

FEMALE VIOLENCE AGAINST MEN IN WESTERN SOCIETIES: WOMEN AS HARASSERS IN TWO CONTEMPORARY LITERARY WORKS

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Abstract

In western societies, the issue of female violence against men has received a great deal of attention recently. More specifically, the harassment of men at the hands of women has been widely addressed not only in the West but also in many countries across the world. Men have stereo-typically been looked upon as the ones who harass women. Unfortunately, many are still used to viewing men as the harassers rather than the harassed. However, this outlook has proved unfair. In the past two decades, there have been many cases of men being victims to female harassment in the real-life workplaces. This asserts the view that women, like men, are capable of harassing, that there is no exemption of gender when it comes to this, and that both men and women can become victims of harassment. This study investigates David Mamet's *Oleanna* and Michael Crichton's *Disclosure* to spot light on the female harassers and their male victims in both works. It explores the false sexual accusations made by the female characters against their male counterparts. It also depicts the female characters as harassers rather than harassed. The study concludes that harassment is no longer gender-specific, that women can and do harass like men, and that harassment, whatever form it takes, is a crime that must not be tolerated.

Keywords: Female violence, political correctness, *Oleanna*, *Disclosure*

Introduction

The question of female aggression against men has widely been addressed recently, particularly in western societies. Men have stereo-typically been accused of harassing women. Moreover, they are still regarded as the harassers rather than the harassed. However, this attitude towards men has turned out to be biased. In the past few years, there have been many examples of men suffering from female harassment in the real-life

workplaces. This affirms the observation that women, like men, can be aggressors, that there is no exemption of gender when it comes to this, and that both men and women can become victims of harassment. This study investigates David Mamet's *Oleanna* and Michael Crichton's *Disclosure* to shed light on the female harassers and their male victims in both works. It reveals the false sexual accusations made by the female characters against their male counterparts. It also portrays the female characters as harassers rather than harassed. The study concludes that aggression or harassment is no longer gender-specific, that women can and do harass like men, and that harassment, whatever form it takes, is a crime that must be punished.

Statement of the Problem

The question of female violence against men in the western world has recently become the center of critical attention. As a facet of female aggression, the harassment of men by women has extensively been addressed in western societies. Men have stereo-typically been seen as the molesters of women. In addition, they are still looked upon by many as aggressors. However, this outlook has proved unjust. It has turned out that many women have harassed men in the workplaces. This means that women can be as aggressors as men. The main question of this study is: Is harassment still viewed as gender-specific?

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to

- i. discuss the issue of female aggression against men in western societies.
- ii. shed light on the question of political correctness and its relation to harassment.
- iii. explore the question of female harassment of men in David Mamet's *Oleanna* and Michael Crichton's *Disclosure* in particular.
- iv. prove that harassment is no longer gender-bound and that women can be as molesters as men.
- v. call attention to the dangerous effects of harassment on both the harassers and the harassed.

Female Aggression

Female aggression is a serious problem in most societies and is increasing these days in families all around the world. Female aggression has a negative effect on women as offenders, their partners, children, and society in general. Thus more researches on female aggression are needed. This paper reviews the female aggression. According to the existing literatures, the rate of female aggression is equal to those of men, and in some studies,

the rates of aggression among women are found to be higher than men. Some researches show that men and women are abusing each other at the same rates. Based on these findings, the rate of women aggression is not lower than that of men; instead, it is either equal to or higher than that of men. According to Conradi (2004), women are also violent or aggressive towards men. Further, women commit acts of minor and severe violence as often as men (p. 8).

Gavin and Porter (2015) hold that men are more likely to exhibit their aggression in ways that are aggressive, and that women will respond in roundabout ways, since they are too weak to display the same force. This rather simplistic opinion is echoed by most major theoretical attitudes to aggression. It is also accepted that men/males are the aggressors, whereas women are not. Women are looked upon as only applying aggression in passive, submissive or emotional ways. However, aggression among and by girls and women has been on the increase. Female aggression has become a fact of life that has just lately been dealt with by conventional social and behavioural sciences. Female aggression displays the same drives and form of expression as male aggression (pp. 2-3).

Edalati and Redzuan (2010) argue that there is a shared view pervading almost every culture in this world that men are more aggressive than women, and that men are more likely than women to engage in aggression that results in pain or physical injury. Therefore, aggressive conduct by women has been disregarded by people and the society at large. Aggression within the family has often been ascribed to males. However, recent research has revealed that females are as aggressive as their male counterparts. Although female aggression has always been a part of human society, it has not been researched until the early 1970s (p. 1).

Shuler (2010) points out that many women and men have been victims of intimate partner violence each year. The Bureau of Justice Statistics declares that each year nearly 1,181 women and 329 men are subject to intimate partner aggression. Even though female victims outnumber male victims, the latter cannot be overlooked. The victimization of men by their women partners is a grave social problem which is often overlooked by the society. A part of America's social norm demonstrates that men are the more powerful and more controlling gender who do not permit women to be the dominating partner. As a result, male victims feel ashamed to acknowledge being victims of intimate partner aggression at the hands of females. Further, these same male victims do not ask for any professional aid. The informal social control has shaped the thinking of American society about who abuses whom within society; therefore, informal social control is highly influential in how society reacts to various situations within the family and the community as a whole (p. 104). Gavin

and porter (2015) hold a similar view to that of Shuler. They hold that there was little admission of female sex offenders until recently, because the definition of sex offenders was gendered. Research in this field has been problematic, due to the common belief that women cannot be offenders and due to the shame which victimized male are likely to experience if they tell the stories of their victimization (p. 80).

Recent research points out that 25% - 30% of all intimate violence is entirely female on male. People hit and abuse family members because they can. In today's western society, as mirrored in TV movies, law enforcement, courts, and feminist literature, women are openly allowed to be aggressive towards men. However, aggression laws usually order the arrest of the male despite research demonstrating 50% of aggression is reciprocal. Studies steadily show women using weapons very often in attacks than do men (80% for women; 25% for men). Women often react aggressively by throwing an object, slapping, kicking, biting, or hitting with their fist or an object. Three common reasons why men are abusive of women: to settle an argument; to interact with family crisis; and to make him bother her any more. Self-defense is not announced by women to justify their aggression. Research indicates that a gender-balanced treatment of domestic violence is basic in order to minimize both the occurrence and sternness of aggression for both men and women. In order to settle these issues effectively, we must first admit that domestic violence and abuse are human problems, not gender issues (Corry, Pizzey & Fiebert, 2001, p. 70).

Political Correctness

Political correctness is defined as “anything that could be considered offensive by any definable group except white males” (as cited in Lalonde, Doan & Patterson, 2000, p. 317). It “described a broad movement that had corrupted the entire system of higher education” (Wilson, 1995, p. 4). The movement began to flourish by late 1990 as a movement seeking to impel a Left/liberal program on university campuses which downgraded conventional, white, male-dominant rule for the sake of minority, multicultural, feminist classes. The ‘politically correct’ are certain that the ‘politically incorrect’ strive only to maintain the racism and sexism that describe some of society. Conservatives are sure that the liberal opposition advocates race and gender equity and is ready to give up essential American principles such as individual freedom and justice (Lalonde, Doan & Patterson, 2000, pp.318-19).

Political correctness induces great sensitivity to situations in which sexual harassment may take place, and the characters' actions in *Oleanna* and *Disclosure* show the characters within this framework. The male characters —John in *Oleanna* and Tom Sanders in *Disclosure*— are

imperceptive of the perils of experiencing such a situation; they fail to watch their own actions, and so they fall prey to the manipulations of the female characters —Carol and Meredith Johnson in *Oleanna* and *Disclosure* respectively. These manipulative, vindictive women abuse their positions of power to force those men to yield to their demands. When their attempts come to no good, they decide to destroy their male counterparts.

