

THE IMAGE OF THE PROFESSOR IN RECENT AMERICAN DRAMA: 1992-2004

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A Thesis

By

Salim E. A. Al-Ibia

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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THE IMAGE OF THE PROFESSOR IN RECENT AMERICAN DRAMA: 1992-2004

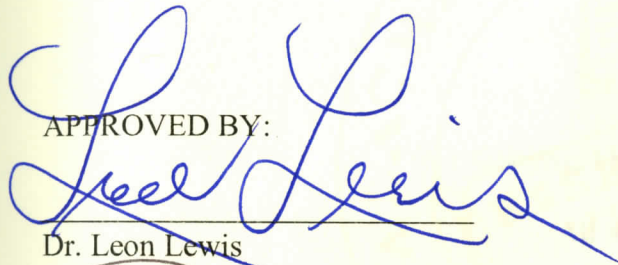
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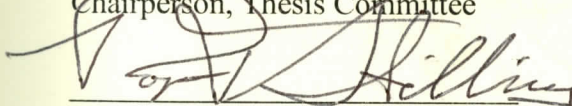
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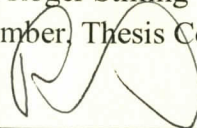
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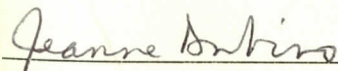
Dr. Roger Stilling

Member, Thesis Committee



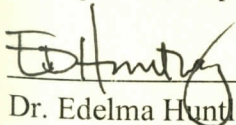
Dr. Bruce Dick

Member, Thesis Committee



Dr. Jeanne Dubino

Chairperson, Department of English



Dr. Edelm Huntley

Dean, Research and Graduate Studies

ABSTRACT

THE EFFECT OF THE PRODUCTION OF KINETIC ENERGY ON THE PRODUCTION OF A ...

Salim E. A. Al-Idrisi, Ph.D., Faculty of Science,

U.S. Army Research Office,

Fort Belvoir, Illinois, U.S.A.

The production of kinetic energy is a process that involves the conversion of potential energy into kinetic energy. This process is fundamental to many physical phenomena, including the motion of objects and the generation of electricity. The study of kinetic energy production is essential for understanding the dynamics of various systems and for developing efficient energy conversion technologies. This paper discusses the theoretical aspects of kinetic energy production and its applications in different fields of science and engineering.

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ABSTRACT

THE IMAGE OF THE PROFESSOR IN RECENT AMERICAN DRAMA: 1992-2004. (May 2009)

Salim E. A. Al-Ibia, B.A., Al al Bayt University

M.A., Appalachian State University

Thesis Chairperson: Dr. Leon Lewis

In addition to its extensive appearance as subject matter in American theater, the presentation of professors, students, and scholars has been a recurring image in literature. Literary traditions are rich with examples that show professors and scholars as active characters in different literary genres. My thesis examines how the image of the professor character in recent American drama is an extension of its representation in literary traditions. The appearance of the professor-scholar character and the way it is reproduced is not limited to a specific time period. Rather, it has been portrayed on some standard models throughout literary history. Models of the professor character can be classified under four main categories—a comic representation, a positive representation, a negative representation, and a fourth category in which the character is mixed between positive and negative representations. My thesis is based primarily on how these categories function in four recent American plays: David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1992), Peter Sagal's *Denial* (1995), R.A. Gurney's *Human Events* (2001), and Jamie Pachino's *The Return to Morality* (2004).

My research considers the image of professors and the way they are represented through their actions, behaviors, and relationships with students, friends, and the surrounding immediate society. Each play, therefore, is classified under one of the four categories listed above. In order to accurately evaluate the professor character in recent American drama in an accurate manner, I examine this character in selected pieces of literature from different time

periods, including Middle English, the Renaissance, and 20th century literature. Using these examples, I explain the general attributes of the four categories under which a professor character can be classified. Then, I label these categories according to either an important example or the general attributes of the professor character in these categories. Chapters two and three demonstrate how the professor character in the four recent American plays I examine in this MA thesis are located within the previous literary traditions.

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Chapter I

The Professor, the Student, and the Textbook

Reading the textbook of the professor has been the habit of the

American professor since the days of the first book, the *History and Geography* of

Thus, the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

which I have made dialogues, have discussed ancient texts, offered

character of the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

scholarship of the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

that grows from the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

image of the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

adequate of the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

time of the professor of this state has been the first to introduce the

I have made dialogues,
have discussed ancient texts,
have thrown what light I could, offered
what pleasures
doceat allows

Charles Olson
Maximus to Himself

Chapter 1

The Professor: Origins and Traditions

Recently, the character of the professor has been reproduced periodically by American playwrights such as Edward Albee, Peter Sagal, R. A. Gurney, and Jamie Pachino. Thus, the appearance of this character on the American stage has become a phenomenon which I believe is worth investigating. Prior to these recent American plays, however, this character was reproduced extensively in different literary genres and time periods. The scholars who tried to evaluate this character have, I believe, failed to provide adequate theory that governs the appearance of this character in literature. This MA thesis will evaluate the image of the professor character on stage in recent American drama as well as establish an adequate theory that governs the appearance of this character in different literary genres and time periods.

According to the *Oxford English Dictionary (OED)*, the word “professor” is found in different classical European languages. In Anglo-Norman, for example, the word is “proffessur,” while it is “professeur” in Middle French. In these languages, the word “professor” often means a “person who professes (c1275 in Anglo-Norman), an academic teacher of an art or science, or of the law (1337 in *professeur en loys*), a person who openly professes the Christian faith (15th cent.).” The etymon of the word is “classical Latin *professor*, person who declares, person who claims to be expert in some art or science, teacher.” In “post-classical Latin” the word means a “person who professes a faith (early 3rd cent. in Tertullian).” Another meaning is a “person who takes religious vows (c1170, c1400

in British sources).” The word “professor” is also related to “university academic (frequently 1265-1583 in British sources).” The *OED* recommends that readers “Compare Old Occitan *professor*, Catalan ‘*professor*’ (early 15th cent.), Spanish *profesor* (1359 as *professor*), Portuguese *professor* (15th cent.), Italian *professore* (1389).” In Modern English, the word “professor” has several similar meanings and senses. From all these meanings of the word “professor,” I am interested in the word in the academic sense: “academic teacher of an art or science.” In this MA thesis, the word “professor” refers to the professor character in the aforementioned academic sense.

Although literary traditions are rich with examples showing professors and scholars as active characters in different literary genres and time periods, the professor character in drama has received less attention from critics and researchers who have treated the image of the professor superficially. This character has been criticized, evaluated, or judged just like any other character, protagonist, or antagonist. In novels, this character and the academic life have been examined by different researchers. In fact, the professor character has been an interesting topic for many critics who have thoughtfully discussed this character in the twentieth century. The term ‘academic novel’ has come to define narratives dealing with professors and academia. Mortimer Proctor’s *The English University Novel* (1957) focuses on novels set in universities before Kingsley Amis’s *Lucky Jim*. In this book, Proctor primarily examines the negative attributes of the professor and the academic life rather than the positive aspects. Published in 1962, John O. Lyons’s book *The College Novel in America* focuses on the eccentric image of the professor character, as well as on academic life and academic freedom in the American novel. Interestingly, Lyons refers to the “professor of English” as the favored type of character used as a hero in academic American novels. Lyons

notices that most of the academic novels revolve around professors who teach in the English department (181). In his PhD dissertation, *The British and American Academic Novel: The Professorromane, the Comic Campus, the Tragic Self* (2008), Mathew H. G. Fullerty briefly touches upon the professor character in drama. He argues that the images of the professor and academic figures are alike in both novel and drama:

The following plays (*The Male Animal, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?, Educating Rita, Oleanna, Spinning into Butter, and Wit*) are thus a different genre by being performances and written for the stage, but in a sense they belong with the *professorromane* (academic novel) because of the striking similarities of their tragic concerns. Any argument over genre and the differences arguable comes back to the idea of these plays as plays rather than novels. But far more interesting is the similarities of the novels and plays, both the comic worlds of these professors, and the increasingly tragic consequences for the individuals. Any question of genre therefore dissolves the standard genre divide in this case, and places academic play and the *professorromane* (academic novels) side by side. (206)

Fullerty points out an important fact in the above quoted passage. I strongly agree with him that academic plays are similar to academic novels in the way the professor character is treated or presented. At the same time, he emphasizes a difference in the genres, which is another key issue when we talk about the play and the novel. Still, I do believe that the representation of the professor character has nothing to do with a literary genre. Rather, the professor character is portrayed in the same models in all the different genres, and it has very long traditions which date back to the Greek era. I explain these facts later in this chapter.

In his article "Three Tutorial Plays" (1997), Craig Stewart Walker is concerned with the power relationship between the professor and his students in three plays: Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson*, George F. Walker's *The Prince of Naples*, and David Mamet's *Oleanna*. Walker's study does not reach beyond the image of the professor, the student-

teacher relationship, and the cultural aspects of these three plays in particular. In other words, Walker does not trace the traditions of this character beyond the context of the plays he discusses. Thus, his study does not provide a comprehensive evaluation of the professor character on stage.

In 2000, Sage Hamilton Rountree wrote a PhD dissertation called *The Professor and the University in Recent Drama*. Rountree uses both American and British plays in her research, including Willy Russell's *Educating Rita* and Edward Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* She concludes with Mamet's *Oleanna*. She focuses on two dominant themes in her research: the professor and the university. Although her dissertation is the most serious effort in the field to examine the image of the professor on stage, she does not refer to the historical development of the professor character throughout literary traditions, nor does she explore the ways professors are represented historically on the stage and whether or not these representations are related to specific time periods. Instead, she focuses primarily on the images of the professor and the university in the specific plays she discusses, relying heavily on additional examples from academic novels. Although Rountree covers most of the previous research on the image of the professor and the academic life, especially in the novel, she hardly refers to the historical development of the professor character in her dissertation.

One example of her brief treatment is as follows:

Academic figures in English imaginative literature date back to Chaucer's clerks. Drama was one of the first venues for academic figures; the intellectual appears as a character in the late morality play *Wit and Science*, as well as in Renaissance drama including *Love's Labour's Lost*, *Hamlet*, and *Every Man Out of His Humor*. The advent of the novel brought whole books centering on campus activities . . . (2-3)

The professor character has been reproduced repeatedly in different literary genres.

The appearance of this character and the way it is reproduced do not belong to a specific time

period. Rather, professors have been portrayed within standard models throughout literary traditions. These models of the professor character can be classified under four main categories—a comic representation, a positive representation, a negative representation, and a negative-positive representation. Here and in my literature review, I will explain these four categories through textual examples from different pieces of selected literature. After I explore the different models of the professor character through example, I will further define these four main categories.

An early example of the positive representation of the professor character can be traced to the Greek era. Socrates, Greek philosopher and teacher, can be considered both a fictional and a real example of the character of the professor. But how can he be real and fictional at the same time? Most people hardly doubt the real character of Socrates since he is considered one of the most famous founders of Western philosophy. On the other hand, we only know about this Greek philosopher through the writings of his student (Plato), who presents Socrates's ideas mostly through fictional dialogues. Western civilization would have never known about Socrates the teacher unless Plato had written these dialogues. Socrates, then, exists only in literature because "we are given Plato's version of Socrates' speech . . ." and not Socrates's version (Plato 9). Hence, he is nothing but a fictional character in reality. The French Philosopher Jacques Derrida refers to this fact in his Book, *Of Grammatology*, when he quotes Nietzsche, "Socrates, he who does not write" (6).

Socrates was put on "trial on a charge of impiety and corrupting the young." According to Plato, Socrates believed that it was the "prejudice against him that led to his trial." His friends tried to convince him to escape, but he believed "it is better for him to stay in Athens and die, rather than to escape to another country and live in exile" (Plato 9). As we

can see, Socrates's ideas and thoughts that contributed profoundly to Western civilization led to his trial. These ideas and thoughts were considered corrupt by Greeks. However, our current standards may suggest the contrary, since there is no doubt that Socrates, the fictional character that appears in Plato's world, is an obvious example of the positive representation of the professor character in literature. Accepting Socrates as a fictional character, he is an example of the positive representation of the professor character.

In medieval literature, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* is rich with positive and negative representations of professors, scholars, and students. Early in his *General Prologue*, Chaucer states that the pilgrims who accompanied him to Canterbury represent the different social classes of England during that time period, including professors and students:

In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay
 Redy to wenden on my pilgrimage
 To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,
 At nyght was come into that hostelrye
 Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye
 Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle
 In felawshipe, and pilgrimes were they alle.
 (20-26)

Chaucer describes the twenty-nine pilgrims in his company, each of whom practices a different profession, in great poetic portraits. Among these portraits, the Clerk of Oxford is a perfect example of the scholar character. This portrait represents one of few examples in which the professor character, along with Plato's Socrates, is purely positive. Chaucer's Clerk is a poor student and teacher of philosophy. He spends his money on books and education, not on clothes: "The Clerk's defining characteristics, as mentioned in the opening lines, are his devotion to logic . . . His horse is so thin that its ribs show to match his own hollow looks" (Cooper 43):

A CLERK ther was of Oxenford also,
 That unto logyk hadde longe ygo.
 As leene was his hors as is a rake,
 And he was nat right fat, I undertake,
 But looked holwe, and therto sobrelly.
 Ful thredbare was his overeste courtepy,
 For he hadde geten hym yet no benefice.
 (285-91)

According to Chaucer, the Clerk seems to be poor and has no “clothes that are not threadbare. He is the archetypical impoverished student” (Cooper 43). Chaucer’s satire of the Clerk’s poverty is interesting since it provides early evidence that professors and scholars have always been under strained financial circumstances, “for the study of philosophy notoriously never made anyone rich” (43):

But al be that he was a philosophre,
 Yet hadde he but litel gold in cofre.
 (297-98)

Chaucer explains the reason his Clerk is suffering poverty. It is the fact that he spends all of what he earns on books and learning. He is a pious person who refuses devotion in his life to worldly things:

But al that he myghte of his freendes hente,
 On bookes and on lernynge he it spente. (299-
 300)

The Clerk speaks only when he needs to. If he says something at all, it is short and full of meaning. His carefully chosen words show wisdom and moral virtue: “The Clerk is not a theologian, but he is no less pious for having chosen the more secular branch of learning” (Cooper 43). The portrait of the Clerk in *The General Prologue* ends with Chaucer reminding readers of the Clerk’s devotion and passion for learning and teaching. He gladly learns and gladly teaches:

Noght o word spak he moore than was neede,
 And that was seyde in forme and reverence,
 And short and quyke and ful of hy sentence;
 Sownyng in moral vertu was his speche,
 And gladly wolde he lerne and gladly teche.
 (304-8)

In the prologue of *The Clerk's Tale*, the Clerk of Oxford is compared to a newly married maiden by the Host who complains about the Clerk's silence. The Host says that he did not hear a single word from the Clerk all that day. The Host then mocks the Clerk, wondering if he is silent because he is thinking of some logic problems. He adds that everything has its time and that it is time for the Clerk to regale the other pilgrims with a merry story of high style, since he also is part of the story telling game on the way to Canterbury:

'Sire Clerk of Oxenford,' oure Hooste sayde,
 'Ye ryde as coy and stille as dooth a mayde
 Were newe spoused, sittynge at the bord;
 This day ne herde I of youre tonge a word.
 I trowe ye studie aboute som sophyme;
 But Salomon seith every thyng hath tyme.
 'For Goddes sake, as beth of bettre cheere!
 It is no tyme for to studien heere
 Telle us som myrie tale, by youre fey!' (1-9)

The Clerk responds "benignely" in Chaucerian terms. He kindly and politely agrees to tell a merry tale that he learned from another worthy clerk:

'Hooste,' quod he, "I am under youre yerde;
 Ye han of us as now the governance,
 And therefore wol I do yow obeisance,
 As fer as resoun axeth, hardily.
 I wol yow telle a tale which that I
 Lerned at Padowe of a worthy clerk. (20-27)

The Clerk tells a tale, "paraphrasing from the 'prohemye' to 'Petrarch's tale of Griseldis'." Beside its high style and syntax, *The Clerk's Tale* is "entirely appropriate for a

scholar to footnote his sources and the Clerk does so with unique care” (Cooper 185). His moral tale tells the story of the poor Grisilde who gets married to the noble marquis Walter. Grisilde is a typical example of the good Christian woman who never says no to her husband. She endures the devastating experiments of her husband, who wants to examine her patience. She gives her child away to death without objection to her husband’s will. By the time her daughter is a grown woman, Grisilde discovers that her daughter is actually alive and that her removal was a series of tests by Walter. This story is classified as one of the most virtuous Tales in *The Canterbury Tales*. Some critics believe that this tale came as a reaction to the Wife of Bath, who claimed that “no clerk will speak ‘good’ of women” (Chaucer 689). “In speaking ‘good’ of such a kind wife, the Clerk manages to deliver a mighty insult to Alison of Bath herself” (Cooper 197-8). Therefore, *The Clerk’s Tale*, his portrait in *The General Prologue*, his good teaching traits, the way he responds to the Host’s request, and the kind of story he tells make an ideal example of the Clerk as a positive representation of the character of the student and teacher in *The Canterbury Tales* and literature in general.

