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Gender Performance in Neil LaBute's Some Girl(S)

A B S T R A C T

This study analyses gender performance in Neil LaBute's *Some Girl(S)* and reveals how his male characters oppress others by adhering to standard societal ideals. Using the writings of Judith Butler and other gender theorists, the researcher examines the attempts of LaBute's male characters to reject the femininity within themselves by suppressing their feelings. Overall, the presence of harmful men in LaBute's works and the predominantly negative implications of their roles demonstrate that LaBute is criticising traditional performance in an effort to encourage change. LaBute employs numerous methods to illustrate this issue.

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الأداء الجندري في بعض الفتيات لنيل لابوت

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الخلاصة:

تحلل هذه الدراسة الأداء الجندري في مسرحية بعض الفتيات للكاتب الأمريكي لابوت وتكتشف كيف تضطهد شخصياته الذكورية الاخرين من خلال الالتزام بالمثل المجتمعية القاسية. باستخدام كتابات بتلر وغيرها من المنظرين، وتفحص الباحثة محاولات الشخصيات الذكورية لابوت لرفض الانوثة داخل أنفسهم من خلال قمع مشاعرهم. بشكل عام يظهر وجود رجال ضارين في اعماله والاثار السلبية في الغالب لأدوارهم ان لابوت ينتقد الأداء التقليدي في محاولة لتشجيع التغيير. قدم لابوت طرق عديدة لتوضيح هذه

المشكلة.

المفاهيم الأساسية: الجندر, الجنس, نيل لابوت, بعض الفتيات.

1. Introduction

In the 19th century, the theatre was a big part of social life. People liked going to the theatre to see plays just for fun, but they also liked plays with serious or "moral" messages. People could buy short versions of popular plays to read in their free time, and they could also put on private performances of plays in their own homes for fun. Neil LaBute is among the many playwrights who included performance and theatricality into their works, and there are several instances of acting and performing in all of LaBute's plays, particularly in Some Girl(s) (2006).

Some Girl(s) is one of LaBute's plays that offer a scathing critique of the moral, psychological, economic, and political norms that have been used to oppress women in the United States and elsewhere. The playwright wants to bring attention to the way in which women are treated as objects in American society, therefore he wrote plays about them. The plays of LaBute deal with "a smorgasbord of perversions: infidelity, infanticide, rape, homophobia, racism, sexism, fatism, gender, and just plain cruelty," as one critic put it (Farouky). He basically thinks that can't write about the world if are not out there doing something about it. In his works, he places characters in contexts that shed light on contemporary events. Author and all that we live in, LaBute is a symbol for both.

The construction of gender identity in contemporary American plays provides a venue for challenging and interrogating the alleged gender crisis. This research will examine the gender studies in modern American Play Some Girl(s) (2005), by Neil LaBute that have gotten little scholarly attention. The play portrays characters conversing on what it means to be a particular gender. By comprehending the different ways in which gender is formed by the male and female sexes, one may begin to identify and destroy the oppressive power structures that are driven by hegemonic masculinity. The purpose of this research is to investigate and comprehend the position of masculinity and femininity within the culture in which they are generated. By researching contemporary dramatic literature written mostly by white

middle-class males and females, the researcher will identify culturally affected notions of the masculine and feminine in order to analysis their production and impact in theatrical representation.

2. Gender as a Concept

Gender refers to a variety of socially constructed roles and personal qualities, attitudes, performances, beliefs, relative authority, and the impact that society attaches to men and women on a differential basis. Gender is a relational concept that describes the interaction between men and women. Gender emphasizes that masculinity and femininity are learnt in the process of becoming a man or a woman and are the result of social, cultural, and psychological factors. It represents the qualities acquired by men and women as a result of socialization with social life and culture. Gender is a concept used to evaluate the moulding of women's and men's conduct according to a society's normative expectations (Jarviluoma 1-2).

