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**Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (1951) and LeRoi
Jones's *Dutchman* (1964): A Foucauldian Reading**

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Abstract

This research delves into the works of Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* and LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman*, employing Michel Foucault's theory of power relations, with a focus on the key concepts of "Knowledge" and "Power." The study examines the behavior and interactions among characters within the framework of *Theatre of the Absurd*. The dissertation comprises two chapters. In the initial chapter, we explore the interconnectedness of "Knowledge" and "Power." We observe how those who possess knowledge wield power, as seen in The Professor's dominance over the Pupil and Lula's control over Clay. The subsequent chapter investigates the consequences of this power dynamic, transitioning from "Power" to "Domination." Following the abuse of power by the Professor and Lula over the Pupil and Clay, we explore the emergence of "Resistance" as a response. In the final chapter, we address the body as a target of power, referencing Sara Mills' work on "*Michel Foucault: The Body and Sexuality*" (2003). Through this lens, we analyze how the authors were influenced by the conditions of their societies characterized by absurdism, uncertainty, and chaos. Ultimately, we conclude that the possession of knowledge can lead to negative domination, significantly impacting power relations and suppressing the powerless, particularly when wielded by authoritarian and misguided authorities.

Key words: Michel Foucault, Power Relations, Power, Knowledge, Domination, Resistance, Sara Mills, Body and Sexuality, Theatre of the Absurd (Absurdism), Uncertainty, Chaos, Authoritarianism.

Dedication to:

- *Our dear families*
- *Our friends*
- *You the reader*
- *Us*

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Introduction

This paper attempts to analyze the European playwright Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (1951) and the American LeRoi Jones's *Dutchman* (1964) from a Foucauldian perspective. The focus is on how power, knowledge, domination and resistance along with Body and Sexuality are represented. We also discuss the interplay between power and knowledge as a theoretical framework by Michel Foucault in the demonstration of discourse. We also shed light on its strategies to dominate and control the characters of the plays. The purpose why we selected the two plays, is to provide a rich and diverse basis for examining power, knowledge and domination within the context of theatre offering opportunities for nuanced insights and comparisons. Also to show how the different time periods (1951) and (1964) allows for an examination of how power dynamics and societal issues may have evolved or remained consistent over time.

The two selected plays belong to the Theatre of The Absurd. The concept of the Absurd is gleaned from Albert Camus's *The Myth of Sisyphus* (1942). Later on, the term absurd was coined as the theatre of the absurd by Martin Esslin in a number of plays in the 1950s and the 1960s in his book *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961), which propagates the principles of the absurd concept such as uncertainty, chaos, and miscommunication. Esslin's book *The Theatre of the Absurd* was used as a reference to the post World War II theatre, how the plays emphasize the absurdity of man's condition for being "out of harmony with reason of propriety, illogical and ridiculous¹" as stated in Carina Kroger's essay "*The Theatre of the Absurd*". The associated playwrights with this movement are called, Absurdists such as Samuel Beckett (1906-1989), Eugene Ionesco (1909-1994), Arthur Adamov (1908-1970) and Edward Albee (1928-2016). They all share the view that life has no inherent meaning, and man is occupying a universe with which he is out of key.

The plays center to a great extent on thoughts and the influence of existentialism and express what happens when human presence needs meaning, reason and communication.

The “Absurd Theatre” or “New Theatre” was initially a Paris based Avant-Garde phenomenon of the 1920s and the 1930s that took place in small theatres only. As the influence of the Absurdist figures grew, it quickly spread to other countries that urged many writers especially playwrights to express their absurd visions through their writings. It was the birth of a new level of form that transformed the traditional norms of theatre. The dramatists of that period were intertwined with themes of fear, uncertainty, depression, arbitrariness...etc, as a consequence of the Second World War’s atrocities and a reaction to realism.

a. The Review of the Literature:

Over the last decades, absurdist plays were the focus of many critics namely the plays of Eugene Ionesco’s *The lesson* (1951) and LeRoi Jones’s *Dutchman* (1964). To begin with, Eugene Ionesco has received a large amount of criticism as one of the Avant-Garde figures in the 20th century. The playwright has influenced new revolutionary dramatic techniques that challenged traditional theater conventions such as: break down of communication, surrealism, lack of character development and repetition. One of the critics is Nasrullah Mambrol.

Mambrol has reviewed Eugene Ionesco’s works, life time career and childhood events. This critic tried to relate his early works to his childhood events that impacted his writings. The critic Mambrol has claimed in his article “Analysis of Eugene Ionesco’s Plays”(2019)that Ionesco has often attended puppet shows for children in the Garden of Luxemburg and remained haunted by the reverse relationship of human beings to marionettes². He sees his fellow mortals as puppets pulled by an unseen and unexplained force, prone to violence either as a perpetrator or as a victim. According to Mambrol, puppetry must, thus, be seen as one of the strongest verifiable influences on Ionesco’s theatre. In Mambrol’s article, it is difficult to imagine a more

effective illustration of a dehumanizing habit than it is to be found among Ionesco's peculiarly automated characters whose aspirations have been separated from their lives³.

Another critic who has discussed Ionesco's plays is Sylvie Drake. She studied Ionesco's style of writing in her article "*THEATRE REVIEW: Ionesco's Absurdity is Today's Reality*" (1993). She claims that Ionesco's language is after all full of logic on its own and considered to be a response to Beckett and flip side of Kalfa⁴. Sylvie Drake argues that Ionesco's plays, such as *The Bald Soprano* (1950), show submission, self-obsession of an unhinged world that was discernible⁵ during the 1950s. People were still under the influence of the post-World War II, from which Ionesco wrote his plays that seem to be meaningless when skimming but understandable when reading deeply.

Another one who is interested in LeRoi Jones' writings is Sabah Atallah. LeRoi Jones is an American poet, playwright and one of the most controversial artists and the founder of the Black Art Repertory Theatre. Atallah states, in her article "The Dilemma of the Black Man in LeRoi Jones's play *Dutchman*"⁶ (2009), Jones's writings were committed to the issues of racial identity, social injustice and other contemporary events. His play *Dutchman* (1964) is subject to much criticism. The work received the Obie Award and the Best of Broadway Play of 1964. In her article, Atallah discusses the issues of identity and alienation that the Blacks went through in the American society during the 1960s. She argues that the black main character Clay is enslaved by the white American norms and surrendered his black identity while trying to fit into the white culture.

The critic Atallah also discusses, in the same article, how *Dutchman* is quite similar to the legendary story of *The Flying Dutchman* (1939) by Michael Arlen. In the play, the subway is a doomed ship under a malediction; the doors open and shut mechanically. The silent passengers resemble the ghosts that walked the *Flying Dutchman's* decks⁷. Like the captain,

Clay suffers as he lives under the curse of the white society. She states in her analysis that the curse will be lifted if Clay sacrifices his identity and adopts the materialistic ideas of the white society. He puts his black identity in shade as he assimilates himself into the white culture.

Another prominent reviewer of Jones's work is Marcellete Williams, a Professor of English and Comparative Literature in Michigan State University. She asserts that Jones's writings have taken another orientation that re-shaped his identity with the modification of his name to Amiri Baraka, as he converted to Islam and directed a spirit house, a religious, cultural and educational black community. LeRoi Jones shifted from Black Nationalism to International Socialism. The critic assumes that the change of his ideology was also reflected in his works from being a Black Nationalist political leader to a black Marxist-LeninistMaoist⁸. He converted into writing socialist poetry and essays supporting revolutionary politics.

b. Issue and the Working Hypotheses

From the above review, we have noticed that the two plays have been studied separately, but to our modest knowledge, no study has dealt with the two plays jointly in a comparative study. Both works were either individually analyzed or with other oeuvres and raised great discussion and criticism. Therefore, the purpose of this research paper is to study the selected plays, *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco and *Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones, with reference to Foucault's theory of power relations. The aim is also to test and validate the working hypothesis through examination and analysis of the two plays, their character and the thematic elements we have identified. The research seek to investigate the themes of; "Power" and "Knowledge", "Domination" and "Resistance" along with "Body as the Target of Power" are portrayed in the two plays and how they relate to each other. In the plays "*The Lesson*" and "*Dutchman*", there exist a parallel representation of power, knowledge, domination, resistance as well the targeting of the body as a focus of power that allines with Michel Foucault's theories on power relations.

Throughout a comparative analysis of these plays, we hypothesise that the character's interactions and thematic elements in the works will reveal consistent patterns of power tentes.

c. Methodological Outline

Our present research is undertaken following the IMRAD method. First, it starts with the introduction where we have presented our research topic and its aim. Then, we devoted a part for the issue and the Working Hypotheses, where the problematic of the chosen topic is explained. Next, the Method and Materials section, in which we intend to provide a detailed explanation of Foucault's theory of power relations and follow it with a brief historical background of the two selected plays as well as the biographies of the playwrights; Eugene Ionesco and LeRoi Jones. This section closes with two short summaries of the two plays. In the Results section, we will provide the findings of our research. The discussion section which is the most important part has been divided into three chapters; the first chapter will deal with "Knowledge" and "Power" in *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*. In The second chapter, we will implement the concepts of "Domination" and "Resistance" in addition to Black identity and racism in *Dutchman*, whereas in the third chapter, we will discuss "Bodies as the Target of Power" in the two plays. To end with, we will provide a general conclusion.

Endnotes

¹ Carina, Koger, “Grin”, *Theatre of the Absurd*. Term, playwrights, historical context, characteristics, 11, 2010

² Nasrullah, Mambrol, “Literart Theory and Criticism”, Analysis of Eugene Ionesco’s Play’s, May 5, 2019.

³ Ibid

⁴ Silvia, Drake, “Los Angeles Times”, *THEATER REVIEW: Ionesco’s Absurdity Is Today’s Reality*, March 30,1993.

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Sabah, Atallah, K, “Research Gate”, *The Dilemma of the Black Man the Dilemma of the Black Man in LeRoi Jones' Play Dutchman*, June, 2009.