In Renaissance drama, Christopher Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus* presents an excellent example of a play in which the tragic hero is a humble professor whose passion for knowledge brings his doom. Although we never see Faustus teaching, we know that he studied different fields and sciences. Furthermore, he has students who participate in the course of the action (Marlowe ii 1-44). Doctor Faustus’s ambition and pride are responsible for his fall. He is dissatisfied with the traditional forms of knowledge such as logic, medicine, law, and religion. Hence, he decides to practice magic because he believes it is the kind of practice that will satisfy his desires. He has unchecked ambition to go beyond the limits of human ability and knowledge. Faustus says:

Faustus: What will be shall be? Divinity, adieu!
 These metaphysics of magicians
 And necromantic books are heavenly:
 Lines, circles, scenes, letters, and characters:
 Ay, these are those that Faustus most desires.
 O, what a world of profit and delight,
 Of power, of honour, of omnipotence,
 Is promised to the studious artisan! (i 48-55)

Faustus leaves the traditional forms of sciences to practice the black arts because he believes that his ultimate happiness is achieved through the black arts. He trades his soul with Lucifer in exchange for twenty-four years of service from Mephistopheles (a devil). Faustus tells Mephistopheles:

Go bear these tidings to great Lucifer:
 Seeing Faustus hath incurred eternal death
 By desperate thoughts against Jove's deity,
 Say he surrenders up to him his soul,
 So he will spare him four and twenty years,
 Letting him live in all voluptuousness. (iii 91-96)

Lucifer agrees and Faustus spends the twenty-four years using the black arts for his personal pleasure. This agreement with Lucifer shows that Faustus is a negative representation of the professor character. On the other hand, Faustus's image in this play is not purely negative since he recognizes his sin toward the end of the play. On the final night before the expiration of the twenty-four years, Faustus is overcome by fear and remorse. He begs God for mercy:

O God,
 If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
 Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood hath ransomed me,
 Impose some end to my incessant pain.
 Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
 A hundred thousand, and at last be saved. (xvi 99-104)

However, it is too late by this time to ask for forgiveness. As Faustus ends his speech, the clock strikes twelve. Faustus recognizes at this point that his doom is inevitable. Faustus says:

Oh, it strikes, it strikes! Now, Body, turn to air,
 Or Lucifer will bear thee quick to hell.
Thunder and storming
 O soul, be changed into little waterdrops,
 And fall into the ocean, ne'er be found!
 My God, my God, look not so fierce on me!
 (xvi 116-20)

Lucifer comes with a group of devils, including Mephistopheles, to take Faustus to hell. Faustus protests, but this does not help him. He says:

Adders and serpents let me breathe awhile!
 Ugly hell, gape not. Come not, Lucifer!
 I'll burn my books. Ah Mephistopheles!
The devils exit with him. (xvi 121-123)

By asking for forgiveness, Faustus becomes a repentant Christian who deserves our sympathy. Had Faustus not asked for forgiveness, we would not feel the fear and pity we feel for him. In other words, the cathartic function of this tragedy would be less powerful (if not absent) at the end of the play. If Faustus went to hell while he was proud and happy, we might be satisfied with seeing him in hell. Therefore, Faustus's representation is mixed between negative and positive attributes and a prime example of the fourth category I discuss later in this chapter.

The two directions or sides of Faustus's character have been discussed thoroughly by many critics. In his article, "Marlowe's Doctor Faustus and 'Sin against the Holy Ghost,'" Gerard H. Cox III tries to compromise between these two directions in Faustus's character, or his negative-positive aspects: "To those who believe Marlowe was himself skeptic, Faustus's aspiring will saves him; to those who believe that Marlowe was an orthodox Christian,

Faustus' perverse will damns him" (119). Cox also refers to Max Bluestone's notion that "there seem to be two plays dramatizing different doctrines, there seem to be two Faustuses, the form of his critical fortunes, like his dramatic fortunes, 'good or bad'" (Quoted in Cox 119). Hence, Doctor Faustus's character is an example of the negative-positive representation of the professor character on stage.

The character of the professor also appears in many American, British, and European novels, including Willa Cather's *The Professor's House* (1925), Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947), Mark Stain's *Groves of Academe* (1952), Kingsley Amis's *Lucky Jim* (1954), Randall Jarrell's *Pictures from an Institution* (1957), Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire* (1977), and Richard Russo's *Straight Man* (1997).

Published in 1948, Thomas's Mann's *Doctor Faustus* is a German novel that reproduces the old legend of Doctor Faustus who sells his soul to the Devil for knowledge and power. The scholar this time is a writer called Adrian Leverkühn, while the Devil is more ambiguous, especially when compared to Marlowe's Mephistopheles. It is also hard to tell whether the devil is part of Adrian Leverkühn's psyche or an unfamiliar demonic power. "The encounter with the devil is the direct result of the Faust concerned being clinically diseased, although there is the only superficial attempt to disguise the dialogue as anything other than the psyche in dialogue with itself" (Carnegy 81). The title of this novel, *Doctor Faustus*, implies Leverkühn's professorship. Leverkühn leaves writing and theology and exchanges his soul with the devil for twenty-four years of being a great composer. The encounter with the Devil is a representation of the whole literary tradition of "Faustian aspects and Mephistophelian dialogues" (80). The passage describing Leverkühn's meeting and pact with devil are similar to the kind of pact Marlowe's Faustus had with Lucifer (Mann 284).

The narrative style of the novel makes it hard to guess the identity of the narrator in some chapters. Whether the narrator is LeverKühn or Zeitblom, nevertheless, we are sure that the narrator is a professor who leaves his teaching position because of his demonic ambition. Mann's narrator, Zeitblom, is a professor. The narrator starts the novel by alluding to the demonic nature of the novel's theme "which, he assures us, has always been alien to his nature. The demonic has even been responsible for his early resignation of his 'beloved teaching profession'" (Carnegy 55). Zeitblom refers to this profession as his "beloved," but he leaves it because he prefers the demonic to teaching. Just like Marlowe's Faustus, he leaves the traditional forms of knowledge because he believes that happiness can be only achieved by using demonic powers. Mann's professors do not have any negative attributes except for their demonic ambition. However, this demonic ambition is responsible for the fall of Zeitblom—his sickness and death—by the end of the novel.

Needless to say, Zeitblom and LeverKühn who might be the same person in Mann's novel are examples of the negative-positive representation of the professor character, since desire and teaching incompetency are not key attributes of these characters. These characters have unusual demonic ambition that goes beyond the human's ability. They want to achieve their ambitions by using such demonic powers. They leave traditional forms of knowledge because they are not happy with the limited power human beings have. Thus, Mann's professors have *Faustian* traits which make them examples of the negative-positive representation of the professor character. They want to achieve more than we expect from them as human beings. Because of their *Faustian* ambitions, Mann's professors oscillate between the negative and the positive representation of the professor character. I explain this category of professors later in this chapter.

Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire*, published in 1977, is an American novel that tells the life story of Professor David Kapesh and his sexual desire. In his literature course, Desire 341, he contrasts his own personal experiences and desires with some portraits from literary works. He asks his students to discuss his own personal experiences in the classroom. Trying to build a reasonable argument for talking about his own desires in the classroom, David says:

Have I made any clearer why I should find our classroom to be, in fact, the most suitable setting for me to make an accounting of my erotic history? Does what I have just said render any more legitimate the claim I should like to make upon your time and patience and tuition? To put it as straight as I can—what a church is to the true believer, a classroom is to me. (184)

David Kapesh, as narrator, dedicates some time outside the classroom describing his sexual adventures trying to find answers for his sexual instability. As a result of his sexual drive, David struggles to pin down an identity for himself; but his greatest desire—to be happy—is never attained because he cannot overcome his past. David looks back on his time in England when he was “a visiting fellow in erotic daredevilry” (Roth 44). In London, he became sexually involved with two Swedish women named Birgitta and Elizabeth. Once he moves back to the US, he realizes that he “must stop impersonating others and Become Myself, or at least begin to impersonate the self I believe I ought now to be” (Roth 12). Throughout the novel, we feel that David is in a constant struggle with himself and that he is emotionally insecure. Thus, literature becomes an alternative for David's obsession with women that goes beyond our expectations. This obsession exceeds real life to fiction, when he talks about it openly in his classroom. He is emotionally insecure and he remains haunted by his past sexual desires and experiences. In his classroom, David recalls his past sexual experiences, including the Swedish girls. Calling them “prostitutes,” David tells his students:

The two pretty young prostitutes are still unattended, still across from me in their white angora sweaters, pastel miniskirts, dark net stockings, and elevating high-heel shoes—rather like children who have ransacked Mamma's closet to dress as usherettes for a pornographic movie house—when I rise with my sheaf of stationery to leave the café. (185)

Professor David Kapesh's life is controlled by his sexual desire. His obsession with sexuality spills over into his classroom. Although David Kapesh tries to legitimize his sexuality in his classroom, he fails, in the end, to emerge as a positive representation of the professor character in literature. Kapesh is "a 'professor of desire' more than a professor of literature" (Fulerty 77). This professor has "a great passion for woman . . . Kapesh plans to teach his class, not by putting the literature first, but himself and his own story" (78). He "tries to understand women through literature" and vice versa (79). Thus, the sexual desire of Professor David Kapesh is the greater driving power in his character and therefore he is an example of the negative representation of the professor character in the modern American novel.

Published in 1997, Richard Russo's *Straight Man* is also an American novel that satirizes the academic life, this time in fictional West Central Pennsylvania State University. The narrator of the novel, William Henry Devereaux (Hank), is the acting chairman of the English department, which faces budget cuts. When the English faculty members vote for his dismissal, he hides in the rafters as the members are voting. He is questioned periodically by his colleagues, who think that he is responsible for these cuts. He threatens the university with killing a campus duck every day until the English department receives a budget. He becomes "a tweed-jacketed, middle-aged senior professor and department chair in a fake nose and glasses, brandishing a live, terrified goose" (Russo 115).

Hank tries hard to avoid the pressure resulting from recalling his past experiences with his mother and stepfather. At the same time, he feels the anxiety of the whole department, "the

various petty English department feuds that have served as our substitute for the genuine conflict" (Russo 157). The conflict and the uncertainty of the English Department center on Hank as a temporary chairman. The stress resulting from the daily environment of the English department makes Hank refer to himself in the third person. The novel also criticizes professorial and faculty-student relationships in a highly comic style.

Professor William Henry Devereaux and his colleagues in Russo's novel are comic examples of the professor character in post-modern American novels. The entire novel makes fun of the life of faculty members and Devereaux himself. Thus, it is the comic style of the novel, rather than negative personal attributes of the professors, which makes these characters negative portrayals of the professor character. This comic representation might be considered a lighter sort of the negative representation of the professor character. It is a lighter degree of negativity that represents a different type of the professor character, especially when compared to the type of professor we see in Roth's novel. Russo's Hank is "the clown of the (English) department," (Fullerty 92) while Roth's David is a Professor of Desire. Roth's David has sexual attributes which make him a "Professor of Desire" (77). In comparison to Roth's David, Russo's Hank is not bad enough to be a Professor of Desire. I comment on the comic professor character, and on the differences between a Clown Professor and a Desire Professor in light of the differences between Roth's David and Russo's Henry, later in this chapter.

In modern and recent drama, the professor character resembles the traditions of those we have seen in the novel. The professor character has a strong presence in American and British (European) plays. This character appears in many plays, including Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* (1962), Simon Gray's *Butley* (1971), Russell's *Educating Rita* (1980), Irene Fornes's *Dr. Kheal* (1985), Andre Alexis's *Lambton Kent* (1999), Mark F. Jenkins's *All*

Powers are Necessary and Convenient (2000), Hannie Rayson's *Life after George* (2002), and David Hare's *The Vertical Hour* (2006). In this literature review, I focus commentary on Russell's *Educating Rita* as a British example and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* as an American example. My thesis then concentrates on four recent American plays written between 1992 and 2004: David Mamet's *Oleanna* (1992), Peter Sagal's *Denial* (1995), R. A. Gurney's *Human Events* (2001), and Jamie Pachino's *The Return to Morality* (2004), which I discuss in depth in the second and the third chapters.

Published in 1980, Russell's *Educating Rita* is a British play in which a female scholar character affects her professor's character positively. The entire action of Russell's play takes place in a professor's office between two characters—the professor and his female student. Rita, the female student, has an extraordinary passion for knowledge and education. Unlike Rita, Frank, the alcoholic professor, has no desire for teaching. In fact, Rita ends up as the positive educator when Frank decides, by the end of the play and as a result of their interaction, to stop drinking.

Russell's Frank is an example of the negative representation of the professor character in British drama. Act 1 introduces the alcoholic nature of this professor by showing whisky bottles behind his bookshelves. It is important for him to stop by the bar after he is done with his classes and faculty meetings. When his girlfriend calls inviting him for dinner, he says:

But darling, you shouldn't have prepared dinner should you?
Because I said, I distinctly remember saying that I would be
late...yes. Yes, I probably shall go to the pub afterwards, I shall need
to go to the pub afterwards . . . (279)

Frank also believes that he is a bad teacher. When he first meets with Rita, he tries not to help her out because she seems to be a serious student who wants to learn and achieve something in life. Frank describes himself as an “appalling” teacher. He refers to most of his

students as “appalling” too. He admits his poor level of teaching and he advises Rita to leave his class and never come back to him:

Rita: When d’ y’ actually, y’ know, start teaching me?

Frank: What can I teach you?

Rita: Everything

Frank: *Leans on the filing cabinet, drinks...*

I will make a bargain with you. Yes? I’ll tell you everything I know—but if I do that you must promise never to come back here . . . I am actually an appalling teacher. Most of the time, you see, it does not actually matter—appalling teaching is quite in order for most of my appalling students. (292)

In fact, Frank is sexually attracted to his female student. He makes serious advances toward Rita, who rejects them with firm kindness. In the second scene of Act 1, we read:

Frank: What I would actually like is to take you by hand and run out of this room forever.

Rita: (*Going back to her chair*) Tch—be serious . . .

Frank: I am. Right now there’s a thousand things I’d rather do than teach; most of them with you, young lady . . .

