



## Resistance and Distribution of Power in David Mamet's *Oleanna and Race*

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### ABSTRACT

This essay represents a Foucauldian reading of David Mamet's *Oleanna and Race*. By drawing on Foucault's view on the importance of the power relations exercised through discourses, Mamet illustrates the discourses that power is exercised. The focus is on the diffused and dispersed nature of power, its ubiquity, and pervasiveness. Based on Foucault's view on the circulation of power in schools and institutions, in *Oleanna*, the classroom discourse and interaction patterns show that knowledge is power. Being more of an intellectual and skillful individual in the class lets both John and Carol exercise power. Through normalization, everything is to be made uniform, and the subjected bodies are inducted to accept the disciplinary measures as the norm. Thus, John is the authority figure in his class who serves Carol to obey his dictates if she wants to pass the course. Through the discourse of resistance, Carol takes advantage to respond to the power exercised on her through her knowledge. This shows that Carol has the potential to resist and attempt to exercise her power. Further, in *Race*, Mamet attempts to speak on race and sexuality by presenting it in his discourse. He attempts to talk about sex as the fundamental part of individuals' identities to solve the other underlying problems of an individual.

**Keywords:** Knowledge, Normalization, Power in literature, Resistance

### INTRODUCTION

David Mamet is an American playwright, essayist, screenwriter, and film director. As a playwright, he wins a Pulitzer Prize. Mamet's writing style is in the form of dialogue, marked by a cynical, street-smart edge, precisely crafted for effect, which is so distinctive that it has come to be called Mamet speak or Mametesque. Mamet recognizes his narrative style by expressing his debt to Harold Pinter. He often uses italics and quotation marks to highlight particular words and to draw attention to his characters' frequent manipulation and tricks in using language. His characters frequently interrupt one another, their sen-

tences remain unfinished, and their dialogue overlaps. Dean summarizes Mamet's unique use of language in all of his plays and asserts that Mamet's work "constitutes a theatre of language: the lines spoken by his characters do not merely contain words that express a particular idea or emotion; they are the idea or emotion itself" (Dean, 1990). Mufson another critic describes Carol as a "femme-fatale and p. c. fascist rolled into one" (Mufson, 1993). MacLeod asserts that Carol can be regarded, from all points on "the political spectrum, as a monster straight out of men's worst nightmares" and this "grotesque figure may then be disavowed as an insulting caricature or affirmed as the whole horrible truth about current feminist trends," further, though, "the con-

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sensus is that the play has constructed Carol in such one-sided negative terms that no genuine debate about the merits of her position is necessary or even possible" (MacLeod, 1995). He also explains that Carol seems as the "mouth-piece of a radical and subversive group that brainwashed her and filled her with their brand of hate speech to be directed at John" (MacLeod, 1995).

What is more, in the article "Race, Rape, and White Victimhood: David Mamet's *Race*," Young explains that *Race* is "Just as the Tea Party has so successfully done, Mamet has captured the contemporary mood of white disaffection, yoking it to an image of a post racist society intent on grinding white men under its heel" (Young, 2011). Rankine also writes *Race* shows "the debate in courtroom terms [. . .] A courtroom is like a church to the extent that it is a sacred space", that particular "rules, conventions, and practices apply, and not necessarily those of everyday life" Further, he explains that "these spaces are "easy arenas for civil disobedience, places for persons to act in uncustomary ways (Rankine, 2013). In *Oleanna*, John is a university professor, husband, and father who is about to achieve tenure in his mid forties. Carol comes to discuss the professor's course in education that she struggles with. Their conversation is repeatedly interrupted by telephone calls from John's wife; she calls to talk about the new house she is buying. John asks Carol to come back to meet him some other time. When she is about to leave, the phone rings again; this time exactly when Carol appears on the brink of representing some mysterious secret about herself. Considering John's touching her on the shoulder as a sexual assault, she accuses John of sexual harassment and even rape after he tries to interfere with her leaving his office due to some unpleasant misunderstanding; therefore, everything ends tragically, especially for John.