⁷ Ibid

Method and Materials

1- Method: power relations in *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*

Our focus concerns power relations in *The Lesson* (1951) and *Dutchman* (1964). In order to develop and analyze the two plays, we intend to borrow some concepts from Foucault's *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1 The Will to Knowledge* (1990) and the journal article *The Subject and Power* (1982), namely, power, knowledge, domination and resistance.

Another reliable work that we used is Mills Sarah's book *Michel Foucault: the Body and Sexuality* (2003). It seems relevant and helpful to achieve a succinct study because it is a significant critical ingredient that explains clearly how knowledge contributes to the exercise of power that impacts the body and sexuality.

Michel Foucault focuses on the exploration of the relationship between knowledge and power. He is one of the founders of critical discourse analysis which is concerned with how power is exercised through knowledge and how they are used in society. For Michel Foucault, power, discourse and knowledge are never a neutral accumulation of facts, in other words; that they can be collected or recorded in an objective manner, these accumulating facts is often shaped by power dynamics, however, there is always a "Will to Knowledge", a drive to gain knowledge of certain things in a particular way. The more we know about something, the more power we have over it. Further, coming to acquire new data and put in practice our previous feedback is also an exercise of power.

In his book *History of Sexuality*, Foucault introduces some concepts which are; power, knowledge, domination and resistance. He uses a historical analysis as a key to his study to better understand the concepts. According to him, the historical analysis is an essential step for an examination of his account of power. His study is rooted in a highly individual historical

vision, which centers on the transformation from traditional to modern individual society. It is especially concerned with the forms of knowledge and modes of social organization, and characteristics of capitalist modernity. Foucault also devotes a part of his study to the body, as he gives a great importance to the body and sexuality.

One of the main reasons for him during his journey of research is his homosexual nature which was not acceptable during the 1960s. He was obliged to hide it by fear to be judged, rejected and punished by his environment. Eventually, his interest is not only in his sexuality but also to acquire a certain kind of knowledge, perspective, and the kind of power we find in that kind of knowledge. The conclusion and argument from his book and the method by which Foucault offers a new description of the historical deployment of sexuality is his disagreement to the “Repressive Hypothesis”. He even applies his study to epistemology considerably because of his strong, distinct and captivating descriptions of the way knowledge actually occurred and operated in history. Nevertheless, his work cannot be epistemologically applied or compared similarly as it might compare and contrast two theories of modern epistemology.

Foucault has been influenced at an early period of his career by structuralism. He evolves an approach to intellectual history that he named the “Archeology of Knowledge” also as a title of this book. This approach dismisses the importance of individual thinkers, motives; instead, it emphasizes the inescapable mind-set that characterizes different ages. Foucault says that “Archeology” is primarily interested in the conditions and rules under which something comes to count as knowledge. Foucault re-describes knowledge in a way we almost instinctively find wrong at first, and understanding that leads many to believe that understanding knowledge in such a way does not constitute any understanding of knowledge at all¹.

a) Power and Knowledge

Almost all of Foucault's works are related to the process of how certain acquired information becomes acceptable and perceived as a fact. Foucault focuses on the mechanisms by which "Knowledge" comes into being and is produced by including the human sciences in which he situates his own work. Foucault wants to focus on the more abstract institutional processes at work which establish something as a fact, or as knowledge², rather than accepting that the individual thinkers develop notions and knowledge. He asserts that:

The subject who knows, the objects to be known and the modalities of knowledge must be regarded as so many effects of [the] fundamental implications of power knowledge and their historical transformations. In short it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it, and of which it is made up that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge³.

Foucault uses the terms "Power and Knowledge" to signify that "Power" is made up through accepted forms of "Knowledge", scientific understanding and truth. "Power" is not carried or exercised structurally by one person over another, even the dominated takes part in power relations. "Power is what creates knowledge, and knowledge on her turn induces the effects of power⁴"

Foucault says that power is always intentional; power relations do not exist that supposedly exercised without "aims and objectives" as Foucault states. The way that power relations manifest themselves within a society, culture or discourse is fully intentional, but without a specific individual or sovereign source whose objectives and aims might have determined the network of power's strategies.

Moreover, power produces knowledge and shows the sensitive relationship between them. The connection between power and knowledge is the way individuals or societies may use their

power for a type of knowledge they need to create power itself. “Knowledge” gives “power” and the combination of these two concepts outcomes a new concept which is “Domination”.

b) Domination

Foucault’s usage of the terms power and domination in his late works, on the one hand, denominates different physical states of relations, and on the other hand, it brings a differentiation between a general and a special case forth⁵. Domination produces a form of power that has implications for the whole of society from top to bottom. “Domination” inevitably emerges resistant movements and revolts that become a central phenomenon in the history of the society. According to Foucault, domination is not the nature or character of power. Power is exercised upon the dominant also and not only upon the dominated or marginalized one by resistance; however, domination is omnipresent. Simply, power can affect both the dominant and the marginalized through resistance but it remains a constant presence.

Power, knowledge and domination are the phenomena that make the organizations, and institutions remain vulnerable to corruption because those in position of dominance are free to rationalize their own version of rationality over the weak categories of the society.

c) Resistance

One of the most famous passages in the first volume of Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* concerns the relation between power and resistance. Foucault asserts: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power⁶”. He means that because power is not coercive in the sense of direct threat of violence, it must be understood as an asymmetrical set of relations in which the existence of this multiplicity of main points or relations necessarily involves the possibility of resistance.

In addition, Michel Foucault, in his work *Une Pensée de la Résistance* (2017), discusses his thoughts about passive and active resistance and the distinction between the two is a way of repressing and delegitimizing violence. According to Foucault, passive resistance is not necessarily conscious, but arises from the forces that control the body and transforms it into an immediate reaction to the initiative of power, illegitimate justice or evil as a revealer of the power that produces it. The other form of resistance is the active form. It is about courageous will to act in order to paralyze an intolerable or failing power and gives choice of tactics and use appropriate vocabulary, which is an explicit challenge to a power that is unbearable⁷. As mentioned in our introduction of the chapter, Michel Foucault states that resistance is formed just after the exercise of power, and if there is no resistance then power is not having an impact. In *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*, power is exercised in both plays, and resistance is formed just after it.

d) Body and Sexuality

Foucault's writings seem to have an activist dimension rather than being purely academic. He somehow forced the feminists, queer theorists and other marginalized groups to take a serious look at his work and to being put to use in political causes⁸. Foucault has studied power outside the realm of institution which he examines in his work *History of Sexuality* the way the state or other authorities oppress people in various discursive pressures. The body is one of the places where power is practiced, resisted and contested.

Michel Foucault's work focuses on the body for being more important than the individual which is perceived to be an effect rather than an essence, he argues, "The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus... on which power comes to fasten; In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, gestures, discourses, desires come to be identified and constituted as individuals⁹." He also claims in his essay "*Nietzsche*,

Genealogy and Power” (1992) that any experienced type of events, and whatever decision is made, have a certain material effect and impact on the body. In short, the body is “The surface of events¹⁰”.

Even though the body is perceived as solid and strong, it is totally constructed by the processes of history. The body is described as “a historically and culturally specific entity¹¹”. It is the nucleus for being treated and viewed differently depending on the historical period and the social context. From his description, Foucault concludes that the body is not and cannot be conceived as natural; thus, it is a subject to change through different social constructions and experiences. He also argues that much regulation by the state and institutions from the nineteenth century onwards were practiced upon the body on how knowledge is acquired and populations being constantly observed. The aim is to put population under the control of the state in which the body particularly is refined¹².

The Foucauldian analysis of the body and sexuality is a vague subject that is still being examined and researched worldwide. Foucault takes the initiative to study the matter of body that has been taken for granted. His ideology leads to a radical questioning of the unchanging nature of the body and how power relations are played out upon it. He also explains the relation of having a sexual choice and sexual preference that influence the individual on rethinking their identity itself.

2-Materials

a) Historical Background

It is important to mention what main events the decade from 1950s to the 1960s witnessed that brought changes into America and Europe. In the 1950s, the European countries were still trying to fully recover from the damages that the Second World War (1939-1945) had caused.

Its population was mentally suffering because of the atrocities of war and was left traumatized which made it view life as meaningless, absurd and inhabited a world where they were out of key and felt bewildered, troubled and obscurely threatened.

The trauma experienced during the two world wars under the threat of nuclear annihilation has been an important factor in the rise of a new theatre. With the emergence of this new theatre named the Absurd as coined by the absurdist critic Martin Esslin, gave chance to many absurdist playwrights to rise such as Eugene Ionesco and LeRoi Jones.

The Theatre of the Absurd is characterized by some basic elements, some of them can not necessarily be found in all absurdist plays. Absurd plays rise with basic questions of human existence and purpose of life; men suffer and finally die at the end of the journey. Due to these life questionings, language and words result in meaningless conversations which fail to express the essence of man. Since language is useless, it led to an absurd plot with illogical speeches and vagueness about time and place in the plays, as it felt like there is neither past nor future, but only repetition of the present.

The Theatre of The Absurd emerged during a period of depression and negative atmosphere as the plays try to prove that man cannot resist living in such an absurd, illogical world and does not provide any solution to his life problems. The Theatre of The Absurd keeps on reminding man that his existence is an absurd and meaningless fact. Thus the countdown of the Absurd began in the mid-1960s, its techniques and elements are now commonly being used in modern theatre. What is perceived is that The Theatre of the Absurd has many remarkable productions in Europe and America, Edward Albee's *The Zoo Story* (1959), Jean Genet's *The Maids* (1947), Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* (1951) are some of the prominent representative plays.

Throughout these plays, the playwrights provide real evidence of man's hope, world, fears and the meaningless of his life towards the external world. The drama tries to portray the real spiritual state of the individuals and how they confront their human condition. Martin Esslin tries through *The Theatre of the Absurd* (1961) to help its audience accept life as meaningless and not be that much depressed about it. He explains that it is a challenge to accept the human condition as it is in all its mysteriousness and absurdity and to bear it with dignity, nobility and responsibility. The reason for that is because there is no easy solution to the mystery of existence and that man is ultimately alone in a meaningless and chaotic world.