Rita: (*Smiling gently*) Tch. Oh sod off . . . you just like saying things like that. (303)

On the other hand, Rita always takes a positive attitude toward her teacher. She believes that a teacher-student relationship can never be sexual. When Frank says that Rita’s husband may assume a sexual affair between them, Rita totally disagrees with Frank’s assumption. “You are my teacher. I have told him (her husband)” (Russell 315). Rita makes a positive change in Frank’s life as a result of his interaction with Rita. He stops drinking and starts to adopt new possibilities for teaching and living. All in all, Rita is an example of the positive image of the scholar character in drama, while Frank is an example of the alcoholic impotent professor. He believes that he is an appalling teacher. Thus, he is a negative representation of the professor character on stage.

In American drama, Albee’s *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* is an example of “academic drama” because the two husbands in the play are professors. “Academic drama” is

an equivalent term to “academic novel” (this term has been used by Rountree, Fullerty, and others to refer to plays that deal with academic life). In Albee’s play, after a party, Professor George and his wife Martha, the daughter of the university president where George works, invite a new professor named Nick and his wife Honey to their house. George and his wife keep drinking and fighting all the time, while Nick, the younger professor, and his wife Honey are embarrassed by George and Martha.

Similar to Russell’s Frank, George is a negative representation of the alcoholic professor character. Sexuality also appears in this play. George and his wife are preoccupied with sexual affairs. George says:

Nick: It’s just I don’t like to...become involved...uh...in other people’s affairs.

George: Well, you’ll get over that...small college and all. Musical beds is the faculty sport around here.

Nick: Sir?

George: I said, musical beds is the faculty favorite sport....Never mind. (34)

George is not the only negative image of the professor character in this play. Nick is also a negative image of the professor character. Martha, George’s wife, kisses Nick twice. Then, she “slips her hand between his legs” (Albee 163). Nick “seems uncertain, but does not move. He resists a little before he agrees to give her another kiss” (164). Nick reveals the real reason why he does not want to kiss Martha: He is afraid of being caught by George. Martha undervalues this reason, saying:

Martha: George? Don’t worry about him. Besides, who could object to a friendly little kiss? It’s all in the faculty.

(They both laugh, quietly . . . Nick a little nervous)

We’re a close-knit family here . . . Daddy always says so . . . Daddy wants us to get to know each other . . . that’s what he had the party for tonight. So C’mon . . . let’s get to know each other a little bit.

Nick: It is not because I don’t want to . . . believe me . . .

Martha: You're a scientist, aren't you? C'mon . . . make a little experiment. Experiment on old Martha.

Nick: Not very old . . . (165).

Nick ends up kissing Martha, who considers his action a "nice change." George watches his wife while kissing Nick but he does not react. Instead, he makes a compliment to his wife saying, "My dove . . . you look . . . radiant" (Albee 166-167). Albee's play suggests unfaithful marriage life among faculty. George and Nick both are negative images of the professor character. George is an alcoholic professor and Nick breaks the rules of hospitality when he agrees to kiss Martha. Thus, Albee's play offers negative examples of the professor character in American drama.

As we have seen through close textual perusal of different literary examples from different genres and time periods, the appearance of the professor character and the way it is reproduced are not restricted to a specific time period. Rather, it has been developed on some basic models or criteria throughout literary history. These models of the professor character can be classified under four main categories—a positive representation, a negative representation, a comic representation, and positive-negative representation. I am going to label these four categories after some of the prominent examples I have discussed in this chapter or after the general attributes of these categories.

I would like to call the first category—the positive representation—The Clerk's Category, after Chaucer's Clerk, who makes an ideal example of the positive representation of the perfected professor character in literature. Chaucer's Clerk does not have any attributes that can be considered negative. As I explained earlier in this chapter, *The Clerk's Tale*, his portrait in *The General Prologue*, his good teaching traits, the way he responds to the Host's request, and the virtuous story he tells make an ideal example of the Clerk as a positive

representation of the character of the student and teacher not only in *The Canterbury Tales* but also in literature. Thus, a professor who belongs to this category must be a Perfected Professor whose personality is free of any kind of negative aspects or attributes. As a teacher, The Perfected Professor shall have worthy teaching traits and competency. At the same time, he shall enjoy very good personal characteristics or attributes.

I call the second category—the negative representation—The Desire Category after Professor David in Roth's *The Professor of Desire*, Professor Frank in Russell's *Educating Rita*, and George and Nick in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* who are ruled by their own desires and lusts. A professor who fits into this category is called a Professor of Desire. In fact, Fullerty is the first researcher who brings the term 'The Professor of Desire' into existence in his PhD dissertation describing professors who are similar to Roth's David. Fullerty defines this term saying:

The Professor of Desire is therefore a particular type of professor who manipulates and seduces but not always happily for his himself or his object of desire. He seeks comfort in an openly self-amused way that belies a certain eerie underbelly, smiling and smiling and still a devil. He is a lecherous lecturer for whom consequences are frequently non-existent, or justified poetically in his downfall; hence he manipulates his power and thereby undermines his traditional pastoral role as a teacher. . . (10)

However, I want to expand the type of professor Fullerty calls a 'Professor of Desire' into a whole category which I call The Desire Category. In this category, the professor character is depicted negatively. Desire in all its forms—sexual, political, and economic—and its manifestations in alcoholism and teaching incompetency are all key attributes of the professor character classified under this category. As I explained earlier in this chapter, these negative attributes of the professor character might vary from one play and character to another. But The Desire Professor is known by at least one of these attributes which are

responsible for the downfall of the character. Roth's David in *The Professor of Desire*, Russell's Frank in *Educating Rita*, and Albee's George and Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are professors who are driven by at least one of these key attributes. Thus, these characters are negative representations of the professors on stage.

Albee I call the third category—the comic representation of the professor character—the Clown Category. Again, I borrow the term 'Clown' from Fullerty, who calls Russo's William Henry (in *Straight Man*) "the clown of the (English) department" (Fullerty 77). But I would like to expand Fullerty's term into a whole category called *The Clown Category*. The comic spirit of the novel makes Henry a comic example of the professor character. Thus, it is the comic nature of the novel itself which makes this professor comic portraits rather than pure negative attributes in the Henry's personal attributes. The comic representation of the professor character might be considered a lighter sort of the negative representation of the professor character. In fact, it is a different degree of negativity that represents a different type of the professor character from the type of character we see in Roth's novel. Russo's Henry is "the clown of the (English) department" (77) while Roth's David is a "Professor of Desire" (92).

Proff Although the comic representation of the professor character is to some extent a negative representation, I would like to argue that the comic representation is considered an independent category by itself, since the negative aspects of this character come from the comic style of a literary work while a pure negative professor character comes usually from seriously negative attributes in the character itself rather than a literary style. In *Straight Man*, for example, it is the frame in which Russo introduces these professors that makes them inferior examples (when compared to Chaucer's Clerk, for example), since comedy usually presents people who can be considered less than the average. Thus, we laugh at their follies. On the other

hand, it is David's personal attributes that make him a Professor of Desire in Roth's *The Professor of Desire*. Therefore, The Clown Category is another form of the negative representation of the professor character. At the same time, The Clown Professor is not usually associated with the primary attributes of The Desire Professor—uncontrolled Desire, Alcoholism, and Teaching Incompetency. Rather, The Clown Professor enjoys enough comic aspects which allow him or her to be a negative representation of the professor. However, these negative attributes are not as serious as those of The Desire Professor. Further, The Clown Professor's negative attributes come as a comic necessity so we can laugh at him or her. Hence, even if they are negative images, Clown Professors are not bad enough to be Desire Professors. In other words, a Clown Professor's attributes are comic rather than pure negative.

I would like to call the fourth category—the positive-negative representation—The Faustian Category. In this category, which I named after Marlowe's Faustus, the professor character is developed on both negative and positive models with elements that exist in both The Clerk's Category and The Desire Category but not The Clown Category because the perspective of The Faustian Category is totally serious rather than comic. Thus, The Faustian Professors might have some attributes that exist in other categories, but they are known best for their destructive ambition. They are so ambitious that they commit a crucial mistake, and this excessive ambition is responsible for the downfall of the character. The negative-positive attributes of the professor character in this category might vary, but the main attribute Faustian professors have in common is this excessive ambition. Marlowe's Faustus, for example, leaves the traditional forms of sciences to practice the black arts. He trades his soul with Lucifer in exchange for twenty-four years of ultimate power. Doctor Faustus's character is an example of the negative-positive representation of the professor character on stage

because of the two directions in his character—it is mixed between the positive and the negative (see ch.1 10-12), but it is neither one. Doctor Faustus's tragic fall happens because of his unusual ambition to go beyond human ability.

The Faustian Professor's ambition contains four main defining aspects. First, the Faustian ambition is responsible for the fall of whoever has this kind of ambition. Marlowe's Faustus, for instance, falls because he thought his ultimate happiness resides in practicing the black arts. He wants to go beyond the traditional limits of knowledge but he falls by the end of the play. Second, the Faustian ambition is temporal. In other words, the character should recognize his mistake at least by the end of the play. Faustus, for instance, asks for forgiveness at the very end of Marlowe's play. He recognizes his mistake and he wishes that he had not practiced the black arts. Third, the character that has a Faustian ambition should have both good and bad attributes. Faustus has good-bad attributes because of the two directions in his personality. The good aspects are concrete attributes related to the character's personality while the bad aspects are abstract attributes related to the character's ambition. Doctor Faustus's negative attributes come as a result of his unchecked ambition while he enjoys good personal attributes. Fourth, the Faustian ambition is abstract rather than concrete. In other words, it is related to abstract concepts rather than concrete desires. For instance, Faustus has a passion for knowledge. On the other hand, a Desire Professor (Roth's David Kapesh for instance) has a concrete sexual passion. Consequently, Faustian Professors are defined by these four aspects in their ambition or otherwise they cannot be called Faustian.

The Clerk's Category is totally absent in recent American drama (1992-2004) since none of the professors—those in the four plays this MA thesis focuses on—are represented in a

purely positive manner. The absence of a positive representation of the professor character in this time period might be associated with the nature of recent times wherein professorship is no longer a restricted privilege. In other words, everyone can aspire to the graduate school and receive a PhD after completing certain requirements in a given field. At the same time, the absence of The Clerk's Category does not necessarily condemn the professorship in the United States. Rather, it emphasizes the negative role given to the professor character on stage (I explain this idea thoughtfully in my discussion of *Oleanna* in Chapter Two). The Clown Category is also absent in recent American drama. The absence of this category might not be associated with the same reasons, but it might strengthen my position that recent American playwrights prefer to portray The Desire Professor and The Faustian Professor.

Therefore, the image of the professor character in recent American drama continues its most basic representation in literary traditions. The plays I discuss in this MA thesis fit into the two other categories—The Desire Category in which the professor character is negatively represented, and The Faustian Category in which the professor character is mixed between the negative and the positive representations. In the coming chapters, I focus on four recent American plays. They are Mamet's *Oleanna* (1992), Peter Sagal's *Denial* (1995), R.A. Gurney's *Human Events* (2001), and Jamie Pachino's *The Return to Morality* (2004). I locate these plays within the above mentioned categories as *Oleanna* and *Human Events* are plays that reproduce negative examples of the professor character, while *Denial* and *The Return to Morality* reproduce Faustian examples of the professor character.

Chapter 2: *The Desire Category*

Recent American drama has represented negative images of the professor character in plays which we can classify under The Desire Category. In this category, the professor character is depicted negatively. Desire in all its forms—sexual, political, and economic—and its manifestations in alcoholism and teaching incompetency are key attributes of the professor character classified under this category. While these negative attributes of the professor character might vary from one play and character to another, The Desire Professor is ruled by at least one of these attributes which are responsible for the downfall of the character. Roth's David in *The Professor of Desire*, Russell's Frank in *Educating Rita*, and Albee's George and Nick in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* are professors who are driven by at least one of these key attributes. In recent American drama, playwrights such as Mamet and Gurney have developed similar portraits of the professor as a Desire Professor.

This chapter investigates the professor character in Mamet's *Oleanna* and Gurney's *Human Events*. I demonstrate through close textual readings how these characters fit into The Desire Category. Mamet's and Gurney's professors have negative attributes which make them Professors of Desire. Beside their sexuality, the professors I discuss in this chapter can be considered incompetent teachers. These two main attributes—sexuality and teaching incompetency—are the most common aspects of Mamet's and Gurney's professor. Mamet's John is an incompetent professor who breaks the university's rules when he decides to grant Carol a free "A" even before the end of the semester. He admits that he used to think that he

is stupid. He believes education is “hazing” and tests are designed by idiots for idiots. John’s sexuality and desire are responsible for his fall. Gurney’s professors—Anita, Porter, and Chris—are all negative portraits of the professor character on stage. Anita cannot be a good teacher unless she has sex. She sleeps with a graduate assistant who is seventeen years younger than she is. She unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Chris, and then sleeps with Porter. Chris breaks the hospitality rules by being sexually attracted to Porter’s wife Nancy. He uses people to achieve his ends while Porter is a parody of Mamet’s Professor John.

*

Oleanna

Published in 1992, David Mamet’s *Oleanna* is a three act play that is similar to Russell’s *Educating Rita*, since both plays take place entirely in a male professor’s office and the entire action of both plays happens between a professor and his female student. In *Oleanna*, the forty-year old professor, named John, receives three visits from a twenty-year-old female student named Carol. The student claims that she has met difficulties understanding key issues in his higher education class. Interrupted continuously by phone calls, the two characters’ conversation leads to several arguments. As Professor John is answering her questions, Carol begins to believe that he thinks she is stupid. Because he tries to solve his female student’s problems in a personal manner, John is accused of sexual harassment (and later rape) by Carol. The play ends with a physical confrontation between the student and the professor. In this play, Mamet presents a negative example of a Desire Professor. Mamet’s Professor John is an incompetent teacher with sexual desire. In this fashion of sexuality and teaching incompetency, Mamet’s John reminds us of Russell’s Frank.

The play opens with Professor John on the phone. He is engaged in family business. He talks to his wife about the new house they are planning to buy after John is strongly recommended for tenure. Carol is seated across the desk from John. The professor seems very busy and wants to leave as soon as possible. His female student has some questions about his higher education class. As soon as he hangs up, Carol asks her first question: "What is a term of art?" (2). John tries to leave, but Carol asks the same question again. The professor tries to define the word his student is asking about in simplest terminology. Carol seems rather lost, and John seems willing to help. Carol expresses her worries about her grade in John's class continuously: "I must pass this course" (9), "You have to help me" (10), "Teach me. Teach me . . . I read your book, I read it. I don't under . . ." After getting offended: "Perhaps it not well-written . . ." (11). John tries to answer her questions. As the conversation goes on, we see the first spark of student-teacher conflict in this play. Carol gets the impression that John thinks she is stupid:

Carol: You think I am stupid?

John: No. I certainly don't.

Carol: You said it.

John: No. I didn't. (13)

Professor John repeatedly denies Carol's assumption that she is stupid, "No. I never did, or never would say that to a student . . ." (13). But Carol insists that she is "pathetic" (15). Trying to let her feel better about herself, John starts to reveal personal information about himself. He tells Carol that he was raised to see himself in much the same way she does when she feels stupid and pathetic (15-16). Gradually, John starts to give up his role and authority as Carol's teacher and to deal with Carol in a more personal manner. John tells Carol, "I don't know how to do it other than to be personal." Carol wonders, "Why would you want it to be personal with me?" (19) The phone rings and John speaks to his wife again.

Right after he hangs up, John starts to reveal more personal information, talking to Carol about his hope for tenure position and the new house he plans to buy. Figuring out that her professor is in a hurry, Carol is still confused: "Why did you stay here with me?" (20). John tells her that the reason why he is staying is "Because I like you (Carol)." He adds, "Why, well? Perhaps we are similar" (21).

