

Theme of power in sive by john b. keane

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Sive – The abuse of power Power and the abuse of power is a central theme in Sive. The text examines the way in which empowerment can corrupt certain individuals and become a destructive factor in families and in relationships. Mena uses her powers of persuasion and her position in the family unit to satisfy her own ends and ambitions. Mena's attitude to Sive's education is one of begrudgery and resentment. Mena abuses her position in the family. She is empowered by her man who is easily manipulated and overcome.

Mike Glavin does not have the ability to thwart the wills of his respected wife. A further abuse of her power can be seen in each text in the way Mena tries to break up a positive relationship. Mena keeps Sive a prisoner in the house and lies to her concerning Liam Scwab's feelings about her proposed marriage. What we observe here is a woman who seeks to control and manipulate a young person in order to suit her own agenda. The text provides a serious and devastating example of a woman abusing psychological power by revealing secrets about fathers to control and influence Sive.

She believes that she has succeeded and enjoys a temporary triumph. Thomasheen Rua is another example of an individual who holds tremendous power and sway over the lives of others. He has a nasty streak and exploits others for his own ends. Thomasheen's threats to Nanna engage in abuse and personal insults, which gives him an over-arching sense of his own power. A sadistic streak can be observed in Thomasheen. The former enjoys talking about the County Home to terrify Nanna.

Mena's controlling manipulative behaviour has a destructive effect on the family relationships and creates a toxic atmosphere in the household. Mena

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has strong objections to Sive getting an education. Mena is more motivated by jealousy and spite. On the opening of the play, “ Out working with a farmer you should be instead of getting your head filled with high notions”. Her resentment is palpable when she complains about how she has to work herself to “ the marrow of the bones to give you schooling”. At this point of the play Mena does not have power to prevent Sive attending school.

This power comes later when she is considering the possibility of marrying Sive off to Sean Dota. Mena uses her power over Mike Glavin to convince him that Sive should abandon her education. She asks him contemptuously if he is “ forgetting the money” they will get if they manage to marry Sive to Sean Dota and wonders if “ There is a soft bone somewhere in your head man”. Mike’s comment that “ Sive is young with a brain by her” is ignored while Mena goes on to play on his fears that Liam Scuib is meeting Sive secretly.

She exploits the hatred Mike has for Liam by deciding that Sive will not go to school again but remain under Mena’s supervision in the house “ there’s one easy way to stop that sort of thing and that is to move Sive into the west room where I can keep my eye on her and her only mean of coming and going will be through our bedroom”. Having manipulated Mike later flings Sive’s schoolbag across the room and shouts at her that there “ will be no more school for you”. Using her power over both Mike and Sive Mena succeeds with her plan. Mike has no option but to comply and inform the nuns that Sive will not be attending school again.

In this text we see women abusing their power over weaker men to satisfy their own selfish plans. Mena manages to separate Sive from Liam Scuib. Mena keeps Sive a prisoner in her own home. She lied to Liam Scuib as to

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Sive's whereabouts she attacks him even threatening him with a knife screaming " I'll open you! I'll open you if you vex me more" Twisting the truth of Liam's intentions in an effort to finally break Sive's spirit she tells her that Liam called to the house to wish her well in her marriage and that he was " going away to foreign places".

Mena has no respect for the grief her actions cause others and thinks only of herself. A key scene in Sive depicts a revelation concerning the identity of Sive's father. Mena previously uses secret information to manipulate and gain a powerful advantage over Sive. When Sive says to Mena that she doesn't want to marry Sean Dota Mena manipulates the situation by telling Sive that her " was never a father, he had no name, you have no name" Sive is shocked and is left speechless. There's some truth to Mena's story but so much of what Mena says is twisted.

If Sive feels the same shame as her mother because she is " a bye-child, a common bye-child a bastard" Mena will succeed in breaking her down making her compliant. Thomasheen Rua is another example of a person who misuses the power of persuasion for self-gain. He's the centre of a battle to ensure the Sive marries Sean Dota and he thrives on bullying and abusing those who put forward any obstacle in his desired end. Thomasheen thinks he is hard done by " making love between people I spend my days and no thanks for it". He is capable of wielding power through sarcastic comments .

Thomasheen abuses and threatens Nanna who has to defend Sive. He callously tells her that she is " a lone woman with your husband feeding worms in his trench. You have terrible gumption with no one left to back you" he engages in threats by referring to the " the county home staring you

in the face". At that time many old people lived in fear of ending their days in such a place. His words have the desired effect as Nanna seems to withdraw from the attack. He has no hesitation in encouraging Mena to assert her power over Sive by threatening her with violence if she refuses to marry Sean Dota " isn't she a bye-child.

Tell her you will bell-rag her through the parish if she goes against you. Tell her you will hunt the oul' woman into the county home". Later he turns on Mike mocking his naivety concerning the love letter from Liam Scuab " it comes to me that you are the greatest lump of a fool, of an eejit in the seven parishes". Humiliation is his trump card " if you ever get out of the bog there is an asylum for lunatics where you could put down a bit of time without doing yourself any harm".

Sive chooses death as her only method of refusing to obey those who like to control her. Sive thinking that Liam has left her and that her position is hopeless escapes from her tormentors by drowning herself in a bog-hole. Sive disempowers her tormentors by committing suicide in the bog rather than agreeing to marry Sean Dota. This character chooses death to make a stand against those who abuse power for their own private often fully acknowledged reasons. Her suicide brings the play to a poignant close and illustrates the destruction caused by a greedy abuse of power