

## A Gender Study or Shift Of Balance in David Mamet's *Oleanna*

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**Abstract:** *One of the distinctive persons in American literature and cinema, David Mamet writes a great number of plays and scripts and many of which are produced or directed by Mamet himself. Consisting of three acts and having minimalist characterization, Oleanna concerns about John, a faculty member in a university, and his female student Carol. Mamet primarily questions about capitalism, American education system and also tends to the subjects of sexual harassment. Even though Mamet arguing about the relationship between man and woman is criticized by many feminists, he seems to be very accomplished to indicate the deep psychology in both sexes. John who lectures in a university looks superior to his student Carol in terms of his masculinity and linguistic ability. However, this superiority relays to Carol charging him with sexual harassment. The play ends with his endeavor to manhandle her. In this study, one of Mamet's most important works, Oleanna will be argued in terms of feminism, linguistics and American education system.*

**Keywords:** *Oleanna, David Mamet, Linguistics, Feminism, Gender*

### David Mamet'in *Oleanna* Adlı Oyununda Cinsiyet Çalışması veya Denge Değişimi

**Öz:** *Amerikan edebiyatının ve sinema dünyasının önemli isimlerinden biri olan David Mamet birçok oyun ve senaryo kaleme almış ve bunların birçoğunun yönetmenlik koltuğuna kendisi oturmuştur. Minimalist özelliklerle yazmış olduğu üç bölümden oluşan Oleanna oyunu üniversitede hocalık yapan John ile kız öğrencisi Carol arasında geçmektedir. Mamet bu eseriyle öncelikle Amerikan eğitim sistemini sorgulamakta ve kaleme aldığı dönemde cinsel taciz konusuna eğilmektedir. Öte yandan kadın-erkek ilişkilerini irdeleyen yazar her ne kadar feminist eleştirmenler tarafından fazlaca yerilse de her iki cinsin derinlik psikolojisini ele almakta başarılı görülmektedir. Üniversitede ders veren John, öğrencisi Carol'a karşı hem erkek olması hem de dilbilimsel olarak üstünlük sağlamaktadır. Ancak oyunun sonlarına doğru bu üstünlük cinsel taciz suçlaması yapan Carol'a geçer. Oyun John'un Carol'ı tartaklamaya çalışmasıyla son bulur. Bu çalışmada Mamet'in en önemli eserlerinden biri olan Oleanna adlı oyununa feminist, dilbilimsel ve Amerikan eğitim sorunsalları üzerinden irdelenecektir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Oleanna, David Mamet, feminizm, dilbilim, cinsiyetçilik*

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#### I. Introduction

David Mamet is a preeminent playwright, screenwriter, director and essayist in America whose most of plays are filmed by himself and other directors. One of his important plays, *Oleanna* is both performed in Broadway theatres and filmed. The film

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version was written and directed by Mamet himself. *Oleanna*'s London premiere was staged at the Royal Court Theatre, directed by Harold Pinter. The play consists of dialogues between a professor John worrying about his Tenure committee and his female student Carol who does not understand his lectures. The critic summarizes the play: "what begins as harmless "talking" soon catapults into charges of sexual harassment and verbal rape" (Braun, 2004: 104). Mamet's play underlines the problems of American policy on education and capitalism; besides, it dwells on feministic and linguistic issues.

