

Medical Gaze and Discourse in Lisa Loomer's "The Waiting Room" via Foucauldian Bio-power

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ABSTRACT:

Michel Foucault's theories of biopower attract the attention of many writers who articulate this notion in their writing. For Foucault, Biopower is the use of different techniques to achieve body enslavement and population control. However, in light of Foucault's theory of biopower, the doctor-patient relationship is given less consideration. Foucault asserts that the medical gaze and discourse play influential roles in defining this relationship. Thus, this study aims to examine the patient-doctor relationship in light of Foucault's theory of biopower. It investigates the role of biopower, specifically the medical gaze, and discourse, in controlling such relationships in Lisa Loomer's play "The Waiting Room". This play depicts the medical institution as an unhumanized environment that uses its knowledge and power to dehumanize powerless patients. Medical gaze and discourse are used as methodological tools for the analysis to show their role as sites of power. The present study concludes that medical gaze and discourse empower doctors in such relationships and, in return, weaken patients for their lack of such methods.

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Introduction:

The French philosopher, social theorist, and historian Michel Foucault coined the term Biopower in many of his famous works. The term "biopower," is used by Michel Foucault to characterize what he calls the "history of the present" (Foucault, 1995, p. 76). Biopower reveals the forces that have produced and are still influencing modernity, as well as the institutions, interactions, and procedures used to create and deploy political subjects. (Gettysburg College Faculty Books Gettysburg College, n.d.) This term first appeared in Foucault's first volume of *The History of Sexuality (The Will to Knowledge)*. Bio-power has been used by Foucault to refer to a variety of regulatory systems, many of which are less obviously connected to actual physical health, including the management of heredity, risk, and public health practices. It is closely related to a concept known as bio politics, which he uses much less frequently but which later thinkers independently adopted. Bio politics is more closely aligned with the investigation of the methods and mechanisms by which human life processes are managed by regimes of authority over knowledge, power, and subjectivity processes. (Foucault, 2013)

Moreover, according to Foucault, biopower is a form of ideological technology that enables the control of entire communities. It is a tool for managing human beings in big groupings. It alludes to the control of human bodies through societal disciplinary institutions that practice both biopolitics and anatomo-politics of the human body. According to Foucault's analysis, when the human subject gradually consents to subtle rules and expectations of the social order, modern authority gets encoded into social practices as well as human behavior. It is a crucial component and trait that underpins the functioning of the contemporary nation-state, capitalism, etc. and enables their emergence (Policante, 2010, p.45). Between January and April 1978, in his lectures *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault elaborates on the meaning of bio-power:

By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant, namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower. (Foucault et al., 2007, p. 45)

Consequently, Nation-states, law enforcement, the government, legal procedures, human sciences, and medical institutions, according to Foucault, each have their own justifications, causes, effects, methods, technologies, mechanisms, and codes. In the past, these institutions succeeded at hiding their inner workings by eluding observation and scrutiny. Governments, laws, religion, politics, social administration, financial institutions, and military institutions, according to Foucault, cannot have the same rigorous practices and procedures with claims to independent knowledge as those of the human and "hard" sciences, such as mathematics, chemistry, astronomy, physics, genetics, and biology. (Foucault et al., 2007, p. 74) He pointed out that, these technical variations are nothing more than "behavior control technologies," and contemporary biopower is nothing more than a collection of webs and networks that encircle the society body (Rabinow & Rose, 2006, p. 35) Foucault elaborates on his by saying :

We saw the emergence of techniques of power that were essentially centered on the body, on the individual body. They included all devices that were used to ensure the spatial distribution of individuals bodies (their separation, their alignment, their serialization, and their surveillance) and the organization, around those individuals, of a whole field of visibility. They were also techniques that could be used to take control over bodies. (Foucault, 2003, p.245)

However, less attention is paid to the doctor-patient relationship in light of Foucault's theory of biopower. Most previous studies have overlooked the role of medical gaze and discourse in defining such relationships specifically in Lisa Loomer's plays. To list works, in her article "Unexpected Alliances: Friendship and Agency in US Breast Cancer Theater" Morales (2017), points out that friendship units together three ladies from different ages in Lisa Loomer's play *the waiting Room*. She explains that these women moved from acceptance into resistance throughout their intimate friendship. Winer (2019) "THEATER REVIEW: A Search for Truth in Beauty: 'The Waiting Room' Takes a Disturbing Look at Society's View of Attractiveness" refers to the things that women are obliged to do in society in order to be beautiful. Winer explains that Loomer's play criticizes the medical industry at the same time; she comments that *the Waiting Room* reflects "what women really are waiting for--a beautiful sense of self that has nothing to do with magazine ads and is something no surgeon can remove" Winer (2019, p.4)

Consequently, (Genel 2006) article, "The Question of Biopower: Foucault and Agamben," discusses the theories of biopower of Foucault and Agamben and makes a comparative study between them. Whereas Morale's article, "Foucault's Biopower in Contemporary Anglo-American Theater: Margaret Edson and Nell Dunn," discusses the doctor-patient relationship for the female patients in Margaret Edson and Nell Dunn's plays, (Fernandez Morales, 2006). Thus, the present study aims to examine the doctor-patient relationship in light of Foucault's theory of biopower. It investigates the role of biopower, specifically the medical gaze and discourse, in controlling such relationships in Lisa Loomer's play. By using Foucault's theory of biopower, Lisa Loomer's play (*The Waiting Room*) exposes the relationship of the medical institution with patients; it depicts them in a hostile setting that strips them of their rights. By using Foucault's theory of biopower, Loomer's play depicts the medical institution as an unhumanized environment that uses its knowledge and power to dehumanize powerless patients. Medical gaze and discourse are used as the framework to show its role as a site of power. The present study concludes that medical gaze and discourse empower doctors in such relationships and, in return, weaken patients for their lack of such methods.