Also, *Race* illustrates a law firm and a volatile case: Charles, a wealthy white man is accused of raping a young black woman in a hotel room. He seeks someone to defend him; his innocence or guilt becomes one of several debates within the play. The relationship be-

tween power and desire is just like a tug of war in which each side wants to grasp more possibly-developed space than the other. Another objective of this article is to seek how the practice of power exercises in the two plays and how the dominator and the dominated can instantly exchange their roles to resist against one another. These two plays proceed by making resistance that shows why and how resistance occurs in the operation. Next, through normalization, the subjected bodies are inducted to accept the disciplinary measures as the norm. Thus, John is the authority figure in his class, serving Carol to obey his dictates if she wants to pass the course. The aim is to represent the power relations in the world of these two plays and detect the issue of power from the actions of resisting and the occurrence of conflicts.

## DISCUSSION

Mamet's *Oleanna* represents sexual harassment and the power struggle between a college professor, John, and Carol's student. David Mamet's *Oleanna* is a play representing that knowledge is power. The ability to be the more intellectually a skilful individual in a room lets both John and Carol capture and lose the role of the teacher in their student-teacher relationship. John begins the play by employing his knowledge and subsequent power through using ambiguous rhetoric such as noun clauses and indefinite pronouns. Through using vague and ambiguous language, John exercises his power on Carol through his knowledge. When John purposefully fails to give an exact definition of a term, he enacts his role as a teacher, the authority, whose job is to maintain student interest and inquiry. However, John unknowingly lets Carol learn this powerful skill to allow the power dynamic to fluctuate within the student-teacher relationship. Carol gradually learns to be even more skilful at using purposefully vague language to represent her power and exercise her power on John at the end of the play. *This play* represents the shifting power between university teacher John and student Carol over three separate meetings. As they become more hostile, John and Carol derive power by interrupt-

ing each other. As the play progresses, they lessen interruption and begin to exercise their power by repeating and misappropriating each other's language. John and Carol use concise and complete sentences in order to maintain their power. In Act one, John and Carol cannot communicate because John constantly talks during his initial meeting with Carol and does not let Carol to express herself. At the beginning of the play, in a business tone, John tells Carol the importance of his time when he tells her, "I have a *telephone* call that I have to make. Moreover, an *appointment*, which is rather pressing; though I sympathize with your concerns, and though I wish I had the time, this was not a previously scheduled meeting"(Mamet, 1993). John is arrogant draws his esteem from his job as a college professor, and controls and operates whatever he sees correct. In his one-sided theoretical conversation with Carol, he talks about his breadwinner position at home. It seems that his career as a professor went well and he released his first book; as a result, he will be respected and secure his position as a professor in the university.

Despite his need to the tenure committee to secure his position in the university, he talks too proudly about his achievement and boasts of his superiority and power over the committee: "They're *garbage*. They are a *joke*. Look at me. Look at me. The Tenure Committee. The Tenure Committee. Come to judge me. The Bad Tenure Committee" (Mamet, 1993). This shows that how he is proud and looks at his position in the world. He speaks in long sentences with no regard for whether he is understood or not. Because he uses long sentences and complex words, he maintains his power and authority as a college professor. John tries to make Carol take fewer notes and listen more and he says: "But I was suggesting, many times, that that which we wish to retain is retained frequently, I think, better with less expenditure of effort" (Mamet, 1993). In this way, John's language makes him the identity of a teacher; thus, his language bestows on him a particular privileged use of language so that he can impose his power on Carol. Carol continuously repeats that she

does not understand his thoughts, the course material, book, or answers; however, John ignores her and speaks constantly. He questions her ability and attempts to repress Carol to exercise his power over her. She asks various questions and most of the time answers John's question with another question.

Although still speaking, he speaks less in Act two. Carol finds her self-confidence and begins to speak in longer sentences; she becomes more aggressive and exercises her power in her conversation skills. Carol finds this ability to interrupt John on two occasions. In the first example, John begins by saying, "I feel that one point [...]"; Carol begins to speak, but John quickly says, "One second [...]"(Mamet, 1993). This shows that power does not go in one direction and Carol decides to exercise her power. On the other occasion, Carol does let her professor to complete his thought. When John explains that I would like to help you, Carol says that "I don't *care* what you feel. Do you see? DO YOU SEE? You can't *do* that anymore" (Mamet, 1993). Not only does she interrupt John, but also Carol reminds John about the Tenure Committee as "Good Men and True," Carol explains, "one of whose members is a woman, [...]. And though you might call it Good Fun, or An Historical Phrase, or An Oversight, [...] It is a sexist remark, and to overlook it is to countenance continuation of that method of thought" (Mamet, 1993). She tries to exercise her control and power over John and events. The moment that she finds her source of power within the institution, Carol confirms her independence from John, and she does not need him to give her linguistic power any more: "I don't think that I need your help. I don't think I need anything you have" (Mamet, 1993). She denies his power and does not sympathize with him.