Using controversial issues, David Mamet is a conscious writer dealing with making people think about social problems, including American policy, equality and especially the relationship between man and woman. However, his use of words and style force the critics suppose him as a misogynist. There are many critics thinking like that because of his expressions and discourse. For instance, When Piette talks about Mamet's style, he refers to four extreme reasons to blow his audiences' mind. These are "machismo, misogyny, violence (physical and verbal), and the Jewish cultural heritage" (2004: 74) which means his sharp language. The critic possesses valid grounds for this thought. *Lakeboat* a Mamet's play, depicts women as "soft things with a hole in the middle" (1987: 59). This description makes him a gallows bird among the feminist critics. Headicke alleges that he risks "heresy in challenging the claim of most feminist critics that Mamet and misogyny ring synonymous" (2001: 27). Furthermore, Bruster alleges that the critics "often react chauvinistically to David Mamet's work" (2004: 41). Nonetheless, reflection of the reality as it is becomes Mamet's realistic characterization which is an arguable issue among the critics. Through all his literary and stage life, Mamet exploits the human relationships; yet, whether he is a misogynist or a realist depends on where the reader stands, which transforms as a dilemma in his plays. The critics touching on this issue indicates his ambiguity emphasizes the collision among the critics:

As a consequence of the split between scholars who interpret Mamet as a realist and those who do not, there are deep divisions in approaches to his works. Those who see him as a realist tend to see him as a misogynist; those who do not, see him as problematizing gender issues. Those who see him as a realist tend to take his language as descriptive of reality; those who do not, see his characters as constructed by the language they use. Those who take him realistically see the center of his plays as emptiness; those who do not, see the void as implying, somehow, a need for community. Only when one looks at critics whose starting point is theatrical performance, and who as a result ignore the view of conventional realism, is there no similar binary split. (Sauer & Sauer, 2004: 225)

Additionally, the title of play, *Oleanna* has taken from "a nineteenth-century utopian community founded by the Norwegian violinist Ole Bull and his wife Anna: thus "Oleanna" (Murphy, 2004: 124). Mamet makes sarcasm and accentuation of social problems in the play because the setting occurs in a university. The university, center of science, culture and intellectualism, turns into a place for John, a professor preparing for his tenure committee, who assaults his female student Carol. As well as *Oleanna*'s

feministic characterization, it plays very important role indicating the disagreements on American education system and Mamet interrogates educational philosophy. Murphy, again, encapsulates that the play “points out some of the most basic failures of American education and the long-term effects of the damage it does to young people” (2004: 124). Mamet taking his inspiration from real names questions the issue of sexual harassment and its effects. In fact, American society would dispute the notion of sexual harassment on political area. The critic epitomizes the coincidences between the play and political incidences:

The play opened in New York last fall in time to coincide with the anniversary of the Clarence Thomas/Anita Hill hearings, and just in time to be recontextualized by the sexual harassment charges brought against Bob Packwood, the senator from Oregon, days after his re-election. Mamet has depicted the very concept of "sexual harassment" as yet another available weapon in a struggle for power, which is of course partly true, but his play has struck feminists, who view the issue as one primarily of justice (and only secondarily about power) as reactionary and hostile to their cause. (Scanlan, 1993: 98)

In this play Mamet uses a minimalist setting and cast, which consists of two people and a room. With these two characters, the playwright indicates the deprivation of education system in American universities, savage of capitalism in the US, and also male and female relationships. Bigsby alleges that the main theme of Mamet's plays is loss (2004b: 160). Indeed, John confronts with losing his job and family and ending up in prison and Carol is described as defeated and failure. Haphazard and unplanned, Carol attends the university not for self-improvement and a plan but for the desire that she must be a part of system. In this sense, Mamet thinks that the play is not melodrama but tragedy (Braun, 2004: 108). The theatregoers feel no complaisance to these two characters; however, they are humans having weakness and vulnerability and making mistakes eventually. No matter how vulnerable and weak they are, *Oleanna* is a kind of play narrating human and social problems clearly.

## **II. A Gender Study or Shift of Balance**

### **A. The Characters:**

First of all, recounting the characters is very important to understand the play and its messages. At the beginning of the play, John looks exhausted and concerns about both buying a new house and dealing with his tenure committee. Seeing an attractive young girl, John exhibits himself as remarkable and respectful. Yet, his continuous talking on the phone during his office hour is a sign of disrespect to his position and students. Murphy alleges that “successively more urgent phone calls from his wife and Jerry make John more and more frustrated and unsure of himself” (2004: 128). This let the readers think about his sticking between a boring marriage and a charming girl. Additionally, he is depicted as an unreliable and unstable character as Pinter describes him “a pretty pompous guy who loves his own authority and his own position” (Bigsby, 2004a: 4).