In America, there was the rise of the "Black Theatre" or "Ethnic Theatre" in the 1960s. The playwrights who emerged from the movement of the absurd are: Randolph Edmonds, Charles Giplin, James Brown and Paul Robenson. This period also witnessed the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement, marked by mass manifestation against racial segregation and pressures of discrimination throughout nonviolent protest. The black playwrights converted their writing skills into a political weapon and used the black theatre as a privilege to express the struggle that the black Americans have endured to achieve freedom and equality.

Their drama is inspired from the Blacks' everyday life which called for awareness and action addressed to the black public to educate and to white public to accuse and abuse. One of the greatest playwrights and central figures of the Black Arts Movement of the Sixties is LeRoi Jones, who is part of our interest in this research paper. Thus, his work is relevant to the research due its social and political significance in addressing racial issues and advocating for change.

b) The Biographies of the Authors

1. Eugene Ionesco (1909-1994)

Born in November 13th, 1909 in Romania, Ionesco spent his childhood in France where he started writing poems and scenarios at the age of twelve years old¹³. The divorce of his parents made him move back to Romania with his father and continued his studies of French literature at the University of Bucharest. After his marriage, he relocated to France. His life and work were influenced by a mysterious experience of a sudden luminosity while walking under the blue sky; Ionesco felt a sensation of floating that made him feel great peace within himself. As his feet touched ground again, he perceived the world as corrupted, dirty, evil and meaningless, the strange juxtaposition made him experience a paradigm shift. His first play *The Bold Soprano* (1950), surprisingly received critical praise which catapulted him into a vibrant working career and wrote many other famous works as *The Lesson* (1951), *The Chairs* (1951), *Rhinoceros* (1959) which explore morality, fantastical humor and depict a meaningless world that is ruled by luck.

Ionesco won a number of prizes including Tours Festival Prize for films as he challenged the traditional rules of theatre. The playwright died at the age of eighty-four years old in Paris. Eugene Ionesco is still considered as one of the most talented artists and founding fathers of the Theatre of the Absurd¹⁴.

2. LeRoi Jones (1934-2014)

LeRoi Jones is born in October 7th, 1934 in Newark, New Jersey. His full name was Everett LeRoi Jones¹⁵. He attended Rutgers University in Newark then went to Howard University. After college, he joined the Air Force from where he got discharged for reading communist texts and relocated to New York City, Greenwich Village in 1950s. Being in New York offered

LeRoi Jones a chance to be a part of the rich Avant-Garde literary scene. During his life time in Greenwich, he started two magazines and married a Jewish woman and had two daughters.

In 1959, he traveled to Cuba where he worked to promote African-American literature. Later on in the 1960s, Jones wrote his famous play *Dutchman* (1964) and was performed in Off-Broadway as the best play of the year that made him win the Obie Award. Some years later, he left his family behind and moved to Harlem where he became a black radical nationalist and turned away from western tradition and worked for a new black aesthetic. In 1965, he converted to Islam and changed his name to Amiri Baraka the name he maintained until his death in 2014, after he established the Black Art Reportory Theater in Harlem. LeRoi Jones is emblazoned as a highly influential activist and poet that helped great advancements in African-American literature and art¹⁶.

c) The Summaries of the Plays

1. The Summary of *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco

The Lesson is a play by Eugene Ionesco published in 1951. It is a story of a professor student relationship. The play begins with a doorbell ringing and a maid welcomes a young lady to receive private instructions from the old Professor. The Professor meets the pupil in his dining room which is also used as an office to tutor her. At first, the teacher feels shy and stutter while asking his student questions to which she answers correctly and he congrats her for her intelligence. The more questions he asks, the more she hesitates and gives wrong answers; this raises the Professor's anger and so he yells at her as he lectures her. As the play progresses, the Pupil starts to complain from a toothache and the Professor ignores her while she endlessly keeps repeating herself "I have a toothache". The Professor loses control and meaninglessly gives instructions and orders his student to remain calm and not to interrupt him while talking

about philology and translation. The Professor's maid "Marie" interferes and tries to make him stop his lecture before he completely loses control; however, he also ignores her. As the Pupil keeps complaining about all her body parts aching, the Professor murders her with an imaginary knife and then asks Marie for help. The play ends with the maid opening the door to another student who seeks for private lessons from the old tutor.

2. The Summary of *Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones

Dutchman is a one-act play written by LeRoi Jones in 1964. It tells the story of a conflict between the two characters, Lula, a beautiful young woman in her thirties, and Clay, a young black man in his twenties. The scene starts with Clay reading a magazine in a wagon in a three buttoned suit; seemingly the presence of the white woman Lula catches his attention and stares at her fully. Lula approaches Clay and starts a conversation that later on alters into a verbal dominance towards the black man. She accuses him of a couple of racial stereotypes, and she oddly manages to correctly guess important details about Clay's life and some of his deep secrets which confuses him. He remains calm to Lula's provocations and shouting in the wagon until he loses control and starts slapping her while confronting her about the challenges that black people experience in their daily lives. After his long soliloquy, he readies himself to leave, Lula abuses Clay by stabbing him with a knife in the heart and asks the other passengers to get him away from her and throw his dead body out of the wagon. At the very end of the play, we see the young lady looking at her next victim who has entered the subway who is also a young black man.

Endnotes

¹ Rick Marsh Mcom Hons, *The Essential Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge and its Impact upon Contemporary Organizational Discourse* (2016), “Academia”

² *ibid.*

³ Martin A. Hewett, *Michel Foucault: power/knowledge and epistemological prescriptions* (2004)

⁴ Martin Messner. Silvia Jordan,” *Knowledge and Critique – A Foucauldian Perspective*”

⁵ Schubert, Karsten. (2020). *Freedom as Critique. Foucault Beyond Anarchism. Philosophy & Social Criticism*. 47.

⁶ Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality* (1976). P95

⁷ Fernanda, Canavez. Heraldo Miralda,” *Cairn*”, *Recherches en Psychanalyse (N°12), Resistance in Freud and Foucault*, 2011

⁸ Sara, M. *Michel Foucault, Routledge Critical Thinkers*, (2003). 164.

⁹ *Ibid*

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² Vernon W. Cisney and Nicolae Morar, “*Biopower: Foucault and Beyond*”

¹³ “GradeSaver”, *Biography of Eugene Ionesco* (1999-2022)

¹⁴ *Ibid*

¹⁵ “Britannica”, *Amiri Baraka, Biography, Plays, Books, & Facts*, 2022

¹⁶ “Your Dictionary” 2022 LoveToKnow, Imamu Amiri Baraka

III. Results

This research has provided a comprehensive understanding of the plays "*The Lesson*" by Eugene Ionesco and "*Dutchman*" by LeRoi Jones when viewed through a Foucauldian perspective. Both plays share significant characteristics associated with the Theatre of the Absurd, which emerges as a response to the chaotic, fearful, and uncertain conditions of the times, reflecting profound existential questions that fail to capture the essence of human existence. To unravel these themes, we have applied key concepts from Michel Foucault's body of work. Each chapter of our dissertation has yielded distinct results contributing to our overall understanding.

In the first chapter, we discerned that both the Professor in "*The Lesson*" and Lula in "*Dutchman*" exhibit a sense of superiority over the Pupil, the Maid, and Clay. This research has underscored how power dynamics manifest within the characters of the plays and influence their discourses. The characters' sense of superiority is integral to the power relations at play.

The second chapter elucidated the dynamics of domination and submission among the characters. The Pupil and Clay find themselves as victims subjected to the authority of the Professor and Lula, respectively. Their lack of knowledge renders them vulnerable, and we have observed that the dominated characters employ different forms of resistance. The Pupil exhibits passive resistance, while Clay actively rebels against his oppressors. In the third and final chapter, which explores the themes of the body and sexuality in "*The Lesson*" and "*Dutchman*", we have uncovered that in both plays, the body becomes a focal point of power. The Pupil and Clay suffer at the hands of their oppressors, experiencing sexual abuse that ultimately leads to their tragic ends: the Pupil at the hands of her teacher and Clay at the hands of Lula.

In summation, this research has delved into the intricate Power Dynamics, Domination, Resistance, and the exploitation of the Body in “*The Lesson*” and “*Dutchman*”. Both plays serve as poignant reflections of the human condition and the impact of Power Relations in a world marked by chaos and uncertainty. The results highlight the enduring relevance of these themes in understanding the complex interplay between individuals and their societal contexts.

Discussion

The discussion section unfolds in two chapters, each offering a focused exploration of power dynamics in Eugene Ionesco's "*The Lesson*" and LeRoi Jones's "*Dutchman*." In Chapter One, we scrutinize the intersection of Power and Knowledge through the lens of Michel Foucault's theories, uncovering how characters employ knowledge to wield power. The chapter highlights the interplay between Knowledge and Power, revealing their impact on relationships within the narratives.

Chapter Two extends our analysis to Power Relations, examining themes of Domination, Resistance, and the embodied experience in both plays. It explores moments of resistance, from intellectual defiance to physical confrontation, offering insight into how characters grapple with oppressive authority. Additionally, this chapter delves into the symbolic and physical dimensions of power as it is enacted upon and resisted through the characters' bodies.

Together, these two chapters form a cohesive discussion that dissects the intricate interplay of Power and Knowledge in "*The Lesson*" and "*Dutchman*". This structured examination contributes valuable insights to the scholarly discourse surrounding the profound themes embedded in the Theatre of the Absurd.

Chapter I: Power and Knowledge in Eugene's "*The Lesson*" and Le Roi

Jones' "*Dutchman*"

This chapter discusses Foucault's concepts of "Power" and "Knowledge" in *The Lesson* (1951) and *Dutchman* (1964). The theory identifies crucial themes and concepts concerning the issue of how domineering-dominated are exercised in different time-frames and forms. While

studying Foucault's relation network, we get to understand that "Power" and "Knowledge" are interrelated in a way of supporting and influencing one another.