As a form of historical rethinking, gender initially appears in the 1970s writings of American feminists. In the 1980s, English historians began using this phrase, and by the mid-1990s, books and articles with gender in the title were published almost weekly. In addition, gender becomes a synonym for woman as a result of the political fact, as in the phrase 'woman and gender.' For some, it is synonymous with sex. The term's most influential application, however, is as a replacement for sex to illustrate the historical disparities between men and women. Because man and woman are typically distinct in terms of what they are not, it is difficult to research one without need information on the other. The term gender is used to emphasize that the inequalities between men and women are socially, culturally, and politically constructed, and so susceptible to change. This does not diminish the significance of biological variations between men and women. Consequently, biological facts alone cannot explain the historically variable distinctions between men and women. Thus, gender is a social term that is imposed on a sexed body (Shoemaker 1).

Alternatively, sex refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish males and females. Every individual is born male or female. When a child is born, he or she is designated as a boy or a girl based on his or her sex. The source of this description is the genital distinction between male and female. However, it has been argued that after being born into one sex or another,

individuals are socialized in accordance with particular gender norms and expectations. Biological men are taught to assume masculine roles. They are socialized to have male attitudes and behaviors. Biological females are taught to assume female duties. They are socialized to have feminine attitudes and behaviors. Therefore, sex refers to the biological characteristics that distinguish males and females. The top scale represents the biological sex range, which includes external genitalia, internal procreative structures, genetic material, hormone levels, and secondary sex traits such as breasts, facial and body hair, voice, and body shape. Other than the sexual and reproductive organs, all other organs are identical. Aside from these minor biological differences, girls and boys are comparable. Girls' and boys' bodies share more similarities than differences. Due to their physical characteristics, females belong to the female sexed, whereas boys belong to the male sexed. These biological differences are shaped by nature, and they exist in every family, community, and country. Many scientists believe that there are significant biological or genetic differences between men and women, but all agree that the natural (i.e. biological, physiological, or genetic) and the social cannot be easily separated. Gender-defined conservation, communal, financial, and social issues have an impact on biology (Barash and Eve Lipton 2-3).

Sex is innate, whereas gender is acquired through a socialization process. Sex is constant and unchanging, whereas gender, gender roles, and gender norms change and vary among cultures. The primary distinctions between sex and gender can be observed in their distinguishing characteristics. Sex is natural and biological, and it refers to the observable distinctions in genitalia and procreative function. Gender is a sociological construct, while sexuality is a universal phenomenon. A sociocultural construction. Gender refers to masculine and feminine characteristics, patterns of behaviour, societal duties and responsibilities, etc. It is variable and changes as a result of time, location, and sociocultural circumstance (Lerner 3).

3. *Some Girl(S)* Gender Discourse

Some Girl(s) premiered at the Gielgud Theatre in London in May 2006. On the eve of his wedding to a 22-years-old nursing student, the protagonist of this work resolves to compile a list of the women he has loved and abandoned. Aware that he has left a path of shattered relationships, he sets out purportedly to settle previous debts, sarcastically portraying his journey

as a Pilgrim's Progress. However, this pilgrim appears to have made little emotional or moral progress (Bigsby 206).

Neil Labute prefers to address more general topics, such as gender. *Some Girls* exemplifies this by presenting an unnamed universal figure, Guy, who represents any man whose role is the exploitation of many types of women. The purpose of Labute is to illustrate how men treat women in the society. He discusses the collective consciousness of the society in this play by Guy, who represents all males and their actions against women. In this sense, one can relate the matter to Ibsen, the father of drama, and his play *A Doll House*. Ibsen introduces Noora as a symbolic character who alludes to the suffering of women in patriarchal societies everywhere in the whole world.

Bigsby thinks Guy is somewhat emblematic in LaBute's ongoing examination of the nature of male–female relationships. Indeed, regardless of the character's names, the stage instructions refer to them as "the man" and "the women." LaBute says that the critic's description of Guy as a serial monogamist was comparable to that of a serial killer. Behind his mask of well-intentioned dishonesty, it turns out, lies premeditated cruelty. It was a gloss that emphasized this. LaBute noted that the play was inspired by a desire to write "a series of duets including a large number of women's roles and following the journey of a modern-day Candide as he stumbles through a landscape familiar to most men – the mess he's made of his romantic life on the path to manhood" (LaBute xi). “you are made a little change in your character. That's good” (Labute 24).