Political correctness has demolishing consequences. Taken to its extreme, this authorized sensitivity could become so aggressive and uncontrollable that every interpersonal act could be interpreted as erotic and, as a result, indictable. Carol's and Meredith's awareness that their charges may be false yet cannot be denied by the accused is the perilous outcome of this exaggerated kind of political correctness.

Both Mamet and Crichton are critical of the illogicality underlying political correctness. This illogicality imposes the burden of verifying a sexual harassment accusation upon the accused, not the accuser. This implies that the accused is guilty until he proves his own innocence. Besides, the accused is no longer in a position to enjoy the benefit of the common practice that the accused is innocent until proven guilty. When a charge places the burden of proof on the accused rather than the accuser, an innocent individual is likely to suffer the consequences since he cannot prove his guiltlessness. This means that Carol and Meredith will inevitably overpower John as well as Tom since they are the accusers (and the alleged victims) while John and Tom will remain convicted until they prove otherwise.

The Harassment of Men by Women as Depicted by David Mamet's *Oleanna* and Michael Crichton's *Disclosure*

David Mamet's play *Oleanna* (1992) and Michael Crichton's novel *Disclosure* (1993) are a reaction against the American political correctness movement of the 1990s, which sought to reduce offensiveness in all sides of life. Both works confront similar problems: both tackle difficult-to-prove sexual accusations and both deal with harassment and take as their model lying women and unfairly accused men. Both works have similar settings: the workplace. Most importantly, however, the dramatic situations in both works are analogous: a male's career is at risk due to female sexual allegations. Both works eventually show male characters reacting stubbornly to female charges.

More particularly, *Oleanna* and *Disclosure* explore the issue of the harassment of men by women. They investigate the false sexual allegations made by the female characters against their male counterparts and reveal the bad consequences that may ensue. In addition, they trace

the dramatic action that involves the female harassers and the male victims.

To begin with, “The text that had sparked the most debate [...] was David Mamet’s *Oleanna*; [...]” which is concerned with “the question of whether Carol, the student who claims she has been sexually harassed by her professor, John, was telling the truth” (Ryan, 2006, p.29). *Oleanna* is described by Jacobson (2004) as “a macho male’s nightmare of sinister feminist wiliness” (p.2440). The play is about “A male professor [who], on the cusp of tenure, makes a generous gesture, treats his student humanely, refuses to be limited by the letter of the law, and suffers in return a kind of terrorist attack” (Morgenstern, 2012, p. 6). It focuses on an uncaring female student making a charge of sexual harassment against a professor. The charge is depicted early in the play as arising from a misunderstanding. As the characters continue to interact, the student’s accusations escalate to a charge of attempted rape. As Morgenstern further demonstrates, “This attack will not only deprive [John] of the tenured security he covets, but ultimately turns him into a lawless and physically violent subject who demands to be placed behind bars” (p.6). The disturbing first scene portrays the so-called harassment. Scenes Two and Three depict the professor gradually distressed and the student increasingly threatening. The Carol who is seen in Act Two “has undergone a surprising transformation and overturns her relationship [with John] and the direction of the action”(Porter, 2000, p. 19). “A stammering imbecile in the first scene, the student,” as Solomon (1992) observes, “has become an articulate little Maoist in the second” (p.104) and grown into an unwavering girl controlling the professor’s self-esteem and occupation. Or, as Morgenstern (2012) states: “The once and inarticulate student now appears to have the upper hand” (p. 18).

Carol’s sudden change has baffled critics and reviewers. Solomon (1992), for example, wonders, “Did she concoct the whole thing with her group? Was it a conspiracy from the beginning? Is that why she is taking notes while he’s on the phone in the play’s opening moments?” (p. 355). Like Solomon, Porter (2000) is amazed, “Are her confusion and lack of understanding in the first interview a pose? Does she, in the second interview, become a singularly unattractive mouthpiece for an aggressive and radical feminism? (p.19).

Attempting to find reasons for Carol’s disturbing transformation, Ryan (1996) says:

One suggested explanation for Carol’s metamorphosis is that she or the people she calls her group have ‘planted’ her in John’s class to exploit his vulnerability, in which case she is feigning imbecility in the first act in order to trick the professor into making

statements that can subsequently be twisted into evidence against him. (p. 395)

Pirnajmuddin and Shahbazi (2011) have a similar view to that adopted by Ryan. They claim that “Carol [...] has become empowered by the language of her new linguistic community which might be a feminist group” which teaches her “how to take control of the dialogues she has with John ” (p. 137). Furthermore, Carol has been encouraged by her group to press the charges of sexual harassment against John to ruin his career and marriage. “She,” as Morgenstern (2012) notes, “really is at moments the teacher’s worst nightmare ” (p. 20). She, according to Pirnajmuddin and Shahbazi (2011), “applies a new language belonging to a feminist or women-rights-fan group. It is in that group that she learns about the law and how she could accuse John of rape and sexual harassment” (p. 138). Solomon (1992) points out that “Mamet hints that the student is a lesbian. And lesbians, those bra-burning banshees who [. . .] hold [...] most of the power in America [. . .], want to destroy men”(104). Porter (2000) refers to Thomas Goggan’s view that Carol’s erroneous actions against John are ascribed to a past experience of child abuse and a guileful control by her feminist group (p.11). Another plausible view of Carol’s ostensible frailty is that “Carol’s seeming weakness and confusion in Act One are no more than the practical tools of her first major step of a big vicious plan to destroy John ” (Shtaywi & Aludayli, 2011, p. 83).

“Those,” says Walker (1997), “who have criticized the play as a polemic generally founded their criticism on what they see as the presentation of Carol as a perpetrator of unmotivated evil”(pp.156-57). Tannen, for example, sees *Oleanna* as a play about “ a woman [who] lures a man by seeming helpless and feminine, then, after he becomes vulnerable by trying to help her, she destroys him” (as cited in Walker, p. 157). Shtaywi and Aludayli (2011) assert the view of John’s innocence and Oleanna’s viciousness by claiming that “spectators,” are “initially fool[ed] ” to “take the play to be about a womanizer professor [...] professional in seducing female students through trapping them to his office under the ploy of tutoring them” (p.84). The play supplies many evidences that demonstrate that Carol is not really innocent but rather feigns innocence. Her manipulation of John is evident in the play and cannot escape the reader’s notice. A close examination of Carol’s interactions with John reveals her scheming and vindictive intent. It also exposes her as a harasser, eventually attempting to ruin a man who has failed to let her have her way.

Early in the play, John is seen on the phone, discussing with his wife the purchase of a new house with the expected salary increase from his

recently approved tenure. After John's initial phone conversation with his wife, Carol picks up on his private business: "Oh, oh. You're buying a new house!"(p.5) [. . .]. Because of your promotion" (p. 20). Clearly, Carol's interference in John's life is felt as early as the play starts. Her insolence makes readers and spectators question the nature of her relation with her professor. As Shtaywi and Aludayli (2011) note, "The big question must have to do with Carol's rudeness and John's tolerance of her rudeness" (p. 81). Shtaywi and Aludayli further point out that the way John and Carol address each other indicates a long-time familiarity which is sometimes abused by Carol whose offensive attitude towards her professor is evident:

Such a language cannot be the language of a first-time acquaintance. [...] Readers do not expect a graduate student to use [excessive] negative forms [...] when addressing her professor, especially when the professor is as calm As John. Besides, carol is the one in need of help, and those who are in need usually behave themselves, suppressing their nervousness even hen offended. (p.85)

Carol's initial encounter with John shows her as a student who is reluctant to admit the professor's human fallibility. While John is talking to his wife on the phone, Carol overhears a real estate term. Intruding into John's affairs, Carol asks him about the meaning of the term. Much to her surprise, the professor fails to know what it means. Instead, he offers a complicated explanation that disappoints her:

Carol: You don't know what it means . . . ?