Having this position, John misuses it and the position turns into a tool for John reminding Carol to his superiority. Again, at the start of play, Carol's long stay in her chair and John's peeking on her indicates the attraction between them. Furthermore, it stimulates sexual appeal in later acts.

With this play, Mamet reconsiders the male-female relations. In fact he is well known for his male-oriented plays; yet in this play "Mamet showed greater empathy for John, the unsuspecting victim, than for Carol, his naïve and vindictive attacker" (Braun, 2004: 108). It can be comprehended from audiences' clapping while performed in the Royal Court Theatre. During Act II, John does not answer Carol's questions and he only gives long speeches. It demonstrates the inequality and conflict of power between each other. However, at the end of Act III, it can be easily noticed his desperation because of his abusive words and attempts of beating.

The other character, Carol is more complex and controversial figure than John. The critics have some contradictions about how she is discerned. For instance, on the one hand, Bean approaches Carol as an innocent student. According to her, Carol's "character shift—a movement from demure, deferential good girl to angry woman—signify her behavior as threatening to the masculine authority to which her clothing refers" (2001: 113). She is victim and John is responsible for her unwelcome behaviors. On the other hand, "Daniel Mufson's observation that "Oleanna's working title could have been *The Bitch Set him Up*" (Murphy, 2004: 125). In this sense, she is guilty of John's abuse and beaten. However, those who think like that do not consider John's irresponsible attitudes and desire of superior over her.

The clash between John and Carol concludes with Carol's victory. Having a narrow and limited scope, Carol manages to defeat John although she behaves unfairly. Braun alleges that Mamet has revised his characters since 1990 and "they are often just as clever and aware of how to manipulate power as their unsuspecting male opponents" (2004: 115). This indicates his fall of reputation of misogyny. Instead of being superior over women, John is both exasperated and defeated from his student. While Carol learns how to be manipulative and reincarnates, John loses his superiority and takes his wickedness out. "Clearly, there is a splendid irony in seeing how successfully John has transmitted to Carol the facts, customs and feelings of their "professional" situation" (Skloot, 2001: 98). Carol becomes a sort of professor lecturing John about how he should be and seize the control. Using bad language and sexual abuse portrays his losing of control.

In consideration of all these interpretations, these characters are the products and consequences of culture they live in. Mamet deserves to take appreciations for indication of society living in a capitalist system (Silverstein, 1995: 118). However, the society must pay attention cultural and ethical problems and contrive a solution this "corruption" as the play points out them. Hence, according to some critics including the author himself, the characters are not dreadful or immoral. Boon and Mamet states:

It is difficult to privilege either view without betraying our own bias. But John is not a bad man, as much as he is the inevitable product of the American mythic landscape and Carol is not a malicious woman, as much

as she is a product of cultural shifts in the distribution of economic power.  
(2011: 182-3)

We cannot feel angry with or worried about them. Although their behaviors can be regarded as rude or even abusive, being a circle of social chain.

### **B. Educational system:**

Essentially, we must pay attention to the relationship between John and Carol, one of whom is a professor and the other one is a student. As aforementioned, the title of *Oleanna* comes from an ideal community established by a 19th century Norwegian singer whose name is Ole and wife's name is Anna. This failed Utopia reappears in the play. Badenhausen renames the plays "failed Utopia of Academia" (1998: 15) because Mamet endeavors to recount the degenerated education system and pedagogical problems. The play, however, cannot be read as a utopic text dealing with the education system because of John's physical harassment to Carol, which makes the audiences and readers cheer up. As James states, Mamet scrutinizes "unfinished question of 1960s student radicalism" (2006: 113). By using a problematic professor in anger with his complicated female student, Mamet evinces the possibility of awry interactions – sexual harassment and John's beating – between them.

