

Stylistically Disempowered Masculinity in Shepard's *Buried Child*

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Abstract:

This paper aims to discuss masculinity in Shepard's *Buried Child*. Shepard's plays have often been viewed as geared significantly towards a male audience, and seen to be filled with concepts which reinforce masculine ideology. The aforesaid point provided the motivation for an investigation into Shepard's work based mainly on linguistic factors to draw a conclusion about the workings of masculinity in the aforementioned play. To achieve the said goal, two excerpts were chosen: the first excerpt illustrates the dominance and power of one female character, Halie, over the male characters, and the second portrays Shelly's significant supremacy (who is the only other female character) in comparison to the male characters. Each excerpt consisted of turns which were numbered for ease of reference. Each turn was then analyzed using the stylistic tools of politeness, impoliteness, and speech act theory in conjunction with various masculinity theories. For politeness, Brown and Levinson's model was employed, while for impoliteness, Culpeper's ideas were put to use, and Searle's speech act theory provided the last piece of the stylistic puzzle. The results of the linguistic analysis were utilized to make easier the analysis done through traditional masculinity theories such as Connell's model of gender.

Keywords: *Buried Child*, masculinity, politeness, impoliteness, speech act theory

Shepard's Predicament

The researchers believe that the play exposes masculinity and also undermines it to portray the masculine characters in a subordinated manner. Through stylistics, it will be shown how the male characters inhabiting Shepard's play are subordinated and shown to be less powerful. Masculinity and its ramifications have been often present and remain one of the central themes of Shepard's work which characterize his approach. As such, viewing masculinity in *Buried Child* from this

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new angle which is a mix of concrete tools such as stylistics and more abstract methods such as masculinity theories could prove to be fruitful.

Whiting states that Shepard has never been praised for the manner through which he has illustrated his female characters, explaining further that the majority of his plays mainly revolve around the male characters with women being portrayed in an “extremely negative” light (494). Bennett (1993) echoes Whiting’s words by saying that Shepard’s works are plays produced by a man for male viewers, explaining that Shepard’s female characters are put into disabled roles (169-170). Such views from critics make further investigation into Shepard’s worlds a necessity, and because of the complex nature of gender relations, a stable tool is needed to concretize the abstract which is why stylistics will be helpful. Even though one foray into Shepard’s dramatic worlds will not provide a definitive answer, but this play is a valid starting point because it has various characters whose power and status shift in the ever-dynamic and complex relationships which often characterize Shepard’s plays.

Stylistic Tools: Discussing Power through (Im)Politeness and Speech Act Theory

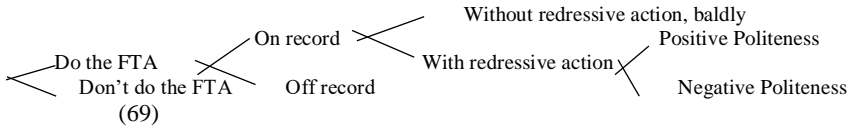
What follows is an explanation of the various stylistic tools which will be employed to discuss the excerpts of the play and power dynamics within those excerpts in detail. Regarding politeness, Brown and Levinson’s model will be used, and Culpeper’s ideas will be relied upon to analyze impoliteness within the play. To talk about speech acts Searle’s notions will be put to use. Politeness helps to identify moments when characters try to mitigate and control the situation which, based on context, could point to a character having greater power. The occurrence of impoliteness could mean that a character has enough power to commit such acts. Finally, speech act theory will help in analyzing the perception of power. It should be noted that stylistics alone does not paint the complete picture which is why it will be mixed with more traditional theories.

Politeness

Brown and Levinson mention (1987) “Face” as being the “public self-image” that people envision for themselves, which can be separated into “negative” and “positive” face, as such, politeness entails tending to other interactants’ face needs, and negative face consists of “the basic claim to territories, personal reserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e., to freedom of action and freedom from imposition”, and positive face consists of “the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially

including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of claimed by interactants” (61).

