

Expounding the Evolution of the Proto-Femme Fatale and Its Correlation with the New Woman: A Close Study of David Mamet's Oleanna

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Abstract : The 'Femme Fatale' figure has become synonymous with a mysterious and seductive woman whose charms captivate her lovers into bonds of irresistible desire, often leading them to compromise or downfall. Originally, a Femme Fatale typically uses her beauty to lead men to their destruction but in modern literature, she represents a direct attack on traditional womanhood and the nuclear family as she refuses to abide by the pillars of mainstream society creating an image of a strong independent woman who defies the control of men and rejects the institution of the family. This research aims at discussing the differences and similarities between the femme fatale and the New Woman and how they are perceived by the audience. There is often confusion between the characteristics that define a New Woman and a Femme Fatale since both women desire independence, challenge typical gender role casting, push against the limits of the patriarchal society and take control of their sexuality. The study of the femme fatale remains appealing in modern times because the fear of gender equality gives life to modern femme fatale versions and post-modern literary works introduce their readers to new versions of the deadly seductress. One that does not fully depend on her looks to destroy men. The idea behind writing this paper was born from reading David Mamet's two-character play *Oleanna* (1992) and tracing the main female protagonist/antagonist's transformation from a helpless inarticulate girl into a powerful controlling negotiator who knows how to lead a bargain and maintain the upper hand.

Keywords : Circe, David, Eve, evolution, feminist, femme fatale, gender, Mamet, new, Odysseus, Oleanna, power, Salome, schema, seduction, temptress, woman

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