First of all, When Harold Pinter talks about the play, he regards the situation as "Oleanna's highly problematic confrontation between a professor and a student made good sense when played as a sexual relationship" (Price, 2004:155). This affair composes the main structure of the play. Mamet makes a reference to 'utopic' state system and people's standards of judgment. The harassment, according to the author himself, is a big issue "from the traditional Americanist perspective of the presumption of innocence and the burden of proof" (Quinn, 2004: 105). The dreamland, that is America, turns into a nightmare which proves the idea of perfectionism is a total false in the author's mind. However, some critics conceive that there is no sexual harassment but student abuse. Sauer believes "what is important is not what her secret was but John's total lack of recognition of her vulnerability in being about to reveal it" (Sauer, 2004: 213). The critic emphasizes the deep psychology of these two characters and readers/audiences' must-be diverse perspective.

The professor, John indicates a prolific character representing a faculty member having many problems such as making time for teaching, academic publication, affiliation. John possesses difficulty with his tenure committee. When Morgenstern talks about the play, he states it "seems peculiarly attuned to the role tenure plays in what we might call academic border crises" (2012: 2). John is a product of academic system. He does not know what to do under the circumstance of tenure committee. He seeks the way of self-expression and self-assertion and Carol is an unmissable opportunity to enunciate himself. In this sense, as the critic asserts, John becomes a symbol representing "the institution of the university, a sign of cultural authority to which his gender has always enjoyed access and that women like his student have only very recently entered" (Bean, 2001: 109). This superiority comes from both masculinity and professorship. In fact,

John is a victim of his weakness. The desire of self-assertion carries him on making mistakes. According to Skloot, John exploits the rules of academe by saying that he is supposed to “instruct her, impersonally and authoritatively” (2001: 104). This provokes to denounce the discourse incommunicable, which means academic rules be broken. However, Mamet has no intention to give lust or influence each other.

Carol, at first, seems to be shy, feeble-minded and insecure; yet, through the end of play, she confiscates over John and manages to lead John. As the critic purports that she completes her absolute learning:

Thus begins Carol's real "education," whose subject matter is the art of deception, dishonesty, and skepticism. And Carol does become quite a good student who learns her lessons well by the play's end, for she has come to master many of her teacher's own tricks, including a penchant for intellectual bullying; an ability to use language ambiguously so as to get her way; and an outlook on the world informed by a deep-seated cynicism about human relations. Far from being a simplistic, static symbol of good or evil, Carol is a character who develops quite remarkably in a fairly influential environment that finally determines some of her core beliefs. (Badenhausen, 1998: 14)

With the parallel of American dream, as feminist critics protest ardently, Carol is depicted as a Machiavellian manipulative woman in the play. Learning how to wield John's feelings and attitudes surprises the readers/audiences, which make them frustrated. Even, while it is performed on the scene, it is said to have been applauded by audiences while John starts to hit Carol. However, her transience regarded as her education is a metaphor.

However, we must observe the situation from Carol's point of view. From the moment she enters John's office, she is ignored by him talking on the phone with his wife again in again. John's not caring in his office makes her nervous and feel ostracized from the conversation. John changes the subject she wants to deal with by making wordplay. Giving more informative knowledge, John makes her more confused and, as the critics state, John “makes his contribution more informative while trying to reveal sick game of education, testing and school system” (Dayani & Amjad, 2016: 81). John's attitudes unfold the awry system Mamet underlines. Carol's reaction to his inappropriate behaviors bears too much liberation. However, the critics such as Skloot assert that Mamet gains the leverage of criticism of women ““cry rape” when they feel aggrieved by men and/or powerless in their presence”

Mamet calls attention to cultural and ideological contamination in the country. Furthermore, using a utopian title, the author employs “nation's culture core – the university” (Silverstein, 1995: 106). Also, two distinctive characters, a professor and an undergraduate student, indicate the extent of severity of situation. It revives nocuous effects in a place where ideas must interfere. Mamet depicts accomplishedly corruption and degeneration. As critic states: “Oleanna offers an ominous commentary on education in America and more particularly functions as a dire warning both to and about those

doing the educating” (Badenhausen, 1998: 2). In this sense, Mamet’s thoughts on American education are a bit of blistering for those who read/watch the play.