In Act Three, the transformation of power can be seen ultimately. John now is the one who has to request for explanation of words so that he asks Carol to repeat what he cannot understand. As Carol could not understand John in Act one, John does not understand Carol in this act. Carol takes John's words, his actions, and his belief that "we interpret the behaviour of others through the screen we [...]"

create” and she adds that “don’t you begin to see...? Don’t you begin to understand? IT’S NOT FOR YOU TO SAY (Mamet, 1993). The focus of the play is a power struggle; John has all the power in the beginning, whereas Carol has none. By the end, Carol resists against him and takes power. In this regard, one can find that power does not go in one direction and distributes everywhere. Power plays a productive role, and it does not belong to a superstructure.

Thus, this type of power did not lead to a binary opposition between a dominator and dominated that is reproduced from top to bottom. Power circulates everywhere; power relationships exist at every point, and everyone can exercise power. There is no central place for power in society; everyone can exercise power everywhere. Based on Foucault’s view on the circulation of power in schools and institutions; in this play, the classroom discourse and interaction patterns show how language produces meaning and power for the speakers. John resorts to physical violence when his linguistic powers fail him; thus, he beats Carol by raising a chair over her. As John feels his control of his life slip away, Carol adds the last insult when she intervenes into his intimate life, and attempts to make law about his most private community and family. This play represents the discourse of resistance; Carol takes advantage to respond to the power exercised on her through her knowledge. By circulating her discourse about her identity, she resists and attempts to exercise her power. Despite many efforts from her university teacher to silence her voice and rebelliousness, she confronts power and authority and resists them. She can show her agency so that she creates changes in the authorial system of the university. This shows that power is exercised, and Carol has the potential for resistance; in this sense, by drawing on Foucault’s quotation, “where there is power, there is resistance” (Foucault, 2007).

In *Oleanna*, Mamet illustrates the pedagogical relationship between John and Carol; it displays how John attempts to repress Carol by interrupting her to control what she says. The physical violence of John against her student Carol is an attempt to erase her identity.

Through controlling the language of Carol, he attempts to resist and protect his identity in any way possible. Indeed, at the end of the play, John’s physical violence shows that Carol succeeds in exercising her power. Although Carol is not interested in writing, he tells her that her grade for the whole term is an “A” if she comes back to class and meets him: “It’s not important. What’s important is that I awaken your interest if I can and that I answer your questions. Let’s start over” (Mamet, 1993). At the beginning of the play, despite John’s self-assurance and brave, Carol, as a student is silent and weak and she comes to him for help. She tells John that she does what she is told to do; however, she does not understand the course material or what John says. In their first meeting, although John attempts to ignore Carol’s complaint and makes her silent, Carol argues and takes advantage of the support of her “Group.” She protests to John’s challenging course and argues that she cannot understand John’s language to know something “to get on in the world. [...] However, I don’t *understand*. I don’t *understand*. I don’t understand what anything means [...]. From morning till night: with this one thought in my head. I’m *stupid* (Mamet, 1993). Throughout the first act, she is emotional and does not have enough self-esteem and self-confidence. She comes to the university to improve herself; however, all she finds is a lack of understanding. Despite his attempts to use different strategies to have Carol withdraw her complaint from the Tenure Committee, he does not succeed. His first request is that he loves job: “You see, (*pause*) I love to teach. And flatter myself I am *skilled* at it. And I love the, the aspect of *performance*. I think I must confess that” (Mamet, 1993). In other words, John admits that he needs tenure to build and secure his position within his family.

Further, he points out that false reports could spoil his provider status within his family; then, he tells Carol: “You don’t have your own family, at this point, you may not know what that means. But to me it is important. A home. A Good Home. To raise my family” (Mamet, 1993). John informs Carol that his future will be in jeopardy if the Tenure Committee