John: I'm not sure that I know what it means. It's one of those things, perhaps you've had them, that, you look them up, or have someone explain them to you, and you say "aha," and, you immediately *forget* what . . . [. . .].(pp.2-4)

Carol finds John's lack of knowledge very disappointing because, as Ryan (1996) holds, "she craves certainty and desires John to mold his theories into a concrete body of information that she can copy down in her notebooks, memorize, and recite at will"(p. 396). However, Carol does not want to tolerate the fact that the professor, like other mortals, is imperfect. Consequently, she is going to take unfair advantage of his human fallibility to haunt him, as it will turn out.

Seemingly innocent, Carol appears in John's office baffled as to why she seems to be unable to pass John's course. She complains that she cannot grasp what he teaches. When John reads a fragment of her failing essay, he realizes that it is unintelligible, which means that she actually does not understand what he teaches. However, if Carol cannot pass the course because of her inability to express herself in writing, she is articulate enough to negotiate with the professor the inevitability that she

must pass the course. For Carol, passing the course is absolutely imperative. She will accept no other alternative.

Carol: I *have* to pass this course, I . . .

John: Well.

.....

Carol: . . . I . . .

John: . . . either the, I . . . either the *criteria* for judging progress in the class are . . .

Carol: No, no, no, no, I have to pass it. (pp. 8-9)

Evidently, Carol's insistence on passing the course, taking no heed of 'the *criteria* for judging progress in the class' suggests that Carol is not as innocent as she pretends.

When John attempts to explain to Carol that he is a human being with limited authority, that he cannot provide the requisite responses to her needs, and that they are both governed by an austere student-teacher relationship, Carol responds reproachfully, believing that it is John's responsibility to get her through the course. "I," Carol says, "did what you told me. I did, I did everything that, I read your *book*, you told me to buy your book and read it. Everything you *say* I . . . (*She gestures to her notebook.*) (*The phone rings.*) I do" (p. 9). Ryan (1996) sees that Carol's cry—"I did what you told me"—"anticipates the transference of guilt from herself to her professor, which will make all of her accusations valid to her and safe from John's attempts to refute them logically"(p. 397). However, following a teacher's instructions that include attending classes, buying and reading the material assigned, and taking notes do not necessarily insure a student's success. There, perhaps, are other factors that can contribute to a student's success.

When John is about to leave Carol to make a phone call to his wife and the realtor to see what they can do about the purchase of the house, Carol plays on his sympathy by claiming that he takes care of his interests rather than attend to her concerns because she is unworthy. However, John responds kindly, "[Though] this was not a previously scheduled meeting, [. . .] I sympathize with your concerns [and] I wish I had the time [for you]" (p.13).

As the play proceeds, Carol's counterfeit innocence and alleged victimization become more evident. Starting to "believe that John is humiliating her for not understanding the lessons" (Pirnajmuddin & Shahbazi, 2011, p. 134), Carol takes advantage of John's pity by claiming that "I know I'm stupid. I know what I am" (p.14) and that "I come from a different *social* . . ." and "a different *economic* . . ." (p.8) background. Sharing with Carol his own feeling of intellectual incompetence and responding to her lament that she is stupid, John

explains to Carol that he has experienced similar feelings. Moreover, he tries to assuage her feeling of imbecility by acknowledging her brilliance: “Just what I said. I was brought up, and my earliest, and most persistent memories are of being told that I was stupid. ‘You have such *intelligence*. Why must you behave so *stupidly*?’”(p.16). At this point in the play, Carol senses John’s vulnerability and therefore begins to take advantage of it. Rather than use her intelligence for good purposes, Carol uses it to harm her benefactor.

Not only does Carol exploit John’s benevolence, but she also plays upon his remorse for her lack of understanding: “Well,” John says, “then, that’s *my* fault. That’s not your fault. And that is not verbiage. That’s what I firmly hold to be the truth. And I am sorry, and I owe you an apology” (p.17). Mamet wants us to feel for John and realize that we, like John, are fooled by Carol’s machination. He depicts Carol as shrewdly fooling the relatively naïve John, so that he actually puts his arm around her shoulder in a consoling manner. He also shows her exploiting his guilty feeling so that he soon realizes that he is responsible for her failure. Having sensed John’s susceptibility, Carol does not hesitate to set a trap for him to bring him down.

Still unable to realize Carol’s false innocence and alleged naivety, John takes a parental attitude towards her. He intimately tells her about his early learning difficulties in order to mitigate her panic at her failure as a student. He addresses her as though she were his daughter: “[. . .] Listen: I’m talking to you as I’d talked to my son [...]. I’m talking to you the way I wish that someone had talked to me. I don’t know how to do it, other than to be *personal*, . . . but . . .” (p.19). Being personal for John most probably means sharing Carol her own predicament. However, Carol’s seeming innocent question—“ Why would you want to be personal with me?”(p.19)—is slyly made by Carol to drag John into saying something that could be held against him when she ultimately accuses him of harassing her.

In contrast to Carol’s later display of ingratitude, John’s benevolence to her pervades the play. Like any father who feels he has sometimes neglected or failed to tend to his daughter’s needs, John feels he was disregarding her as a student and therefore offers, “We’ll start the whole course over”(p. 25). Furthermore, he will grant her an “ ‘A’ ” “for the whole term”(p. 25) even though it is the middle of the semester and she is currently failing. He will disregard her poor performance on her paper since this for him is unimportant. “What’s important,” he stresses, “is that I awake your interests, if I can, and that I answer your questions” (p. 26). More than that, he is keen on communicating with his student and allows her a few more chances to meet with him. Unfortunately, John’s

generous offers are interpreted, perhaps deliberately, by Carol as anything other than acts of generosity.

Nevertheless, Carol responds to John's benevolent offer to help her with her course by feigning incomprehension.

John: [. . .] Let's start over. (*Pause*)

Carol: Over. With what?

John: Say this is the beginning.

Carol: The beginning.

John: Yes.

.....

Carol: Why would you do this for me?

John: I like you. Is that so difficult for you to . . . (pp. 25-27)

Obviously, Carol feigns incomprehension to drag him into making more statements with which she can haunt him. Her cunningness, unfortunately, escapes John's notice. Further, John's well-intentioned answers —“ Because I like you”(p. 21) and “ I like you. Is that so difficult for you to . . .”— to Carol's sly questions —“ Why did you stay here with me?”(p. 20) and “Why would you do this for me?”— are among other innocent answers made by John and twisted by Carol to serve as evidence of sexual advances against him. Ironically, John's good intentions are “going to cost me my house, and . . .” (p. 48), perhaps, his career. Feeling she has been embittered by her poor background that denies her proper education, by her failure at college, and eventually by John's assault on education, Carol, deliberately, takes advantage of John's parental arm around her and undermines his hopes for tenure and a new house.