Carol and John are getting along a lot better now, and John gives up his authority as a teacher more and more. He explains to her his personal point of view about education and teaching, which he describes as "hazing" (28). Thus, Mamet's John is similar to Russell's Frank, since both professors have appalling attitudes toward education (see ch.1 18-19). However, Carol is surprised with her teacher's appalling attitude toward education and his personal experience in the field. She also starts to ask more personal questions, which John answers with no hesitation:

Carol: They granted you tenure?

John: Oh. No, they announced it, but they haven't signed. Do you see? 'At any moment . . .'

Carol: . . . mmm . . .

John: 'They might not sign' . . . I might not . . . the house might not go through . . . Eh? Eh? They'll find out my dark secrets. (23-24)

Carol is curious about the grade she made on his test and she tries to inquire about it. Interestingly, John breaks all the conventional rules of the university by making a deal with his female student. He decides to give Carol an "A" grade in this class. He asks her to come and meet with him periodically in his office in return. "But the class is half over," Carol protests (25). John says he wants to discuss the class from the beginning in his office during these periodical meetings. "There are rules," Carol reminds her teacher; but John does not

care very much about these rules, saying, "Well. We'll break them" (26). Moreover, John reemphasizes the fact that he "likes" Carol (27).

John resumes the conversation about the class, and Carol keeps writing down everything her professor says, including his personal information (28-35). Suddenly, Carol says that she does not understand what her professor is talking about (36). Professor John goes over to her and puts his arm around her shoulders. Carol protests again, "No!" and John hushes her and says, "It is all right" (36). Act 1 ends before Carol reveals a very important secret about herself that she "never told anyone" (38). Here we see the second aspect which makes Mamet's John similar to Russell's Frank; both professors make sexual advances toward their female students. I have discussed Frank's sexuality in Chapter One, while I discuss John's sexuality in detail later.

In Act 2, Carol is back to meet with her professor. John starts another long personal conversation. He talks about teaching and his tenure offer. Carol's first sentence in this act is again a question: "What do you want of me?" Right after this question, we understand that Carol has reported something important to the tenure committee against John when he says:

I was hurt. When I received the report of the tenure committee. I was shocked. And I was hurt. No, I didn't mean to subject you to my weak sensibilities. All right. Finally, I didn't understand. Then I thought: is it not always at those points at which we reckon ourselves unassailable that we are most vulnerable and . . . (Pause) Yes. I am. By nature, by birth, by profession, I didn't know . . . (45)

The thing Carol has reported seems so crucial that John asks her if he "can make amends." He adds, "Can we not settle this now? It's pointless, really, and I want to know." Carol protests as usual, "What can you do to force me to retract?" John exclaims, "That is not what I meant at all." Carol interrogates, "To bribe me, convince me to retract..." (46). Unlike

Russell's Rita who takes her professor's sexual advances as jokes, Mamet's Carol reports sexual harassment against her professor. John asks, "What wrong have I done you?" and Carol believes that what he has done is far beyond what a teacher should do for his student (sexual harassment). We understand that something physical happened in their previous meeting and it has something to do with Carol's body rather than a verbal phrase John might have said (47). Carol has filed a sexual harassment report to the tenure committee. John exclaims, "Do you know I tried to help you?" and Carol says, "I know what I have reported" (49). John tries numerous unsuccessful ways to solve the problem with Carol, but Act 2 ends with Carol screaming for somebody to help her: "LET ME GO . . . SOMEBODY HELP ME PLEASE" (57).

In Act 3, trying to compromise again, John asks Carol to come to his office. John thanks Carol for coming and Carol seems in a very powerful position, but she is nevertheless stressed, and John tries to calm her down. John says:

All right. I cannot . . . *(Pause)* I cannot help but feel you are owed an apology. *(Pause)* *(Of papers in hand)* I have read. *(Pause)* And reread these accusations. (61)

However, for Carol, "these are not accusations. They have been proved. They are facts" (62). Carol blames John, saying it is his own action that led to these accusations and not anything else. She believes that it is her responsibility to report the harassment against him on behalf of her and all those who suffered what she suffered (64-65). Carol expresses her will to retract if John agrees to a list of things she has prepared. She wants him to remove his book and some other books from his class. Carol says, "Here is a list of books . . . which we find questionable . . ." (73). Carol adds:

You have an agenda, we have an agenda. I am not interested in your feelings or your motivation, but your actions, if you would like me to speak to the tenure committee, here is my list. You are a free person, you decide. (74)

John initially appears to appreciate the offer and starts reading the list. Then, he is shocked to discover that his book is among the books that the list states he should remove from his course. He exclaims, "You want to ban my book?" Immediately, John demands that she leaves his office, "Get out of here" (75). Then, he says: "You want to ban my book? Go to hell, and they can do whatever they want to me" (76). After John absolutely refuses her offer, Carol accuses him with rape, "You tried to rape me. (*Pause*) According to the law . . ." (77). The phone rings again and John calls his wife "baby." Carol protests to the word "baby." Perhaps, she believes that she is defending females from sexism. Here, John loses his patience, grabs Carol, and begins to beat her. He also calls her "vicious little bitch" and "cunt." He knocks her to the floor (79) and the play ends with Carol and John staring at each other.

The power struggle in Mamet's *Oleanna* is the central structural device that gives readers a deep insight into the real struggle between the two characters. In order to understand the real character of Professor John and Carol, we must decode the power hierarchy throughout the play. This work goes through four main phases of the power struggle which I will summarize and then discuss in more detail. Toward the beginning of the play, Professor John is at the top of the power hierarchy. Later in the second phase, there is a balance of power, since the relationship between John and Carol seems to be friend-to- friend rather than teacher-student. In Act 2 and a great part of Act 3, Carol seems at the top of this

power hierarchy. The end of Act 3 represents the fourth phase and the peak of the power struggle in which both characters are engaged in a physical struggle for this power.

Act 1 begins with Professor John at the top of this hierarchy. John is very powerful. He has the teacher's authority over Carol. Naturally, Carol seems less powerful and she is worried about her grade in John's class. Early in this act, John is a typical professor who keeps the natural distance between him and his student. He also can sense the inferiority of his student. Even Carol herself admits John's teaching authority:

John: I am sorry that I was distracted.

Carol: You don't have to say that to me.

John: You paid me the compliment, or the 'obedience'—all right—of coming in here . . .

All right. (5)

The conversation they have in the early part of this act seems a normal interaction between a teacher and his student, in which the central power is the teacher:

John: No. I see. I see what you, it . . . (*He gestures to the papers*) but your work . . .

Carol: I'm just: I sit in class . . . (*She holds up her notebook*) I take notes . . .

John (*simultaneously with 'notes'*): Yes. I understand. What I am trying to tell you is that some, some basic . . .

Carol: . . . I . . .

John: . . . One moment: some basic missed communi . . . (6)

In this quotation, John practices his normal authority as a teacher. He tries to guide his student to what he thinks she should do. He is so powerful that he demands that she let him speak. Carol, on the other hand, seems very worried about her performance in John's class. Carol explains, "I have to pass this course . . . I did what you told me . . . I did, I did everything that . . . I read your book . . ." Professor John does not seem to accept Carol's concerns: "Look. Look. I am not your father" (9). By saying this, John understands his role as a teacher who should treat all students equally and apart from personal feelings. Up to this

point, John is still like any other professor who, of course, has full power over his class, since Carol is naturally inferior to her professor. She tries to make him sympathize with her need to pass the class. Carol begs her professor, "Teach me," while John asserts his teaching identity: "I am trying to" (11). Right after that, we see Carol and John again in the normal process of education in which a teacher is trying to guide his student (11-12).

Shortly thereafter, Carol is depressed. She assumes that her teacher thinks that she is stupid. John sympathizes with Carol, who responds by starting to put words into her professor's mouth, attempting to undermine his authority:

Carol: You think that I am stupid?

John: No. I certainly don't.

Carol: You said it.

John: No. I did not.

Carol: You did.

John: When? (13)

The first part of Act 1 initiates the power struggle in the play. As the conversation goes on, Carol seems unstable, "I know what it means and I am failing." She adds, "I know I am stupid. I know what I am" (14). Here, the play moves to the second phase of the power hierarchy. John starts to give up his teaching authority. John requests, "Please sit down." He adds, "I know what you talking about" (15). As I explained earlier, John starts to deal with Carol in a personal manner. John tells Carol, "I don't know how to do it other than to be personal." Here, Carol starts to misuse her teacher's sympathy. She wonders, "Why would you want it to be personal with me?" (19). John breaks all the conventional rules of the university professor making a deal with his female student. He decides to give Carol an "A" grade in this class. He asks her to come and meet with him periodically in his office in return. "But the class is not half over," Carol protests (25). John claims that he wants to discuss the class from the beginning in his office during these periodical meetings. In so doing, John not

only breaks the traditional rules of the student-teacher relationship, but also he gives up his superior power hierarchy. Even Carol herself is surprised by her professor's strange behavior. She reminds her teacher that "There are rules." John does not care very much about these rules, "Well. We'll break them" (26). Hence, the conventional student-teacher relationship no longer exists in this phase of the play.

In Act 2, after Carol writes her report to the tenure committee, John feels threatened by Carol. He seems weak enough to discuss Carol's accusations. John also tries to appeal to Carol to drop the accusations. John reads Carol's report and tries to make her feel sorry for his present situation:

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.' *(Pause) (To Carol:)* it's ludicrous. Don't you know that? It's not necessary. It's going to humiliate you, and it's going to cost me my house, and . . .
(48)

The above quotation represents the beginning of the third phase of the power hierarchy. Carol now has the superior power. Shortly after this, Carol speaks of the power struggle between her and her professor. She says, "You drag us, to listen to you . . . we don't express ourselves very well . . . And you say that 'I don't understand you'" (48-49). Later, she is more direct, "The. Power. Did you misuse it? Someone did" (50). She adds, "You (John) love the power. To deviate. To invent, to transgress . . ." (52). Shortly, Professor John is so weak that he desperately begs Carol, "Wait one moment. Wait one moment... just do me the courtesy" (57).

In Act 3, Carol is still on the top of this power hierarchy. She reminds John that what happened to him is happening because of nothing but his own behavior and because of his passion for power: "What has led you to this place? YOUR OWN ACTIONS . . . Do you

know what you've worked for? Power. For power" (64). Carol goes on practicing her power over the weak professor. She actually goes beyond the norm when she asks him to ban his book (74). John initially seems to appreciate the offer and starts reading the list. Why not? He is so weak that he cannot miss this opportunity to get the tenured position. However, as soon as he discovers that Carol wants him to ban his book, he asks her to leave his office, "Get out of here" (75). Later he says: "You want to ban my book? Go to hell, and they can do whatever they want to me" (76). This point represents the fourth turning point in the power hierarchy. John does not accept being threatened by Carol anymore because he thinks there is no way to compromise. When John finally refuses her offer, Carol accuses him with rape, "You tried to rape me. (*Pause*) According to the law..." (77). Carol, here, tries to retain her power over John who loses his patience, grabs Carol, and begins to beat her. He also calls her "vicious little bitch" and "cunt." He knocks her to the floor (79). This tragic end of physical struggle represents the peak of the power struggle in the play. Both characters are fighting for power. John is defending his house, wife, and position while Carol is trying to keep the power John gave to her by being a weak professor who broke the traditional rules of teaching and, hence, the traditional power hierarchy of the student-teacher relationship. Thus, Carol is right when she says that what led John to be accused by his student is his own action when he gives up his authority and when he tries to restore it toward the end of the play.

The question arises: What kind of professor is John? "He is a bad teacher and an egotist, guilty of poor judgment. Yet by the end . . . a villain" (James 22). Throughout the play, John reveals many personal facts about himself as a person and as a teacher. In Act 1, Mamet's professor tells Carol that he was raised to believe that he is stupid:

John: I'll tell you a story about myself. *(Pause)* Do you mind? *(Pause)* I was raised to think myself stupid? *(Pause)* that is what I want to tell you. *(Pause)*.
 Carol: What do you mean?
 John: ... my earliest and most persistent memories are of being told that I was stupid..." (15-16)

As the conversation goes on, we discover more negative attributes about Professor John. As a student, John had a hard time understanding even the easiest classes: "The simplest problem was beyond me" (16). Soon after this fact, John reveals another important secret about himself. He is an incompetent teacher, just like Russell's Frank. John says, "They said I was incompetent . . . I become, I feel 'unworthy,' and 'unprepared' . . ." (17). Later in Act 1, John's point of view about education reveals his teaching incompetency. Although he is teaching a class about higher education, John believes that education is 'hazing.' Furthermore, he believes that teaching is artificial. He also mentions his hatred of schools and teachers:

I came late to teaching. And I found it artificial . . . I told you. I hated school, I hated teachers . . . I knew I was going to fail. Because I was a fuckup. I was just not goddamned good. (22)

John's point of view about tests also reveals much about the artificial nature of his professorship. He believes that tests "are designed . . . for idiots. By idiots" (23). The tests discussion leads John to talk about the test and the interview he had to do with the tenure committee. While talking about this tenure committee, John seems confident that this committee "will find an index" of his "badness" (24). Later, John decides to give Carol an "A" grade even before the semester ends. As I explained earlier, John loses his teaching authority over Carol. He begs her to drop the accusations in Acts 2 and 3. Toward the very end of the play, John beats his student and calls her a "bitch" and a "cunt". All these facts about John's character challenge his professorship. Therefore, academically speaking,

Professor John's character fails to have even the minimum requirements of professorship. In his article, "Dramatizing AIDS," Richard Hornby refers to the teaching incompetency of Professor John and his unsuitability for the tenure position: "Mamet's professor is so inept that we can hardly have any sympathy for him. I could only feel that anyone lacking in intellectual skills or moral fiber never deserves tenure in the first place" (194).

Although it is not stated frankly, sexuality and desire are highly suggested as important sides of Professor John's character. Throughout the play, many parts of John's speeches invite readers to estimate the desire and sexuality in his character. Early in Act 1, John tells Carol that he has "no desire other than to help" her (5). John could have said, "I am willing to help you," but he uses the word "desire." It is as if Mamet is actually trying to send a message to the reader by such a thematic use of the word 'desire.' Gradually, readers start to think more seriously about the idea of desire in the above mentioned quotation when John describes Carol as "an incredibly bright girl" (7). The possibility grows exponentially greater as the conversation persists. John tells Carol, "I am not your father" (9). What does this mean? And why did he tell her that she is "an incredibly bright girl?" Is it because John sexually likes his female student?

Later in Act 1, John begins acting strangely. When Carol asks why he stays with her when he "should have gone," he says, "Because I like you." Then, he speaks of the similarities between him and his female student: "Perhaps we're similar" (20-21). Shortly after this, John breaks the university rules when he decides to grant Carol a free "A" in his class if she comes and visits him periodically to talk about the class in his office (25). When Carol asks why he will give her this free "A," he goes back to confirm again that he "likes" her (27). Even while trying to help his student, John gives a sexual example, "When I was

young somebody told me, are you ready, the rich copulate less often than the poor. But when they do, they take more of their clothes off" (32). The end of Act 1 is also highly suggestive. John goes over to Carol and puts his arm around her shoulder (36). Carol does not seem to like this at the beginning, but she seems to accept it later (36-8).

