the straitjacket to arrive, the Pastor, Laura's brother tells her that she is a very strong woman, "Let me see your hand! Not one incriminating spot of blood to give you away!" then he adds "One

little innocent murder that the law can't touch; an unconscious crime!"(52). By proving his total insanity, Laura will achieve her full control over her daughter without the interference of the father.

As a scientist, the Captain uses the sitting room as his private room for studying. It is filled with newspapers and magazines. All the women in the house never consider this room his private one, so they enter without knocking the door. Throughout the play, the Captain stays in the same place. The dramatist uses the same setting to reveal the monotony and the boredom of his life. Moreover, it is meant to show the fact that he is really a helpless prisoner in his own home. This fact is shown in the first act when the Pastor says "There are too many women here governing the house,"(10) immediately the Captain replies "Yes, aren't there? It is like going into a cage full of tigers"(11). Moreover, using one setting emphasizes Strindberg's message that the Captain, like many other fathers, is a victim of the mother's domination. He is like a prisoner or a soldier desperately holding out in an old decaying castle. He is deprived of his privacy and peace of mind even in his own home (Strindberg 1983, 62). The Captain cannot bear this horrible thing from his family and dies as broken man spiritually. He is considered the victim of brutal motherhood which kills him.

In her article *The Continental Drama of Today*, Barrett H. Clark avers that Strindberg criticizes the idea of emancipating woman in marriage as he feels that such a woman seeks not only equality with a man but domination over him. For him the ideal role of a woman is that of wife and mother only and any other thing or role can be destructive; meaning excessive domination. Therefore, the evil nature of woman is completely rejected. Strindberg wants mothers to understand that fathers have a vital role in the life of the children as the mothers. Such a realization would help very much to minimize the conflict between them (77).

Clark adds that Strindberg portrays the father as a nervous man and the mother as a cruel and evil abnormal woman in order to expose her wicked and destructive nature. According to him, life is a series of struggles between weaker and stronger wills. Excessive desires of over controlling destroy not only the father, family and the children but the mother herself as well. To achieve her desires, she might commit a crime such as the destroying of her children.

The Father focuses on the main idea of how a mother can drive the father to insanity by making him doubt that he is not the father of his

daughter just to achieve her evil desire of full control over the daughter. This is very vicious proving that she is psychologically unstable. Her monstrous behavior is so extreme that she denies the paternity of the father without considering that this might affect the reputation of her daughter in society. Indirectly, she is harsh to her and damaging herself. The father becomes obsessed with the need to know the truth of what she said, making biological, experiential and literary tests to confirm his paternity. But the impossibility of knowing the truth has driven him to madness. Her purpose to possess and dominate the daughter urges her to fabricate false realities of his instable and troubled thinking. It is a psychological play that concentrates on the conflict between the mother and the father and its climax when the mother succeeds to dominate him. The mother uses all the means to put the father under her control so she can educate their daughter without listening to his advice. Her evil behavior makes him lose the ability to express his inner feeling and to speak any words. Feeling of triumph urges her to tell him:

Now you have fulfilled your function as an unfortunately necessary father and breadwinner. You are not needed any longer and you must go. You must go since you have realized that revolt my intellect is as strong as my will, and since you will not stay and acknowledge it (60).

Her speech exposes her true evil nature as for the possessing and dominating she destroys her husband and her family too. Moreover, it arouses his rage and makes him act violently by throwing the lighted lamp at her as he becomes completely frustrated. As a wicked and monstrous mother, she succeeds to provoke him in doing this irrational act which later was used as an evidence of his madness. Here she proves to the doctor and others that he is insane.

When the house is controlled by a monstrous mother, the father starts to doubt whether he is of any worth to his family. This confusion creates conflict within himself whether he achieves his being as a father he aspires to or not. It is obvious that the Captain is confused and lives in illusions that are supported by his later words, "for the last twenty years she has been treating me as if I had one foot in the grave"(55). He believes in his ability to perform his role as a father and a husband if he is given a chance.