Now the question that deserves attention is: Is a simple gesture, i.e., John's hand on Carol's shoulder, an appropriate demonstration of concern for a troubled student? Or is it, as Carol contends, a sexual invitation? (p. 8). In her book *Sexual Harassment of Working Women: a Case of Sex Discrimination*, Mackinnon (1979) notes that women who are reluctant to the sex overture of male supervisors often risk their positions (p.35). If this is to be applied to Carol, one can safely say that if Carol had sensed genuine harassment on John's part, she would have left his office, particularly when he told her a nasty joke. Rather, she is keen on remaining with him for a longer time for the purpose of, as she admits, “taking notes” (p.35), which she will use against him later. As Pirnajmuddin and Shahbazi (2011) suggest “[Carol's note taking turns into a weapon to threaten the professor; she writes down every word that he utters and labels it as bribing , sexual harassment, exploitation, etc.” (p. 139). Furthermore, recent writers preoccupied with the problem of sexual harassment have called attention to the importance of reflection

upon the circumstances of the social situation and the individuals involved when deciding whether a certain conduct should be looked upon as harassing. A conduct which is agreeable to one person might be abominable to another (Jones, 1996, p. 5). Taking this notion into consideration, John's hand on Carol could be either comforting or harassing. While Carol sees John's behaviour as an attempt on his part to sexually harass her, one sees it as no more than a paternal act of kindness or, to use Walker's (1997) phrase, "a genuine effort" (p.159) to feel sympathy for Carol and mitigate her sense of frustration at failing to understand his argument on higher education. Most importantly, if one considers (for the sake of bolstering up one's view) the context of the situation involving John and Carol, one can clearly realize it is a pedagogical encounter between a teacher and his student, during which the teacher discusses the student's class performance and other topics bearing on higher education—things far from implying any sexual advances made by the teacher. Besides, forms of sexual harassment include undesired gazes, lewd remarks, incessant offers for dates, insistence on copulation, immediate rape (Farley, 1978, pp. 14-15), caressing, gentle strokes (Mackinnon, p. 40), most of which are accompanied by threats of bad consequences for refusal. To John's credit, his conference with Carol registers none of the aforementioned modes of harassment. Furthermore, it has never been reported that any other female students have come forth to accuse John of harassment throughout his long-life career as a professor. This, undoubtedly, undermines Carol's allegations and proves that John has been the target of Carol's harassment and not vice versa. She, one suggests, has managed to seduce him into putting his arm around her shoulder in order to disgrace and eventually destroy him.

Carol's character makes a significant change in Acts Two and Three. The Carol we encounter in these concluding acts is not the "seemingly stupid student" (Barnes, 1992, p. 359) or the "terrified, helpless mouse" (Feingold, 1992, p. 112) of Act One. Formerly she has been frail, less determined, and self-doubtful; now she challenges John and asserts that he cannot deny her accusations even though they were false. Not only does she accuse him of sexually harassing her, but she also, as Evans (1994) observes, "keeps hammering away with additional charges and demands" (p.1).

The charges which Carol accumulated in her complaint against John suggest that what seemed innocent remarks in their first interview now appears threatening and alluring:

John: ([*John*] reads.) I find that I am sexist. That I am *elitist*. [. . .] That I [. . .] "Told a rambling, sexually explicit story, [. . .] moved to

embrace said student and . . . all part of a pattern . . .” [. . .] “He said he ‘liked’ me. That he ‘liked being with me.’ He’d let me write my examination paper over, if I could come back oftener to see him in his office.”[. . .] “He told me [. . .] that he wanted to take off the artificial stricture of Teacher and Student. He put his arm around me. . .” [. . .] “He told me that if I would stay alone with him in his office, he would change my grade to an A.”(pp. 47-49)

Carol’s second interview with John demonstrates a drastic change in her character. She, as Evans (1994) notes, “has done a 360-degree turn and now is ‘empowered,’ but also rigid and vengeful” (p.1). In act One, she goes to him on her own initiative to ask for his help. In Act two, she returns at his own request: “Professor. I came here as *a favour*. At your personal request. Perhaps I shouldn’t have done so. But I did. On my behalf, and on behalf of my group [. . .]” (pp. 50-51). Evidently, Carol is no longer “self-effacing and timid” (Ryan, 1996, p. 395) but rather articulate and self-assured. However, her new identity, as Porter (2000) illustrates, “is progressively representative of a radical feminism, and her persona traces [. . .] the growth of a shared awareness and the development of a feminist theory and practice” (p. 20).

Shocked by Carol’s false charges, John cries, “What have I done to you?”(p.49). He explains his good intentions, telling her that “I tried to help you” and that he is “ready to help you now” (p.49). He tries in vain to persuade her to retract her charges so that he can keep his job, and with it, his new house. Carol responds ungratefully, “[. . .] I don’t think that I need your help. I don’t think I need anything you have” (p.49). She continues her assault on him, reprimanding him for disparaging higher education, embracing his students, and adopting some established norms but questioning others: “What gives you the *right*. Yes. To speak to *a woman* in your private . . . [. . .] eh? You say that higher education is a joke. [. . .]And *confess* to a taste to play the *Patriarch* in your class. To grant *this*. To deny *that*. To embrace your students” (p.51). Amazed at Carol’s queer change, Lahr (1992) says:

Carol, who lacked words before, has got educated in a hurry by what she refers to as her group, and she speaks now with the righteous fervor of a woman whose day has come. This transition is jarring but intentional. She has acquired a new voice and a new vocabulary, whose authority precludes ambiguity. She adopts political correctness as an intellectual carapace that substitutes dogma for thought, mission for mastery. (p.124)

When John eventually wants to know what Carol really wants and feels, she alludes to her “Group”, to which John innocently and tolerantly responds by recommending that “There’s no shame” if she

turns to her “Group” for advice: “Everybody needs advisers. Everyone needs to expose themselves. To various points of view. It’s not wrong. It’s essential” (p. 55). Ironically, John does not know that it is Carol’s “Group” which is behind his ordeal. However, when John suggests they talk about Carol’s complaint, she declares that they will discuss it “at the Tenure Committee Hearing” (p. 56). John insists that “we [. . .] settle this *now*. And I want you to sit *down* and . . .” (p. 57). Taking no heed of his request, Carol “*starts to leave the room,*” but John “*restrains her from leaving,*” to which she responds frenziedly: “LET ME GO. LET ME GO. WOULD SOMEBODY HELP ME? WOULD SOMEBODY HELP ME PLEASE . . .?” (p.57). “She,” as Porter (2000) suggests, “mutated from bewildered student to confident accuser, overturning hierarchies, conjuring surprises” (p. 24). Clearly, Carol has the upper hand by virtue of the complaint she has filed against John in addition to the new charges she is concocting against him.

Act Three registers a series of ferocious attacks made by Carol against John. When John invites Carol to his office to persuade her to “hear me out,” she insensitively responds, “I didn’t have to come here” because “the court officers told me not to come” (p.60). When he tells her that he has read her accusations, she aggressively responds, “[t]hose are not accusations. They have been *proved*. They are facts” (p.62). Worse than that, she terrorizes him by declaring that the tenure committee have decided to discipline him because “you are *guilty*, [. . .] you are found *wanting*, and in *error*; and are *not*, for the reasons so-told, to be given tenure. That you are to be disciplined. For facts. [. . .] Not “alleged,” [. . .] But *proved*” (p.64). When John complains that “They’re going to discharge me,” she scolds him, saying that his plight is brought about by “*your own actions*” (p.64). Furthermore, rather than sympathize with him, she gloats over his misfortune when he loses “Your Home. Your Wife . . . your sweet ‘deposit’ on your house . . .” (p. 65). She feels that her day has come to get her revenge just as he, as she thinks, “worked twenty years for the right to insult me” (p.65). Undoubtedly, her claim that “I don’t want revenge” (p.71) is suspect.

John is still harassed by the ghost of political correctness embodied by Carol who inflicts her charges or rather curses on him one after another. She tells him intimidatingly, “My charges [. . .] were accepted. A *joke* you have told, with a sexist tinge. The language you use, a verbal or physical caress. [. . .] To lay a hand on someone’s shoulder” (p.70). In this respect, many men and their female allies see Carol as an epitome of political correctness, misinterpreting the innocent remarks and gestures, and fiercely attacking John forcing him to react violently against her (Weales, 1993, p. 565). Since the advocates of political correctness insist

that the burden of proof rest with the accused rather than the accuser, John finds it impossible to prove that his language and actions are “devoid of sexual content” (p.70).

It is worth mentioning that Carol’s confession —“I saw you. I saw you, Professor. For two semesters sit there, stand there and exploit our, as you thought, ‘paternal prerogative,’ and what is that but rape; I swear to God” (pp.66-67)— suggests that her harassment of John is predetermined.