By FTA, Brown and Levinson mean face threatening acts which are described as actions that attack the hearer’s face needs. Brown and Levinson offer the below strategies:



On record is when an actor overtly shows his intention to commit an act aimed at the hearer; an example being the act of promising to do something (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 68-69). Off record is when the intension of the actor could be construed in different manners (*Ibidem*: 69). Brown and Levinson describe committing an action baldly as carrying it out “in the most direct, clear, and concise way possible (i.e. for a request, saying ‘Do X!’)” (69). Brown and Levinson (1987) state that:

By redressive action we mean action that ‘gives face’ to the addressee, that is, that attempts to counteract the potential face damage of the FTA by doing it in such a way, or with such modifications or additions, that indicate clearly that no such face threat is intended or desired, and that S in general recognizes H’s face wants and himself wants them to be achieved. (69-70)

Redressive action is categorized into the two subdivisions of negative and positive politeness. Positive politeness is connected to the hearer’s positive face where the speaker’s desires are in line with the hearer’s wants; negative politeness goes hand in hand with the hearer’s negative face and it happens when the utterer wants the hearer’s negative-face wants, and will not restrict the addressee’s freedom in performing different acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 70).

Impoliteness

Culpeper (1996) developed Brown and Levinson’s concepts by putting forth “Impoliteness” which discusses those acts that are quite opposite to politeness acts because they result in “social disruption” by employing FTAs (350). His strategies are as follows:

- I. Bald on record impoliteness – the FTA is performed in a direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimized.
- II. Positive impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face wants.

- III. Negative impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee's negative face wants.
- IV. Sarcasm or mock politeness – the FTA is performed with the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations.
- V. Withhold politeness – the absence of politeness work where it would be expected.

(356-357)

Culpeper (1996) also suggests some output strategies to do with positive and negative impoliteness:

Positive impoliteness:

Ignore, snub the other – fail to acknowledge the other's presence.

Exclude the other from an activity

Disassociate from the other – for example, deny association or common ground with the other; avoid sitting together.

Be disinterested, unconcerned, unsympathetic

Use inappropriate identity markers – for example, use title and surname when a close relationship pertains, or a nickname when a distant relationship pertains.

Use obscure or secretive language – for example, mystify the other with jargon, or use a code known to others in the group, but not the target.

Seek disagreement – select a sensitive topic.

Make the other feel uncomfortable – for example, do not avoid silence, joke, or use small talk.

Use taboo words – swear, or use abusive or profane language.

Call the other names – use derogatory nominations.

Negative impoliteness:

Frighten – instill a belief that action detrimental to the other will occur.

Condescend, scorn or ridicule – emphasize your relative power.

Be contemptuous.

Do not treat the other seriously.

Belittle the other (e.g. use diminutives).

Invade the other's space – literally (e.g. position yourself closer to the other than the relationship permits) or metaphorically (e.g. ask for or speak about information which is too intimate given the relationship).

Explicitly associate the other with a negative aspect – personalize, use the pronouns 'I' and 'you'.

Put the other's indebtedness on record.

(357-358)

Speech Act Theory

Searle (1975) categorizes speech acts into five classes: representatives, directives, commissives, expressives, and declaratives (354-358). Using these taxonomies one can hope to analyze power; for example, in particular situations directives can be taken as a sign of power. Searle (1990) also puts forward the class of assertives (410). Representatives show the utterer's beliefs (Bousfield, 2014: 121) whereas assertives “commit the speaker... to the truth of the expressed proposition”; directives are employed to force the hearer to perform a

particular act, and commissives “commit the speaker... to some future course of action”, while an expressive portrays the speaker’s approach regarding the main proposition, and declaratives alter reality so that “propositional content corresponds to the world” (Searle, 1979: 12-17). Searle mentions a number of felicity conditions which need to be carried out so that a speech act can be considered valid and felicitous; “Propositional act” is that which the speaker proposes to do, “Preparatory condition” consists of the circumstances that need to come about for the speech act to have an effect, “Sincerity condition” states that the speaker should “mean the proposition”, and “Essential condition” is that the speaker should make sure the proposition happens (qtd. in Bousfield, 2014: 127).