Foucault's theory primarily addresses the relationship between "Power" and "Knowledge", how they are used as a form of social control through societal institutions. To Foucault, the exercise of "Power" is what creates "Knowledge", and "Knowledge" on its turn induces the effect of "Power"¹. The two concepts cannot be separated, they are bond together. Foucault claims that power is everywhere, and whenever there is "Power", "Knowledge" is produced.

a) **'Knowledge' in *The Lesson and Dutchman*:**

Both Eugene Ionesco and LeRoi Jones show the role of knowledge in social relations, how and where it appears through the two plays. Foucault asserts that an interface between modern forms of power and knowledge has served to create new forms of domination.²

The two plays are full of absurdity and nonsense which is one of the details that *The Lesson* and *Dutchman* have in common and where the concept of Power is studied along with Knowledge from the beginning till the end. In *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault claims that between every point of a social body between a man and a woman, between the members of a family, between a master and his pupil, between everyone who knows and who does not, there exist relations of power.³ Moreover, the desire for power is the main driving force in humans, achievements, ambitions and striving to reach the highest possible position in life. In *The Lesson*, it is a professor-pupil relationship which deals with giving private lessons to an eager girl, whereas in *Dutchman* it is the illustration of master-slave relationship.

The characters in Eugene Ionesco's play are mentioned by their status written in capital letters, which gives impression that those nouns are their actual names. "PROFESSOR"

prescribes the meaning arbitrarily to his student in order to overpower her by being manipulative puppeteer as he showed no restriction in the use of authority. “PUPIL” implicates innocence and weakness which emphasizes the superior and inferior in the play; in other words, the intellectual and ignorant. “Pupil” also means “an orphan”, a minor who needs protection from his state. She needs protection from her teacher according to the dictionary.

The only character who is given a name by the author is the professor’s maid “MARIE” whose name refers to two important figures in the Christian and Egyptian history. “Mary”, in Christianity, is the mother of Jesus Christ that is a much praised name and symbol of wisdom and sanity. In this context, each time the maid Marie shows presence in the play, she is there to advise and to admonish the Professor who has done something wrong. She tries to stop him from committing any further sins and to bring him to the right path and never abandon him. The name can also relate to Moses’ sister in the Old Testament of the Bible and the meaning of the word itself is “bitter” or “rebellious”, a reference to the biblical “Myriams” life as a slave in Egypt⁴ that can share the status of servant with the maid Marie. As the scene starts to get heated, the maid repeatedly interrupts her master and warns him of what is yet to come if he does not stop the lesson and control his action towards his student. The name “Marie” adds a layer of religious symbolism to the play, and it contrasts the absurdity and immorality of the Professor’s actions with the purity that is associated with “Mary”.

PROFESSOR: ... the essentials of linguistics and comparative philology ...

MAID: No, Monsieur, no! ... I shouldn't do that if I were you!

PROFESSOR: Marie! Now you're really going too far!

MAID: Of all things, not philology, Monsieur, philology is the worst of all ...⁵

Ionesco is known for his irony and satire. It highlights the contrast between the maid’s name and her actions. It suggests that people on authorities that claims moral or religion are not always true to those values, but full of hypocrisy which is seen in the Professor’s behavior.

In the same way, proper nouns are given to the characters in *Dutchman* for their implicit meanings. The choice offer to the black man's name 'Clay' is not coincidental. 'Clay' refers to pottery; that is a substance of wet soil. It carries implicit meanings that add depth to the character. Lula representing the higher controlling power and racial prejudice as if she was a pattern who molds Clay into her desired shape.

The Professor and Lula both exploit their distinct forms of knowledge when dealing with receptive subjects, the Pupil and Clay. Drawing from Michel Foucault's distinction between "savoir" (knowledge) and "connaissance" (knowledge) where savoir is refers to acceptable procedures and effects of knowledge in specific domains at a given time."⁶ we can observe how the Professor relies on his scientific knowledge (savoir) to earn a living *The Lesson* through private tutoring and maintain control over his student.

Similarly, Lula in *Dutchman* possesses a different type of knowledge (connaissance) from the Professor, which she also leverages to manipulate and mold Clay according to her desires. This underscores the motion that power is intimately tied to knowledge and can manipulate it to align with the hidden intentions of dominant character in the play.⁷

In the two plays, knowledge is represented through discourse that is the characters' words and sayings. The Professor and Lula went through the same process which led them to the same conclusion. Similarly, they also take time to fully be aware of the student and Clay's lack of competency after observing and analyzing their answers during the conversation. As stated in *The Foucauldian Concept of Power* "one has control over the person one observes"⁸.

PROFESSOR: All the Doctorates?... you are very courageous young lady. I really must congratulate you most sincerely. Well, we'll try, Mademoiselle, we'll do our best for you. Besides, you are most knowledgeable already. And so young, too⁹.

In this quotation, the Professor acknowledges his student's knowledge and even praises her for being well-advanced for her age, as evidenced by her school-learning certificate and her accurate responses to his initial questions. He treats her with respect, recognizing her cleverness and her proficiency in her studies. At this early stage he does not exhibit any sense of superiority or intention to exert power over her. His initial interaction with the pupil is characterized by a genuine acknowledgement of her intellect and capacities.

In Lula's case, her interaction with Clay takes a different form compared to the Professor's initial exchange with the pupil. Instead of a straight forward questions-and-answer format, Lula engages in a guessing game with Clay. She uses deceptive tactics, feigned curiosity to manipulate him. It's not about seeking factual information but rather about testing Clay's reactions and emotions. Lula's approach is more insidious as she throws a deceptive statement "fake" to elicit genuine responses from Clay, aiming to uncover deeper truth about him. This psychological manipulation highlights the complexity of power dynamics and the use of knowledge as a tool to control and dominate. Lula's game creates a sense of unease and uncertainty for Clay, emphasizing the psychological aspects of power and control in their interaction.

The dialogue between the two main characters, Lula and Clay, reflects Jones' notion on the relationship between black and white Americans, a slave-master relationship. Lula attempts from the very beginning of the conversation to manipulate and provoke him as she tried to draw his attention to the reason why he started down to her body and he vehemently denied it. As the play evolves, she accuses him of social stereotypes and correctly deduces things about him, like where he lived and gave details about Clay's friend Warren, his appearance and way of speaking. Lula succeeds to manipulate his thinking by convincing him that she actually knows him.

In this quotation, we witness a vital moment in the interaction between Lula and Clay. Lula admits lying about her knowledge about Clay's sister and Warren Enright, making Clay question her motives. As Lula's deception and her probing into Clay's personal life reveals the underlying tension and power dynamics in the play.

LULA: I told you I lie. I don't know your sister. I don't know Warren Enright.

CLAY: you mean you're just picking these things out of the air?

LULA: Is Warren Enright a tall skinny black boy with a phony English accent?

CLAY: I figured you knew him.¹¹

According to Foucault, the desire to control discourse and knowledge is essentially a desire to control power. This is illustrated through Lula's character and her desire to control everything that surrounds her. Power acts as a complex form of strategy with the ability to secretly shape another's behavior and recreates its own fields of exercise through knowledge¹². The function of knowledge is to help people to understand how life works.

In *The Lesson*, Marie appears in almost every moment in the play, no importance is attributed to her for being an unknowledgeable servant. The Professor underestimates her and ignores her whenever she attempts to communicate with him. The knowledge she acquired about her master's behavior after years of service, makes her know what makes him happy, sad or angry. Later on, when the Professor starts invoking the subject of arithmetic and essentials of linguistics and comparative philology, the maid interrupts him and asks him to avoid those subjects because she is mindful of what is about to happen later. The maid's knowledge is totally different from the teacher's and the pupil's, cause she knows the true colors of her master and he is made of, which Michel Foucault calls "connaissance". Marie also gained her confidence to step between him and the student to warn him through the observation she made of her master "one sees without being seen¹³" which means that people can gain power through observing

situations and transform it into knowledge, as Foucault aligns with the commonly accepted notion “Knowledge is power, and power is a source of sovereignty¹⁴”

In the quotation below, the maid is aware of her actions. Discourse generates knowledge and truth¹⁶ as Michel Foucault asserts. In other words, the maid’s discourse takes a form of knowledge; she tries to tell a fact about her master. Foucault also says that discourse helps us to identify the individual who produces it because it reflects his identity, class and social rank. In the case of the maid, even if she tries to convince her master, she still behaves by showing a lot of respect. Through her discourse, we can notice that he is her superior and she should respect him.

MAID: Don’t take on so, Monsieur, think what it may lead to! It’ll take you further than you want to go, you’ll go too far, you know.

PROFESSOR: I shall be able to stop in time.

MAID: I’ve heard that before. I’d like to see it happen.¹⁵

b) The way Power operates

Power operates through discourse. While reading the two plays, we notice that the Professor and Lula are quite accurate examples of how power operates. According to Foucault, the ultimate weapon toward power is knowledge itself “Knowledge is (simply) power¹⁷”. He has proven through years of studying history that if you have knowledge, then you mostly have higher chances of manipulating and taking command over the population. Humans by nature are mostly drawn to people with authority, knowledge and power, so they can provide answers to their incomprehensible questions. In the case of the Pupil, she sees her teacher as an example and a source of knowledge instead of heading towards her parents who are supposed to be also a source of orientation and learning. The pupil’s reliance on her teacher for knowledge may be

influenced by a combination of cultural norms; teacher-student relationship. It also reflects the dynamics of education and the role of educators in shaping student's intellectual development.

When we first read *The Lesson*, we may think the Professor is the only character who exercises power because of his authority and attitude, but power is also exercised by the character of the maid at the end of the play. The Professor is known by his attempt to overpower his Pupil with his orders and intention towards her. He orders her, in this context: "Be quiet, then! I don't want to hear a word from you!"¹⁸. We may conclude that the above showcase consolidates Foucault's opinion about the fact that power is gained through actions but not possession. Likewise in *Dutchman*, Lula, the white lady holds power for breaking the traditional gender role of women who should be courted not the reverse. This is the first sign that Lula is authoritarian because of her skin complexion. When Clay asks her for her name, she answers, Are you talking to my name?¹⁹in the same conversation, Lula emphasizes guessing the proper name that suits him better according to his skin tone, as it is illustrated in this quote:

LULA. I bet your name is ... something like... uh, Geraldor Walter. Huh?
CLAY. God, no.
LULA. Lloyd, Norman? One of those hopeless colored names creeping out of New Jersey. Leonard? Gag.... CLAY. Like Warren?
LULA. Definitely. Just exactly like Warren. Or Everett.
CLAY. Gag...
LULA. Well for sure it's not Willie.
CLAY. It's Clay.
LULA. Clay? Really? Clay what?
CLAY. Take your pick. Jackson, Johnson, or Williams.
LULA. Oh, really? Good for you. But it's got to be Williams. You're too pretentious to be a Jackson or a Johnson.²⁰

The above quote shows the higher esteem that Clay accords to himself by suggesting names of great black families to Lula to choose, such as Jackson, Johnson or Williams. Lula shows an

authoritarian behavior when she allows herself to behave in a certain way towards others, but she refuses to be treated the same way. She reproaches Clay for the reason he asks for her name whereas she allows herself to guess names that fits him regarding his physical appearance.

