

Under the Veneer of Words Lies Power: Foucauldian Analysis of Oleanna

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Abstract : The notion of power and gender domination is one of the inseparable aspects of themes in postmodern literature. The reason of its importance has been discussed frequently since the rise of Michel Foucault and his vantage point toward the circulation of power and the transgression of forces. The language and society act as the basic grounds for the study, as all human beings are bound to the set of rules and norms which shape them in the acceptable way in the macrocosm. How different genders in different positions behave and show reactions to the provocation of social forces and superiority of one another, is of great interest to writers and literary critics. Mamet's works are noticeable for their controversial but timely themes which illustrate the human conflict with the community and greed for power. Many critics like Christopher Bigsby and Harold Bloom have been discussing Mamet and his ideas during recent years. This paper is the study of Oleanna, Mamet's masterpiece about teacher-student relationship and the circulation of power between a man and woman. He shows the very breakable boundaries in domination of a gender and the downfall of speech as the consequence of transgression and freedom. The failure of the language the teacher uses and the abuses of his own words by a student who seeks superiority and knowledge are the main subjects of discussion. Supported by the ideas of Foucault, the language Mamet uses to represent his characters becomes the fundamental element of this survey. As a result, language becomes both the means of achievement and also downfall.

Keywords : domination, foucault, language, mamet, oleanna, power, transgression

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