changes its decision and does not accept his tenure. As he explains, “I will not be able to close on my house. I will lose my *deposit*, and the home I picked out for my wife and son will go by the boards” (Mamet, 1993). Carol does not feel upset; then, John changes his tactics towards her. Because Carol is not affected by his frustration, he resorts to physically restraining her in his office that makes her shout: “LET ME GO. LET ME GO. WOULD SOMEBODY HELP ME? WOULD SOMEBODY HELP ME PLEASE?” (Mamet, 1993). Despite Act I, she tries less to find words to express herself because she feels more confident in her ability to deal with John. She prepares precise writing in her report to the Tenure Committee so that he cannot believe the report. Now there is the distribution of power and he is obliged to sit and listen to her views. Again, John attempts to change Carol’s mind about the situation. Otherwise, he will be fired from the Tenure Committee. He argues and accuses Carol of having no feelings; she exercises her power on her by charging him with the following: “That’s my point. You see? Don’t you have any feelings? Your final argument. What is it that has not feelings? *Animals*. I don’t take your side, you question if I’m human” (Mamet, 1993).

As she resists to John, she points out to John that he has to blame for his circumstances: “What do you want? You want to charm me. You want to convince me. You want me to recant. I will not recant. Why should I [...]? What I say is right” (Mamet, 1993). Carol is exercising her power over John since she is angry about long-ago wrongs. Carol describes what John thinks about women like Carol: “You think I’m a, of course I do. You think I am a frightened, repressed, confused, I don’t know, abandoned young thing of some doubtful sexuality, who wants, power and revenge. (*Pause*.) Don’t you?” (Mamet, 1993).

In this way, Carol resists to John and does not want to be a repressed student due to higher academic education. After finding out about the charge of rape and the list of Carol’s Group’s demands for banning his book, John is reduced to nothing. The moment that Carol

says: “Don’t call your wife baby” (Mamet, 1993), John resorts to physical strength and force which shows that Carol becomes successful exerting her power on him. By considering John and Carol’s communication patterns and behaviors, it is evident that how they go through the distribution of power. Similarly, Carol takes advantage of her “Group” and threatens and charges rape on her professor. John struggles to resist to Carol who serves to accuse him of rape and he argues: “I’m a teacher. I am a teacher. Eh? It’s my *name* on the door, and I teach the class, and that’s what I do. I’ve got a book with my name on it. You’re *dangerous* [...] You want to ban my book? Go to *hell*” (Mamet, 1993). It is evident that in everywhere there is a power relation, there is resistance. Resistance is coextensive with power; power appears where there is resistance. Thus, John’s action is a defence to resist charges and attacks. Power distributes everywhere “rather than radiating downwards from a super structural position, power circulates, comes from below and a multiplicity of different sources—we must conceive of power without the king” (Foucault, 1980). As a result of the particular disciplinary mechanisms of university characterized by highly asymmetrical distribution of power, Carol attempts to contest the mechanisms of disciplinary power successfully; she resists to the power of John and challenges the validity of the discourse legitimizing him.

By Foucauldian reading of Oleanna, it is evident that John links the norm to disciplinary power whose goal is to train individual bodies so that they are simultaneously efficient and obedient. John employs a disciplinary context and norms as the universal prescription for Carol as an individual. He identifies the norm as essential to exercise and legitimize power because it functions within a disciplinary context, bringing both qualification and correction. From this position of power, John can change the rules in order to argue with Carol. John explains: “Your grade for the whole term is an A. If you will come back and meet with me. A few more times. [...] Let’s start over [...] Say this is the beginning,” however, Carol rejects: we can’t start over. [...] I don’t believe

it" (Mamet, 1993). In this regard, disciplinary power is so effective that it normalizes the judgment of its subjects. In this system, everything is to be made uniform, and the subjected bodies are inducted so that they accept the disciplinary measures as the norm. Carol realizes that in the higher education system, somebody must choose the textbooks to bring enormous power. The books govern what is taught and what is not taught. To put it in another way, the books describe John's norms and institutional goals and his agenda; they serve to confine and discipline their members. By drawing on Foucault's perspective, John as the representative of his correctional institution produces some expected rules and norms in the higher education system to make university students conform to these norms. In this play, Carol is supposed to conform to these norms if she wants to be included in higher academic education. Otherwise, she will be excluded automatically. In this regard, individuals need to play a role within an institution and adapt to the roles that others play. They need to internalize the norms and expectations of an institution and conform to them. At the beginning of the play, Carol attempts to be an obedient individual who follows the norms of the university and the rules of the class so that she tells John that even though she takes copious notes and follows his orders; she does not understand the course: "No, no, no. I'm doing what I'm told. It's *difficult* for me. [...] The *language*, the things that you say" (Mamet, 1993). In this sense, individuals are supposed to obey and follow these norms to be included in the university's disciplinary system.