Some Girls uses gender to study masculine oppression against women, social oppression, and violence. LaBute imbues his characters' relationships with an air of detachment. Most of them engage in self-centered, slothful, and/or hazardous behaviour, which LaBute attributes to the disposable culture of America's capitalist society. Instead of treating others with human kindness, one desires to coerce others into viewing them as objects. As LaBute states, “It’s easier to throw things out than to fix them. We even give it a name—we call it recycling. Especially as relationships go, we’re too quick to say the easiest way is to end it because we don’t want to do the work” (qtd. in Dickson). As John Lahr argues, LaBute's characters are so individualistic that they have an "inability to imagine the suffering of others" as objects, causing them to damage one another, whether purposefully or inadvertently.

LaBute investigates the artificiality propagated by American culture. The characters in LaBute's plays, as Becky Becker, observes in "No Simple Misogyny," buy into both the superficiality of beauty and imposed gender roles. Specifically, the usage of *Some Girl(s)* illustrates how the playwright reveals the socially created gender identities of several of his male and female characters. In the discussion of Guy in *Some Girl(s)*, reference is made to the moment when Guy says to Lindsay, "Guy... right. I meant, like, In women's studies. Lindsay, we call it gender studies now" (37).

In LaBute's play, both men and women do bad things, but most men and a certain type of Man are to blame. These are the men who try to follow the rules of traditional masculinity. Playwright LaBute's interest in portraying males in society is reflected in his play, which focuses on masculine gender performance.

Examining how the female and male characters are portrayed in the play through their roles and circumstances is crucial for analysing the gender theme. The topic of gender is so deeply established in antiquity that both Plato and Aristotle addressed it. Aristotle was an ancient Greek philosopher and scientist. He was an anti-feminist. He viewed women as a fault and himself as a flawed man. As the lesser being God created, he preached that men should always be in charge and women should always be submissive (Bar 227-228). Misogyny has evolved into an ideology over time. Great philosophers, Socialists, and thinkers of the golden age were humbled by the patriarchal society's voice, which narrowed their perspectives and made them patriarchal society followers, i.e., “a wife and mother and this is like some ancient Greek history.”(13)

Researching the history of women's rights leads one to conclude that women have been denied the power to exercise active control over their lives. Male has been the Self, the subject, throughout history, whereas the female has been the Other. With her consent, Man has enslaved a woman by transforming her into a mere clone of himself. According to Beauvoir, women can become self-aware persons for the first time in recorded history (Dijkstra 293). In *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir argues that "one is not born a woman, but rather becomes one" (12). For Beauvoir, gender is "manufactured," but implicit in her formulation is an agent, a cogito, who assumes or appropriates that gender and could, in theory, assume another gender. Beauvoir makes it apparent that one "becomes" a woman but is always under cultural pressure. The compulsion is not sexually motivated.

Her narrative does not indicate that the "one" who becomes a woman will necessarily be female. As she asserts, if "the body is a circumstance," there is no resort to a body that cultural meanings have not always understood; therefore, sex cannot be considered a discursive physical facticity (Butlre 14).

The dispute over the *construction* definition rests on the traditional philosophical dichotomy of free will and determinism.

As a result, one could suspect that a common linguistic restriction on cognition shapes and restricts the debate's terms. Within these concepts, "the body" appears to be a passive medium upon which cultural meanings are imprinted or an instrument by which an appropriative and interpretive will choose a cultural meaning for itself. In both instances, the body is conceptualized as a mere instrument or medium to which cultural connotations are only externally attached. However, "the body" is a creation, as are the plethora of "bodies" that compose the domain of gendered subjects. A body cannot be claimed to have a meaningful existence prior to its gender designation (Butlre 17).