Foucault thinks that power operates in the processing of information which results in something being labeled as a fact, rather than knowledge being a pure search of the truth. He asserts that power is implicated in the manner in which certain knowledge is applied, and that people who decide what knowledge is in the first place can easily claim to be the most knowledgeable²¹. In the case of the Professor, his perception of certain things is true for him that contradicts his way of teaching and puts his learner in a state of confusion. In either ways, the student follows his instructions blindly because she trusts his status as a professor and affirms everything he tells her;

PROFESSOR: In English.

PUPIL: Er ... you want me to say in English: the roses of my grandmother are...

PROFESSOR: ... as yellow as my grandfather who was born in Asia ...

PUPIL: Well then, one would say, in English, I think: the roses ... of my ... how do you say grandmother in English?

PROFESSOR: In English? Grandmother.²²

This quotation above shows the illogic and chaotic explanations where the Professor teaches his student translation from Spanish as a source language to English a target language without using any words in Spanish. It also shows the power that the Professor exercises because of his position as a mentor. His student does not show any doubt about the information her teacher transmits to her. The expression he gives to his learner in order to translate it is not a proper expression that a well-educated and rational professor would use in the realm of education; however, the words he utters are only meant to impact his student's thinking to have a racist attitude towards other cultures. Within this context, Foucault asserts that knowing the type of

knowledge one possesses will determine what and how that power will be practiced depending on what type of knowledge will strengthen it.

According to Foucault, “Power” is used to control acquired information that can be manipulated later on for its benefit and intention of the authority by modifying it and making the truth blurry. It gives the higher forces the right and authority to forbid and allow actions, behavior, norms, habit and culture to manipulate the society. In *Dutchman*, Lula is the character who tries to manipulate and overpower Clay for being a black middle-class man. That is very unfamiliar for black men to be part of a social middle class in the 1960s. The way Lula exercises her power by relying on her superiority as a white woman to set the truth out of the wrong from Clay.

LULA. You look like you been trying to grow a beard. That’s exactly what you look like. You look like you live in New Jersey with your parents and are trying to grow a beard. That’s what. You look like you’ve been reading Chinese poetry and drinking lukewarm sugarless tea.

[Laughs, uncrossing and recrossing her legs]

You look like death eating a soda cracker²³

As Lula and Clay keep talking, the conversation gets heated when she attempts to sexually seduce him. It is one of her tools to over-power and control him as talking about his manhood and other sexual connotation. She keeps on mentioning his black identity as she insults and verbally abuses him; however, Clay prefers to ignore her insults and tries to assimilate to the white culture by dressing and behaving similarly to them, which Lula held against him;

LULA. That’s what makes you so attractive. Ha. In that funnybook jacket with all the buttons. [More intimate, taking hold of his jacket]

What you’ve got that jacket and tie on like this? And why’re you wearing a jacket and tie like that? Did your people ever burn witches or start revolutions over the price of tea? Boy, those narrow shoulder clothes come from a tradition you ought to feel oppressed by. A three button suit. What right do you have to be wearing a three button suit and tripped tie? Your grandfather was a slave, he didn’t go to Harvard²⁴

In this excerpt, Lula engages in a provocative and intimate conversation with Clay. She not only comments on his attire, symbolized by three button suit and tie, but also subtly questions his connection to a tradition that may seem oppressive given his grandfather's history as a slave. The dialogue reflects layer of social critique, highlighting the complexities of identity, privilege and historical context within the character's interaction.

The conflict between Lula and Clay originates from Lula's desire to control Clay's emotions, and Clay himself who attempts to escape from his memories and his origins in order to adapt the white culture and manners. Clay does not reply to any of Lula's insults because he feels over-powered by her, since she represents the white culture "the primary authority". He feels ashamed of himself, since the white culture has normalized the rejection of the blacks who have no right to a better life for how unimportant they are. It is the ultimate truth that none can deny. The young bohemian woman takes advantage of her background based knowledge on black people's identity and behavior, and uses it against Clay as she triggers him to put his dark side on show. It is the will to power that motivates all actions of human beings and the characters of the two plays in particular.

In the last part of *The Lesson*, the Professor abuses his female student with an imaginary knife and let her dead body fall on the chair. The way the student behaved caused her murder, because to society, committing murder is considered as "abnormal" as Foucault claims in his power and knowledge ideology. Moments later, the maid enters unsurprised of her master's action who tries to fool her by denying his act and blames Marie instead; however, she does not fall into the trap. Marie confronts her master that it is the fortieth time he kills a student in the same day. As she scolds him, he justifies himself that it is the unknowledgeable student's fault and her disobedience for not learning and being a bad misbehaved student. The Professor's justification for his actions is not ethical but for him, it is the right thing to do. People acquire a better understanding of the subject undergoing exploration, hold power over the ones who

lack it. Therefore, Foucault explains that those people become able to command, based on their own perspective and have the privilege to judge what is right and what is wrong. This statement is shown in the Professor's conduct towards his naïve student. In addition, he tries to put his maid under the same spell by underestimating her, but he did not match his expectation of obedience. Knowledge can be gained from power, and through observation knowledge is produced²⁶ as explained by Michel Foucault. In the case of the maid, she gains knowledge through the surveillance of the Professor after serving him for many years, she succeeds to know his deepest secrets like murdering each one of his students, a servant's house becomes its master. "One can only observe because one controls, and one controls all and gains the more power as one observes and acquires knowledge²⁷".

Similarly, in the final scene of *Dutchman*, Lula grabs a knife from her bag and stabs Clay with it. The passengers in the wagon show neither reaction nor sympathy towards him. The passengers sitting on the wagon have witnessed all the action that took place in there and none interfered as a sign of hopelessness and weakness. In this context, Michel Foucault asserts In this case, the one who is in control of power is Lula, while all the other passengers are at her service and do as they are asked to. Instead, they manage to throw him out of the wagon following Lula's order to get his dead body off her and to leave the wagon at the next stop, while Lula busies herself straightening her things getting everything in order. She takes out a notebook and makes a quick scribbling note and drops it in her bag. The train apparently stops and all the others get off leaving her alone in the coach²⁸. We can translate Clay's murder as an indifferent act to the other people in the wagon and how the scene is absurd, as the play belongs to The Theatre of The Absurd or just a representation of how black people were worthlessly treated in the 1960s.

It follows from above that the young female student is neither considered important by the maid nor by the Professor who is responsible for her death. Instead, they both calmly discuss

how to get rid of her body and put it in a coffin like all the previous victims. They both show no worries that their neighbors would suspect them for murder, and see them order many coffins a day. It is also totally relatable to The Theatre of The Absurd for the absurdity of the characters' behavior and the chaotic scenes.

At last, in the two plays, the female pupil in *The Lesson* (1951) and Clay in *Dutchman* (1964) end up being murdered by the Professor and Lula. Respectively, Foucault claims that the relationship between knowledge and power can bring negative effects upon society, if it falls to the hands of unscrupulous people as dictators or corrupted politicians. Therefore, it becomes a means of manipulation and oppression as illustrated through the characters of the plays. For that Foucault's new reflection on power made the world experience a paradigm shift concerning his conceptualization on power by criticizing the old belief that power can only be, oppressive and negative for its misuse by the authorities. The student and the black man are respectively murdered in the same way after they are both verbally abused in the beginning of the two plays, and then physically harmed by their oppressors at the end.

Endnotes

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- ⁶Martin Messner. Silvia Jordan, KNOWLEDGE AND CRITIQUE - A FOUCAULDIAN PERSPECTIVE
- ⁷Saroj. D. *Foucauldean Concept of Power. Chapter 1*. PDF
- ⁸Ibid.
- ⁹Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p 186
- ¹⁰LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: William Morrow & Company) p.10
- ¹¹Ibid,p 10
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- ¹⁵ Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p 211
- ¹⁶Khechane.H. John Ronald Reuel Tolkien“s *The Lord of the Rings* (1954): a Foucauldian Reading. (2019-2020).p10.
- ¹⁷Saroj. D. *Foucauldean Concept of Power. Chapter 1*. PDF
- ¹⁸ Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p 209
- ¹⁹LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: William Morrow & Company) p. 14
- ²⁰Ibid.p. 15

²¹Saroj. *D. Foucauldean Concept of Power. Chapter 1. PDF*

²²Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p. 205

²³LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: William Morrow & Company) p.8

²⁴*Ibid.* p. 18

²⁵Saroj. *D. Foucauldean Concept of Power. Chapter 1. PDF*

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: William Morrow & Company) p

Chapter II: Power Relations: Domination and Resistance in *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*

Foucault says that “there cannot be a society without power relations”.¹ Domination and Resistance are parts of power that are practiced differently to achieve different goals after a long journey of struggle. According to Foucault, the challenge is not in using power to achieve justice and fairness, but in the actual acquisition and maintenance of power itself.

Domination involves exerting power over another individual or object, signifying a state of being more powerful and prominent than others. This superiority can manifest through various means, such as physical strength, intellectual powers, social status, and more. Domination is perceived as an act of oppression or imposing a certain way of thinking on other subjects that are considered to be weak and fragile by those who have power as stated by Foucault². In other words, it is an attempt to control, manipulate or coerce others by different means and forms.