In this play, the mother is the main cause who drives the father to insanity and self-destruction, insisting to send him to the hospital not

because she wants them to take care of him but because she will be able to raise her daughter as she wants without his interference. The most horrible thing is that she never feels guilty of what she has done to him on the contrary; she neither tries to relieve his pain nor to console him. Even his daughter does not sympathize with him or feel sorry for his tragic end. All the time, she takes sides with her mother against her father and follows her blindly. This shows the alienation of the children from their father. According to John Ward, Strindberg presents a weak father who does not have the ability to withstand and face a mother's power. Moreover, the sadness of father is due to mother's force which makes him desperate and disappointed completely (7). At the moment of wearing the straitjacket, the Captain finds all the domineering women surrounding him. He rejects his daughter then falling in a deadly stroke. His death neither affects the daughter nor the mother who embraces her daughter saying "My child! My own child!" This foreshadows the single headed families which become gradually not accepted but now is wide spread phenomenon in western societies. This sounds rather strange concerning a healthy environment to live.

Ann Kaplan identifies that "though the mother loves her child, she represents a real evil and monstrous mother for her wicked desires of complete control over her children" (48). She succeeds in alienating the father from his daughter. The concept of the monstrous mother is of a long history in the West, from ancient time, the Greek age to the present. She is more than a bad mother for her lack of cordiality, emotion towards her children. She is highly self-involved; willing to consume and overwhelm anyone who stands in her way especially those who are under her control. Her sense of over protection to her children turns her to be an attacker or a murderer. Therefore, the relationship with her children becomes a hostile instead of a strong one. She is responsible of harming her children changing them to weaker persons since they depend on her only. Shari Thurer observes that "the domineering mother was held to be the cause of her children's miseries" (247).

3. The Monstrous Mother in Arthur Kopit's *Oh Dad*

Arthur Lee Kopit (1937), an American playwright, becomes well-known due to his play, *Oh Dad* (1960). Like Strindberg, Kopit concentrates on the figure of the domineering mother who is willing to control everyone and everything. His play, *Oh Dad* focuses on "the dying of a central character, whom we never see – surrounded in his final hours by his family, his mistress, best friend and medical assistance" (Bigsby 140). It discusses

the story of a dominating woman, Madam Rosepettle, her overprotected son, Jonathan who simply becomes a destructive element and her dead husband's body.

By satirizing American family life, Kopit reveals the psychological danger inherent in a society that blindly follows a belief in stereotyped family roles. The play is a light hearted dramatization of a fairly overworked American theme of feminine dominance. It advocates well known platitudes and familiar attitudes of the young which basically amounts to being amusingly and irresponsibly anti-woman, anti-sex and anti-life as Kelly Kevin remarks (12).

The protagonist of the play, Madam Rosepettle, a widow, arrives at a very stylish fashionable hotel at Havana in Cuba with a baggage that among other things contains extraordinary things such as a coffin with her husband's stuffed body, Rosalinda the carnivorous fish and two insect eating Venus Flytrap plants (Kopit 2).

At the beginning of the play she gives the impression that she is good and resolute when she cries arrogantly at the poor Bell-boys who set up the coffin in the bed room. Her voice is a mixture of affection and frustration. Her appearance is completely different from her reality as she used to oppress her son Jonathan who feels afraid from her presence. So in order to avoid her he always tries to find refuge in his childish hobby of collecting stamps or coins. It is obvious from her behaviors that she overprotects her son in an extremely snobbish way from various imaginary cruel realities of the wicked world.

She is a monstrous mother due to her abusive power over her son, her brutal behavior and her lack of passion towards him. The sense of dominance, violence and aggression shapes her character. She seeks to consume anyone under her control especially her son Jonathan. It is obvious, that psychologically she is not well as the obsession of controlling affects her badly.

To evaluate the relationship between the mother and her son, it is important to know how she is treated and her status in society. The bad manner of her husband has risen in her psychopathic determination of mind and a wicked sadistic nature that caused her frustrated libidinous and increased her desires of domination. Thus, her enfolded and twisted mentality forces her to carry the stuffed corpse of her dead husband in a coffin whenever she goes, and also indulge in several abnormal acts. Moreover, she keeps with her unusual creatures and plants such as Rosalinda, a kind of fish that attacks large mammals in water including man.