In Acts 2 and 3, the sexuality is no longer restricted to mere suggestions; rather, it becomes the dominant theme of the play. It is Carol this time who speaks of John's sexuality and readers are not guessing anymore. Carol is one of the only two characters in the play. When John put his arm around her shoulder, we were not there. But now she reports harassment to the tenure committee against her professor. Carol is a participant character whom we should trust as long as we don't have evidence that John did not do what Carol claims he did. Because we don't have this evidence, we cannot help but trust Carol who says:

Whatever you have done for me—to the extent that you've done it to me, do you know, rather than to me as a student, and, so to the student body, is contained in my report. To the tenure committee. (47)

Interestingly, John does not try to defend his action while the audience is expecting him to refute what Carol has mentioned in the above quotation. John says, "Well, all right" and he moves to read the report passed to him by the tenure committee (47). Later on, Carol tells John, "You think you can deny that these things happened" (48). John again does not deny "these things" when he could have at least said that "these things" did not happen. Carol also describes the story she is narrating to the tenure committee as "pornographic" (51). Toward the end of Act 3, Carol also brings sexuality into discussion again: "You think I am frightened, repressed, confused, I don't know, abandoned young thing of some doubtful sexuality . . ." (68). Carol also says, "You tried to rape me. I was leaving the office, you

'pressed' yourself into me. You 'pressed' your body into me" (78). In his article, "Mamet's *Oleanna* in Context: Performance, Personal, Pedagogy," Lee Papa asserts that the violent end of the last act makes "a phallogentric revenge fantasy" of Mamet's play:

The increasing violation of Carol's personal space by John—the comforting arm, the blocked exit, the beating—perhaps makes the play turn all-too-possibly into a phallogentric revenge fantasy by the end: The male defends wife, home, and life against the forces mounted against him. (222)

Whether it is phallogentric or not, Carol describes her struggle with her teacher as pornographic. Thus, sexuality and desire are aspects of Professor John's character. Needless to say, he is an example of the negative image of the professor on stage. Mamet's Professor John is criticized severely by many critics who take John's negative professorship so seriously that they criticize him as if he is a real professor who did harass his female student in reality. In her article, "The Politics of Gender, Language and Hierarchy in Mamet's *Oleanna*," Christine MacLeod expresses her uncomfortable reaction to Mamet's *Oleanna*. She compares John to herself and she feels bad about inferior, repressed students. She also feels embarrassed to see such an image of the professor on stage:

The fact is that my discomfort in the theatre did not arise solely from my identification with Carol's gendered vulnerability. Rather, it arose from the sharp and embarrassing recognition that as a teacher by virtue of academic status and a competence in certain privileged forms of discourse—I too could be and perhaps have been guilty of the same insensitivity towards students, the same arrogance and verbal aggression, that is so patently deplorable in John. (203)

Richard Badenhausen takes the negative professorship of Mamet's Professor John to the extreme when he sees this theatrical negative professorship as signs of corruption in American education in his article, "The Modern Academy Raging in the Dark: Misreading Mamet's Political Incorrectness in *Oleanna*." He says:

Oleanna ultimately explores the peril of inferior teaching and the subsequent misreadings that necessarily follow in a pedagogical environment that tacitly reinforces hierarchical differences amongst its participant. In fact this is a play about teaching, reading, and understanding: How to do those things well and the consequences of doing them poorly. As such *Oleanna* offers an ominous commentary on education in America and, more particularly, functions as a dire warning both to and about those doing the education. (2)

Martin P. Levitt also takes Mamet's play as reality in his article, "The Offense of Elitism." He takes a personal stand against the entire play when he says: "I dislike Mamet's *Oleanna*, for example, because I cannot believe any male professor would be such a schmuck" (536). Hornby, Macleod, Badenhausen, and Levitt take Mamet's play as absolute reality. They forget that Mamet's professor is nothing but a fictional character that has nothing to do with reality. Mamet himself confirms my point of view when he comments, in his *Writing in Restaurants*, on the role of theater as an expression of the dream life we are looking for. Mamet says, "we respond to a drama to that extent to which it corresponds with to our dream life" (8-9). When Mamet says "our dream life," he might mean a different kind of reality or anything outside reality and exclusive of reality itself. *Oleanna*, thus, is but a piece of literature and what happens in this play does not reflect the actual reality of education in America. I am not trying to suggest that Mamet's professor makes a good example of professors. Mamet's professor is an example of the negative image of the professor character in recent American drama. Rather, I am making a clear distinction between the fictional professor character on stage and professors in reality.

Only Dale M. Bauer succeeds in evaluating the character of the professor in his article "Indecent Proposals: Teachers in the Movies" when he makes a clear distinction between reality and fiction. In this article, he talks about the image of the professor in several movies including the movie version of Mamet's *Oleanna*. He argues that professors,

especially English professors, are usually depicted as “professors of desires.” He also talks about sexuality as a dominant side of their personalities. But he argues that “Such filmic images deny the reality of teaching. The English teacher’s work usually takes place ‘off-stage’ rather than in the classroom, according to these films . . . the teacher is often portrayed as a role model, a model of managing sexuality” (302).

I wholeheartedly support Bauer’s point of view that the image of a professor character on stage does not reflect total reality for several reasons. First, I do believe that the world of literature does not necessarily reflect everyday life, although it might reflect partial reality. Second, I am treating the character of the professor from a literary point of view in this MA thesis and I have established four categories under which the professor character is portrayed in the first chapter. I have demonstrated, earlier in Chapter One, how these categories are not restricted to a specific literary genre or time period. Third, sexuality and desire are very dominant themes in all genres and time periods. Sexual harassment in particular has been prevalent in “the news, as in the Tailhook and West Point scandals, or in Paula Jones’s accusations against President Clinton” (James C22). Thus, sexuality, desire, and related issues have become a prominent phenomenon in recent times which cannot be related only to the professor character in recent American Drama. It is not surprising, therefore, that sexuality appears in academic plays as well as academic novels. Lastly, professors are not portrayed on entirely negative models in recent American drama, but there are some plays whose professors can be classified under what I call The Faustian Category in which professors are mixed between negative and positive characterization. This idea is explained in detail in the third chapter of this MA thesis. Thus, although some partial reality

might be present somewhere on stage, the image of the professor in recent American drama in particular does not necessarily reflect the total picture of education in the United States.

All in all, Mamet's *Oleanna* makes a good example of a play that can be classified under The Desire Category since Professor John is a negative representation of the professor character. John is an incompetent professor who breaks the university regular rules when he decides to grant Carol a free "A" even before the end of the semester. He admits that he used to think that he is stupid. He believes education is "hazing" and tests are designed by idiots for idiots. John's sexuality and desire are responsible for his fall. John also deserves what happened to him since his own actions lead to his downfall. Mamet's Professor is not so different from Roth's Professor Davis or Albee's George and Nick, especially when we compare their sexual desires. Hence, because of his desire and teaching incompetency, the recent theatrical American characterization of Mamet's Professor John is a very good example of The Desire Category. Thus, Professor John in Mamet's *Oleanna* deserves to be called another Desire Professor.

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Human Events

Published in 2001, A. R. Gurney's *Human Events* is a two act play set in the 1970s. Christopher Simpson is a British professor of English. He meets with Professor Porter Platt, an associate professor at a well-known Cambridge college (although we don't know what university this is). Porter does his best to get Christopher a job in his department because he thinks Chris is qualified enough to be a good teacher. Shortly, Christopher is rising in the department while Platt does not achieve any progress. Christopher is also sexually attracted

to Porter's wife, whom he successfully seduces. The play sheds light on other professors whose sexuality is highly emphasized. Thus, this play fits The Desire Category.

The play opens with the Professor Porter Platt (Porter) narrating his story with Professor Christopher Simpson (Chris) and how it led to what he calls his "downfall" (2). The action begins when Porter was preparing for his class on *The Odyssey*. Chris appears and asks Porter to help him find Professor Seymour Blum, the chairman of the English department. Because the chairman is gone for the Jewish holidays and won't come back before Chris flies back to England, Porter decides to invite Chris to stay at his house (6). Porter takes Chris to his class and lets him teach a great part of his class (10). Impressed with Chris's teaching of literature and his Oxford education background, Porter invites the Appointments Committee to meet with Chris unofficially over the weekend so that Chris won't need to fly all the way across the Atlantic for a future job interview (9).

When the chairperson returns from his holidays, a student stops by his office asking if he can "shift to a different section." He is unhappy with Professor's Porter's class and he believes he can do better if he moves to another section. The student also explains the reason why he wants to move from the class, since he likes Professor Chris "better" than Porter.

Seymour asks:

Porter Seymour: Professor who?

Student: The English guy who did a guest spot last Friday. (11)

The chairman tells the student that Chris is not on the faculty list at the English department, but the student says that Chris told him that he would be teaching the term after. Startled by the news, Seymour goes to talk to Porter in his office. Seymour tells Porter that the meeting he had for Chris with the Appointment Committee is illegal and Chris won't be

appointed for two main reasons—"There are no jobs available" and Seymour has "a folder full of applicants who are infinitely more qualified." Porter supports Chris:

Porter: More qualified than Eton and Oxford?

Seymour: What he has written?

Porter: I don't know.

Seymour: By their work shall ye know them.

Porter: Everyone who met him was extremely impressed. (13)

As the two professors are talking, Professor Anita joins the conversation. Anita tells Porter and Seymour that their graduate teaching assistant Arnie Bernstein's graduate school deferment ran out and as a result he will be drafted. The department now needs someone to teach Arnie's class, and Proctor and Anita strongly recommend that Chris teach the class. Seymour insists on conducting regular interviews to find the most qualified persons to fill the position. Porter and Anita try to convince Seymour:

Porter: We're talking Eton and Oxford here.

Anita: And Porter's seen him teach.

Porter: He is terrific!

Anita: As if good teaching made any difference around here.

Porter: Let me at least find if he is available.

Seymour: Sorry. I intend to round up the usual suspects. (*Starts out*)

Porter: Why don't you like the guy, Seymour? (16-17)

Porter invites the faculty for a meeting to discuss the opening and Seymour agrees after he realizes that most of his colleagues want Chris to teach at the department. Chris accepts the offer and flies to the United States, where he stays at his friend Porter's house for awhile until he finds another place. Chris starts teaching; and his students along with Professor Anita, and the dean, are "thrilled" with him. Forty-three students register for

Chris's, class while another professor, Fred Nagler, has four students. Porter wonders, "How does he (Chris) do it?" and Seymour gives the answer:

Look at this syllabus and you'll see. (*He shows it around.*) He asks students to buy only six plays of Shakespeare, in the Pelican edition, at ninety cents a copy . . . That's a total of five dollars and forty cents, plus tax. Whereas most of our electives cost at least ten times that. (33)

With his ninety cent copies of Shakespeare, Chris let his students perform scenes from Shakespeare's *As You Like It* in front of the University president, who likes Chris and enjoys the show. Chris also manages to win the respect of his non-tenured fellows. When Porter hears from Anita about the non-tenured faculty meeting, he wonders why Chris did not invite him. Anita explains, "We found we could talk much more freely without people there who will be voting on our future" (37). Porter seems to understand the reason and does not give it any more thoughts. The semester ends and Chris has to leave because his visa has expired. However, he gets married to an American lady and remains in the United States. Thus, he stays and asks the dean to let him teach the following semester. While Porter is telling his wife, Nancy, about Chris's marriage, we also discover that he was married to a British woman whom he divorces so he can get married to the American lady:

Porter: They were married down at City Hall. The day his divorce came through.
 Nancy: Divorce?
 Porter: He was married before in England.
 (44)

Right after this, Seymour calls Porter to talk about something important. We learn that the junior faculty had met with the Dean and accused Seymour of being inflexible about The-Old One-Two class (a freshmen writing class). At this moment, we understand what Anita meant earlier while talking to Porter when she said that Chris suggested some

interesting ideas about this class in the private meeting he held at his place. In other words, what Anita calls "Chris's interesting ideas" (37) is his plan to be in charge of developing The-Old One-Two class. The junior faculty members want Chris to take it over because they think his ideas about developing the class are interesting while his plan makes it easier to teach and less demanding for students. The Dean decides to grant Chris a tenure-track position and allows Chris to teach any class that he wishes (45-46). Then, Chris becomes in charge of the English department (it is unclear whether he becomes the chairman). Toward the very end of Act 1, we see Chris having a bad attitude while talking to his friend and helper, Porter, who comes to discuss the new curriculum with him. While Porter is talking to Chris, the latter ignores him and talks to his student. Porter exclaims, "You never cut me in any of this." Chris answers rudely, "Who are you? My father confessor?" (47). Porter reminds Chris how he helped him get the teaching position and allowed Chris to stay at his house, but that does not make any difference. Porter asks Chris to hold a meeting if he intends to change his class, allowing everybody to vote on it, but Chris tells him that his request is too late and asks him to "stop managing other people's lives and start" living in his own. Porter becomes enraged at Chris, whom he calls a "Fucking Limey bastard" (48).

Act 2 reveals the real struggle between Porter and Chris. The play is now taken in an entirely different direction. Porter is a totally different person who does not consider Chris a real friend anymore. Chris is in command of the English department now. One evening, he calls Porter's home to see what he would like to teach for the following semester. When Nancy tells Porter about Chris's call, Porter says that he would not teach anything under Chris. That same evening, Porter meets Anita at her apartment to ask her if she would allow him to teach one of her writing classes because the Dean will not allow him to teach Anita's

class without her permission. Anita refuses to give him permission. However, the two professors drink heavily and end up having sex by the end of the meeting (57).

At this time, the English Department faces a real problem. The university plans to close the Department. We hear the English professors expressing fears about their insecure futures if the department is removed:

Anita (*To Seymour*): This time next year, I'll probably be bussing trays at Legal Sea Food. You are lucky.

You've got tenure.

Seymour: Not if they disband the Department. We'll all disappear, like the whooping crane. (60)

However, Chris's speech in front of a general faculty meeting saves the future of his colleagues, since the university officials are impressed with Chris's words. The action moves quickly again. Nancy returns home late one night. When she arrives, she tells Porter about what happened between her and her Nigerian friend who usually asks her out for coffee after every class. This friend told her that his roommates were not there and she decided to go home with him. While they were dancing, one of his roommates "came back and grabbed" her "stuff and ran." However, Nancy assures Porter that she did not go to bed with her friend. Porter then decides to tell her about what happened between him and Anita. Once he starts talking about Anita, Nancy interrupts to tell him about her sexual experience with Chris. Porter doesn't pay attention and goes on trying to tell her about Anita, but Nancy interrupts him again, saying, "It happened with Chris too, you know" (66). We read in the play:

Porter (*Exploding*): WHAT?

Nancy: Here we go.

Porter: What the fuck did you do with Chris?

Nancy: Calm down.

Porter: In this house... In my home...when?

Nancy: Last fall when he stayed with us after his trip west. (67)

Nancy goes to bed while Porter stays up thinking about what Chris has done with his wife. The next morning, Chris calls Porter and asks if they can meet sometime in the evening. When they meet, Chris tells him that he might replace the Dean because of the speech he gave at the faculty meeting. Porter tells Chris that the Dean had consulted with him about this issue earlier and that he did not recommend Chris because he believes that Chris is not qualified for the position. The conflict between the two former friends becomes an open power struggle. Porter says, "I don't want you over me, Chris . . . In charge. Making decisions. I think you're an opportunist . . . You use people." Chris denies this, but Porter admits his feelings of being used by his old friend. Porter continues:

From the beginning. You used me, and my home, and my wife, and my colleagues. Nobody likes to be used. And in the process you have wounded my friend Seymour. (74)

However, Chris gets the position and becomes Dean Simpson. Porter and his wife attend Chris's party, which celebrates him as the new Dean. Chris has a surprise for everybody. It is a song that he sings. In this song, Chris mentions almost everyone from the English Department except for Porter, who becomes angry as a result and throws a punch at the new Dean. As a result, Chris reels into the crowd and we hear screams and gasps. Later, the university president meets with Porter, and everybody assumes that he will be fired. However, Chris does not want to sue Porter. Instead, he wants Porter to make a public apology and to pay for Chris's new set of teeth. Porter pays the money but refuses to make the apology; he resigns and leaves his position. Toward the end of Act 2, Chris pays a visit to Porter at his office. We see him at the door, as when he first arrived in the United States, talking to Porter. He apologizes to Porter and tells him that he also resigned from his position to accept a temporary job at Harvard. The play ends with Porter cleaning his office and

getting ready to leave his position. He tells Nancy that he will write a play about his experience with Chris. Thus, Gurney may be suggesting that the story of this play is true.