Excerpt One

This excerpt consists of dialogue between Halie, Dodge, and Tilden. Its importance lies in the fact that it is the first time Halie is conversing face to face with the men, so essentially the reader is experiencing her character for the first time. Furthermore, her words are quite implicative as a result of being harsh and biting towards Dodge and Tilden. In this part of the play, Halie comes across as the one in control and power, in addition to being the voice of authority.

1-HALIE: What’s the meaning of this corn, Tilden!

2-TILDEN: It’s a mystery to me. I was out in back there [...] I looked up. And I saw this stand of corn. In fact, I was standing in it. Surrounded. It was over my head.

3-HALIE: There isn’t any corn outside, Tilden! There’s no corn! It’s not the season for corn. Now, you must’ve either stolen this corn or you bought it.

4-DODGE: He doesn’t have a red cent to his name. He’s totally dependent.

5-HALIE: (*To Tilden.*) So, you stole it!

6-TILDEN: I didn’t steal it. I don’t want to get kicked out of Illinois. I was kicked out of New Mexico and I don’t want to get kicked out of Illinois.

7-HALIE: You’re going to get kicked out of this house, Tilden, if you don’t tell me where you got that corn! (*Tilden starts crying softly to himself but keeps husking corn. Pause.*)

8-DODGE: (*To Halie.*) Why’d you have to tell him that? Who cares where he got the corn? Why’d you have to go and threaten him with expulsion?

9-HALIE: (*To Dodge.*) It’s your fault you know! You’re the one that’s behind all of this! I suppose you thought it’d be funny! Some joke! Cover the house with corn husks. You better get this cleaned up before Bradley sees it.

10-DODGE: Bradley’s not getting in the front door!

11-HALIE: (*Kicking husks, striding back and forth.*) Bradley’s going to be very upset when he sees this. He doesn’t like to see the house in disarray. He can’t stand it when one thing is out of place. The slightest thing. You know how he gets.

12-DODGE: Bradley doesn’t even live here.

13-HALIE: It’s his home as much as ours. He was born in this house!

14-DODGE: He was born in a hog wallow.

15-HALIE: Don't you ever say that!

16-DODGE: He was born in a goddamn hog wallow! That's where he was born and that's where he belongs! He doesn't belong in this house! (*Halie stops.*)

17-HALIE: I don't know what's come over you, Dodge. I don't know what in the world's come over you. You've become an evil, spiteful, vengeful man. You used to be to be a good man.

18-DODGE: Six of one, a half-dozen of another.

19-HALIE: You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body! Hacking your head off 'til all hours of the morning! Thinking up mean, evil, stupid things to say about your own flesh and blood!

20-DODGE: He's not my flesh and blood! My flesh and blood's out there in the backyard! (*They freeze. Long pause. The men stare at her.*)

21-HALIE: (*Quietly.*) That's enough, Dodge. That's quite enough. You've become confused. [...]

(Shepard , 2006: Act One)

Analysis of Excerpt One

In turn 1, Halie commits positive and negative impoliteness by asking Tilden (indirectly) how he came across the large amount of corn occupying their living room; her act can be considered impoliteness as she is saying that she does not approve of Tilden bringing corn of unknown origin into the house (positive), and also because she is indicating that he is not to do it again or he will be reprimanded (negative), much like what he is experiencing in this turn. Connell (2005) introduces a three-tiered model for discussing masculinity consisting of power relations, production relations, and cathexis; she explains power relations as being “the overall subordination of women and dominance of men”, while production relations are described as the “gender divisions of labour”, and cathexis comprises of “emotional energy attached to an object” which is gendered (73-75). In this turn, even though Tilden has actually committed an act which has produced a tangible result one would think that he might have fulfilled his masculine role; however, Halie, by reprimanding Tilden, brings Tilden's role in production relations into question, and by doing so threatens his masculinity. Her impoliteness acts also indicate that she has a higher standing where power relations are concerned, and thus, in a single turn Tilden is subordinated. As such, Tilden's response becomes important because it will be indicative of whether or not he is able to regain a foothold in power and production relations.