Foucault defines resistance as a free action opposed to all illegitimate norms. It is the rejection of the new given ideologies or changes by higher force to practice. For Foucault, resistance is everywhere, since it is „formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised³, and it functions as a “counter-discourse”⁴ because the refusal of being oppressed by a man or woman is a refusal of his discourse and a shape of resistance on the identical time. He also asserts that the relation between a slave and his master is not a relation of power but rather a relation of oppression for there have to be quarrels, actions and reactions between the different sides so that it can literally be labeled a relation of power. In addition, he argues that „if these possibilities are closed down through violence or slavery, then it is no longer a question of relationship of power”,⁵ so we can deduce here that the deliberate decisions which individuals make contribute in spreading the area of power relations.

Indeed, the act of resisting against a dominating force is an act of power. Foucault stated that resistance is created just after the practice of power and where there is no resistance, and then power is not the effect. Resistance comes as a reaction to domination that is usually an illegitimate power.

A / Domination in *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*

For Foucault, domination is the application of power; it is the exercise of power and influence over someone, or the state of being controlled. In Foucault's writings, he talks about domination in different ways. He explores various types of relationships and distinguishes between general and specific cases. Similarly, in the two plays being discussed, there are clear examples of dominant and submissive pairs, showing a connection to Foucault's ideas. A correspondence in the two plays is apparent in the appearance of the dominating-dominated couples. In *The Lesson*, the student's general posture and movements „gradually lose their animation“ and she slowly changes from being happy and cheerful to being downcast, morose, sleepy, and in a state of nervous depression

In Ionesco's and Jones' plays, domination is illustrated through the characters of the Professor and Lula as the domineering, the Pupil, the maid and Clay as the dominated. In *The Lesson*, the Professor shows an act of dominance against his passive student with his knowledge, as soon as he gets to know that his pupil is not as clever as she pretends to be. At the beginning of the play, she acts like an idiot who agrees, obeys and answers on everything; she sees her

PUPIL: I'm following you, Professor.

PROFESSOR [*wittily*]: But still sitting down, I see!

PUPIL [*appreciating his joke*]: just like you sir.

PROFESSOR: Good! Then shall we arithmetize a little?

PUPIL: I'll be pleased to, sir.

PROFESSOR: Then perhaps you wouldn't mind telling me..

PUPIL: Not in the slightest, Sir. Please go ahead.⁶

This quote describes a kind of domination in the Professor's character, and if we take into consideration the Pupil's obedience, we would associate it with Michel Foucault's idea that the one who owns power, can dominate.

Furthermore, the Professor undergoes a transformation, shifting from a stance of equality or impartiality to one of imposition and domination. At first, he is excessively polite and very professional, he then becomes, in the course of drama; more sure of himself, excitable, aggressive, domineering, until he can do exactly as he pleases with his pupil. Indeed, she becomes as a puppet in his hands.

PROFESSOR: ... and again, this is another fundamental principle, every language is in fact only a manner of speaking, which inevitably implies that it is made up of sounds, or...

PUPIL: Phonemes ...

PROFESSOR: I was about to say so. Don't show off, airing your knowledge! You'd better just listen.

PUPIL: Very well, Sir. Yes, Sir.⁷

As noticed, when the pupil displays her knowledge by using the term "phonemes", the Professor's response takes on a condescending tone. He discourages her from demonstrating her knowledge and insists that she should merely listen to him.

Likewise in *Dutchman*, the word "Dutchman" is a symbolic name through the made research from the maritime history that refers to the *Dutch Slave Ship*. The latter transported about 4,600 slaves from the African west coast to the Dutch colony of Suriname and St Eustatius over seven voyages to South America and the Caribbean between 1722 and 1736. At least 1,000 slaves died on board⁸. It also shows how black people still suffer and never be able to get rid of the slavery issue since the 17th century till nowadays. Clay in *Dutchman* is still struggling to liberate himself from the "slave" identity into a free man. The word "Dutchman" also refers to the ghost ship *Flying Dutchman*, which was said in the folklore legends of the Maritimes to

never be able to make port, doomed to sail the oceans forever because of an oath made by the captain to get over a furious storm even if it took him eternity⁹. According to the legend, the devil heard the Captain and made him sail forever even after his death and became a part of the ship. In the play, the devil is illustrated through Lula, who was the barrier that stopped Clay from leaving the wagon until the moment she took his life. In relation to the play, the character “Clay” is manipulated and can easily be muddled by Lula as a leader and him as a follower who was seduced by her beauty and also intimidated by her audacity to inferior him. It is also important to note that interpreting Clay and Lula as Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden a symbolic and allegorical reading. If we view Clay as an innocent and pure human and Lula a temptress as she’s portrayed with a bag apples and invites Clay to eat with her as a symbol of temptation and manipulation. Later on, Clay’s initial innocence is corrupted as the play progresses. Clay falls into Lula’s trap and falls from grace after being murdered by her and thrown from the wagon as if it was “the garden of Eden” and being punished for his sins.

Lula is a domineering woman, who assumes the role of an aggressor in establishing a sexual relation, and Clay is receptive to her provocations; however, he does not undertake any direct prepositioning for sex, but he seems to fall in the trap.

LULA. What kind of reaction is that? You’re supposed to say, “Aw, come on, we’ll get to know each other better at the party”

CLAY. That’s pretty corny.

LULA. What are you into anyway?

[Looking at him half sullenly but still amused]

What thing are you playing at, Mister? Mister Clay Williams?

[Grabs his thigh, up near the crotch] What are you thinking about?

CLAY. Watch it now, you’re gonna excite me for real.

LULA.

[Taking her hand away and throwing her apple core through the window]

I bet.¹⁰

In addition, Lula dominates Clay through discourse. Her supremacy is illustrated in her acts and words. She is pictured as the representative of the white culture, thus, she dehumanizes Clay for being black American with her dictatorial behavior towards him. In the same context, Foucault argues that it is an “everyday behavior; it is the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us”¹¹. That is to say, Lula observes Clay’s fragility and inability to react; she feels herself stronger and grows her desire to dominate him. At a given moment, she even allows herself to use physical strength against him that he would not dare to harm her, thus, she feels protected by her society.

LULA. And I bet you’re sure you know what you’re talking about.

[Taking him a little roughly by the wrist, so he cannot eat the apple, then shaking the wrist]

I bet you’re sure of almost everything anybody ever asked you about... right?

[Shakes his wrist harder] Right?¹²

Clay’s weakness is due to his deliberate attempt to seek integration within the white American’s mainstream culture, which is a cardinal sin in Jones’s doctrine because such an attempt is the destruction of black humanity, as it leads to acts of self-hate on the part of black people. Lula also reflects the inability of the white man to accept the presence of a worthy culture or any beauty in any race rather than his own;

LULA: a union of love and sacrifice that was destined to flower at the birth of noble Clay Clay Williams. Yea! And most of all yea yea for you, Clay Clay. The black Baudelaire! Yes! [and with knifelike cynicism] My Christ. My Christ.

CLAY: Thank you, ma’am.¹³

The quotation above shows how Lula’s discourse of hatred towards Clay as a black man is based on racism and sarcasm. In this context, Foucault says that discourse is important because language and knowledge are closely linked to power and refers to discourse as an individualized group of statements that are utterances which seem to form a grouping such as the discourse of

racism¹⁴. That is to say, discourse is what helps us to contextualize the conversation such as racism where Lula uses words like: first, black Baudelaire. The color black means darkness, the skin color of Clay makes him cursed and the name Baudelaire refers to the famous French poet Charles Baudelaire, so the expression black Baudelaire means a cursed or damned poet¹⁵. Various literary critics and scholars have referred to Baudelaire as damned “Maudit” due to the themes of existential despair and moral ambiguity. Second, the name William is of Germanic origin which can be related to the *Dutch Slave Ship*¹⁶. Finally, the word “My Christ” which is repeated twice in the play refers to Jesus Christ who has been sacrificed, it can also be seen as a provocative and sacrilegious reference and views Clay as a figure of sacrifice possibly related to his experiences as a black man in a racially charged society.

Meanwhile in *The Lesson*, the Professor starts to give his female student orders. He just wants her to listen to him, but he ignores her needs. The student becomes the subject of the Professor; she obeys him without any objection at first. The Professor’s behavior and the student’s response introduce us to a new form of domination in the realm of obligation where violence reigns. This type of domination allows the one who holds power to control his servant or any other person that he judges to be inferior to him to obey his orders immediately and under any circumstances.

The dominated has no right to show any reaction or doubt against his given tasks. In this case, the student is under the Professor’s authority. The Professor uses violence to oblige his pupil to sit and listen to him; his authority reduces her to passivity. When the Pupil shows objection, he allows himself to kill her as a reaction to her misbehavior. Even after her death, he still orders her dead body to stand and leave the room. The Professor is not satisfied by only dominating his student but also his maid, Marie. Marie always obeys her master and the day

she opposes him, the Professor scolds her and tries to stab her with the same knife he used to murder his female learners.

PROFESSOR: at least, if you... [To the Maid] Leave me alone, Marie, what on earth do you think you're up to? Back to the kitchen and you're washing up! Go on! Go on!¹⁷

The person who shows more power gets to dominate the weak and be obeyed in return. Marie now becomes authoritarian in the Maid-Master relationship the moment she violently hits him to the ground to avoid being stabbed. After the shift of positions between Marie and the Professor, he becomes the dominated and his maid is the dominant, so he should do whatever she orders him to do with no hesitation for that she would save him from the crime he committed and feel safe;

MAID [bringing out an armband bearing a device, the Swastika perhaps]: Here you are! Put this on, if you're frightened, then you won't have anything to be afraid of. [she puts it around him arm]... It's political.

PROFESSOR: Thanks you, thank you, kind Marie; I feel safer like that ... You're a good girl, Marie ... You're a good girl, Marie ... very faithful ...

MAID: That's all right. Well Monsieur? Are you ready?

PROFESSOR: Yes, Marie, I'm ready.¹⁸

The violent shift in power, marked by Marie's forceful action, echoes Hegel's idea of the Slave's potential to become the true master through rebellion. This inversion reflects the transformative nature of Power Relations, emphasizing that the roles of master and slave are not fixed, but subject to change based on struggle and assertion.