Gurney's play is full of negative portraits of the professor character. These Professors of Desire are driven by their sexual impulses and political ambitions. Gurney adds more negative attributes to the professor character than those we have seen in Mamet's *Oleanna*. These negative attributes vary from one character to another—Chris, Porter, and Anita. But their sexuality is the greatest common factor by which they are defined.

Throughout the play, Professor Anita is represented as a prostitute rather than a professor. Anita's lecherous morals promote intimate experiences with everyone, whether graduate students or colleagues. All that we know about Anita, besides her sexuality, is that she wants to keep her non-tenured position because she needs money. Although her character is not introduced to us in detail, Anita plays a crucial role in this play. From her first appearance on stage, we learn about her sexuality as she tells Seymour and Porter about her lover, Arnie Bernstein. Anita informs them that she will miss the guy because she believes that "he was more fun" than her "ex-husband" (17). We also know from this meeting that she talks about sex everywhere and to everybody:

Anita: Arnie Bernstein and I were lovers.

Porter: I know that.

Anita: Who told you?

Porter: You did. At the Old One-Two spring party. (17)

Anita also reveals that Arnie is seventeen years younger. As the conversation goes on, Anita tells Porter, "My teaching is terrible if I don't have sex" (by saying this, Anita might be a parody of Soule—a well-known American professor—who stated the same fact). Again, Porter tells her that she mentioned this fact to him earlier as well (18). Because her lover is

gone, Anita starts to think of Chris as an alternative who can fill both positions—a lover and a teacher for the class Arnie no longer teaches. Anita describes Chris as “a nice looking man” and urges Porter to “invite Chris to assume Arnie’s position.” Because he understands Anita’s real intention, Porter brings her attention to the fact that Chris might be committed, so she should not build up great expectations (19).

Later in Act 1, we learn that Chris does not express any sexual interest in Anita. However, the fact that Anita is easily available for those who pursue her is not as important as the role she plays in Act 2, where she successfully seduces Professor Porter:

Anita: There is nothing wrong with being gay,
Porter.

Porter: Except that I’m not.

Anita: (*A big sip of sherry*) Prove it.

Porter: How do I prove a negative?

Anita: By being positive. (56)

Anita stands in Porter’s way and prevents him from leaving. She wipes his “fevered brow” and they end up having sex. Thus, Anita’s role in this play is crucial in the sense that it contributes to shaping the negative portrait of Porter himself. Furthermore, Anita herself is a negative image of the professor character.

Porter’s character is similar to Mamet’s John in many aspects. From the very beginning of Act 1, Porter, the participant narrator of the play, confesses important facts that we don’t understand until we read the entire play. Porter narrates the play in a flashback strategy which makes it really hard for us to believe what he reveals about himself in the first dialogue we hear from him in the play. He addresses the audience, saying, “I suddenly found myself seething with anger, committing rape, and attempting murder all within a single second semester” (1). As we read the play, we start to understand the circumstances under which he committed these crimes. The first and most significant crime Porter committed

against himself took place when he helped Chris get the teaching position. This crime makes him seem altruistic. But the way to hell is paved with good intentions. From a traditional point of view, this crime represents what could be called the tragic flaw, since it is responsible for the fall of this character. However, I would not classify Porter in this category because of two major attributes of his character. His sexuality and incompetent teaching abilities make Porter a negative character, but he cannot be called a tragic figure. Thus, an accurate term for describing Porter is a protagonist.

Porter: In Act 1, we slowly discover Porter's character. It was not until toward the end of this act that we start to see signs of Porter's sexual promiscuity. Just like Mamet's John, Porter goes through a disturbing negative experience with a female student. This happens when a female student comes to Porter asking if she can transfer from Chris's section into his section. Porter asks, "Am I that good?" But the student says it is not because Porter is good or Chris is bad; rather, it is because she is "in love" with Chris (37). As Porter is talking to this student, she starts crying. Here, Porter's behavior is more or less a parody or an echo of Mamet's John. Porter "touches her arm," trying to make her feel better. As we have seen in *Oleanna*, it was also toward the end of Act 1 that John puts his arm around Carol's shoulders. Yet, both Carol and Porter's female students speak in the same tone and react in similar ways to their professors's behavior. We read in Gurney's play:

Student: I'll just sit quietly in back, and take notes, and pretend that human feelings have nothing to do with anything. (*She starts sobbing again.*)

Porter: Oh hey... (*He touches her arm.*)

Student (*Jumping up*): Don't! Touch me again, and I will report you to the Dean of Women! (*She hurries off, sobbing*). (38)

Although we never know if this female student really does report Porter to the Dean of Women or if Porter's behavior is genuine sympathy or a sexual advance, her reaction and Porter's behavior bring Mamet's John and Carol to our mind. Carol and Porter's female students treat their professors' actions in a similar way. Both demand that their professors not touch them and end up screaming for help. Thereupon, due to these similarities between the two plays, we can firmly say that Gurney's Porter is to some extent a parody of Mamet's John since *Oleanna* is published around nine years earlier than *Human Events*. However, Porter's sexuality is more obvious than John's hypothetical sexuality. As I explained earlier, we build the sexuality argument of John's characters on logical assumptions rather than final reality. In fact, Mamet's professor never sleeps with anyone, although he might have attempted to seduce Carol. On the other hand, Gurney's Porter sleeps with his colleague Anita. In so doing, his sexuality goes beyond the kind of sexuality we see in Mamet's professor since Porter's sexuality is ultimate fact. We read in the play:

Porter: Now I want to see the rest of your apartment. (*Takes her toward the bedroom*).

Anita: The bed isn't even made.

Porter (*Pulling her*): So much the better.

Anita: I thought the caged eagle couldn't mate.

Porter: Fuck the caged eagle. (57)

Later we read in the stage direction that Porter "comes on, buttoning his shirt" and Anita is doing the same thing. Thus, sexuality in the case of Porter's character is not mere assumptions. It is a distinct event. However, sexuality is not the only negative attribute that makes me consider Porter a parody or an echo of Mamet's John. Porter is also an incompetent teacher, and this fact makes Porter and John alike. Throughout the play, John talks about his book, but he never finishes it. Chris comments on the Porter's recurring misspellings in the first draft he gave to Chris for feedback (41), while Seymour describes it

as a “bad book.” Seymour adds, “the typos are fine but the thinking is terrible... I wish I could tell how to revise it, but there is nothing there . . .” (42). In Act 2, Porter reveals to Seymour the main reason why he is an English professor. It is because he could not find other options. Yet, he does not like his job. We read in the play:

Porter:See? It wasn't a real choice.

I kind of fell into it.

Seymour: Do you like it?

Porter: Who likes what they do? (51)

Toward the very end of the play, Porter confirms his unsuitability for teaching to Seymour. Porter says, “I am not right for this place, Seymour. And not right for this profession. You sensed it yourself” (83). Besides his sexuality and incompetent teaching abilities, Porter shares a third attribute with Mamet’s John. Both professors like to end their struggles physically. Mamet’s professor ends up beating his student, Carol. Similarly, Gurney’s Professor Porter throws a roundhouse punch at Chris, who reels into the crowd (81). Therefore, Porter’s character is a parody or at least an echo of Mamet’s John. Both characters, Gurney’s Porter and Mamet’s John, are negative representations of the professor character on stage.

The third major professor character I would like to comment on is the antagonist of this play, Professor Chris. Professor Porter reveals to the audience, early on, that his “downfall” began when he met Chris (2). Thus, readers expect Chris’s character to be a negative one. The negative attributes of Chris’s character exceed those of Porter. At first glance, Chris does not seem such a bad professor. But a deep analysis of his character leads to the conclusion that he is the most negative character in Gurney’s play and the worst represented. Beside the fact that Chris is responsible for Porter’s downfall, there are other dark sides of Chris’s character. Generally speaking, Chris has many of the negative attributes

we can find in a bad person. In Act 2, while Chris is giving his speech in the general faculty meeting, Seymour reveals that Chris is a thief. Seymour says, "Now I know who stole the copy of Bartlett's from Department Headquarters" (62). Furthermore, Chris gossips about his colleagues with students, an attribute that goes against the admirable traits of a professor's character. As I explained earlier, Chris is also an easy grader and, thus, his students are happy with him. He teaches his students reduced loads and gives free grades. Thus, Chris is similar to Mamet's John, who decides to give a free "A" grade to his female student Carol.

While Porter tries to convince Seymour to hire Chris, Seymour mentions two key facts about this character. Seymour believes that Chris is not qualified enough for a teaching position (13) and that he "doesn't understand the word No." Seymour explains another reason why he doesn't want to hire Chris, saying, "I know the type. He's another one of those English armatures who wander through the world, sneaking into Mecca, climbing Mount Everest, and leaving trails of debris behind him" (17). All these assumptions make readers wonder what kind of professor he is. Seymour's notion that Chris doesn't understand the meaning of the word 'no' makes us also feel that Chris is politically ambitious. He uses whomever and however to achieve his goals. His political ambition becomes apparent when we learn about the secret meeting he held at his apartment for the non-tenured faculty. The fact that he becomes in charge of the English Department and the Dean of Humanities in a very short period of time does confirm Chris's political desire.

Chris has two major sorts of desire: his political ambitions and his sexuality. As Seymour predicted earlier, Chris is too politically ambitious in that he wants what he doesn't deserve. Nothing is impossible for Chris, who does not understand the word 'no.' His

obsession to get what he doesn't deserve is very obvious when he talks to Porter about taking the "visiting dignitaries" office to be his own. We read in the play:

Chris: . . . There is a lovely, empty office on the fourth floor, overlooking the river.

Porter: That's reserved for visiting dignitaries . . .

Chris: Ah, but no such luminaries

Are scheduled for this semester . . . (24)

Chris also manipulates people to achieve his own goals. Porter describes Chris as an "opportunist" and a person who "uses people" (74). Chris asks Porter to provide examples, and Porter explains how Chris used him to achieve his personal goals. We also see in the play how rude Chris is with Porter. While Porter is talking to him in Act 1, Chris ignores him and talks to one of his students. Porter exclaims, "You never cut me in on any of this." Chris answers rudely enough, "Who are you? My father confessor?" (47). Porter tries to remind Chris of the kind things he has done for him, but that does not have any impact. When Porter asks Chris to hold a meeting if he intends to change his class so everybody can vote on it, Chris tells him that his request is too late and asks him to "stop managing other people's lives and start" living in his own (48). Thus, Chris wants whatever he does not deserve. He wants whatever he wants, all the while using whoever to achieve his goals.

Sexuality is also a very important aspect of Chris's character. Chris expects everybody to sleep with him. While talking to Porter about the department secretary, Chris assumes "like most secretaries, she expects me (Chris) to take her to bed" (24). Later in Act 1, his sexuality with his students is highly suggested. Chris's female student comes to Porter asking if she can transfer from Chris's section into his section. Porter asks, "Am I that good?" The student says her request is not because Porter is good or Chris is bad, but because she is "in love" with Chris (37). Later she adds, "He (Chris) said he could deal with it if we

stayed in the Bible, but since we were about to move into the *Confessions of Saint Augustine*, he'd find me somewhat distracting . . . So he suggested I switch to you" (38). Although we never know if Chris has sex with this student or not, sexuality is highly suggested. In Act 2, these suggestions become reality when we hear Nancy confessing to her husband Porter what happened between her and Chris. Here we learn that one time Porter and the children were not home and Chris was staying at their place. While Nancy was taking a bath, Chris asks her if he could bring her a cup of tea into the bathroom because "He said he had always admired my body and wanted to see me naked" (68). Nancy agreed. Then, Chris "asked if he could get into the tub with" her. "So he took off his clothes and got" into the bathtub with Nancy (69). In so doing, Chris breaks the rules of hospitality when he betrays the man who helped him get a job, the man who opened his home to him, and the man who allowed him to dwell with his children. Therefore, Chris is a completely negative image of the professor character. Among the plays under consideration, he is the worst represented character of the professor.

Gurney's professors—Anita, Porter, and Chris—are all negative portraits of the professor character on stage. Anita cannot be a good teacher unless she has sex. She sleeps with a graduate assistant who is seventeen years younger than she is. She unsuccessfully attempts to seduce Chris, and then sleeps with Porter. Chris breaks the hospitality rules by being sexually attracted to Porter's wife Nancy. He uses people to achieve his ends. Porter is a parody or an echo of Mamet's Professor John. Thus, Gurney's professors are Professors of Desire and his play's characters fit into The Desire Category.

Chapter 3: *The Faustian Category*

Pachino's Professor Arthur and Sagal's Professor Cooper have *Faustian* characteristics. This chapter demonstrates how Arthur in *The Return to Morality* and Cooper in *Denial* can be located in this category. Both characters have the three main aspects of ambition that exists in Faustian Professors. These aspects are (1) the ambition leads to the professor's fall; (2) the ambition is temporal, in that the professor recognizes it by the end of the play; (3) the professor has both good and bad attributes, and (4) the Faustian ambition is related to abstract desires (ideas for instance) rather than concrete desires (sex, for instance).

*

The Return to Morality

Published in 2004, Jamie Pachino's *The Return to Morality* is a two act play about the downfall of Professor Arthur Klegg, who publishes a book with the same title as the play. Arthur's real intention is to publish his book as a scathing satirical novel of the religious right, but the publisher manages to publish it as non-fiction. Thus, the satire is taken seriously by militia groups, and Arthur becomes their hero. Arthur tries to fix the mistake; but before he achieves any progress, he separates from his wife.

The play opens with Arthur at his publisher's office (Le Becque International Publishing). Arthur is waiting to discuss his book with Mr. Le Becque, who finds Arthur's product very interesting. The publisher extols Arthur's book: "Brilliant! You hear me? Haven't seen anything like it in ten years . . . Good morning America, here's your fucking

wakeup call . . .” Le Becque is so enthusiastic that he wants to “get it into stores by election time.” Once Arthur enters the office, the publisher tells him how beautiful his book is. Arthur asks, “Exactly what do you like about it?” The publisher answers:

The book? Sonny, it’s gorgeous! It sings like Florence fucking Nightingale. Men. Women. Slavery. Enviromental Rape. Jews. Gays. Communism. Nuclear Holocaust. Peace is dangerous to our economy . . .
(8)

Here we see that the publisher has really misunderstood the satire behind Arthur’s book. He describes it as “a mean and dirty” book. Arthur explains, “It is satire. You saw that right away, right?” (9). Le Becque doesn’t believe what Arthur says about his book. Arthur explains further:

I’m serious, Mr. Le Becque. It’s my commentary. A warning to the American public about continuing in their current path. Couched in the language of their national politicians and the nightly news. I took an existing extreme to a logical absurd . . . (10)

The publisher devalues the satirical aspect of Arthur’s book. He tells Arthur that if they publish his book as a novel, nobody will be interested in reading it, especially because Arthur has not published before this time. Arthur defends his novel and point of view, but the publisher develops a convincing argument. He suggests that they publish the book as non-fiction first, so that people will be interested in buying it. Once the book becomes controversial, they will tell people about Arthur’s real intention. Le Becque says:

They’ll believe you mean it because they want to believe you mean it. They won’t even be surprised. They’ll trust you . . . and PROVE THE BOOK FOR YOU! Then when we are whipped into a frenzy of outrage, we come back and HIT ‘EM WITH THE TRUTH! Suddenly—they understand. They’ve been had. They can be had. You are a prophet . . . A national hero . . . Nothing like it has been attempted in the history of publishing. (14)

Arthur seems impressed by what Le Becque says. "You think?" Arthur exclaims. The publisher persists, "Say it, Arthur. Say yes... My boy. My own. There's the man who wrote the book. There's the man I called to my office. There's the man I sell to America!" In Scene Two, we understand that Arthur has accepted the publisher's offer and plan. Arthur now has a personal assistant, Lily, who teaches him how to walk and behave on promotional tours.