Tilden then proceeds to show his powerlessness compared to Halie by using a representative speech act when he says that he is unsure of the corn's origin (turn 2); because Tilden portrays himself as powerless, it becomes clear that he has not been able to undo the damage done to his masculinity by Halie in the first turn, and thus, he remains subordinated in power and production relations. Tilden, by using

expressions such as “Surrounded” and “over my head,” shows that he is unable to keep his emotions in check, and is therefore guilty of not abiding by “Restrictive emotionality” which Levant et al. (1992) mentioned as a “traditional male norm” (329); it is in this manner that Tilden further shows his lack of masculinity. By using an assertive speech act in turn 3, Halie is guilty of positive impoliteness when she contradicts Tilden’s belief that there is corn in the backyard, and she drives her point home by repeating her assertive speech act to leave no doubt as to who is in a position of power. She explains that “it’s not the season for corn” which is yet another assertive, and therefore, she has successfully attacked Tilden’s positive face once again. Halie does not let up, and her face threatening acts keep coming when she says Tilden probably stole the corn which is positive impoliteness because she insinuates, she is skeptical of Tilden’s methods of obtaining the corn. Not only does Halie question Tilden’s standing in production relations with her insinuations, but the fact that he has no response for her shows his inferior standing compared to Halie when it comes to production, and he is therefore emasculated.

In turn 4, Dodge uses a representative speech act to explain that Tilden does not have any money, and in doing so (by going on the defensive), he shows that he fears for Tilden, all the while indicating that both of them have less power than Halie. Dodge’s speech act does not carry the same force as Halie’s, and therefore, Dodge shows that he is subordinated in power relations; to further complicate matters for the two men, because Dodge answers for Tilden and because his answer emasculates himself, by extension it can be said that Tilden is also emasculated as he could not defend himself and the person that did was also less powerful than Halie. Another male norm which Levant et al. (1992) mention is “Self-Reliance” (329), and both Tilden and Dodge lack this trait so they cannot be considered masculine. Turn 5 sees Halie use yet another assertive which shows that she is completely dominating the two men in these exchanges. Additionally, she partially disregards Dodge’s explanation when she uses it as incriminating evidence against Tilden, which can be said damages Dodge’s positive face needs.

Tilden replies using an assertive himself (turn 6), but that does not place him in the role of the powerful speaker because he proceeds to over explain, which leads to the conclusion that he is quite afraid. Furthermore, in the next turn, as though she is trying to dispel notions of losing power, Halie uses a directive speech act (conditional threat) to force Tilden to tell the truth. It can be said that Halie’s speech act meets the required felicity conditions because Tilden does not argue anymore and is reduced to tears which indicates that he has lost the battle to Halie and her scathing verbal attack. Connell and Messerschmidt (2005)

explain that “hegemonic masculinity” is seen as “the pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men’s dominance over women to continue” (832); taking the aforementioned into account, it becomes clear that Tilden and Dodge have not managed to establish such a pattern, whereas Halie continuously dominates them which points to their being emasculated. Additionally, it is quite ironic and highly suggestive that a female character has managed to step into a male role by establishing a “pattern of practice” which subordinates the men. Dodge tries to wrestle some power back from Halie by attacking her positive face needs (turn 8), but Halie responds with her own FTAs (placing blame on Dodge which is positive impoliteness), in addition to a directive speech act (ordering him to clean up in the form of a conditional threat) to fully cement herself as the powerful speaker. Halie, by doing so, shows her elevated status in power relations which is clear because she freely attacks the two men with absolutely no fear; also, her production of FTAs and forceful speech acts points to her greater stature with regards to production relations.