In the case of Lula in *Dutchman*, she shows another form of domination that is also reined through violence. The white bohemian woman is the character who shows authority in the play regardless of her gender. She forces the black man Clay to behave the way that pleases her and ignores how he feels about it, but only focuses on her needs. The exercised domination against Clay is in the realm of ideology and creativity which explains that the authoritarian force is the

only source that dictates individual's orientations, compulsory or obligatory beliefs. Clay is an imitator of the white Americans; the young lady rejects the appropriation of the white society's behavior because she does not perceive him worthy of being a part of her culture. Lula takes from Clay the right of self-determination and having choices and tries to impose her thinking. She reminds him of the inferiority of his people that he denies. Clay's strong will to adapt to the white culture made Lula furious. They share different opinions, Clay is free to act, like and adopt any culture that pleases him. This play revolves around the topic of misperception of the black culture by the white culture and the belief that black people will always be inferior to the other race. Clay does not only represent Jones or the Black American, but any exploited and oppressed man in the world, who scolds his exploiters and oppressors through the strength of resistance.

B/ Resistance in Eugene Ionesco's *The Lesson* and LeRoi Jones' *Dutchman*:

Power is not only used to oppress and to subjugate, it has another function, namely resistance which is an immediate reaction towards another action, as stated by Barry Smart in *Foucault: Key Sociologists* (2002). No matter how the system is over-repressing, there is always a possibility of resistance and it can take various forms. Michel Foucault discusses his thoughts about active and passive resistance, and the distinction between the two is a way of repressing and delegitimizing violence. As previously explained, resistance is formed just after the exercise of power, and where there is no resistance, and then it is not an effect of power. In *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*, power is exercised in both plays and resistance follows just after it.

In the previous part, we have explained how Lula and the Professor succeed to overpower Clay and the student respectively after act scenes of the plays. In *The Lesson*, from the middle till the end, the student is suffering from a toothache all along the teacher's incoherent explanations, such as teaching her to translate sentences from Spanish to French using none

Spanish words and expressions. The Professor keeps ignoring his learner's pain while forcing her to focus and repeat what he says without being interrupted by her toothache complaints;

PUPIL: Are they really, Sir? ... Oh? Sir, I've got a toothache.

PROFESSOR: Don't interrupt! And don't make me angry!

For it I lose control of myself ... As I was saying ... ¹⁹

The word toothache is repeated thirty-six times by the student before she starts complaining of other aches. This shows her struggle to follow her teacher's instructions, the same amount of time that the Professor does not give any value or importance to his learner. The type of resistance that is formed in this play is the passive resistance. As it is already mentioned in the theoretical part of our work, passive resistance can be unconsciously formed after being surprised by an unbearable force, as the female student has experienced during her lesson with her mentor. After she tries to bear her pain, she suddenly manifests herself and shouts at her teacher to end his lecture because of her inability to focus. The Professor immediately restricts her by threatening to remove all her teeth then physically hurts her and continues his lecture like he normally would.

Moreover, the Professor's behavior makes the student unable to take any action. Each time the student tries to interrupt her teacher, he succeeds to control and manipulate her as he calls her "my puppet" for bring controlled like marionettes (puppets on a string), and this shows the implications of Eugene Ionesco's love for puppet shown from his childhood. Because of the unbearable toothache, she starts complaining of other parts of her body aching that comes from up to down her body; her arms, ears, head... which shows the gravity of her situation and the ruthlessness of her mentor who keeps torturing her all along. All her attempts to set herself free lead to failure,

PUPIL: I'm aching all over ... my throat, neck ... ah ... my shoulders ... my breasts ... knife ...

PROFESSOR: Knife ... Knife ... Knife ...

PUPIL: My Hips ... Knife ... My thighs ... Knife

PROFESSOR: Say it clearly ... Knife ... Knife ...

PUPIL: Knife ... my throat ...²⁰

The explicit sexual connotation of her aches and the repetition of the word „Knife“ at least thirty-three times by both the Professor and the Pupil lead to her rape and murder. The word “knife” in the context of the pupil’s physical discomfort and the professor’s response can be interpreted as having a sexual connotation. “knife” can be associated to phallic symbol that represents male sexuality. As the student mentions various parts of her body in discomfort and associates them with word knife, it can imply a sexual undertone.

The second form of resistance that is introduced in this chapter is the active resistance; it is well illustrated in *Dutchman*. From the beginning of the first scene of the play, Clay shows no signs of resistance and tries to go along with Lula’s impulsive racist jokes until the very end of the second scene. With the overstatement of Lula’s behavior, Clay ends up losing his temper and control over his fake personality. He starts showing signs of an active resistance, she consciously stands up from his seat to reach Lula on the other side of the wagon, in order to restrain her and take a stand for himself as a reaction to her abusive insults. In addition, Clay revolts against every assumption Lula makes about him and his origins. He angrily defends himself in along speech and violently addresses to Lula and passengers in the wagon and physically abuses her;

CLAY: Shit, you don't have any sense, Lula, nor feelings either. I could murder you now. Such a tiny ugly throat. I could squeeze it flat, and watch you turn blue; on a humble. For dull kicks. And all these weak-faced ofays squatting around here, staring over their papers at me. Murder them too. Even if they expected it²¹

In this quotation, we can notice that Clay alters from being a white noble calm man into a black savage that Lula triggers to show “his true nature” as their society assumes it is. The way the black man expresses himself seems as if he has prepared the long speech to be read and heard somewhere and someday, so he makes of the situation an opportunity to deliberate his repressed thoughts. Lula’s main purpose is to reveal the real personality of that black man under the mask of a white middle class man in a three-buttoned suit. Lula seems to be satisfied of Clay’s changing behavior at last, and that she is right about his type as a man. Clay lets Lula know that he is free to behave the way that pleases him, even if it is by pretending to be a fake white mid-class man, she still does not know anything about black people’s life. He also asserts that nothing stops him from cutting her throat while insulting her as if he talks to the whole white society and makes himself heard;

CLAY: And you tell this to your father, who’s probably the kind of man who needs to know at once. So he can plan ahead. Tell him not to preach so much rationalism and cold logic to these niggers. Let them alone. Let them sing the curses at you in code and see your filth as a simple lack of style.²²

The way Clay defends himself from his society’s prejudices shows how suffocated he is to maintain a personality which is not his. He tries to blend in with the ones who oppress him so he would not feel as a stranger in his three-buttoned suit.

The characters of the two plays, the young pupil in *The Lesson* (1951) and Clay in *Dutchman* (1964) are doomed to suffer the same fate. They both try to free themselves from their oppressors differently and none of them succeeds. Clay who aggressively and violently defends himself, as exposing active form of resistance which needs courageous will to act. The black man pushes back against Lula’s assumptions and racial stereotypes and challenges her provocative statements in a battle of wits and uses his words as a form of resistance. Later on, his resistance becomes more overt and confrontational as the play reaches the climax. As for

the Pupil, her physical resistance is ultimately futile in climatic moments of the play when the professor becomes physically threatening and the play ends tragically. Resistance is a subtle yet significant theme that unfolds in response to the power dynamics and oppressive behavior of the characters, particularly the Professor and Lula. The two plays explore the complexities of resistance in the face of oppressive authority and power. It also highlights the overwhelming and often tragic nature of power in the absurd world of the play.

C. Bodies as the Target of Power in *The Lesson* and *Dutchman*

“Bodies as the Target of Power” is an important point in Foucault’s Power theory in relation to “Body and Sexuality”. Michel Foucault discusses how the body is taken for granted and becomes the target of Power practices. The theorist suggests that the body must be perceived as the focus of various discursive pressures, in which the body is the center of enacted discourses and the site where they are contested.

The body is a sort of “Illusion of substantial unity”²³, meaning that what we perceive as a solid nucleus is actually just a fake disintegrated body and constructed through discursive pressures. According to Foucault, the body is in-covered and totally imprinted by history and social context. Every experienced political event affects the body directly; it is the reason that explains why certain individuals are viewed differently. The latter will be illustrated through the study of the two plays; *The Lesson* by Eugene Ionesco and *Dutchman* by LeRoi Jones.

As for *The Lesson*, the exercise of power is practiced over the young female student by the Professor. The reason of her death is being stabbed by an imaginary knife. According to historians and many sociologists, knives have a long and vast history in which they are used as a weapon till nowadays and a seeming extension to male physical strength and superiority²⁴. The knife is represented in both plays as a phallic symbol of Power, sex and correlated to masculinity. The knife as an object illustrates a bloodily miming sex over the vulnerable body

of the young pupil in *The Lesson* and kills her. This action either shows power and authority of the teacher or castration anxiety due to his mental instability, as it can be perceived in the play.

Meanwhile in *Dutchman*, the roles have been reversed regarding the knife as a phallic symbol. Lula's knife penetration into Clay's flesh means that his male power has been taken from him and she emasculates him through a phallic object. Clay cannot regain his power or masculinity unless he stabs her back with the same knife. The young student in *The Lesson* is unfairly treated regarding her gender. Women are perceived throughout history and culture as weak, immature in a patriarchal society. They are only considered to be beautiful objects in the possession of men.

The way the student's body is built determines the type of treatment she will receive. In the play, she gets abused and murdered by her male professor. Thus, it is the reason why Foucault gives great importance in his work to the body rather than the individual. In the cultural context, women are supposed to be only an object in the domestic sphere, obey men, and be dependent on them in order to survive as they follow what society dictates to them. The discourse of masculinity creates an atmosphere in which women were believed to be good only as housewives. The Professor murders his student because of her resistance that her mentor describes as disobedience. The old teacher repeatedly aggresses his learner by grabbing her from the arms, shouting and threatening her to remove all her teeth due to her toothache complaints. As Foucault explains, the body being the center of enacted discourses; it is also the place of controversy and combat. As the young female student tries to defend herself from the violent behavior of her mentor who physically violates her;

[... they both cry out, murderer and victim, at the same moment. After the first knife-thrust the PUPIL has fallen on the chair, her legs apart and hanging on either side of it: the PROFESSOR remains standing in front of her, back to the public; after the first blow, he gives the dead PUPIL a second thrust of the knife, with an upward movement; and then he starts visibly and his whole body shudders.]²⁵

Foucault explains that society and institutions have managed to control and oppress bodies mainly through given instructions and a sort of knowledge which is aimed for individuals to be manipulated and yet observed by those who rule. Foucault describes the body as “The surface of events”. In *The Lesson*, we have discussed how the female student is meant to be treated because of her biology. In contrast, in *Dutchman*, the male character incurs physical abuse by the female character Lula.