Further, Mamet's *Race* is the story of a wealthy white man being accused of raping a black woman. Two lawyers, one black and one white, as well as the firm's new young assistant, a young black woman called Susan, attempt to find whether they should represent him in court or not. Susan, a black woman in her 20s, plays a pivotal role in the play with her alleged actions. Understanding Susan and the power she wields over her employers is essential in order to understand her status as a minority employee; however, she attempts to use her own race and gender as a reason to

take advantage. All black and white, female and male characters work towards their agendas and use any available means to take advantage. In the United States, "affirmative action" is defined as positive steps to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business that they are historically excluded. In *Race*, significant issues such as rape and betrayal victimize women, and the female characters' voice in the play is impotent. It can be seen that the female character who is raped is nameless and does not have an identity. In this sense, such a policy leads Susan to take advantage of her race and gender to admit that she thinks the white businessman is guilty. In every social relation there is a power relation so that every power is in a power relation and there is no absolute dominant. Power in modern society is a kind of relations system that relies on knowledge or a network of power.

According to Foucault, there is a power relation in every social relation; he points out that every power is in a power relation, and it does not represent an absolute dominant. He declares that power in modern society is a kind of system of relations, and it is productive. Power is everywhere, and resistance is everywhere as well. As there are various forms of disciplinary power, there is a multiplicity of resistance. Power is not something exerted by powerful rulers, and it can be produced by both individuals protecting it and individuals resisting it. In America, "affirmative action" also shows positive steps for increasing the representation of women and minorities in areas of employment, education, and business that they have been historically excluded. There is resistance in networks of power so that power is related to resistance. Without resistance, there is no power relation; in this sense, "slavery is not a power relationship when a man is in chains, only when he has some possible mobility, even a chance of escape" (Foucault, 1980). Power comes to be productive when it is exercised and there is resistance as result power is not exercised over individuals who are not free but controlled. Freedom is necessary for exercising power; therefore, power and resistance are interrelated

together. In this regard, the American Civil Rights Movement is the essential social movement of the 20th century. Although the roots of this movement refer to the 19th century, it rises in the 1950s and the 1960s. The goal is to support and promote African Americans right to basic privileges of American citizenship. Affirmative action and employment equity let black people and minorities have similar rights in job opportunities. Drawing on Foucault's notion, in the disciplinary society of America, black people "received light only from that portion of power that was conceded to them or from the reflection of it that for a moment they carried" (Foucault, 1980). It means that when an appropriate and productive model of power is exercised in society, it will result to freedom and productivity; if not, it will lead to despotism.

In this sense, in *Race*, Susan who is a young African American lawyer argues and represents her concern: "Whites would think to find him innocent is racism. Blacks would think that to do so is treason" and Jack asks her: "Do you think he raped her?" and Susan argues: "Why? Because I'm black?" (Mamet, 2013). In America, affirmative action serves as positive steps to increase the representation of women and minorities in areas of education, employment and business that they are historically excluded. In this way, Civil Rights Movement and affirmative action are the social norms that the disciplinary society of America applies in order to control individuals and their behaviors. In a disciplinary society, the socialists attempt to understand the best way of training people; therefore, the impact of the panoptic society on individuals is to make them to internalize norms. Mamet argues that it is evident that "a racist view of the world must result in injustice. That injustice may be calculated to benefit the members of a group which may have been previously oppressed may stand as an explanation for immoral behaviour, but it does not excuse it" (Mamet, 2011). This represents that wherever power exists simultaneously there is resistance too. Charles J. Ogletree, Jr. also writes: "Affirmative action admissions policies seek to realign the balance of power and opportunity

by doing what is, at heart, quite simple: affirmatively including the formerly excluded" (Mamet, 2011). In this regard, power is everywhere and exercises at each point because it is diffused and embodied in discourse, knowledge and regimes of truth. Power is everywhere and it does not mean that it embraces everything because it comes from everywhere. Power is not a structure, a possession nor an institution.