In turn 10, Dodge tries to illustrate dominance by using an assertive (saying Bradley is not coming in), however, because Bradley does eventually get into the house, Dodge’s speech act does not satisfy the essential condition, and is therefore not felicitous which means that he has failed in gaining any power. This failed speech act also shows how Dodge has been subordinated in production relations, and thus, his masculinity is brought into question. In Turn 11, Halie completely snubs Dodge which, according to Culpeper, is positive impoliteness, but it also attacks Dodge’s negative face needs because Halie allowing Bradley in appears to be an imposition on Dodge. The fact that Halie uses impoliteness nullifies any loss of power she might have experienced from using representative speech acts when talking about how Bradley might react. Paechter (2006) explains that the “problem of shifting definitions is exacerbated by our inability to define either masculinity or femininity except in relation to each other and to men and women” (254); Paechter’s words suggest a fluidity about masculinity and perhaps gender relations as a whole, but even when it appears that the tide might be turning against Halie, she responds with considerable force much like her words in turn 11.

Dodge tries to show his forcefulness through an assertive speech act (turn 12), but Halie responds in kind and uses two assertives of her own (turn 13) to signify that she is not willing to back down. The mere fact that Halie uses a greater number of assertives points to her stature being more comprehensive in production relations compared to her husband who is therefore once again subordinated. Dodge, having seen

that he cannot compete with Halie, starts attacking Bradley's positive face needs (turn 14) which goes to prove that he has given up trying to wrestle power from Halie. Even these FTAs by Dodge committed against Bradley do not go unanswered by Halie, and in turn 15, she uses a directive when ordering Dodge to refrain from repeating his remarks about Bradley. Bird explains that "competition" is a characteristic of hegemonic masculinity (1996, 122), and Dodge seems to be competing with the absent Bradley. However, Halie's reply nullifies Dodge's rather pointless competitive nature towards Bradley to further emasculate him. Turn 16 sees Dodge repeat his remarks regarding Bradley, seemingly illustrating his power by using assertives. However, Halie, once again, completely disregards Dodge's words which is an instance of a positive-face attack; to put her power beyond any reasonable doubt, Halie also commits bald on record impoliteness when she simply insults Dodge by saying he has become an "evil, spiteful, vengeful, man", and lastly, she commits yet another instance of positive impoliteness when saying Dodge used to be good (turn 17). Halie's bald on record impoliteness exalts her status in power relations because she simply insults Dodge with brazen bravado, never for a second fearing any kind of retribution from him.

In turn 18, Dodge tries to lessen the impact of Halie's words with his sarcastic comment. However, in the following turn, Halie continues with her face attacks to nullify Dodge's attempts. By using the words "festering" and "decomposing", Halie might be stating her beliefs (representative speech acts), yet this does not prove her powerless because they are, at the same time, examples of positive impoliteness meant to belittle Dodge. Halie says that Dodge is 'smelling up the house' which is negative impoliteness as Dodge is not really capable of taking care of himself, and perhaps checking his hygiene too often would be an imposition on someone who is shown to be quite handicapped. Also, by describing Dodge's words about his family as "mean, evil, stupid", she is attacking his negative face needs (critical of his freedom of speech) as well as committing bald on record impoliteness, which all prove her dominance over Dodge. Cashman (2008) believes that "impoliteness may serve as resources for more powerful interactants to maintain or recapture their position and for less powerful interactants to resist and renegotiate their position" (278); however, every time Dodge tries to renegotiate his powerless position Halie responds with more force to ensure her own dominance over her feeble husband. In turn 20, Dodge's attempt to grasp at some semblance of power through an assertive is negated by Halie in the next turn. Halie uses a directive speech act to order Dodge to speak no more on the matter, and she also attacks his positive face needs when she calls him

‘confused’ indicating that he can no longer think coherently or rely on his mental faculties to speak cogently. This last turn portrays Cashman’s ideas best because Halie uses impoliteness numerous times to maintain her powerful position, and whenever Dodge tries to renegotiate, she simply compounds her effort by increasing the number of impoliteness acts.