We notice that Madam Rosepettle has killed her husband and has been carrying the corpse along. Above all her abnormal nighttime journeys on the beach and kicking sand into the eyes of the innocent entangled Adams and Eves of the beach-resorts is a horrifying sight of a frustrated destructive female indulging in a dreadful variety of damage that is at alteration with the laws of nature and the American culture. Jürgen Wolter points out that by showing the reality; Kopit reveals the American preferences which have perpetuated its own obscure myths of the American female as an absolute man-eater in order to suggest its capacity for inducing the pathological destructive obsession (61-63). There is a hint of the myth between Madam Rosepettle and the young teen-aged Rosalie who falls into another simulacrum of the older lady's past whereas Madam Rosepettle, to avoid the repetition, recreates the ghastly aspects of her anti-romantic past as a wife and a mother.

Commodore Roseabove is a wealthy, romantic man and owner of the largest yacht in the Caribbean. During Madame Rosepettle's stay in the hotel, he tries to express his fascination but in vain. He is quickly put in his proper, subservient place by madam Rosepettle, who does not respect males. The Commodore has the audacity to love the cold widow, for which he is both savagely mocked and terrified.

The dialogue between Madam Rosepettle and Commodore who during the dance of lovers explores the heart of the play; "Madam.....I love you forever. Don't you understand? Oh your husband.....He must have been a wonderful man to deserve a woman such as you" (52). The use of irony reveals Madam Rosepettle's contradictory sense of violence as well as love. According to Anne C Murch, Kopit exploits the situation of love for both the strange humor and the macabre horror (369). Madam Rosepettle in her longish soliloquy tells us that she married her husband mainly because he was the first man to propose with honorable intentions. In a world full of greedy sharks he had the grace to utter 'will you please marry me' (48) and she readily accepted him:

yes, perhaps it's because one look at Albert's round, and face and I knew he could be mine...that no matter where he went, or whom he saw, or what he did, Albert would be mine, all mine—mine to love, mine to live with, mine to kill; my husband, my lover, my own.....my very own (Ibid., 57).

It is obvious that she married him because he was that kind of man that she can easily dominate. The husband is factually dead. To complete her control over her husband, she killed him and having him stuffed as if

he were an animal and not a human being. She considers him nothing but a medal, carrying him with her all the time and wherever she goes," He's my very favorite trophy. I take him with me wherever I go" (52). For her as for many people, life is as battle between the two sexes, between man and woman.

The domineering mother forgets her duty as a wife and becomes completely a tyrant whose only aim is to get absolute power. As a monstrous mother, her awful domination destroys the family and the house which is no longer a safe place filled with love but of severe rules that must be accepted. The father lives a frustrated life with no ability to maintain his position in the family. Moreover, her relationship with her husband and the children is based on fear and denial of reality and not on love and respect. Her son, Jonathan after seeing the dead body of his father is shocked because the father's body is not a decaying form of flesh but a young looking prepared by taxidermist that the mother carries everywhere.

The mother seeks to destroy everything that is not according to her notions of purity and courtesy. On the other hand, her son tries to get rid of her prison by watching people and objects. He is not allowed to leave the room thus, only through the window he can see the outside world and his only job is to feed his mother's Venus flytraps in order to recognize her dominance over him. This means that he is a slave to her domination. Burgoyne Dieckman and Richard Brayshaw contend "that imprisonment of Jonathan is constructed by various social forces, the first is the family" (169).

The appearance of Rosalie who is a baby sitter and nanny of many children is regarded as a developed conflict between both the internal and external worlds of the restricted Jonathan. Madam Rosepettle, the domineering mother of the two worlds, loses her control over her son as soon as Rosalie gets hold of the inner world. The mother intends to protect her son from danger as Attila Kiss points out that "the subject internalizes and acts out identity-patterns" (104). She wants him to adopt her forced designs and endure her powerful rules that can act even through the body of the dead father. For her, Jonathan is "as white as fresh snow" (46), therefore, she will do anything to protect and save him from the world of men and women who are interested in the consumption of one another and not in true love (72). She attempts to purify the world surrounding him and to keep his innocence.