Ron (Le Becque's assistant) is helping Arthur to sign a special form for international rights. The book is going to be translated into different languages. Arthur does not hesitate and finishes the form. While Arthur is signing the form, Professor Diane—Arthur's colleague—shows up. She is very happy that Arthur is going to be an internationally recognized author. Ron also mentions that some reporters are coming to meet with Arthur.

Arthur does a radio interview. The book is not published yet, and Arthur talks about his book in general. Right after this, Arthur and his British wife, Jo, go to Vermont on a vacation Le Becque plans and pays for. On the second day of the vacation, the *New York Times* issues the first review of Arthur's book. Someone from the *Atlanta Journal* also calls, asking if he can meet Arthur. Thus, Jo learns that the book is published as non-fiction (33). The book hits the bestseller lists in the United States and becomes a controversial topic for reporters. Jo is depressed to know about the non-fiction publishing and Arthur explains Le Becque's plan. Arthur promises to change the whole thing:

Did you see that? Oh my God. Did you see that? (*Shining*) Everything starts now Jo. From this moment. (*Looks Down at his towel*) I'm gonna change. (35)

Later, Arthur does a television interview. As Arthur is getting ready for the interview, Sharon, the makeup girl, advises Arthur to be funny rather than serious. She says that the

time of the show is very late and people need to relax and not watch something boring.

Arthur takes Sharon's advice and keeps joking during the show. After the show, Arthur tries to explain the truth to his interviewer, who doesn't give him a chance to speak and ultimately asks him to leave. When Arthur gets home, his wife Jo is angry with him because he didn't reveal the truth. She also tells Arthur about the bad reactions to his book:

Jo: You don't know. You don't even know. Today. While you were taping your precious program, three abortion clinics were bombed.

Arthur: . . . What?

Jo: Here in Connecticut. One in Greenwich County. (45)

Arthur asks if anyone knows who did it, and Jo tells him that those responsible are quoting him. She adds, "Pro-Life Nation has embraced your book. They're calling for a national Return to Morality." Arthur says he should not be blamed for what happened as a result of his book. Jo loses her patience and reminds Arthur who he was and why she loved him. Arthur explains, "You are right . . . I will fix it. I'll make it up for you, I swear" (46). But this time, Jo decides to leave him. She says, "I'm going to London to visit my brother" (47).

In Act 2, Arthur does another television interview in which he explains the real intention and the satire of his book. He explains the publisher's plan and purpose behind publishing the book as non-fiction. Arthur also expresses remorse for those who died as a result of his book. He says he "feels incredibly guilty" for what happened (52). Right after the interview, Arthur meets with his publisher, asking him to pull the book out of the stores. The publisher refuses Arthur's request and tells him that if the book was published as non-fiction, it was Arthur's mistake:

Arthur: I didn't want THIS.

Le Becque: Of course you did. Or you wouldn't have sold it to me. You didn't like my methods. You said so. The University offered. But you shook my hand . . . that's not my fault. You can't blame a man for

selling a controversial book too well . . . Unless you're prepared to purchase the entire next run . . . (55)

Le Becque also tells Arthur to get a lawyer to sue him. Arthur tries to call Jo and tell her about how things got worse. Jo picks up the phone but does not say a single word. Arthur gets depressed and goes to a bar. The bartender says that she saw Arthur on television, and Arthur tries to deny this fact. The bartender keeps talking about the interview, and Arthur asks her to leave him alone. Then, someone in the bar named Beverly jumps into the discussion and praises Arthur's book and ideals. Beverly's nice words are what Arthur needs to hear. As they keep drinking, Beverly lies to Arthur and tells him that she is a graduate student. She also gives Arthur the chance to talk about his book. Thus, Arthur likes her very much. Arthur describes her as a "Godsend" (61) and subsequently buys her a drink. She offers herself to Arthur, who cannot resist her. The next morning Arthur is interrogated in a police station. We learn that Beverly is not a graduate student. Beverly's real name is Melinda (Mindy), and she is an underage high school girl. Thus, Arthur has committed a crime, documented by photographs in the possession of Mr. Carlson and a policeman. Mr. Carlson works for the Republican Party, which pushed Beverly to go out with Arthur so he can be coerced into giving a public speech supporting the Republican Nominee for the United States Presidency. Carlson and the policeman make a deal with Arthur. If he agrees to stop talking about his real intention behind the book and gives a public speech in which he endorses the Republican, James Morrison, for President, no charges will be filed against him. Eventually, Arthur accepts their offer because he doesn't have other any other choice.

When Arthur returns home, he has a heart attack and goes to the hospital. Even Arthur's doctor, who has known him for more than twenty years, refuses to treat him. The nurse says Arthur's doctor said that "he doesn't want to touch the bastard" because "he

doesn't want to be associated with such Nazi filth" (72). Arthur's wife, Jo, comes to visit him in the hospital, and Arthur is happy to see his wife. Jo asks him to leave the United States for England, where they can live in peace and leave behind the problems his book created.

Arthur tells Jo about the public speech he intends to give and says he will be ready to leave right after he does it. Jo asks him to leave before the speech, but Arthur explains to her that he can't do it. Jo asks for a reason, and Arthur says he can't tell her the reason because he is afraid that she will leave him again. Jo becomes angry and leaves him forever. Once Arthur is done with his public speech, Beverly (Mindy) comes back to talk to Arthur, but this time she comes because she is willing to help him. Arthur is depressed and asks her to leave him alone, but she convinces him that he is a brilliant author. She also convinces him that they can start over, republish the book as fiction with another publisher, and change public opinion about his book.

Arthur wants to become an international author with the first book he publishes. He pays a huge price by being too ambitious. He loses his wife, whom he loves so much that he refuses to sleep with his female colleague, Diane. He loses his dream of changing the way America thinks. Instead, he becomes a poster boy for violent militia groups who attack abortion clinics and want Black people to leave America. Thus, Arthur goes through devastating experiences because of his extreme ambition which is responsible for his fall.

Pachino's play reminds us of what happens in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*. In Marlowe's play, Faustus makes his contract with Lucifer through Mephistopheles. But in Pachino's play, Arthur deals directly with the devil himself when he signs the contract with Le Becque. Perhaps Le Becque does a better job (seducing Arthur) than Mephistopheles does. Mephistopheles does not spend a long time seducing Faustus, who had made up his

mind to practice the black art before he called Mephistopheles. In Pachino's play, Le Becque calls Arthur and seduces him. He tells Arthur that they will publish the book as non-fiction and reveal the truth as the book achieves the success they are looking for. But Le Becque was lying to Arthur, because he later refuses to pull the book from the market. On the other hand, Mephistopheles does not lie to Faustus. Faustus enjoys doing all that he wants to do in the twenty-four years he traded his soul with the devil, while Arthur enjoys one night in the company of his wife. Once the book is published, he goes through painful experiences and ends up with a heart attack. Thus, the demonic nature of Mr. Le Becques and his action are far worse than the devil's nature and actions in Marlowe's *Doctor Faustus*.

The play starts with Arthur as a young professor who loves his wife very much. He is a good person with good intentions. He wants to make America more open-minded through his satirical book, *The Return to Morality*. He is a righteous man who refuses even to cheat on his wife. When he goes with his colleague Diane for drinks, Diane offers herself to Arthur, but he tells her that he cannot do it out of love for his wife:

Diane: What are you doing right now. Tonight. Any plans?

Arthur: Oh—I'm—uh . . .

Diane: I can make myself clearer if I have to.

Arthur: . . . You don't have to . . . I don't know what to say . . . I love my wife . . . (21-22)

Because of his ambition, Arthur starts to lose all these good attributes one by one. When the publisher turns his back to Arthur and after his wife Jo leaves him, we see Arthur getting drunk in a bar. This bar is also the place where he got acquainted with Beverly, the underage girl with whom he sleeps. It is true that he doesn't know that she is underage, but he does not hesitate to take her to bed. This incident happens for three main reasons. First,

Arthur is drunk. Second, his wife Jo has left him. Third, Beverley lies to him about her age and Arthur feels she was the only person who seems to understand him at this point:

Beverly: I know just the place. For sure. (*Stretches out her hand*)
 What's say I interview you and get the real story, huh? Top to
 bottom... what do you say?
 (*Beat. Arthur doesn't move*)
 Beverly: Arthur. Trust me, or don't you?
 (*She smiles, hard to resist. He starts to move toward her as they go*
 . . .) (62).

As a result, we see Arthur interrogated at a police station, and he is forced to give a speech that goes against what he believes. Why not? He is so weak that he cannot say no after he has committed this crime with this underage girl. Thus, we see him giving a public speech in which he says hateful things about Blacks, peace, and American values. All this happens because of Arthur's ambition. In the public speech, Arthur says:

Gays are an abomination. Hate is good. (*Picking up momentum*):
 Jews are greedy and deceitful. African Americans are lazy. They
 are all criminal. (80)

Because of his extreme ambition, Arthur is mistreated by different people throughout the play. After he finishes his first television interview, his interviewer kicks him out. The interviewer also calls him ugly names, including "Fucking Nazi," "racist," and "asshole" (42-43). The most pathetic scene in the play, in which Arthur is abused, happens when we see him in the hospital. Nurses and doctors are looking down at Arthur. The doctor, who has known him for twenty years, does not want to treat him. When Arthur asks the nurse to tell Dr. Joel that Arthur is in the hospital, the nurse tells him that Dr. Joel does not want to see him:

Nurse: His exact words were 'he doesn't want to touch the bastard.'
 Arthur: Joel said that?
 Nurse: He 'didn't wish to be associated with such Nazi filth . . .'
 Arthur: My God.

Nurse: And if there was any way to refuse you treatment at this hospital, he would pursue it 'within the full force of the law.' (72)

Even in hospitals where nobody should be abused or mistreated, Arthur pays the price for his ambition. Arthur tries to appeal to them that he should be treated just like any other patient in the hospital, but the nurse tells him that her brother was in a hospice which was burned down by a militia group who quoted Arthur.

Professor Arthur pays a huge price for his unusual ambition. It is true that the publisher deceives and lies to him, but it is Arthur who is brought down as a result of his great expectations and unlimited ambition. Thus, Pachino's play fits into The Faustian Category and Arthur is a Faustian Professor. However, the question arises: If ambition is the major attribute for a professor that we classify as a Faustian Professor, why wouldn't we classify Gurney's Chris as a Faustian Professor?

This thesis treated Gurney's Professor Chris as a Desire Professor after a thoughtful study of his character. It is true that Chris has a kind of unchecked ambition. But his ambition cannot be called Faustian because it does not meet the Faustian standards. There are four aspects by which we can define this kind of ambition. First, the Faustian ambition should be responsible for the fall of whoever has this kind of ambition. Pachino's Arthur thinks that he will achieve fame and success by publishing his book as non-fiction. He wants to be internationally recognized, but he goes through terrible experiences as a result. Second, the Faustian ambition should be temporal. In other words, the character should recognize his mistake at least by the end of the play. Pachino's Arthur recognizes his mistake and tries his best to fix it but is unable to handle the situation. Third, the character that has a Faustian ambition should have both good and bad attributes. Arthur has good-bad attributes. As we have seen, Arthur has fine personal traits, but he is brought down because of an abstract

negative aspect that is his unusual ambition. Fourth, a Faustian ambition is related to an abstract type of desire rather than a concrete type. Arthur wants to be an internationally recognized writer, and Faustus has a great passion for knowledge.

On the contrary, Gurney's Professor Chris's ambition and character do not have any of the above-mentioned aspects. His ambition is not responsible for his fall. In fact, it is responsible for another character's fall. Porter pays the price of Chris's ambition. Unlike Faustus and Arthur, Chris's ambition is not temporal. When Chris decides to leave his job at Porter's university, he moves to Harvard and says that although the job he gets at Harvard is small, he has the potential to achieve a better one. He says that when he came to work at Porter's university, his job there was also small, but he ended up as Dean Simpson. His ambition is not temporal. His ambition is concrete because he wants to advance his position in the university. Chris's character is completely negative, and we cannot see any good traits in his personality. Thus, Chris is a Desire Professor and not a Faustian Professor.

*

Denial

Published in 1999, Peter Sagal's *Denial* is a two act play set in a lawyer's office in California. The play, which takes place in "the present," according to Sagal, tells the story of Professor Cooper, who puts himself into a troubling predicament because he develops a controversial theory about the Holocaust. The American government sues him for advocating hatred, while he insists on his theory as the ultimate truth. Cooper's denial of the Holocaust cannot be commended, but his persistence in facing the pressure to forfeit his theory is courageous.

From the beginning of the play we are invited to be skeptical of Cooper. In the prologue, Cooper's lawyer, Abby Gersten, tells the audience about the way she feels toward him. She says he is "hateful" and she advises the audience not to "trust" Cooper (9). Once the play opens, we see Cooper seated, waiting to meet with Abby. The secretary, Stephanie, calls Cooper "Mister" and Cooper insists on "Professor" (10). The word "professor" is the first word we hear from Cooper, who associates his identity with the professorship. Then, he genuinely apologizes for his punctuality. Stephanie considers his apology civil and wishes to see more humble people like Cooper. The American Civil Liberties Union calls to make an appointment for Cooper. Stephanie is surprised because "it is unusual to arrive for an appointment before it is actually made" (11). Through the first meeting with Abby, we learn that Cooper is an engineering professor with historical interests. We also know that Cooper is facing charges relating him to neo-Nazi and racist groups. Abby points out, "the warrant describes 'confidential information' that can link you to neo-Nazi and racist organizations." Abby believes in free association and free speech rights. Abby says:

The government is violating your right to free association and free speech under the First Amendment, as well as your rights against unlawful search and seizure under the Fourth. (14)

For the Jewish lawyer Abby, denying the Holocaust is less important than "shutting down free expression." It is true that she does not accept denying the Holocaust but she also believes that Cooper has the right to say whatever he wants in "a manner of speaking." Cooper, on the other hand, does not believe the Holocaust ever happened. He says, "I don't 'deny the Holocaust.' You can only deny something that is proven fact . . ." (16). Thus, the Holocaust, he believes, is not a historical fact. When Abby asks Cooper to stop talking about the Holocaust, he virtuously recites the Bible: "Bless them that persecute you, bless, and

curse not.” Cooper assures Abby that he “never sought to impose his ideas on anyone” (18). Thus, Cooper seems a religious person.

Adam Ryberg from the U.S. Attorney’s office comes to talk to Abby. Adam is a young Jewish attorney who has just graduated from law school. Unlike Abby, who agrees to represent Cooper in court even though he denies the Holocaust, Ryberg takes the allegations against Cooper very personally and blames Abby for taking Cooper’s case, since she is Jewish. He also tries to get some information from Abby about Cooper, but Abby refuses to reveal privileged information. Again, Adam appeals to Abby’s Judaism, trying to convince her not to represent Cooper; but Abby believes that her job is to defend people. We read in the play:

Ryberg: I mean you are a Jew.

Abby: I am a lawyer.

Ryberg: You are a Jewish lawyer.

Abby: . . . you are the second person I have met today to point that out.

Ryberg: Really. Why? Had you forgotten?