When Carol is dead sure that she has power over John and that he has become helpless and disgraced, she abuses her position of power and attempts to make a bargain with him over an issue which has a direct bearing on the future of his career as a professor. She slyly hints to John at the possibility that “my Group withdraws its complaint” against him and thus saves his job for him provided that he agree to the banning of a list of books which she and her group “find questionable”(pp.72-73). John, still unaware that his book is also among the books to be censored, finds Carol’s demand an atrocious menace to “Academic freedom” (p.74). When he eventually finds out that Carol and her alleged group “want to ban my book or have it “removed from inclusion as a representative example of the university, ” he flies into a rage, responding, “Get out of here [. . .]. Get the fuck out of my office” (p.75). Commenting on Carol’s rigidity, Lahr (1992) says: “Carol remains staunch. She is the embodiment of Mamet’s mischievous assertion that ‘women don’t give a tinker’s damn about being well-liked, which means they don’t know how to compromise” (p.124). Carol threatens John that he will lose the group’s sustenance and consequently his job if he does not yield to their demand that his book be banned.

Ultimately sensing Carol’s malicious intent and realizing the dirty trick she is playing on him if he consents to the banning of his book, John “gathers enough courage to stand up to Carol’s onslaught”(Ryan, 1996, p. 400), declaring that he would rather lose his job than agree to have his book banned: “And, [. . .] I see that now. (*Pause*) You’re *dangerous*, you’re *wrong* and it’s my job . . . to say no to you. That’s my job [. . .]. You want to ban my book? Go to *hell*, and they can do whatever they want to me” (p.76). John’s response that “they can do whatever they want to me” demonstrates that he is ready to sacrifice his new house and even his job in order to remain faithful to his principles. This refutes Carol’s allegation that John is solely interested in his “privilege,” his “house,” and his “career” (pp.64-65).

Carol’s final harassment of John is one of the worst crimes a woman is capable of. When Jerry, John’s lawyer, informs John that Carol and her group have accused him of “battery” and “attempted rape,” he is

shocked and is unable to take hold of himself. Assuming that John has already known about it, Carol impudently tells him, “You tried to rape me. I was leaving this office, you ‘pressed’ yourself into me. You ‘pressed’ your body into me” (p.78). She also adds that her group is considering the possibility of “pursu[ing] criminal charges” (p.78) against him. According to MacLeod (1995), the rape charge is certainly the most offensive feature of Carol’s verbal schemes against her professor, leading many critics to claim that language is being used to twist reality (p. 209). However, reacting to Carol’s obnoxious charges, John grabs Carol, beats her, and calls her a “bitch” and a “little *cunt*.” He is determined not to remain submissive to her assault: “You vicious little bitch. You think you can come in here with your political correctness and destroy my life ? [. . .]. Are you kidding me . . . ? [. . .]. I wouldn’t touch you with a ten-foot pole. You little *cunt* . . .” (p.79). Obviously, John’s crisis has much to do with political correctness. As Morgenstern (2012) asks, “Is the professor’s crisis [...] understood in the context of the ‘crisis’ of political correctness associated with the 1980s and ‘90s—the crisis of multiculturalism, of feminists-and-many-others-attacking-white-men, of the theory wars?” (p.23). However, Ryan’s (1996) question—“If Mamet’s male character [. . .] is wrongly accused by his student, why does he eventually resort to violence against her?”(392)—is easy to answer: John does because Carol has supplied enough provocations.

What testifies to Carol’s lack of goodness is her linguistic intimidation, her objection to communicate peacefully with her professor, and her adoption of a bullying attitude that transforms one’s partner in dialogue to an object of manipulation (Silverstein, 1995, p. 112). This figures clearly in the exchange involving Carol and John, in which Carol reprimands John for calling his wife ‘baby.’ As Silverstein points out, John’s use of the word ‘baby’ when addressing his wife echoes and generates the emotional tie between husband and wife; however, Carol “threatens what it is often regarded as the most fundamental form of community: the family” (p. 112).

Throughout the play, Carol has played the role of decent woman wronged in order to catch John in her web. She has begun to harass him ever since she sensed his vulnerability. Her early insistence on taking copious notes of John’s actions and exact words and her later reference to her supporting group are a proof positive that her harassment of John is premeditated. This refutes any assertions of Carol’s innocence or naivety.

Ultimately, *Oleanna* is the story of a man falsely accused by a lying woman. The play also raises issues of men being unjustly accused because they do not realize that they have done anything wrong. In either case, the writer argues that the accusers will always be believed. Michael Crichton covers similar ground in his novel *Disclosure*, in which he focuses on the false allegations of sexual harassment made against Tom Sanders by his former lover and current boss, Meredith Johnson. The old story of a boss abusing position for sexual pleasure is turned on its head. Meredith is in the power position, demanding performance from Sanders and vowing retaliation at his refusal. However, at its most basic level, *Disclosure*, like *Oleanna*, is about a man falsely accused by a lying woman.

According to Comer and Cooper (1998), “*Disclosure* concerns a high-level manager who rejects the sexual advances of his new boss and is subsequently accused by her of sexual harassment” (p. 229). The novel investigates the truth about the perpetrators of sexual harassment and seeks to identify the person who is telling the truth: Is it the harassed or the harasser? As the title suggests, *Disclosure* “conjures up the metaphor of unveiling. To disclose is to ‘expose to view’, to ‘reveal’. This implies that something must be uncovered, unveiled. What is uncovered or disclosed is ‘Truth’” (Nurka, 2002, p.162).

The novel suggests that the issue of sexual harassment is more relevant to the exercise of power rather than gender. Power is neither male nor female. As Nurka (2002) further points out,

The problem with Crichton’s understanding of power is that it does not discriminate between different kinds of bodies. The body, as a site through which relations of power intersect, is simply erased to make way for a reading of power that is restricted to the management strata at Digicom. Hence, Meredith is shown to be more powerful than Tom, firstly because she has just been appointed the general manager of his restructured division and, secondly, because she’s more likely than he is to be Garvin’s successor. And this is where the problem lies; Tom Sanders is depicted as being powerless. Meredith has the power, and he doesn’t. It is this substitution of phallic power that Meredith is supposed to have, for Tom’s lack, that underpins *Disclosure*’s arrangement of power relations. (p. 163)

The title of the novel refers to “two central revelations pertain to Meredith: the disclosure of Meredith’s harassing behaviour, and the exposition of her incompetent handling of the the production line in Malaysia which she attempts to pin on Sanders” (Nurka, 2002, p. 162). As the novel opens, Tom Sanders, the novel’s protagonist is depicted as “a division manager at Digital Communications Technology in Seattle” (p.5). Tom anticipates the acquisition of the company he works for by

“Conley-White, a publishing conglomerate in New York” (p.5). This merger will bring Tom a promotion and a bulky windfall from the stock he has accumulated over the many years he has been with the company. Tom arrives at his office later than he planned. To his great disappointment, he finds that his promotion has been given to Meredith Johnson, an attractive and intelligent woman, who “used to be Tom’s girlfriend” (p.56) ten years earlier, when they were both single and living in California. Meredith, now Tom’s new boss, invites him to her “office at the end of the day” so that they “can go over things, and maybe catch up on old times, too” (p.72). Tom accepts his new boss’s invitation in her locked office with a bottle of wine. When Meredith begins to engage him in sexual activity, Tom, whose “conscience extinguishes his lust” (Coren, 1994, p.94), protests and “breaks loose from her oral embrace” (Kennedy, 1994, p. 93). Furious at being rejected, Meredith vows to make him pay. However, shortly after his encounter with Meredith, Tom Sanders goes home and has a fight with his wife, during which she complains that “We hardly ever have sex anymore, as it is” (p.128). He ultimately “slipped into bed and rolled over on his side. And then [. . .] went to sleep” (p.133), as if nothing had happened.