Excerpt Two

This excerpt finds its importance in that it is the rise to power of Shelly; in this part of the play, Shelly starts to hit out at any and everyone who tries to silence her or diminish her feelings. In showing that this second and last female character has risen to verbal power, it will become clear that masculinity is subordinated in the play. The less vital parts of the dialogue are omitted and marked by ellipses.

1-BRADLEY: (*Sitting up on sofa.*) We don’t have to tell you anything, girl. [...] You’re not the police, are you? You’re not the government. You’re just some prostitute that Tilden brought in here.

2-HALIE: Language! I won’t have that language in my house! Father I’m –

3-SHELLY: (*To Bradley.*) You stuck your hand in my mouth and you call me a prostitute! What kind of a weird fucked-up yo-yo are you?

4-HALIE: Bradley! Did you put your hand in this girl’s mouth? You have no idea what kind of diseases she might be carrying.

5-BRADLEY: I never did. She’s lying. She’s lying through her teeth.

6-DEWIS: Halie, I think I’ll be running along now. [...] (*Dewis moves toward L. Halie stops him.*)

7-HALIE: Don’t go now, father! Not now. Please – I’m not sure I can stay afloat.

8-BRADLEY: I never did anything, Mom! I never touched her! She propositioned me! And I turned her down. I turned her down flat! She’s not my type. You know that Mom. (*Shelly suddenly grabs her coat off the wooden leg and takes both the leg and coat D., away from Bradley.*) Mom! Mom! She’s got my leg! She’s taken my leg! I never did anything to her! She’s stolen my leg! She’s a devil Mom. How did she get in our house? (*Bradley reaches pathetically in the air for his leg. Shelly sets it down for a second, puts on her coat fast and picks up the leg again. Dodge starts coughing again softly.*)

9-HALIE: (*To Shelly.*) I think we’ve had about enough of you young lady. Just about enough. I don’t know where you came from or what you’re doing here but you’re no longer welcome in this house.

10-SHELLY: (*Laughs, holds leg.*) No longer welcome!

11-BRADLEY: Mom! That’s my leg! Get my leg back! I can’t do anything without my leg! She’s trying to torture me. (*Bradley keeps on making whimpering sounds and reaching for his leg.*)

12-HALIE: Give my son back his leg. Right this very minute! Dodge, where did this girl come from? (*Dodge starts laughing softly to himself in between coughs.*)

[...]

13-HALIE: (*To Dewis.*) Father, do something about this would you! I’m not about to be terrorized in my own house!

14-DEWIS: This is out of my domain.

15-BRADLEY: Gimme back my leg!

16-HALIE: Oh, shut up Bradley! Just shut up! You don't need your leg now!! Just lay down and shut up! I've never heard such whining. (*Bradley whimpers, [...] reaching out toward his wooden leg. Dewis cautiously approaches Shelly [...]. Shelly clutches the wooden leg to her chest as though she's kidnapped it.*)

17-DEWIS: (*To Shelly.*) Now, honestly, dear, wouldn't it be better to talk things out? To try to use some reason? No point in going off the deep end. [...]

18-SHELLY: There isn't any reason here! I can't find a reason for anything.

19-DEWIS: There's nothing to be afraid of. These are all good people. [...]

20-SHELLY: I'm not afraid!

21-DEWIS: But this is not your house. You have to have some respect.

22-SHELLY: You're the strangers here, not me.

[...]

23-DEWIS: Halie, please. Let me handle this. [...]

24-SHELLY: Don't come near me! Don't anyone come near me. I don't need any words from you. [...] Maybe it's Vince that's crazy. Maybe he's made this whole family thing up. I don't even care anymore. [...] He made all of you sound familiar to me. [...] Real people. People with faces. But I don't recognize any of you. Not one. Not even the slightest resemblance.

[...]

25-HALIE: [...] We're just going to have to call the police.

26-BRADLEY: No! Don't get the police in here. We don't want the police in here. This is our home.

27-SHELLY: That's right, Bradley's right. Don't you usually settle your affairs in private? Don't you usually take them out in the dark? Out in the back?