In the case of LeRoi Jones’ *Dutchman*, Clay’s body is the target of the white society’s culture as perceived by Lula “the white bohemian woman”. Clay is also abducted to be treated differently, and this time not because of his biology, but for his race as a “Black American”. Foucault gives another description of the body as a “Historically and Culturally specific entity”²⁶, which means that the skin color of Clay tells and holds a full history of slavery, unworthiness and dehumanization by the white society. It tells about the struggle they went through to achieve their freedom and values as human beings. Lula treats Clay improperly because of the imprinted historical events of his own race and she holds against him the crime of adapting and behaving the same way to with the white people. She aggressively holds his wrist by force and makes him say things she wants to hear, as she attempts to sexually seduce him. Lula ignores Clay for being a human being like her; she only sees him as a savage black man.

Foucault describes the individual as being a fake constructed self by the institutions that cannot be trusted to be considered as pure nucleus individuals. We can compare this description to Clay who is an Afro-American put in a mask of those who mentally and physically oppress him. At the end of the play, Lula shows physical violence against Clay and enacts her power by stabbing him with a knife into his heart. The historical events that Clay and his population have experienced affected his body and made it visible to others, on how to be treated.

In the first volume of *History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault discussed how sexual matters were not allowed to be mentioned outside the bedroom doors in the Victorian Era. This repression of sexuality and sexual practices were not effective the way it was supposed to be. Instead, it increased the desire to speak about sexuality and the pleasure gained from violating these taboos the forbidden is desired. Until the eighteenth and nineteenth century, it was still prohibited to talk about sex. In this context, in *The Lesson*, Ionesco does not express his sexual thoughts that were implicated implicitly through the characters' discourse

PROFESSOR [out of breath, stammering]: Trollop... she asked for it... Now I feel better... Ah! Ah! I'm tired... I can hardly breathe... Ah! [He is breathing with difficulty: he falls. Luckily there is a chair to catch him; he wipes his forehead, mutters something intelligible; his breathing becomes more normal...He rises to his feet, looks at the knife in his hand, looks at the girl, and then, as though he were waking up, panic-stricken.]²⁷

The quotation above illustrates the Professor's unconscious sexual abuse that shows his struggle of being sexually frustrated. The maid is aware of her master's crimes but she still tries to cover up for him by asking her "boy-friend" who is a priest to bring the wreaths. The word "wreaths" symbolizes victory over death and believed to wash away someone's guilt after committing a crime. Eugene Ionesco was able to describe the assassination of the student freely and hides the real crime that is "rape" since it is sexually related to taboos.

Compared to the fellow playwright LeRoi Jones, his writings and expressions related to sexual connotations and behavior were more liberated while describing the scenes between Lula and Clay. Foucault states that "the analysis of the repression of sexuality and indeed of the liberalization of views on sexuality, since it has led to people in the twenty-first century imagining that freedom lies in unfettered sexual expression"²⁸. This liberation of expression regarding sexuality and sexual practices is illustrated through the character of Lula in *Dutchman* in her speech; LULA. When you get drunk, pat me once, very lovingly on the flanks, and I'll look at you cryptically, licking my lips. CLAY. It sounds like something we can do²⁹.

Clay in the quotation above does not seem to be tempted by Lula's flirtatious behavior, but he does not reject her at the time which shows his inner desire to reciprocate her. If we compare both authors used vocabulary, we can distinguish that LeRoi Jones uses daring expression such as "tits" and "black ass".

LULA. ... Like all those Jewish poets from Yonkers, who leave their mothers looking for other mothers, or others" tits they lay their fumbling heads. Their poems are always funny, and all about sex. CLAY. They sound great. Like movies³⁰.

At the end of the play, Clay lets go of himself and makes a long speech where he deliberately responds to every comment that Lula has made to seduce him.

CLAY. You great liberated whore! You fuck some black man, and right away you're an expert on black people. What a lotta shit that is. The only thing you know is that you come if he nags you hard enough. And that's all. The belly rub? You wanted to do the belly rub? Shit, you don't even know how. You don't know how. That ol'dipty-dip shit you do, rolling your ass like an elephant. That's not my kind of belly rub. Belly rub is not Queens. Belly rub is dark places, with big hats and overcoats held up with one arm³¹.

Furthermore, Foucault invested his life time career not only to talk about history of sexuality, but also about sexuality itself. In his work *The History of Sexuality's* part "*Body and Sexuality*", he took the initiative to explain the importance and the real meaning of sexuality outside the realm of institutions and what society dictates. His discourses are more of activist and a model figure for the marginalized groups such as lesbians, gay communities to know their exact hidden identity, true self and to accept other sexual orientation and the importance of embracing them. In addition to feminist activists who fight for the silenced women, such as all the female students in *The Lesson*. Every female student that entered the Professor's house were raped and killed in the living-room without anyone noticing their absence.

Clay in *Dutchman*, as a black man revolts for his people's identity and self-determination as a human being for centuries. Thus, society has put various discursive pressures especially over the body that reflects the murder of the student and Clay for the purpose of manipulation.

Endnotes:

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⁵Claire O’ Farrel , “ Michel Foucault”.London: sage publications, (2005), p 99.

⁶Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain,1958).p 189.

⁷Ibid.p 200.

⁸Amiri Baraka and The Dutchman.” University of Wisconsin Parkside, September 29, 2015.

⁹ibid

¹⁰LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: WILLIAM Morrow& Company).p17

¹¹Diane Enns, *Speaking of Freedom: Philosophy, Politics and the Struggle for Liberation*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, California. (2007). P.83

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¹³Ibid. p.33

¹⁴Renaux, S. “The exercise of power in *The Lesson*”. (1981).

¹⁵Boixeda, Monica. "Baudelaire and the Damned Poets." Only Apartments.

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¹⁷Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain,1958).p197/198

¹⁸Ibid. p.207

¹⁹Ibid. p 213

²⁰Ibid.p 217

²¹LeRoi Jones, *Dutchman+ The Slave* (New York Madison Avenue: WILLIAM Morrow& Company).p 33

²²Ibid. p 36

²³Sara, M. *Michel Foucault, Routledge Critical Thinkers*, 164. 2003

²⁴ibid

²⁵Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p 214.

²⁶Sara, M. *Michel Foucault, Routledge Critical Think2rs*, 164. 2003

²⁷Eugene Ionesco, *The Lesson* (Grait Britain, 1958).p

²⁸Sara, M. *Michel Foucault, Routledge Critical Think2rs*, 164. 2003

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³⁰Ibid. p 28

³¹Ibid. p 34

V. Conclusion

In this extensive comparative research dissertation, we have delved into the intricate similarities between Eugene Ionesco's "*The Lesson*" and LeRoi Jones's "*Dutchman*", utilizing the illuminating framework of Michel Foucault's theory of Power Relations. Despite the distinctive settings and narratives that characterize these two plays, a profound convergence emerges around shared themes of Power, Knowledge, Domination, and Resistance within the context of the Theatre of the Absurd. Through a meticulous analysis, it becomes evident that both works serve as potent depictions of the oppressive nature of power, unraveling the complex dynamics where characters grapple with their dual roles as both dominators and the dominated.

Drawing upon Michel Foucault's seminal concepts of "Knowledge" and "Power", our exploration has unveiled a compelling narrative thread where the possession of knowledge invariably becomes a lever for the exercise of power over others. The characters, epitomized by the Professor in "*The Lesson*" and Lula in "*Dutchman*", strategically utilize their perceived knowledge or intellectual superiority to dominate and manipulate, exemplifying the intricate interplay between Knowledge and Power. This examination has not only highlighted the interconnectedness of Knowledge and Power but has also underscored their profound impact on shaping Power Relations within the intricate landscapes of the respective plays.

Furthermore, our in-depth study has brought to the forefront the pivotal theme of Resistance as a dynamic response to the abusive wield of Power and Domination. Both "*The Lesson*" and "*Dutchman*" vividly portray moments of resistance, manifested through intellectual defiance, verbal confrontation, and even physical resistance. These instances of Resistance serve as poignant reflections of the characters' relentless struggles for autonomy and self-assertion in

the face of oppressive authority, illustrating the human capacity to resist subjugation and reclaim agency.

As we draw our conclusions, it becomes unequivocally clear that our comparative analysis has effectively demonstrated that “*The Lesson*” and “*Dutchman*” share common thematic threads related to Power, Knowledge, Domination, and Resistance. Michel Foucault’s theoretical framework has proven indispensable in comprehending the nuanced dynamics at play within these works. His insights have served as a guiding light, offering a comprehensive understanding of the complex interplay between the dominant and the dominated, unravelling the layers of Power Relationships embedded in the narratives.

In a broader context, these plays transcend their theatrical origins and emerge as profound reflections of the human condition. They serve as mirrors reflecting the enduring relevance of power struggles within the societal tapestry. The resonance of these struggles reverberates through time, echoing the universal nature of human experiences in grappling with authority, resistance, and the pursuit of autonomy.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis embarked upon in this dissertation signifies not only a scholarly inquiry into the works of Ionesco and Jones but also a broader exploration of the human experience itself. Through the lens of Foucault’s theory, we have gained insights into the intricate web of Power Relations that shape our societies. These plays, as poignant reflections of the human condition, beckon us to ponder on the perennial relevance of Power struggles, inviting a deeper contemplation on the ways in which Power, Knowledge, Domination, and Resistance intersect and influence the fabric of our shared existence. In doing so, this dissertation contributes to the ongoing discourse on the complexities of Power Relations, leaving an indelible mark on the scholarly landscape and inviting future inquiries

into the intricate dance between Dominance and Resistance in the vast realm of human interaction.

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