Rosalie and Jonathan become fascinated with each other. She finds in him a new challenge, a timid and frightened youth who desperately needs to get rid from his mother's dominance. Thus, she decides to seduce him in order to free and save him from his monstrous mother.

The mother has a vital role in forming Jonathan's identity and in the seduction act of Rosalie who seeks to take her place. The two women represent two opposites of femininity, the virgin like mother figure and the over sexualized lover who tries to seduce him by acting like a surrogate mother. The mother fails to overprotect her son whose rehabilitation does not follow the rules of rituality as he obeys another woman.

In all her conversations with the Commodore, Madam Rosepettle concentrates on her son starting to express her true feelings towards him:

I feel sorry for you are nothing. While my son is mine
his voice is like the music of angels, and his
 mind is pure. For he is safe and it is I who have saved
 him. Saved him from the world beyond that door. The
 world of you, the world of his father. A world waiting
 to devour those who trust in it; those who love. A world
 vicious under the hypocrisy of kindness, ruthless under
 the falseness of a smile (59).

This conversation reveals that her main target in life is the complete domination over her son. Her awful domination affects her son and makes him weakened and dependent. She is responsible for harming and destroying him. A domineering woman, like Madam Rosepettle is willing to dominate anyone under her control especially her children. She also seeks to impose her domination on the Commodore. Brendan Hennessy sheds light on the hesitation of the Commodore. He said that the Commodore starts to hesitate like Jonathan but fortunately he can escape from her control (12). He recognizes that from him she only wants his heart and the reason remains unknown. After confessing her feminine faults and flesh-eating causes, the Commodore feels frightened from her. He begins to feel that her domineering nature turns him to useless man.

Madam Rosepettle does not accept any relationship between Rosalie and Jonathan and when she sees them in a love scene she screams:

Harlot, I called you slut, scum, sleazy prostitute
 catching and caressing children and men stroking
 their hearts. I've seen you. Blind man's buff with the
 children in the garden..... I've seen you in action. I know
 your kind (38).

By using words like slut, scum, sleazy, caressing and stroking, Kopit seeks to communicate the older woman's jealousy as well as her vicarious sensual

stimulation. On the other hand, Rosalie is another kind of American female; the embodiment of the completely sensuous woman pretending to be a child but she is the woman who emasculates her lover. She is so self-centered and insensitive that her sexual desire arouses only terror in Jonathan. If the lady desperately keeps the curious world out of her own microcosm of a mummified husband and affronted son, young Rosalie's actions and words indicate a similar world, Eden that is lost and changes to another destructive and more aggressive female (73).

The appurtenances of the grotesque and the macabre create an important dramatic effect. For example Jonathan in a desperate gesture of total emancipation from the enclosed control of his mother; pulls out the fire axe and kills the piranha and cuts up the Venus fly traps. Rosalie does not witness this event and she suspects he has done worst thing since he is a confused man.

Rosalie: Not so loudly. Where'd you put her body?

Jonathan: there. Where? I don't see a body. Where is she?

Who?

Rosalie: your mother

Jonathan: I haven't killed my mother. I've killed her plants.

The ones I used to feed. I've chopped their hearts out.

Rosalie: I thought you'd killed your mother (60).

Jonathan was somehow avoiding woman at the time when Rosalie was keen on seducing him. While she is with him, she lies asleep beside the body of his dead father to let him imagine a man and woman in bed just to seduce him. She always succeeds in imprisoning Jonathan in her libidinous elan but fails to make him forget his father. Therefore, she used to tell him:

Forget about your father. Drop your pants on top of him, then you won't to see his face. Forget about your mother. She's gone. Forget then both and look at me.

Love is so beautiful..... Come and let me keep you mine.

Mine to love when I want.....mine to have when I want. Mine all mine (69).

The end of the play shows the return of Madam Rosepettle after her ghoulish ritual of kicking sand to see the unexpected destruction and devastation in the hotel suite and exclaim with becoming feminine equanimity telling her son:

There's a woman on my bed and I do believe she's stopped breathing...you've buried her under your fabulous collection of stamps, coins and books. I ask

you Robinson, as a mother to a son what is the meaning of this? (71).