28-BRADLEY: You stay out of our lives! You have no business interfering!

29-SHELLY: I don't have any business period. I got nothing to lose. I'm a free agent. (*She moves around, staring at each of them.*)

[...]

30-BRADLEY: I'm not telling her anything! [...] Nothing's ever been wrong! Everything's the way it's supposed to be! [...] Everything is all right here! [...] We've always been good people.

(Shepard, 2006: Act Three)

Analysis of Excerpt Two

In turn 1, Bradley commits positive impoliteness because he is indicating that he does not believe Shelly to have the same kind of authority or power as institutions of power such as the government or the police; he also calls Shelly a “prostitute” which is bald on record impoliteness because he straightforwardly insults Shelly. However, Bradley's words do not indicate that he has gained any power or cemented his masculinity through impoliteness acts because Halie, in turn 2, reprimand's Bradley by committing negative impoliteness when she insinuates that Bradley is not to use bad language. To further push Bradley down in power relations, Shelly in turn 3 uses bald on record impoliteness when she calls Bradley a “fucked-up yo-yo”, and in this manner, Bradley is subordinated in power as well as production relations because Halie stops him from talking how he desires. Therefore, Bradley's attempt at brandishing his masculinity has failed as

he is attacked by two women. Mills (2002) states that in ‘engaging in interaction, we are also at the same time mapping out for ourselves a position in relation to the power relations within the group and within the society as a whole’ (74), and all Bradley has managed to do is map out an inferior standing in power relations thereby damaging his masculinity.

In turn 4, Halie commits positive and negative impoliteness towards Bradley by showing that she does not approve of him putting his fingers in her mouth and also prohibiting him from doing it again. Even though Bradley is guilty of positive impoliteness in relation to Shelley (turn 5), he does not show any power because he seems to have been knocked off balance by Halie. Dewis’ words in turn 6 as well as Bradley’s in the previous suggest that these two male figures lack masculine traits as they are both portrayed as vulnerable. While Halie’s words in turn 7 might suggest some vulnerability on her part, Bradley’s words in turn 8 cement Halie’s power. Antony (2015) proposes a category of assertive speech acts called “acknowledgment”, and says that words such as “know” show responsibility, further explaining that the powerful interactant “is able to acknowledge anything under his surveillance” (25). As such, even though Bradley commits positive impoliteness toward Shelly by saying she is not his type, he immediately uses an assertive speech act of acknowledgement (“You know that mom”) to put Halie in a position of power thereby emasculating himself. Furthermore, even though Bradley commits positive impoliteness by calling Shelly a “devil”, he does not prove that he has attained any power because Shelly then takes his leg and Bradley proceeds to revert to a childlike state by asking his “Mom” for help which shows he occupies the lowest status when it comes to power and production relations which proves just how emasculated he is. In turn 10, Shelly laughs while holding Bradley’s leg which is negative impoliteness towards him because it limits his freedom of movement. Garcia-Pastor states that, at times, the essence of power is “based on those attributions of power individuals make without necessarily communicating these in discourse” (105), which is another reason why Shelly holding Bradley’s leg is negative impoliteness, and this illustrates her power.

Bradley’s words in turn 11 are reminiscent of a powerless male because he is indicating that he is useless without his leg which a female, Shelly, currently has control of. Bennett (2007) explains that some masculinity theories suggest that “men maintain a ‘stiff upper lip’ at times of emotional stress” (347), and because it is mentioned that Bradley “whimpers”, it can be said that he has no signs of the aforementioned “stiff upper lip”, and is therefore emasculated by the aforesaid description. Also, because of the above-mentioned, Bradley’s

assertive speech act does not grant him any power. Turn 14 illustrates the powerlessness and emasculation of another male, Father Dewis, because he uses an assertive speech act which instead of granting him power emasculates him because it states that he is powerless to stop Shelly. Additionally, Bradley's directive speech act in turn 15 does not show his power because Halie, in the following turn, uses a directive of her own to get Bradley to stop talking; Halie's negative impoliteness, therefore, negates Bradley's speech act and emasculates him because it limits his production in verbal terms. In turn 18, Shelly proceeds to show her power by employing positive impoliteness against pretty much the whole household. In turn 20, Shelly's forceful answer (assertive speech act) to Dewis' milder words (representative speech act) shows how much more powerful she is compared to the male interactant whom she emasculates. Turn 22 turns out in much the same way as turn 20.