Further, talking on the subject of race is like talking about sex; in each, there is a subject that it is nearly hard to tell the truth. However, Mamet attempts to pave the path to speak on matters of race and sexuality. In *Race*, a white person is branded as racist and is threatened by a stigmatization that ruins his businesses and career. This is why; Mamet attempts to write a play rooted in these issues. In *Race*, Henry, the firm's black lawyer, takes Justice Thomas's position: "I would be mortified," he says, "to go through life, thinking that I'd received a dispensation because of my race. And I am ashamed of her that she is not. And she sold us out. Because of the Race of our client. Who is innocent. That's all" (Mamet, 2013). Though Susan does not speak about affirmative action, the title of her senior thesis, "Structural Survivals of Racism in Supposedly Bias-free Transactions," shows that she is unlikely to agree; she believes that America has a long way to go before past wrongs which are righted (Mamet, 2013). The lawyers in *Race* are aware of the history of interracial rape in America and the ramifications for the public opinion today. The white business man Charles talks about the bitter fact of the society of America due to the constitution of affirmative action; he is shocked that he is charged with an attempted rape: "I'm guilty. [...] Because I'm white" and Henry asserts: "No. Because of the calendar" (Mamet, 2013). Charles cannot believe why the black woman causes such hypocrisy although they were in love with each other. This shows that how black Americans show resistance and misuses the norms of disciplinary society and take advantage of it in a way that causes such hypocrisy that "we continue to be dominated by it even today.

Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality" (Foucault, 1990).

Further, by drawing on Foucault's notion, "sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home [...]. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule"(Foucault, 1990). This suggests that due to the "affirmative action," America swung back again. In this way, there is no secret knowledge, or magic power that the government possesses to meet the country's challenges. Mamet attempts to turn the repressive hypothesis of sexuality down and tries not to be silence of sex; instead, he presents it in his discourse. In *Race*, Mamet does not prevent to represent sexual acts and desires as secrets *within* characters; similarly, the debate between Jack the white lawyer and Susan the black assistance displays how Mamet attempts to talk about sex as the fundamental part of individuals' identities in order to solve the other underlying problems of an individual. Susan argues with Jack white lawyer and claims that "this isn't about sex, it's about Race;" Jack questions her: "What's the difference?" (Mamet, 2013). By drawing on Foucault's argument, today, individuals must liberate themselves from the past norms that only accept and limit expressions of sexuality to the parental marriage-bed. Despite the bourgeois society, individuals need to liberate themselves from the imposed silence and tight sexual morals from Victorian ancestors. Mamet attempts to answer this question that why individuals should struggle to liberate themselves from sexual repression. Instead living with the imposition of silence, there should be new ways of thinking and talking about sex. "Thus the image of the imperial prude is emblazoned on our restrained, mute, and hypocritical sexuality" (Foucault, 1980). In *Race*, Mamet shows that how individuals live with the pressure of silencing of sex. This hypocrisy goes back to a part of the repressive society so that by quoting Foucault: "Sexuality was carefully confined; it moved into the home. The conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule" (Voyce, 2019). In this sense, Jack the

white lawyer who can be Mamet himself, argues: "Anybody ever call you that, while he was fucking you? Crazy with love?"(Mamet, 2013). Mamet tends to show that a society needs to treat sexuality in a way that represents the ultimate secret of individuals, their motives, and their mental and emotional status; if not, it will cause a hypothesis of sexuality.

Instead of banning our sexuality and desires as secrets *within* individuals, talking about sex and individuals' desires as the essential part of their identity is essential. The political history of modern institutions of knowledge-production continues to show that sexuality is to make individuals see themselves in this way. As Foucault states: "Sex is the explanation of everything" [...] and it is the "double petition to know" (Foucault, 1980). It means that the power is dynamic at the heart of modern sexuality so that the petition to know is defined as double because individuals need to discover and account for the truth of their sexuality. Indeed, the truth of individuals' sexuality will say everything about them. In fact, in a disciplinary society of America, power needs to be distributed everywhere and a particular group does not possess it. As a result of stereotyping, black people oppose and show their resistance so that this means that power is circulated and it is not in the hand of a particular class. Everyone; in a society, participates in the relations of power; in this sense, power is in different reactions. Power relations go into the depth part of society; power is not localized in the relations. In other words, power "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives"(Foucault, 1980). Thus, Susan resists and denies the notion that power is a possession. By drawing on Foucault's notion, Mamet means that "if there are power relations throughout every social field it is because there is freedom everywhere" (Foucault, 1980). It means that the individuals of disciplinary power are in some way engaged in the relations of power instead of



being passive so that they can use the freedom implied in the power relations to act more self-consciously and resist the mechanisms of power manipulating them.