The next day, Tom goes to work. There, he is stunned at discovering that Meredith has accused him of sexual harassment, that the company is sympathizing with her, and that he is expected to accept a transfer to another division in “Austin,” where he will “go with the same seniority, salary, and benefit package” except that he “won’t have to have any direct contact with [Meredith]” (p.157). However, rather than succumb to Meredith’s accusation, Tom decides to hire a Hispanic attorney called Louise Fernandez to pursue his own claim of sexual harassment. Fernandez listens attentively to Tom’s detailed description of his sexual assault by Meredith and eventually agrees to represent him despite her awareness that “[his] case is not strong” and “[his] situation is not good” (p.179). She knows that there is so much bias against men in sexual harassment lawsuits that he will lose the case.

In *Disclosure*, Tom Sanders is portrayed as a married man with moral scruples. He is a dutiful husband who helps his wife “feed [their children]” (p.6). Not only is he a dutiful husband, but he is also an “honest executive” (Kennedy, 1994, p. 93). He “understands production lines, but he’s not ashamed to mop up his children’s cereal” (Brennan, 1994, p. 92). He is greatly respected by his immediate colleagues for his excellent work that “involved the development of CD-Roms and electronic database” (p.13). Meredith herself acknowledges his professionalism (p.105). However, his reluctance, as it will unfold, to

Meredith's sexual advances suggests that he is a "rare species —a [. . .] guy with a conscience" (Kennedy, p. 93).

Meredith, on the contrary, is portrayed as an unmarried woman, "smart and ambitious" (p.54) yet unscrupulous and corrupt. Her new job as the head of the technical division of the computer firm shocks both the reader and the other characters in the novel. It is rare to see a woman in a power position, particularly one demanding technical skill. However, Meredith, as some employees think, is not fit for "run[ning] a technical division" (p.54) because she is not qualified. As the story proceeds, Meredith's real nature begins to unfold. She turns to be strong-willed and domineering, two traits one can hardly find in a woman. She is ultimately revealed to be not only a scheming liar but also a "predatory, omnipotent, salacious boss" (Morrison, 1994, p. 90) and a "yuppie bitch" (Kennedy, 1994, p. 93) whose existence is "a threat to family values" (Brennan, 1994, p. 92).

It is often claimed that female harassers trap their victims by using praise and suggestive remarks. Meredith's initial encounter with Sanders illustrates this: "Tom." Meredith placed her hand on his arm. "I always liked your directness. I want you to know much I appreciate your expertise and your frank approach to problems" (p. 105). Significantly, when Sanders shows no reluctance to Meredith's arm on his hand during their conference in her office, Meredith begins to sense his vulnerability and decides to strike while the iron is hot. So she expresses her admiration of Sanders's looks, lets her assistant leave early, makes sexual advances to Sanders, kisses him, and engages him in sexual activity that culminates in his ultimate rejection of her lustful desires (pp.101-17). In retaliation for her hurt feelings, Meredith accuses him of attempted rape. In the famous mediation hearing scene, Meredith is asked by Judge Murphy to make a statement of the incident. Meredith reverses the author's story of her harassment of Sanders, making Sanders appear as a harasser and herself as a victim. She claims that Sanders requests to meet her in her office, suggests that they have a drink as well, keeps making comments of personal nature which she thinks immoral, makes unexpected overtures despite her attempt to stop him, gets angry when she refuses his advances, starts shouting at her and eventually knocks her down onto the floor. She adds that she responds to his assault by tearing his shirt, scratching him, and threatening to kill him (pp. 297-99). What a vicious woman! In short, she is actually, as Lemann-haupt (1994) notes, "the embodiment of all those antiquated, chauvinistic stereotypes of the power-hungry women: she is two faced, underhanded, manipulative, mendacious, underqualified for her position and delighted to wield sex as a weapon"(p.88).

Apart from Sanders's wife and Fernandez, no one believes that Meredith has raped Sanders. It is normally expected that a male boss harass his female subordinates, but what is rarely expected is that a female boss harass her male subordinates. Further, no one can believe that a forty-one year old man can reject the sexual advances of an extremely attractive thirty-five year old woman, whose "blond hair, large eyes. Those incredibly eyelashes" (p.59) charm anyone. So it is not strange that Sanders's co-workers presume that he is lying.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that men could be the victims of harassment if they were employed by women in higher positions (Farley 181-82). Women in superior positions abuse their power to force sex upon men and threaten to unleash their fury upon the reluctant men. This is true of Meredith who, like Carol in *Oleanna*, misuses her position of power to inflict her rage on such unyielding subordinates as Sanders. Meredith, we are told, "is very well connected in this company. She has impressed a lot of extremely important people", "has built a power base in several areas", and "has important allies"(p.159). So, when Sanders rejects her sexual advances, she exploits the authority entrusted to her and responds menacingly: "You fucking *son of bitch*. [. . .] You bastard! [. . .] You can't do this to me! [. . .] You fucker, you can't leave me like this! [. . .] I'll fucking kill you for this!" (pp.116-17).

It is worth noting that Sanders's encounter with Meredith in her office exposes her as a sexually driven woman. When she finally accuses Sanders of harassing her, his initial response to her false charge is that of utter disbelief. Like John, Sanders is tormented by Meredith's serious charge. He feels he has been unjustly treated by her (p.202). He begins to see his life falling apart around him. His friendship with his co-workers is now suspect, his wife is horrified and infuriated by the charges leveled at her husband. He is right about his decision not to forgive this devilish woman. Bob Garvin, the founder and boss of DigiCom, asks Sanders to be tolerant, reminding him that he and Meredith are still working together and that whatever happens between them should remain their private business. He also suggests that Sanders forget about it all, go on with his work, and get rich. Yet, Sanders remain reluctant to Garvin's mediation because Meredith is, among other things, impossible to change, since "she'll do it again" (p. 323).

In his bewilderment, Sanders attempt to find out why Meredith accuses him of sexual harassment though she is actually the harasser. Perhaps, as Sanders think, she was worried lest he would accuse her, so she made up her mind to accuse him first. But if Meredith, Sanders reasons, really had power, it was not reasonable to raise the sexual issue at all. She could just as easily have gone to Blackburn and

informed him of her wish not to work with Sanders. Instead, she had accused him of harassment, which means that she had failed to get her employee under control in a meeting. Quite the contrary, Meredith was new to her job, keen on proving her ability to control the situation. So, according to Sanders, her accusation was not reasonable. However, Sanders concludes that the reason behind her accusation might be her desire to destroy him. For him, “Sexual harassment had the advantage of being a charge that was difficult to recover from. You were presumed guilty until proven innocent —and it was hard to prove innocence ” (pp.190-91). Since sexual harassment is so powerful an accusation and since its suits are biased towards women, men attempt to avoid involvement in situations that end up with suits of that kind. They realize that, even if they are falsely accused and eventually proved to be innocent, their reputation is ruined and they have nothing to gain.

Meredith’s behaviour, like that of Carol, is baffling for both Sanders and the reader: “I keep thinking,” Sanders said. “She accused me of sexual harassment, but now she isn’t pressing charges. And I keep thinking, why isn’t she pressing charges?” (p.195). The reader, too, is amazed as to why Meredith wants to destroy Sanders. Why does she risk her reputation by sexually assaulting him on her first day of work? The answer, however, as Morrison (1994) suggests is that “[Meredith’s] semi-rape of Tom is [...] a calculated squeeze play to cut him from the DigiCom herd and out of a multimillion-dollar windfall” (p. 90). Unfortunately, Sanders has come to discover this lately.

“Oh, Tom. Good. I hope it’s not too late.” Arthur said.