### C. Linguistics

The play has distinctive language in order that it gives direct and indirect information about the characters. An attentive reader can easily find the tracks of characters’ and writer’s ideas and ethos. For instance, according to Şeker dealing with discourse analysis, it is “a distinctive method to conceive ideological, sexual, ethnical and religious mind models” (2016: 508). It is clear that language is very essential to understand narrator/character’s mind. In this sense, the language and stylization used by Mamet give important clues about what characters think and refer. For example, Bigsby asserts that Mamet’s characters possess “scatological language and *fractured syntax*” (2004a: 1). This kind of language illuminates the character’s inner mind. The fragmented dialogue between Carol and John – it can be named as non-communication – is an indication of self-aggrandizement, which will be dealt below. Nonetheless, it must bear in mind that Carol refers to femininity and women while John symbolizes the man and virility. *Oleanna* not only draws attention to education system, teacher-student relationships but also discusses the equality or connection of man and woman. There is a power balance and struggle between John and Carol and the language they use encapsulates this idea, which will be given act by act.

In the Act I, Carol visits John in office hour to express her inability of understanding of lesson. John’s patrimonial use of language turns into a hegemony of man. Carol remains at the lower level. For instance, John uses specific definition of art and his lecture notes, which irritates and Carol. Carol is unable to understand what he means: “JOHN: You paid me the compliment, or the “*obeisance*” – all right – of coming in here ... All right. Carol. I find that I am at a *standstill*. I find that I...” (*Oleanna*, author’s italic 10) Carol cannot understand. However, with the help of being Carol’s teacher, John maintains his superiority.

This act, like all other acts, consists of parallel monologues. They have conversations, examples of miscommunication, which they want to express their desire without listening to other. While John wants to buy a house, pass his tenure, Carol is interested in how to pass her lesson. Both seek to allay their anxiety and disappointment. During her first visit, Carol wants him to argue the theses in his book at universities. Yet, John cannot put into words and he says it is “just a book”. Also, when she asks what the term of art is, Joan endeavors to be at the top of her by explaining the idiom he forgets. The act I teems with the aggressions, and fevers of excitement. A surprise party for John at the end of act encapsulates this idea. Act I ends “Carol: What is? John: A surprise” (*Oleanna* 41). This ending gives clue about the unexpected ending of play. There have been many critics claiming that there is a hidden battle for superiority. For Goggans, Act I is “a pastiche of phrases and clichés associated with the secrecy and psychological manipulation of incestuous abuse” (436) (via Murphy, 2004: 135). The abuse critic deals with means their intimate war.

In Act II, Carol's supremacy can be easily seen. John believes Carol misunderstands him, however, Carol remonstrates his tenure committee and the committee accepts her allegations. John faces the risk of his new title and also his career. John's superiority replaces with Carol's one. The linguistic codes with the help of her gender turn into an advantage for her. As the critic purports:

gender becomes a crucial factor as and when Carol discovers that she can use the rhetorical strategies of sexual politics to change her position in the hierarchy. It is a matter of tactics, of deploying to best advantage the best available weapons" (MacLeod, 1995: 207)

Using her femininity, Carol has the edge on John being her teacher. Mamet endeavors to emphasize this idea although John is guilty as the same as Carol. Furthermore her precedence continues on Act III and she feels so confident that she orders John not to call his wife baby. As the critic states; "Nevertheless, by the third act of the play, these misunderstandings hold the most power as both John and Carol beckon mutely to the air, standing on two stages, speaking two markedly different languages" (Braun, 2004: 108). In this context, their use of language is distinctive to indicate their status.