Even though the scenes occur in different cities, they all occur in anonymous hotel rooms that are only different in small ways. LaBute says that relationships between men and women are like variations on a familiar theme. The guy is looking for something different than what the women are looking for. Not only does he move from city to city and from woman to woman, but he also runs away from the consequences of his actions. The hotel room is where he feels most comfortable. It is just a place to go through.

He is about to make a lifelong commitment and does not want to leave any mess behind, he says, but the fact that he refers to his fiancée as "some girl is all" (44) also makes it clear that he has not changed his habits concerning the other women on his list. In this way, the hotel room in *Some Girls* symbolizes the captivity of the male character. It symbolizes how men's authoritarian power captures women. The fact that Guy is the only male character in the play contributes to the play's macho discourse by emphasizing the assumption that men are superior to women. Some Girls plays a significant role in depicting the experience of being enslaved by masculine power.

LaBute aimed to demonstrate that this masculine character is incapable of learning from his mistakes. He left it up to the viewer to evaluate this

static figure and his offensive conduct. The male characters in LaBute's plays could have come off better. According to Paul Taylor's opinion which is published in the Guardian, "an academic study of the chivalry shown towards women by the male characters in Neil LaBute's works would be one of the shortest volumes publishing history." LaBute admits, "I believe I have been fairer to the ladies than to the men. I grew up with a certain level of mistrust towards guys because my primary male role model was a suspicious individual" (Bigsby 236).

Regarding his behaviour when he was away and at home, he generated much suspicion among the other family members. "Consequently, I am concerned about humanity "(qt. Bigsby 236). Typically, he avoids autobiographical interpretations of his plays; nonetheless, he admits here, that his tough connection with his father has influenced his work. One may encounter male characters depicted wholly innocent in a very unfavorable light.

Concerning education of women which started in the early period LaBute has his view which is reflected in the play. Following the French Revolution, Mary Wollstonecraft pushed for disseminating Revolutionary and Enlightening ideals regarding women, particularly through educational possibilities. Women have fought against a patriarchal philosophy that confines women to utter silence and subservience. In addition, the depiction of women as angels, prostitutes, submissive wives, goddesses, and mothers in male literature was a significant factor in preserving these gender stereotypes (Habib 213). In this sense, the woman in this play evolves and improves due to her education and circumstances. Generally speaking, a woman gains self-awareness through her comprehension of her surrounding environment. "that you finished your master and I dunno, felt the need to go off and become some gig citizen or what have you a member of society"(Labute 29). This citation examines interventions designed to combat gendered stereotypes and norms across multiple outcomes of gender inequality, including violence against women and sexual and reproductive health, to uncover common theories, practices, and success factors. Faced with continued efforts to achieve gender equality, there is a growing emphasis on addressing outmoded and harmful gendered stereotypes and norms to facilitate societal and cultural transformation through individual attitudes and behavior modification.

Success is the motive for Man's use of lies and deceit in *Some Girl(s)*. He does not seem like a man who displays such crude masculinity. He avoids arguments in a stereotypically male manner. Since he had left three without explanation or confrontation, he would never have gone back to see them to ease his guilt. In his desperate attempt to end his marriage and start over with Bobbie, he shows that he is terrified of commitment. It is a prevalent stereotype given in countless films and literature that males are educated and bright. He possesses this trait from the many literary references he makes. On the other hand, traditionally speaking, women neither need to be particularly educated nor clever. This cliché is represented mainly by Sam, Tyler, and Bobbie. Sam presumably married shortly after graduating from high school without more education, Tyler cannot comprehend any of Man's references to Don Quixote (33) or Bluebeard (34), and Bobbie acknowledges, "No, I do not read that much. Except X-Rays…" (67).

The only woman who does not fall into this pattern is Lindsay, who teaches as a housewife with children who gladly carries out her tasks but secretly dreams of romantic adventure stories. Tyler is the total opposite: an independent and self-assured woman who states, "...and that is why my friends have a bunch of kids, and I have fun! […]" (26). On the other hand, Lindsay belongs to a more modern but still quite traditional category of successful working women who are married to men in positions of professional superiority. Bobbie is not as simple to be categorized; like many other women, she is extremely emotional, which is undoubtedly a stereotypically feminine characteristic. This play has numerous classic gender stereotypes of femininity and masculinity.