“Too late for what?” Sanders said. [. . .]

“Well, I’m afraid I haven’t been entirely straightforward with you, Tom. It’s about Meredith. She made changes in the line six or seven months ago, and I’m afraid she intends to blame that on you. Probably in the meeting today.” [. . .]

“I wanted to tell you earlier. I really did. But Meredith kept saying that you would be out. I didn’t know what to do. She said there was a battle coming, and I had better pick the winner.” (p. 477)

Obviously, Meredith’s admission that “there was a battle coming” suggests that her invitation of Sanders to her office, her sexual assault on him, and her subsequent claim that he has harassed her are premeditated.

What baffles Sanders most about Meredith is her apparent indifference to his serious accusation against her. Strangely, rather than appear disturbed by the accusation, she seems self-confident and acts normally as if nothing had happened. Her self-assurance and her feeling of invulnerability may, as Sanders guesses, stem from her certainty of Garvin’s support of her (p.245). Perhaps, one suggests, Meredith’s

display of indifference is also a deliberate attempt on her part to dishearten Sanders so that he may quit the company he works for. Still, despite her heedlessness to Sanders's charge, Meredith begins to feel she is in real trouble on learning from Garvin that Sanders may file with the state HRC. Sensing her distress, Garvin assures her that he is going to find a way out. Yet, Meredith feels that Garvin's attempt is a futile one. She feels uneasy about it and voices her suspicion that Sanders will profess his harassment of her: "Fine," Meredith said. [. . .] But I don't know what we can expect to come out of it. He won't admit what happened, I'm sure. And there isn't any record, or any witnesses" (p.213).

Obviously, Meredith's assertion that Sanders's "won't admit what happened, I'm sure" implies that Sanders is really innocent and that she has lied about it all. What makes her so sure other than her full awareness of his innocence? On more than one occasion, Meredith appears as a two-faced person. The most notable occasion that shows her hypocrisy comes after she has accused Sanders of sexual harassment. Running into Sanders, she slyly apologizes to him for accusing him of sexually harassing her and offers to give him a lift: "Can you forgive me? " Please? You know how I feel about you" (p.242). However, Sanders's reaction to Meredith's hypocrisy is that he is not going to be fooled by her masked innocence any more.

Not only is Meredith a two-faced harasser, but she is also "a scheming [. . .] vixen" (Schulian, 1994, p. 89). Her mendacity and deviousness manifest themselves most clearly in the mediation hearing scene. Sensing that her wicked plans will turn on her head, Meredith changes her early version of the events. She justifies her assault on Sanders by claiming that it was all a sort of misunderstanding. She wants him to take the blame for her implication in sexual activity with him.

"And, Ms Johnson," [Judge] Murphy said," are you also agreeing to the charge of harassment by Mr. Sanders?"

"Not at all, Your Honor. No."

"Then I'm not sure I understand. You've changed your story. You say you now agree that Mr.Sanders's version of the events is correct in most respects. But you do not agree that he has a claim against you?"

"No, Your Honor. As I said, I think it was all a misunderstanding."

"A misunderstanding," Murphy repeated, with an incredulous look on her face.

"Yes, Your Honor. And one in which Mr. Sanders played a very active role."

“Ms. Johnson. According to Mr. Sanders, you initiated kissing over his protests; you pushed him down on the couch over his protests; [. . .] and you removed your own clothing over his protests. Since Mr. Sanders is your employee, and dependent on you for employment, it is difficult for me to comprehend why this is not a clear-cut and indisputable case of sexual harassment on your part.”

“I understand, Your Honor,” Meredith Johnson said calmly. “And I realize I have changed my story . But the reason I say it is a misunderstanding is that from the beginning , I genuinely believed that Mr. Sanders was seeking a sexual encounter with me, and that belief guided my actions.”(p. 336)

Fernandez, however, is certain that Meredith is lying about her claim that “it was all a misunderstanding.” When Fernandez questions Meredith about what she believes to be Sanders’s “hostile act” (p. 338), Meredith’s answer reveals that there is no misunderstanding as she alleges.

“All right. Let’s review that particular moment in detail,” Fernandez said. “As I understand it, we’re talking about the time when you were on the couch with Mr. Sanders, with both of you in a state of partial undress.

[. . .] [I]s that correct?”

“Basically. Yes.” She shook her head. “You make it sound so . . . crude.”

“But that was the situation at that moment, was it not?”

“Yes. It was.”

“Now, at that moment, did you say, ‘No, no, please,’ and did Mr. Sanders reply, ‘You’re right we shouldn’t be doing this,’ and then get off the couch?”

“Yes,” she said. “That’s what he said.”

“Then what was the misunderstanding?”(pp. 338-39)

Feeling cornered and trapped by Fernandez’s shrewdness, Meredith resorts to guile and foxiness to mislead Judge Murphy and Fernandez. “When,” Meredith says cunningly, “I said, No, no,’ I meant, ‘No, don’t wait.’ Because he was waiting, sort of teasing, and I wanted him to go ahead. Instead, he got off the couch, which made me very angry” (p.339). Evidently, both Judge Murphy and Fernandez get nowhere with Meredith. They fail to prove she has harassed Sanders because, as Fernandez believes, “sexual harassment is notoriously difficult to prove. [. . .] It’s one person’s word against another’s. In that circumstance, where there is no clear-cut corroborating evidence, there is often a prejudice against the man.”(p.182)

As the novel draws to its end, Meredith, like Carol, makes a verbal assault on Sanders in addition to her early physical attack on him.

In the presence of thirty executives representing Conley-White and DigiCom, including Bob Garvin and Meredith, Sanders manages to expose Meredith's implication in a plan to merge DigiCom with huge conglomerate, and take over the entire company, shutting down their production factories and changing the line of operations. Meredith, now unable to disprove Sanders's incrimination of her, reacts ferociously:

“[. . .] This calculated, manipulative attitude by an individual who will anything –anything at all—to get head, to make a name for herself at the expense of others, who will savage the reputation of anyone who stands in her path—I mean, that stands in *his* path—this ruthless demeanor that we are seeing . . . No one is fooled by this, Tom.” (pp. 473-74)

Ironically, Meredith does not realize that she has given herself away by unconsciously uttering such phrases as “to make a name for herself” and “stands in her path—I mean, in *his* path.” In actuality, Meredith's words point to her rather than to Sanders.

In her final encounter with Sanders, Meredith again tries to play the innocent by putting the blame for her wrong actions on the system she works for: “I beat you, fair and square, Tom. I don't deserve this. I've been screwed by the damned system” (p. 480). However, Sanders is no longer deceived by her false innocence and reprimands her for what she really is. “The system didn't screw you. The system *revealed* you, and damped you out. Because when you get right down to it, you're completely full of shit” (p.480).

At the end of the novel, Meredith is seen with Ann Hunter who “was assigned to drive Meredith Johnson to the airport, to take a plane back to Cupertino” (p. 490). She discloses the secret that she has been unfair to Sanders: “He's a nice guy,” Meredith said. “Always was. You know we used to have a relationship” (p. 490).