One of the most outstanding characteristics in the play is the way they speak and numbers of words in their conversations. The more superior they speak, the more they use words in their conversations. For instance, while John speaks more than Carol in Act I, Carol gains the upper hand against John. In Act I, Carol frequently responds to John with short answers 'yes' or 'no'. however, In the last act, on page 56, John's conversation consists of "I believe in freedom of thought" "Yes. I do." "Do you?" "Yes I do" "Yes" (*Oleanna*). The reader can clearly understand who is vanquished or winner.

At the beginning of play John has the confidence of himself. He has power of rhetoric and he is ambitious to lecture a lesson "behind his protective desk" (Braun, 2004: 106). John forgets that "he and Carol occupy arbitrarily constructed identity positions: teacher and student" (Bean, 2001: 122). Although he gives a lecture about negative sides of university to Carol, he ignores that the university supply emolument for him and his family. Carol, a university student, justifiably reacts to his responses. Furthermore John is unable to comprehend his student from the beginning and misunderstands her reaction because he has the lack of listening. ". Likewise, since John repeatedly interrupts Carol in the middle of her sentences, he is trying to read a text without having completed it. He might as well read half of a novel and then endeavor to explain its meaning" (Badenhausen, 1998: 9). Even though he makes so many mistakes, it doesn't prove Carol to be right. Mamet having sharp-tongued attempts to recount human nature as it is. In fact, all his male characters resemble each other. Seeming hard and a little macho, male characters have indeed thin-skinned and sensitive personality. Referring to John, Bigsby describes Mamet's men:

His characters are the victims of the language they speak, evidence of the paranoia they express. But somewhere, at the very heart of their being, is a sense of need which is the beginning of redemption. Their words may snap, like so many brittle shards, under the pressure of fear or greed; they

may anxiously try to adjust themselves to the shape of myths and fantasies, deny or exploit the desire for companionship. Deep down, however, below the broken rhythms of speech, beyond the failed gestures at contact, is a surviving need for connection. The plays enact the failure of that urge but are, in their very being, an announcement of its possibility. Their energy is generated by that ambiguity. (2004b: 199)

With respect to Carol, she is not so innocent as John. She does not think about education system the way John thinks but she is more aware about miscommunication with John as Bean claims “she correctly intuits, account for their failure of communication” (2001: 110). On the other hand, Carol’s seeking the superiority against John can be regarded in language use. She is in quest of rhetorical or spoken superiority. Experiencing John’s dominance over herself despite his inability of explanation of art, Carol inquires a “verbal power, the power quite literally to have the last word – a word that refuses to admit the possibility of response by an other positioned as an equal partner in a dialogical relationship” (Silverstein, 1995: 111). When contemplated in terms of feministic point of view, although it seems they have egoist attitudes towards each other, they cannot see the person in front of him/herself because they languish in their issues.

To sum up, the dialogue between John and Carol is fragmented and they do not want to hear what the other’s saying. “John cannot pay attention to Carol; he is constantly distracted by phone calls and stray thoughts; Carol cannot understand what John is saying, nor can she organize her responses given the fragmentary character of his attention” (Skerrett 236). The language gives hints about their perspective and their status in terms of other. As aforementioned, symbolizing woman and man, the characters show a tour de force. So, masculinity and in response to this idea, femininity confront us as an important issue.