According to Judith Butler, the activity of gender involves regular performance. This repetition is both a reenactment and reexperiencing of meanings that have already been socially established and the everyday and ritualized form of their legitimation (7). Although individual bodies perform these significations by being stylized in gendered forms, this "activity" is public. There are temporal and collective dimensions to these actions, and their public nature is not inconsequential; in fact, the performance is carried out with the strategic goal of maintaining gender within its binary frame—an aim that cannot be attributed to a subject, but must be understood to found and consolidate the subject (Butler 178). Subsequently, Labute portrays the repetition of sexual activity in different ways and different women through collective personality to represent gender performances.

In this play, each scene is separate, and each relationship is different. When one looks at them all together, they paint a picture of a man whose primary loyalty is to himself and who seems strangely blind to the betrayals he performs. On the other hand, the ladies share a common attraction to a man whose declarations of loyalty have shown to be unreliable despite their diverse origins and ages. *Some Girl(s)* is partially a tale of desertion, abandonment, and loss, all of which are typical LaBute themes. It is also a tale about the bewilderment that afflicts those who search for a solution to their problems in others whom they seem destined never to comprehend. What had appeared to be an intimate relationship turned out to be little more than fleeting contact. They inhabited different narratives (208).

In parallel, Bobbi tells Guy, "I do not need you," and he responds, "That's not very pleasant" (Labute 62). The guy is always looking for someone to fulfil his needs.

Sam, for her part, assumed that he had abandoned her for another woman or just "some girl." She recalls hearing his mother discuss his taking such a girl to a prestigious nearby school. The memory of this betrayal prompted her to slap him across the face, indicating that, whether she is married or not, she still feels the pain of her abandonment and has maintained her hopes while harboring resentment over her abandonment.

In actuality, male power encompasses all values. Moreover, the more these ideas a man embodies, the more powerful he feels himself and the more others view him to be. However, as Michael Kimmel correctly observes, this unrealistic picture is a source of uncertainty and pain for males (Wright 8).

The incapacity of LaBute's men to connect with others and their propensity to inflict harm on others is largely attributable to how they have been socially created as males to execute traditional masculinity and prioritize power above intimacy. Men in LaBute's works are consumed by a fear of being perceived (both physically and emotionally) as subhuman.

Kimmel, who studies gender from a social constructionist perspective and is one of the most talented and respected people in men's studies today, is the primary source of inspiration. As a feminist, he educates others on gender-related issues and campaigns for equality between men and women. As he notes in The Gendered Society, he is not advocating for a completely degendered society, but rather one in which people are not denied human attributes based on their gender. He says:

> Why, after all, are love, nurturing, and tenderness defined as feminine? Why do I have to be expressing the effect of the other sex in order to have access to what I regard as human emotions? Being a man, everything I do expresses my masculinity. Moreover, I'm sure my wife would be no less insulted if, after editing a particularly difficult article or writing a long, involved essay, she was told how extraordinary it is to see women expressing their masculine sides—as if competence, ambition, and assertiveness were not human properties to which women and men could equally have access. (266)

As pointed out by Kimmel, our propensity to categorize conduct into binary gendered categories can be restrictive. Kimmel uses Sigmund Freud's theories on gender development to introduce the concept of the flight from femininity. However, he extends Freud's technique to show that gender is not a fixed trait (Wright 10). In the Gendered Society, he demonstrates this concept more effectively by citing Candace West and Don Zimmerman, who has claimed that gender is not something a person possesses but rather something a person performs (100). Kimmel explains the existence of many masculinities, which vary according to a man's ethnicity, culture, nationality, and period, among other factors, by acknowledging this concept. Kimmel also emphasizes that the prevailing style of masculinity stands in opposition to the "Other" in the United States.