As the above argument indicates, the dramatic situations in Crichton's *Disclosure* bears much resemblance to those in Mamet's *Oleanna*. In the same way, the protagonists and antagonists in both works are similar in many ways. For instance, Sanders's and John's reactions to their harassers are analogous: Sanders does not submit to Meredith's accusation of sexual harassment and is “prepared to sue if it comes to that” (p. 200), and John would rather lose his job and his new house than yield to Carol's sexual accusation and her demand that his book be banned. Like John, Sanders “was in shock” and “very upset” (p.177) on learning of Meredith's false charge. Most importantly, still, both John and Sanders are partly responsible for their predicaments. Sanders is supposed to have sensed something behind Meredith's invitation of him for a drink in her office, particularly when she put “her

hand on his arm” and “didn't take it away” (p.72). As Prose (1994) notes, “though Tom is adept at diagnosing the glitches in disk drives and production lines, he somehow fails to read the signals when Meredith invites him to an intimate after-hours meeting [. . .]” (p.95). In the same manner, during his conference with Meredith in her locked office, Tom also fails to recognize her hinting at making love when she plainly expresses her admiration of his “nice hard tush,” when she suggests that they “go to Malaysia together” to “enjoy themselves” (pp.106-09), and when she formerly asks him to “rub [. . .] her shoulder” (p.107) for her. Even Mark Lewyn, Sanders’s work colleague, rebukes him for his failure to recognize Meredith’s sexual passes:

“Hey, Tom. You walk the same halls, you breathe the same air as the rest of us. You know who’s doing what. [. . .] All day long, she’s touching your arm, giving you those meaningful little looks and squeezes. [. . .] And now you tell me you didn’t know what was coming, in that office? Fuck you, Tom. You’re an asshole.” (p.240)

Sanders's failure, obviously, echoes John's to identify, despite his prowess as a teacher, Carol’s evil intentions when she insists on taking notes of his words.

Both Carol and Meredith, too, have much in common. Both, for example, are vindictive; Carol for failing to submit John to answer her demands, Meredith to force Sanders to make love to her. We are told that “Meredith made sexual overtures to [Sanders] in her office last night , that he turned her down, and that now she is being vindictive” (p.204). Like Carol, Meredith fakes innocence to achieve her wicked aims. When Garvin informs Meredith that Sanders is “going to file a harassment charge” against her, she responds in seeming innocence, “That’s unfortunate, [. . .] But I suppose it’s part of the pattern —tying to humiliate me, to discredit me with the people in the division”(p.212). However, when Garvin assures her that he “won’t let that happen” (p.212), She begins to play on his sympathy in order to involve him in her plan to remove Sanders. Like Carol who is supported and empowered by her alleged group, Meredith is backed and authorized by Bob Garvin who always takes her side and finds justifications for her wrongdoings. “And I,” says Garvin, “keep coming to the idea that we have to make allowances for women. We have to cut them a little slack” (p.212). Further, Meredith’s ingratitude to her supporter and benefactor echoes Carol’s. Although “Garvin is backing her one hundred percent” and will allow her to “stay in her job” (p.478) despite her responsibility for the misfortune befalling the company, Meredith turns against him, claiming that Garvin has been exploiting her. “[. . .] Garvin,” she says, “won’t support me when the going gets tough. Everybody said he was

like a father to me. But he was just using me. He was just making a deal, any way he could. And that's all he's doing now" (p.480).

It is worth noting that while Sanders displays a remarkable courage by reporting his own harassment, a great deal of sexual assaults of men by women goes unreported. This is because it is difficult for a man to accuse a woman of raping him. Men cannot play the victim because the notion of rape prevents them from admitting their predicament. In *Disclosure*, Meredith used to make sexual demands on her male employees. Richard Jackson, "a marketing manager" (p.380), is one of those guys Meredith harassed. However, apart from Sanders, the guys harassed by Meredith had to put up with this sexualized work atmosphere, perhaps because of their fear to profess their own predicaments, lose their jobs, or find themselves falsely accused of sexual harassment, as in Sanders's case. Further, those guys may have chosen not to report their harassment by women because they feared that the response to their complaint may have become worse than the problem. We see how Sanders is disbelieved and considered guilty when he announces his harassment by Meredith. Crichton's *Disclosure* makes the argument that men who are victims of harassment should not remain silent. Rather, they should follow in the footsteps of Sanders and report their harassment. This may help minimize the number of attempted rapes of men by women.

Though Sanders does not cover up his harassment in his futile attempt to prove his innocence, he comes to realize that he is living in a "climate where men were assumed to be guilty of anything they were accused of. . . . There were no rules now, and every man knew this" (Prose, 1994, p. 95). In such a climate, Sanders and his likes are advised "[not to] smile at a child on the street, unless you're with your wife", "[not to] even touch a strange child. [...] This was a world of regulations and penalties entirely unknown to women." (as cited in Coren, 1994, p. 94)

In *Disclosure*, Crichton realistically depicts a normal man with normal flaws, trapped unjustly in a battle in which defeat means absolute disgrace and victory cannot be celebrated. He demonstrates how the political correctness movement can be merciless and intolerant. He argues that, while this movement has undeniable benefits, it still has its drawbacks. One of these drawbacks, as Coren (1994) suggests, is the proposition that "all men are potential harassers and abusers" (p.94). The most notorious thing, however, about this movement is that it has reversed gender roles: women are perceived as masculine while men are denied their manhood. This is true of Meredith, who assumes the role of men: "Meredith," Jackson says, "likes to fuck guys. She likes to order them to do this, do that. She likes to order

them around. That's who she is" (p.381). Commenting, though, on the evils brought by the political correctness movement, Schulian (1994) says:

The decline of American manhood can be traced from a daffy heavy weight champion named Leon Spinks, who snuggled up with a lady of the night and awoke the next morning to discover that she has stolen his false teeth. Since then, of course, things far dearer to men than dentures have become targets in the war between the sexes. [...] But not until the publication of Michael Crichton's *Disclosure* has it been so obvious that the women's movement possesses the power to turn an admirable male mind to guacamole. (p.89)

Amazed at the rapid increase in the number of women who harass men, Louise Fernandez, Crichton's mouthpiece in *Disclosure*, makes the argument that men and women harass equally:

About five percent of sexual harassment claims are brought by men against women. It's a relatively small figure. But then, only five percent of corporate supervisors are women. So the figures suggest that women executives harass men in the same proportion as men harass women. And as more women get corporate jobs, the percentage of claims by men is going up. (pp. 331-32)

Early in the novel, she demonstrates that one-fourth of all sexual harassment cases are brought by men. Most of those are brought against male bosses, but one-fifth is brought against women. And the number is increasing all the time, as we have more women bosses in the workplace. (p.183)

Fernandez attributes the increasing number of sexual harassment claims by men against women to the fact that harassment is a power issue. For her, power is neither male nor female:

Harassment is about power—the undue exercise of power by a superior over a subordinate. I know there's a fashionable point of view that says women are fundamentally different from men, and that women could never harass an employee. But from where I sit, I've seen it all. I've seen and heard everything that you can imagine—and a lot than you wouldn't believe if I told you. That gives me another perspective. Personally, I don't deal much in theory. I have to deal with facts. And on the basis of facts, I don't see much difference in the behaviour of men and women. (p.183)

To sum up, the message which Crichton wants to convey in *Disclosure* is that the roles in any situation, including sexual harassment, are not restricted to a certain gender. In a world in which women are generally regarded as oppressed, it is futile that a man fight a sexual harassment suit. Crichton makes use of Meredith Johnson to make clear his notion that no gender is limited to a specific part, and that certain situations applied to one gender could as easily be applied to the other. It

is through the uncharacteristic position of high power in a technical company and her aggressive sexual assaults that Meredith has assumed a reverse role, proving that nothing is restricted to a specific gender.

Conclusion

When all is said and done, Mamet's *Oleanna* and Crichton's *Disclosure* address the issue of the harassment of men by women. They demonstrate that women can be equally as vindictive and sexually abusive as men. They also show that, although a man often does not experience the same horror or menace which women confront, this does not mean that a man cannot be a victim of harassment. Men can be as susceptible and easily offended as women. Admitting that men can be harassed and that women can be harassers does not in any way detract from harassment as a serious crime. Harassment is a universal crime regardless of the victim and the perpetrator. The two works, ultimately, conclude that harassment is no longer so gender-specific a crime that its only perpetrators are men, that women can be harassers like men, and that harassment, whatever form it takes, must not be tolerated.

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