## CONCLUSION

*Oleanna* represents the ever-shifting power dynamics between the two main characters. On several occasions, John exercises power over Carol; he is older, male, relatively wealthy, and successful so that he feels confident and comfortable in the context of the university. At the beginning of the play, Carol is a powerless, young and new university student relying entirely on John's approval not to fail his class. As she reminds him, her evaluation could make or break her future because she does not come from a privileged background. At the beginning of the play all power rests in John's hands; however, Carol gains and deploys power throughout the play. She becomes more confident in her judgment and condemns John's values and actions. She achieves social power by allying herself with people who she refers to as her "group." During the play, Carol's powerlessness gives her a certain degree of power. By the end of the play, there is power distribution so that Carol can exercise her power. Further, Carol can gain the trust of activists and the tenure committee to exert power over John. However, as long as the two remain confined in John's office, John seems to hold power in starkest, physical, and literal sense.

Although John's the primary role is that of a teacher and Carol's is that of a student, they represent traditional characteristics attributed to men and women. John takes great pride in his traditional role as a family supporter. On several occasions, he points out to Carol he refers to the house he wants to purchase and his career is what makes him the head of his family. However, his role as leader of his class motivates him to deprive Carol of any power as a student and ultimately drives him to self-destruction. Carol is limited both by her status as a student and her place as a female in the traditional male higher education. After submit-

ting the report to the tenure committee, Carol meets John again. During this meeting, John tries to understand Carol's motivation behind the report.

On the other hand, Carol sees John's manipulative tactics and academic language as a means of forcing her to recant her allegations. Carol now draws on the report produced for the tenure committee as her definitive narrative to defend herself. For Carol, John's actions towards her are just one example of his inappropriate behavior toward students. Carol refers to the inappropriate behaviour of John toward students. With this statement, Carol asserts that his ideology and attitude toward higher education constitutes an offence against the student body. In this play, Carol is the invisible student in the first part of the play; she is ignored in class, and when she tries to seek help, she is met with paternalistic care and attitude.

In order to be heard and taken seriously, Carol changes so that she tries to exercise her power over her professor. Carol's association with her Group gives her a place where she is heard and provides Carol with the confidence to speak out. Carol is now associated with radical feminism, and she looks pretty comfortable with that association. In *Oleanna*, Carol is the most articulate character when it comes to voicing how those around them perceive women who have certain beliefs about women's equality. The most personal look at the preservation of men in power can be found in *Oleanna*. John argues his case with Carol from his position of power within his home and within the academic structure. She threatens John to dismantle his position; she is responsible for his eventual dismissal from the university; thus, he cannot purchase a home and will lose all he works for. Mamet's *Oleanna* draws very sharp lines for the behaviour of men and women, and the play sends a message about what happens when men and women step beyond the traditional gender behaviour boundaries. John was empowered both by his role as head of his household and his career as a college professor. Carol was limited by her status as a woman in his class and in the university; her inarticulate speech and meek be-

haviour to make her seem weak. John and Carol experienced a shift in power and a change in behaviour characteristics from the strong to the weak or vice versa; therefore, power distribution is distributed. While presumably John, as a professor, would have near-universal power over Carol in terms of her success in his course, Carol has used the university's system of accountability to gain significant power over John. The play centres around John's power over Carol, but it also suggests that Carol abuses her power over John. In both *Oleanna* and *Race*, characters use their agenda and the tools to abuse that power, Mamet encourages the audience to question where power lies in an academic system and what, exactly, constitutes an abuse of that power. In *Oleanna*, Carol writes a formal complaint about the professor's behavior, and she feels that the instructor is lewd and sexist. She claims that his physical contact is a form of sexual harassment. Thus, there is no absolute power and as no absolute controller. There is always constant shift of norms and rules that individuals gain power to attract new agent to impose their power. Further, *Race* displays that despite our growth as more culturally diverse, we still live in a world where the color of one's skin results in stereotyping. In this way, individuals attempt to react and resist one another. The fact that the world system is grounded on a network of power. Knowledge and power relate together; dominance, norms and relationships are all grounded on the dynamic process of power. When there is repression, there often exists a productive resistance. Indeed, power is not possessed it is exercised everywhere at every moment. This type of power is not exerted simply as an obligation or a prohibition on individuals who do not have it. This power is exercised in their struggle and they represent their resistance against it. In other words, power relations go into the depth part of society; power is not localized in the relations.

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