Kimmel defines hegemonic masculinity as "a man in power, a man with power, and a man of power" (Wright 8). His lecture introduces the topic of racism, but he focuses mostly on how women are oppressed by males and positioned as their polar opposite so that men can preserve societal authority. On a personal level, though, these guys may not feel very powerful:

"Tell me what page she's on" (Labute 17) is a reference to the number of women in a man's life. When a man finishes one page of a woman, he turns to the next page, but he may always return to the previous pages to relive his past and demonstrate his masculinity.

Although traditional concepts of masculinity are becoming less restrictive, Labute maintains that they continue to play a significant role in the lives of many American males, such as the protagonist of Some Girls. Guy reverts to traditional concepts of manhood—physical strength, self-control, and power—as if 'more' masculinity were the solution to his

dilemma. As a component of the contemporary societal climate, traditional masculinity is still very pertinent for artists like LaBute to incorporate into their works for audiences to address.

Gender is utilized by social scientists as a "factor" or "dimension" of a study, as well as a "mark" of biological, linguistic, and cultural differences for embodied individuals.

Gender can be viewed as a meaning that an (already) sexually differentiated body takes, but this signification exists only in opposition to another. Some feminist theorists assert that gender is a system of relationships, not an individual characteristic. Others, following Beauvoir, would contend that only the feminine gender is marked and that the universal person and the masculine gender are confused, therefore defining women in terms of their sex and praising men as the carriers of body-transcendent universal personhood. Women symbolize the sex that cannot be conceived, a verbal emptiness and opaqueness (Butlre 13).

In a language based on univocal meaning, the female sex is unrestricted and undefinable. In this sense, women are the gender that is not "one" but plural (Butlre 16). In contrast to Beauvoir, who identifies women as the Other, Irigaray contends that both the subject and the Other are masculine pillars of a closed phallogocentric signifying economy that achieves its totalizing objective by excluding the feminine entirely. For Beauvoir, women are the absence against which masculine identity defines itself; for Irigaray, this dialectic produces a system that precludes an entirely alternative economy of signification.

The impact of gender is formed through the stylization of the body; hence, it must be understood as the ordinary manner in which numerous bodily gestures, movements, and styles create the illusion of an enduring gendered self (Butlre16).

Some Girls depicts this aspect of the relationship between the Man and four women. Throughout Guy and Lindsay's chat, she attempts to seduce him multiple times, and each time he allows it more so that when the scene concludes with her blowing smoke into his mouth, the audience is uncertain of what will occur between them next. Observing two completely different experiences between the Man and two of his ex-girlfriends shapes the audience's expectations for the third portion. It piques their interest regarding the next female character. Similar to the earlier scene, it is evident that the relationship between these two did not end well. Lindsay is still

quite angry and full of sarcasm. They had an affair while she was married, and when it came out, he left town promptly without ever contacting her again. This formulation shifts the understanding of gender from a substantive model of identity to a conception of gender as formed social temporality. Importantly, suppose gender is established through internally discontinuous acts. In that case, the "appearance of the substance" is precise. A constructed identity is a performative achievement that the mundane social audience, including the actors themselves, comes to believe and perform in the mode of belief (Butlre 179).

In *Some Girls*, LaBute employs a variety of unusual dramatic methods. Expository techniques (the connection between the dramatic past and the dramatic present) are one example of such aspects. "Primary text" refers to "the spoken dialogue that occurs between the dramatic figures," whereas "secondary text" refers to "the title of the play, the inscriptions, dedications, and prefaces, the dramatis personae, announcements of act and scene, stage-directions, [...] and the identification of the speaker of a particular speech" (Pfister 13-14).

Some girl(s) lacks typical acts or scenes but is organized into four sections. The male character, Man, remains the same in all four parts; only the female characters (Sam, Tyler, Lindsay, and Bobbie), who give the parts their names, change. Consequently, Labute adopts a variety of informative tactics. In this framework, investigating the function and significance of dramatic history and the present is an indispensable tool for interpreting his plays. LaBute addresses these two notions in various ways in *Some Girl(s*). Although the tragic past always plays a significant influence. Pfister defines exposition as "the delivery of knowledge about previous events and circumstances that determine the dramatic present" (Pfister 86). It is different in this play than what occurs in the conventional play where antecedents are frequently disclosed at the beginning of a work, either in a prologue, a protagonist soliloquy, or an expository conversation.