To fully show her power, Shelly first uses a directive speech act twice in turn 24 to order everyone to stay away from her. She then proceeds to commit positive impoliteness by indicating that she does not believe anyone has any useful words to offer her. Furthermore, Shelly uses bald on record impoliteness calling Vince "crazy", and then commits positive impoliteness when she says she does not recognize anyone of them because they differ so wildly from what Vince had told her indicating how far they've all fallen. Hence, not only does Shelly illustrate her power in relation to all the group, but by attacking Vince she also attacks one of the masculine forces. Malamuth and Thornhill (1994) state a feminist idea saying that "feminists argue that men are uniquely socialized to dominate and be aggressive toward women in a manner that differs from their socialization vis-à-vis other men" (191); taking the aforesaid idea into account, not only does Shelly dominate the men but also the other woman in the world of the play, and this proves her power as well as the fact that she subordinates the masculine forces by manipulating masculine ideology for her own gain.

In turn 26, Bradley illustrates his inferior position in power relations as he shows that he is afraid of authority figures. Moller (2007) explains that Connell's views on hegemonic masculinity may convince a critic to seek out "particularly nefarious instances of masculinist abuses of power," which can then result in not taking notice of "more mundane practices of masculinity" (265). Bradley's words in turn 26 seem reminiscent of Moller's ideas because one might not necessarily see rebellion against authority as a masculine trait, yet here, Bradley's lack of rebellion portrays him as weak and thus, emasculated. Shelly's first words in turn 27 are mock politeness as she is pretending to agree with Bradley, but she then starts to insinuate that the family have a secret and make a habit of burying their past which is positive impoliteness as well

as a much clearer attack on the family. Thus, once again, Shelly first emasculates Bradley by attacking his face needs showing that she is more powerful, and then proceeds to attack the family. Bradley uses a directive to gain a foothold in power relations which is also negative impoliteness because he is limiting her freedom to act as she pleases (turn 28). Culpeper (2005) believes that impoliteness is, first and foremost, about “how offense is communicated and taken” (36), so when Shelly, in turn 29, completely snubs Bradley’s speech act she has committed negative impoliteness and her face attack negates Bradley’s words not least because she has taken no offense from Bradley’s impoliteness. To round things off, Bradley completely breaks down in turn 30, and his actions embody cathexis which shows that he has been completely emasculated because he is clinging to a non-existent image of a perfect family. Bradley is particularly guilty of cathexis because he constantly seeks his mother’s help, but even she does not come to his aid in the end to definitively emasculate him.

Conclusion

In the first excerpt, it was shown that Halie subordinates the two male characters, Tilden and Dodge, to illustrate how Shepard has emasculated two of his male creations. Through linguistic analysis coupled with more traditional theories in the form of gender studies, it was proven that the playwright has used dialogue to place the male personas in precarious situations in order to illustrate their gradual emasculation. In the second excerpt, the process of Shelly becoming more powerful was mapped out much in the same way as Halie’s power was shown in the first. Shelly managed to subordinate and consequently emasculate Bradley in a number of ways to prove that she was more powerful, even though, earlier in the play, Bradley had suggestively put his finger in her mouth and taken her coat; the second excerpt was employed to portray Shelly’s revenge and her consequent rise to power. By the end of the second excerpt Bradley’s emasculation becomes abundantly clear as he breaks down and enters a state of denial. The analysis done shows that not only does Shepard shun masculine viewpoints, but that he actually glorifies feminine power in more ways than one (at the very least in this play). Further analysis of this and Shepard’s other plays may prove fruitful in coming to a more general conclusion about Shepard’s plays.

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