Abby: Mr. Ryberg . . . was that a bell I just heard? School’s over. Go Home. (21)

Adam does not seem to be happy with Abby’s response. He wonders why she defends someone who “would kill” her. But Abby does not believe that Cooper wants to kill anybody. She says Cooper “sees himself as a very moral man. He quotes the Bible.” Adam tries to compare Cooper to Hitler, saying that “Hitler loved animals” and “was a strict vegetarian.” Abby says that Cooper “is not Hitler;” she believes he is “a little man with some unpleasant ideas” (22). Adam keeps appealing to Abby’s common sense, touching upon what happened in the Holocaust; but Abby does not change her mind regarding Cooper’s case.

Abby manages to invite to her office an old and famous Holocaust historian whom Adam Ryberg plans to use as a witness against Cooper in the hearings. She also invites

Adam to this meeting. Neither Adam nor Comrowitz, the historian, knows Abby's intention behind the meeting. She also invites Cooper, who is similarly unaware of the confrontation Abby plans between the two sides. Before Abby calls her secretary to let Cooper join his opponents, she suggests dropping the case and leaving Cooper alone. She asks Adam, "Drop the case. Give up the lists. Leave him alone" (46); but Adam says "it can't be done" (47). The two parties are not prepared for this confrontation, but Abby manages to establish a Holocaust debate between them in her office. The debate includes actual historical persons and events related to the Holocaust, including the Harry Dexter White (the American Treasury Department official in the World War II) and Adolf Hitler. At one point, the historian, Comrowitz, quotes Hitler's *The Reichstag*. We read in the play:

Gomrowitz: 'Today I will be a prophet again'. . . You didn't recognize it? . . . 'the consequence will be not the Bolshevization of the world and therewith a victory of Jewry, but on the contrary, the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.'

Cooper: Adolf Hitler, *The Reichstag*, January 30, 1939. (52)

Cooper explains the various ways to translate Hitler's speech from German into English, saying that the word "'virnichtung' generally translated as 'destruction' or annihilation' but who knows what he (Hitler) meant, in the context? . . . Perhaps he simply meant the destruction of the Jewish influence" (52). Thus, Comrowitz tries to end the debate. When everybody is ready to leave, Cooper asks them to give him a chance to ask questions, since he was answering Adam's and Comrowitz's questions. Abby tries to end the meeting, but Comrowitz accepts Cooper's request. Cooper questions Comrowitz's book (fictional author and book and the same person to whom Cooper talks now). As the debate goes on, Comrowitz wonders if Cooper calls him "a liar" and Cooper says, "of course" he does (56). Comrowitz loses patience and the debate ends with a physical fight between them (57).

In Act 2, Cooper comes back to Abby's office, trying to convince her of what he believes regarding the Holocaust and what he intends to say in the court hearings. It is three days before the court day. Abby does not recommend Cooper's beliefs at the beginning and argues that they should not be mentioned in court. But Cooper keeps trying to convince his lawyer. Although his argument against the Holocaust is mostly fictional rather than actual, he manages to provide what Abby considers a strong point that he can use in the court. It is a taped interview with someone named Nathan (originally Woteck Klivinitz). In his book about the Holocaust, Comrowitz claims that he was sent to one of the Nazi camps with an engineer named Woteck Klivinitz. Comrowitz says that Woteck was sick and therefore he told the Germans that Comrowitz is the engineer because Woteck wants Comrowitz to survive since Woteck was dying anyway. The interview Cooper does with Nathan reveals that Comrowitz lies about this incident. Woteck did not die and was not executed by the Germans. He is Nathan, who talks to Comrowitz and Abby now. Thus, what Comrowitz narrates in his book is not true. Woteck (Nathan) did not save Comrowitz's life. What happened is that once Comrowitz hears that the Germans needed engineers and builders, he hits Woteck and claims that he is Woteck, the engineer (78). Abby tells Adam and Comrowitz that Nathan "could be compelled to testify" (79). As a result, Comrowitz and Adam believe that they will lose the case. Thus, Adam drops the case. Cooper is not pleased with this end of his case. He thinks that Abby has betrayed him by warning Comrowitz and Ryberg. We read in the play:

Cooper: I'll sue you.

Abby: For what?

Cooper: You know damn well what for.

Abby: 'Damn'? That is not like you.

Cooper: You betrayed me. You warned them. (82)

Abby tells him that they won the case because they don't need to go to court anymore. Cooper asks her to return the tape, but she claims that she lost it. Cooper says that he will do another interview with Nathan, but Abby tells him that he cannot do it because it is against the law to harass Holocaust survivors. She shows him official paperwork that prevents him from talking to Nathan. Eventually, Cooper gives up and thanks Abby, calling her an "excellent lawyer." He also admits that she "won" (85).

Sagal's notes on producing *Denial* are added in a special commentary at the end of the play. In this commentary Sagal begins with his general view of the play. He says, "This play about a group of strong-minded people . . . believing not only are they right, they are virtuous. Cooper is included" (89). Then, he moves to talk about the characters one by one. He describes Cooper as "completely sincere" but also "a maniacal Nazi." Sagal highly recommends, "The actor and the production should NEVER indicate to the audience that Cooper is a Nazi, Maniac, a scumbag, a crazy. That makes it too easy for them to dismiss him" (90). This is a direct confession by the playwright that Cooper's character has the minimum standards of being a good, religious person which make the audience respect and sympathize with him. Sagal also refers to the end of the play and the way Abby should treat Cooper. Sagal says, "Abby should shake Cooper's hand. . . . Because she won. And there is some part of her left that is professional enough, efficient enough, to respect Cooper" (92). When Cooper admits that Abby won, he accepts his loss. He loses his most precious tape evidence. Here, he gives up his claims to deny the Holocaust. Yet, he calls Abby "an excellent lawyer" and both characters shake hands. Thus, Cooper is designed to be worthy of respect.

Throughout the play, we do not find any negative attributes in Professor Cooper's character except for the "unpopular" and "unpleasant" thoughts he believes. His character is carefully portrayed to gain our sympathy and respect. From the first appearance on the stage, Cooper seems very nice. Stephanie considers his apology civil and wishes to see more people like him (11). Cooper argues "that we should not be afraid of the truth" (16). He "never sought to impose" his "ideas on anyone" (18). Thus, the man seems courageous. He says:

It seems to me . . . that if you are free to act, but do not act because you are afraid of the consequences, then you have no real freedom . . . (35)

Cooper compares himself to great thinkers and philosophers who lived in different time periods. He explains how society rejected their ideas and thoughts. In one of his press conferences, Cooper says:

Socrates, Galileo, Sir Thomas More. Tyndale . . . all punished because their truths were unacceptable to the orthodoxy. I asked you, who am I that the Government would try so hard to silence me? Could it be that they are afraid that someone might listen to what I have to say? That is my question. (33)

Cooper considers himself another example of a man who hangs for the sake of truth. He, thus, has a political ambition. In fact, he is too ambitious because he wants to redefine historical facts. He wants to change actuality. He believes that the Holocaust never happened. Thus he meets the consequences he is talking about in the above quotation. He falsely believes he is doing the right thing and, as Sagal points out, Cooper thinks that he is virtuous. He quotes the Bible every now and then throughout the play. His language is very polite. For example, in the debate between the opponents in Abby's office, Adam Ryberg uses vulgar language and Cooper asks him politely not to use this kind of language with him, assuming moral superiority:

Ryberg: Then what the fuck was it?

Cooper: Why, the emigration of all Jews to Madagascar, of course. Everybody knows that. And watch your mouth. (49)

As we see, the error in Cooper's character does not come from any concrete personal attributes. Rather, it comes from his abstract beliefs or the way he thinks. In other words, it comes from his political ambition. This ambition would not be as bad if it had not gone against one of the well-recognized historical events in the 20th century. It denied the Holocaust. Thus, Cooper's task is not only impossible, but also it is cumbersome, problematic, and hateful. Cooper is attacked severely in the course of the play, as well as by critics and reviewers, as a hateful, anti-Semitic neo-Nazi. In his article, "The Holocaust is Denied and The Denier Defended," Wilborn Hampton touches upon the dark, abstract side of Cooper's character. He points out that "A sort of milquetoast neo-Nazi himself, Cooper is a cult hero to skinheads whose idea of fun is to beat up Jews" (E2). Even Sagal himself describes Cooper as a neo-Nazi in an indirect way because, as I explained earlier, he advises producers not to let the audience notice this neo-Nazi dimension of Cooper's character.

The real historical figures included in this play and the quotations from Hitler emphasize the fact that Sagal did some historical research before he wrote this play. Still, this doesn't mean everything Cooper mentions in the course of the play is based on reality. The evidence Cooper relies on in denying the Holocaust is totally false. The play, then, is not dramatizing the Holocaust, and we should not take Cooper as a real denier of this historical event. In his article, "A Right to Free Speech When Hate is the Subject," Ben Brantley pays attention to this fictional side of Cooper's character and speaks of it through Cooper's own eyes as "a martyr of truth." He adds, "When Abigail...says to him (Cooper) 'I don't know what you are,' you share her deep puzzlement." Cooper "remains a symbolic focal point for

the play's central, sadly familiar question: should the right of free speech be guaranteed even to those who preach a philosophy of hatred?" (C16).

Indeed, Cooper would make an excellent example of The Clerk's Category (which does not exist in recent American drama) if he did not have this error in his character. His ambition takes him down from the Clerk's Category into The Faustian Category. Because of his political ambition, Cooper is a Faustian Professor since he meets this category's general attributes. First, as we have seen, his political ambition is responsible for his fall. All of Cooper's trials in this play happen because of his ambition to refute the Holocaust. Second, his ambition is temporal, as with Marlowe's Faustus and Pachino's Arthur. By the end of the play, as I explained earlier, Cooper accepts his loss. He loses the most precious evidence he relies on to refute the Holocaust when Abby refuses to return the taped interview he did with Nathan. Cooper admits that Abby won and they shake hands. Thus, his ambition is temporal. Third, Cooper has both good and bad attributes in his personality, like Marlowe's Faustus and Pichino's Arthur. The negative attributes come from his abstract, unpleasant ideas and beliefs, while the good attributes, such as virtuosity and politeness, are highly emphasized in his character by Sagal himself. Thus, Cooper possesses all three pass points for a Faustian Professor test.

Conclusion

Recently, the character of the professor has been represented memorably by American playwrights such as David Mamet, Peter Sagal, A. R. Gurney, and Jamie Pachino. Thus, the appearance of this character on the recent American stage has become a phenomenon which I believe worth investigating. The character of the professor has been researched by scholars in different literary genres and time periods. However, most researchers who have tried to evaluate this character have failed to provide an adequate theoretical framework for a consistent, unified analysis of this character in literature. Hence, I have evaluated the image of the professor character on stage in recent American drama and established a useful theory concerning the typology of this character in different literary genres and time periods.

The appearance of the professor character is not restricted to a specific time period. Rather, it has been portrayed according to similar standard models or criteria throughout literary traditions. These models of the professor character can be classified under four categories— a positive representation, a negative representation, a comic representation, and a positive-negative representation.

In this thesis I have called the first category—the positive representation—The Clerk's Category after Chaucer's Clerk, who makes an ideal example of the positive representation of the perfect professor character in literature. Chaucer's Clerk does not have a single attribute that can be considered negative. *The Clerk's Tale*, his portrait in *The General Prologue*, his good teaching traits, the way he responds to the Host's request, and the virtuous story he tells make an ideal example of the Clerk as a positive representation of the

character of the student and teacher not only in *The Canterbury Tales* but also in literature. Thus, a professor who belongs to this category must be a Perfect Professor whose personality is free of any kind of negative aspects or attributes. As teacher, The Perfect Professor has worthy teaching traits and competency. At the same time, he shows nothing but excellent personal characteristics or attributes.

I have called the second category—the negative representation—the Desire Category after Professor David Kepesh in Philip Roth's *The Professor of Desire*, Frank in Russell's *Educating Rita* and George and Nick in Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* are ruled by their own desires and lusts. A professor who fits into this category is called a *Professor of Desire*.

Desire in all its forms—sexual, political, and economic—and its manifestations in alcoholism and teaching incompetency are all key attributes of the professor character classified under this category. As I have shown earlier, these negative attributes of the professor character might vary from one play and character to another, but The Desire Professor is defined at least by one of these attributes which are responsible for the fall of the character. In the plays discussed in this thesis, David Mamet's John and A.R. Gurney's trio of Porter, Chris, and Anita are professors who are driven by at least one of these key attributes. Thus, these characters are negative representations of the professorship.

I have named the third category—the comic representation of the professor character—the Clown Category. However, the Professor as Clown belongs more to the genre of the novel than to the drama, so I turned my attention to the fourth—and perhaps most important professor type in drama. I have called the fourth category—the positive-negative representation—the Faustian Category. In this category, which I named after Marlowe's Faustus, the professor

character is developed on both negative and positive models with elements that exist in both the Clerk's Category and the Desire Category. Thus, the Faustian Professors might have some attributes that exist in other categories, but they are known best for their destructive ambition. This kind of ambition contains four main defining aspects. First, the Faustian ambition is responsible for the fall of whoever has this kind of ambition. Second, the Faustian ambition is temporal. In other words, the character should recognize his mistake at least by the end of the play. Third, the character that has a Faustian ambition should have both good and bad attributes. Fourth, the Faustian ambition is related to abstract desires rather than concrete ones.

The Clerk's Category is totally absent in recent American drama (1992-2004) since none of the professors in the four plays this MA thesis focuses on are represented in a purely positive manner. Likewise, although most of these plays have comic moments, none truly qualify as comedies. Thus, the Professor as Clown is also omitted from this thesis. For whatever cultural reasons, recent American dramatists take educators and their failings seriously and thus prefer to portray the Desiring Professor models and the Faustian models in their plays. But do these predominantly negative professorial portraits truly represent American education as it is in real life? Perhaps they partly do because professors are no more perfect than preachers or bankers. But I do believe their negativity is deliberately exaggerated for the following reasons.

First, I do not believe that the world of literature necessarily reflects everyday life although it might reflect a partial reality. Second, I am treating the character of the professor from a literary point of view in this MA thesis, and I have established four categories under which the professor character is portrayed in the first chapter that are as current in medieval

literature as they are today and will probably be in the future. Thus I have demonstrated in Chapter One how these categories have nothing to do with a specific literary genre or time period. Third, sexuality and desire are very dominant themes in all genres and time periods. Sexual harassment in particular was a dominating theme in discussions of university life all through the 1980s and 1990s, but the theme of the lecherous professor is at least as old as Peter Abelard. Thus, sexuality and desire and related issues cannot be related only to the professor character in recent American Drama. Although some partial reality might be present in these plays, the image of the professor in recent American drama in particular does not necessarily reflect an actual picture of contemporary college education in the United States.

The image of the professor character in recent American drama is located within the continuum of the literary traditions of this character type. Thus *Oleanna* and *Human Events* are plays that reproduce negative examples of the professor character. They fit into the Desiring Category while *Denial* and *The Return to Morality* reproduce Faustian examples of the professor character, and thus these plays fit into the Faustian Category.

But what finally is the literary and philosophical purpose of such mixed or negative views of the professoriate? Ultimately it might be to continue to remind us that as commonplace as a college education has become in today's United States; the inner, hidden conflicts of the educational process remain a rich source of dramatic insights into the permanent conflicts of human nature and the human condition.

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Vita

Salim E. A. Al Ibia was born in Mafraq, Jordan on February 5, 1983. His parents currently reside in Mafraq, Jordan. He attended Al al Bayt University receiving his Bachelor of Arts in English Literature, and he graduated in 2005. After teaching for two years in the Ministry of Education of Jordan, Mr. Al Ibia was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to teach and study at Appalachian State University. The M.A. was awarded in May 2009.