Dramatic pasts play a significant influence in the lives of *some girls (s)*. The dramatic past predominates over the present, but because this is an episodic play, the importance of the expository material can only be defined for the individual episodes, which are only related to the figure of the Man. The most important part is how the male and each of the four women, Sam, Tyler, Lindsay, and Bobbie, perceive the past differently. In the first episode, for instance, there are considerable differences between how the

two characters perceive the past. Sam and the Man had dated in high school, but he supposedly broke up with her then. Various examples from the book can be used to demonstrate how these last events were experienced.

MAN. […] I get a feeling that it did not end well…[…] …we sort of…SAM. You ended it! MAN. Uh-huh. Right. SAM. You broke up with me. […] MAN. Well, we were just kids, right? SAM. Eighteen. When you dumped me, I mean. That is an adult. MAN. True, but that is what it seemed like. To me. Kids SAM. Whatever. Whatever you say. […] MAN. […] I think the reason we broke up back then was…this. We were, umm…SAM. Not we. You. You ended it. (9-11)

As can be seen, their memories of the tumultuous past are vastly different, as are the emotions associated with it. One gets the idea that he is either emotionally insensitive if he did not realise what he had done to her, or that he is repressing the negative memories and pretending their separation was less tragic than it was. Moreover, she appears to recall much more historical details than he does:

SAM. I thought it slipped your mind. So much else seems to've…MAN. I thought we even talked about this once. SAM. No.MAN. Didn't we? Over the summer there, before I …? SAM. No, we didn't. Not ever. MAN. Oh. Okay, my mistake (17). Although most of the dialogue focuses on the dramatic past, there is one important moment in the dramatic present when their conversation causes a change in her conception of their past relationship: SAM. […] I realize now, though, it was just a teenage thing, and you dated somebody else right after me, so… how is that for a wake-up call, huh? Shit (20).

As a result of the first scene's information, the viewer enters the second scene with specific assumptions, expectations, and a different perspective. As expected, it becomes apparent that these two also had a romance. In this episode, however, the audience quickly realizes that a completely different mood prevails, as the female characters Sam and Tyler could not be more dissimilar. Observing how the mood shifts when more knowledge about the dramatic past is disclosed is fascinating. At first, Tyler appears to be a strong, independent woman who, unlike Sam, is not heartbroken over her separation from the Man. They disclose a little information about their relationship, such as their sexual adventures, he never objected to her

smoking, etc. The tone is humorous, and it is clear that they continue to find each other appealing. Only at the very end of this episode is a part of the tumultuous past disclosed that alters this seemingly untroubled small talk:

MAN. I felt so shitty about what I did to her by leaving that I just…plunged in with you, did whatever. All the, you know… […]
TYLER. Look…it is never cool to be second in a relationship. It is not. Furthermore, I was a distant second there for a bit! […] you can talk yourself into anything if you say it enough.
Nevertheless, it's not true. That shit hurts. (39-40)

Another important bit of information that is disclosed is Man's reason for visiting various of his ex-girlfriends: Do a check-in, you know? Get up to date with ‘em, make sure that we’re…you know: no harm, no foul. […] Right a wrong. (32-33).

As he is getting married, he believes "it would be a good way to start [his] new life" (33) as the motivation for all these visits. While the dramatic past dominates their talk, the dramatic present becomes significant in the end.

In this view, one can return to Plato and Aristotle as the originators of gender, as the researcher mentions at the opening of this research. Labute wants to combine the past and present to demonstrate the centuries-old roots of women's history and gender. Consequently, the playwright employs this method to introduce gender conversation. Labute leaves this play's ending open, just like many other plays, because he wants the audience to know there is no end to the issues concerning gender.

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