#### **D. Femininity:**

As aforementioned, apart from education system, linguistic codes and sexual harassment, the play deals with gender and its politics. There are many critics thinking that the play mostly concerns about gender. Silverstein claims that many feminists question “What can Oleanna tell us about the uses of misogyny, about the frightening "need" for misogyny, at the particular cultural moment at which we find ourselves?” (1995: 104). This kind of questioning reminds machismo and patriarchy in the play. Jacobsen recounts Oleanna as “a macho male's nightmare of sinister feminist wiliness” (2004: 2440). It leads the readers –especially women readers – assume that Carol reacts and attitudes in terms of John’s behaviors. Carol withstands again misogynist John and the custom of patriarchy. Masculine professor must be defeated by Carol who is a representative of women. John is a symbol misogynist tradition which “allows him to treat her disrespectfully, to “be personal” with her, to touch her, to offer her a better grade in exchange for more frequent visits, and, finally, to beat her” (Bean, 2001: 122). In this context, the reason of his beating is not to accept her role in the patriarchal world. Like Carol, women are forced to play their roles scripted by men. However, some critics conceive the play is misunderstood and the relationship between John and Carol’s

lessened by feminists (Braun, 2004: 104). Moreover, Mamet claims that the play is beyond these assertions: “Because John and Carol's perceptual screens are based on variances in gender, class, and economic status, their interpretations of each other fail to align and their judgments deprive the other of his and her humanity” (Boon & Mamet, 2011: 175). According to them, the play shows the consequences of lack of good communication.

Under the name of classifications and denotations, Mamet plays very important role. His notoriousness infamizes the play. For instance, In Independent's article, he is depicted as “playwright of oaths and testosterone”. This comment can reveal how he is conceived. On the other hand, MacLeod claims his macho activities such as hunting cigar smoking and poker tents to “overdetermine the critical response to Oleanna” (MacLeod, 1995: 201-2). Those who heard something about Mamet very well have the possibility to misjudge the play.

From a different point of view for feminism, the play has a distinctive portrayal of patriarchal society. Both characters are commodity of their society. Mamet prefers to create the characters as they are. However, his both female and male characters are under the pressure of sociality and constraints. Carol is tightened by John's superiority. Furthermore, she agonizes in the professor's office as Graham claims “the female student in Oleanna is set up as possibly provoking the violence inflicted on her” (2003: 438). It indicates the encumbrance in her academic life. However, as a male character, John feels the oppression on him. The critic juxtaposes:

Like individual men in patriarchal culture, John stands as a kind of symptom of the masculinist ideology guiding his identity and behavior. His connection to an unnamed, unseen force—the Tenure Committee—that confers power based on one's relationship to it imitates the role of patriarchal authority in Western culture. (Bean, 2001: 121)

All these pressures indicate that individuals have the same constraints even if you are a male in a patriarchal society. The play writer creates a social Darwinist world. Fulfilling American dream is rendered how hard it is and you must be powerful, intelligent and well-actor if you want to survive.

In many respects, the critics split in half whether Carol is an innocent student or a femme fatale. It depends on one's perspective. For instance, to Sanger, Mamet reflects “harassment, the already- prevalent male-fantasy fear that looking at a woman cross-eyed will cost you your career is intensified” (1878). Also, according to Habib, Carol is responsible for John's end. Carol is “adversarially brilliant destroyers of male self-complacency” (90-1). These critics are for John. Yet, there are too many critics to believe in male's supremacy over femininity. In this sense, the play gives many indications for feminist criticism.

### III. Conclusion

*Oleanna* is a distinctive play whose title was emerged from a utopic place Norwegian violinist Ole Bull and his wife Anna founded in the USA. However, this utopia turns into a dystopic arena which has power struggles, gender problems and a criticism of educational system. Although Harold Pinter “did not think the play was a polemic” (Price, 2004: 165), it hosts many contradictions. We think that the play is not antifeminist or reactionary. Because Mamet tries to reflect the incidences as they are. The characters are preminent indicating both women and men who have the same destiny as the critic states:

Both have been damaged by adults who demeaned them when they were young; both are hopelessly self-absorbed and full of rage; both are seeking understanding and power; both are victims and aggressors; both are destroyed, although they achieve some form of power over each other. (Murphy, 2004: 136)

Recounting human to human, Mamet manages to represent the contradictions and codes of society and complicatedness of humanity.

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