Jonathan thereafter feels absolutely besieged by his mother's overwhelming dominance and unfortunately, "his awareness of such forces pushes him into irrational as to motivate his own crazy riot of maddened murder" (122).

Gerald Weales remarks that kopit makes Madam Rosepettle and Jonathan confused persons who never maintain specific action in order to echo the modern American society that is in the grip of the American female. As a matter of fact both are neurotic and psychotic; mentally disturbed and aggrieved individuals who represent sick society. Symbolically, it represents a society that has virtually become matriarchal in actual experience as a consequence of the female domination. The mother has enslaved the father. This unnatural and immoral apotheosizing of the mother cause only deterioration and destruction of home, family and children. (597-599).

Madam Rospettle is a domineering mother, an emasculating and demanding woman who abides to no ideology save her own. She is a victimizer and every character in the play is her victim even her dead husband. Her main victim is, however, her son Jonathan whom she browbeats severely. It is obvious that she has reduced him to an awfully unconfident, frightened and emotionally arrested young man incapable of working without her.

Commodore is also a victim and indirectly, Rosalie is also a victim, for it is Madam Rosepettle's unusual views strongly and furiously affects Jonathan to the extent that lead him to kill the girl in a cold bloody way.

The play ends with an ironic note as Rosalie's body is buried whereas his father's corpse does not rest. Jonathan is like his mother has no sympathy for his father. He even does not feel sorry for his father's horrible death at the hand of his mother. The dreadful domination of his mother pushes him to be a murderer. As a monstrous mother, she achieves complete control and dominance over the identity, behavior and feeling of her son. She affects him badly and turns him to a passive man. Such kind of a destructive and violent mother consumes and destroys her son psychologically through her excessive dominance. She is really an evil mother and woman as well.

Both Strindberg and Kopit consider the domineering mother monstrous for her excessive desire of controlling her children. Her violent and abusive behavior towards her children turns her into an evil mother. For them such kind of destructive cruel mother consumes her children and may become a murderer. Therefore, her domination over the children causes not only their destruction, but also the destruction of others. It is obvious, that by nature those two mothers are monstrous and psychologically not stable.

Conclusion

Both father and mother play an important role in the upbringing of their children. They help them to develop intellectually, socially and emotionally as they grow up. Fostering the children is a mutual work between the parents. So it is important establish a healthy human relationship within the family. Both Strindberg and Kopit shed light on the deterioration of this relationship and attack the awful domination of the mother considering her the main cause for destroying the family and the children.

In *The Father*, Strindberg dramatizes a major concern of his life and work; that is the eternal power struggle between father and mother who is portrayed as a destructive and deviating from the norm. Although, the Captain leaves his army work to devote himself to his scientific researches and family, he fails to have a happy life. He suffers from his bitter marriage due to the struggle with the mother who seeks to gain full control over their daughter. Therefore, Strindberg attacks the injustice of life and the ultimate cruelty of the mother.

In Kopit's *Oh Dad*, the mother dominates the family and controls the finance and business. She tries to prove her importance in life, unfortunately at the expense of her own son and her family life. The liberation of woman is considered a nightmare by the father who suffers at the hand of his wife. This play is a real attack on American monstrous mother who becomes a murderer in order to gain full domination over her son and her husband who has no public role.

Although, *The Father* and *Oh Dad* are written in different times and places, both dramatists present monstrous mothers who used various ways to achieve their domination. Both are failed mothers who do not meet the expectations of society. In spite of their evil means, they successfully do what they want. They violate the relationship between the father and the children. They intend to achieve self-realization and identity through their

children as the only means that gives them the sense of being alive. However, doing this, makes them lose their femininity. What they do results in their being misunderstood by their respective societies.

It is obvious that the mother's domination is not favored because it often leads to destruction not only of those around her especially her children, but of herself also. She damages everyone and all good things in her life. Such a mother is considered an enemy to her children and to herself as well.

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