Foucault's Theory of Biopower

In his famous book "The Birth of the Clinic," Foucault describes the medical institution as a state of power that defines, analyzes, and controls the human body and its behaviors by using technologies that Foucault called "biopower." He refers also to various elements that control the interaction between doctors and patients. First of all, He discussed how the "medical gaze," which he coined, as a result of the developing medical discourse. Foucault described a profound shift in society. The inquiry the doctor asked the patient changed from "What is he matter with you?" to "Where does it hurt?" throughout the 18th century (Foucault, 1994b p. xviii). This idea of the gaze, of perceiving a "case" or a "condition" instead of a human being, has emerged as a key paradigm in criticisms of modern medicine. (Davenport, 2000) According to Foucault the medical gaze in this new "syntactical reorganization" is considered to be "pure of all intervention" and is perceived to produce "only the syntax of the language uttered by things themselves in an original silence." this claimed "purity," it is a look that has the power to "bring truth" about the body "to light" (Foucault, 1994, p.107-109)

Foucault simply states that medical discourse is a description of what this "pure" gaze sees as it observes the body. The modern "clinical experience," according to him, is increasing "a simple, unconceptualized confrontation of a gaze and a face, or a glance and a silent body; a sort of contact prior to all discourse, free of the burdens of language, by which two living individuals are "trapped" in a common, but the non-reciprocal situation" (Foucault, 1994b, pp. xiv-xv) The patients become the passive and quiet objects of knowledge when they are under the observation of the gaze, or more specifically when they are under the surveillance of the "eye that knows and decides," the "eye that controls," and the "eye" that dissects, "isolates," and "classifies" (Foucault, 1994,p.89) secondly in his studies of human sciences, Foucault interests in the relationship between knowledge and power. He asserts that when fields like medicine, law, psychology, and social work advanced, they ascended to positions of power in society. Foucault has highlighted the historical development of professional social control by describing the political function of the human sciences. (Foucault, 1980)

Consequently, as described by Foucault, the language that doctors use to express their specialized knowledge increases their capacity to influence and intervene in other people's conduct. Foucault's publications demonstrated the intimate relationship between medical discourse and specialized knowledge, which led to the understanding of it as a venue for the learned elite's control and privilege-reinforcing, with limited access to lay patients. So in the clinical setting, the sick person was thereby created through the exercise of medical authority over his or her body through language and sophisticated technological procedures rather than through the patient's assertion of self. (Waitzkin, 1989) Thus, by using these two methods of biopower—the medical gaze and medical discourse—the present study investigates the doctor-patient relationship in the selected text.

Summary of *the Waiting Room*

Lisa Loomer is one of the contemporary American playwrights who deals in her plays with medical institutions, terminal illness, power, and medical research. The *Waiting Room* (1994) is one of her famous plays, in which she deals with important issues such as the inhumanity of medical institutions and the exploitation of the American pharmaceutical industry. The journalist of the *Washington post* Lloyd Rose describes the play as "Lisa Loomer's mordant, sophisticated comedy about illness, which opened Wednesday at Arena Stage. Directed in high

style by David Schweizer, the production is unabashedly, almost seductively theatrical" (Lylad, 1995, p. 3)

Consequently, Rose adds that "The Waiting Room" begins as a satire on the way men regard the female body and female illness, but it quickly expands. There isn't just one subject. Loomer waves her satirical shotgun around, peppering various targets: doctors, drug companies, the self-help movement, and the humans and animals in general. (Lylad, 1995). In her interview with the journalist Stephanie Coen, Loomer answers

One of the things I wanted to say with the play is that we us women and we us patients _ because I think very often women and patients are treated with the same kind of paternalism must have information. I think of all the things in my mother's treatment which were not explained to her and which now haunt me. But doctors rarely take the time, and patients rarely insist on the information" (Coen, 2003, p.30)

The Waiting Room is a black comedy. The play consists of two acts and its structure is one of its poorest aspects. Scenes occur to raise a variety of themes or jokes, not necessarily to advance the plot. One is unsure if it's intermission or the play's conclusion when the lights go out at the conclusion of the first act. *the Waiting Room* tells the story of three women, each representing a different age and era. These three women suffer from serious health problems. Victoria was a nineteenth-century Englishwoman. She suffers from hysteria, and she has to have surgery on her ovaries to get rid of this hysteria. Forgiveness from Heaven is an eighteenth-century Chinese woman. She has a problem with her foot's toe due to the custom of foot bindings in her country, and she loses her toes and life at the end of the play. Wanda is a modern woman from New Jersey. She suffers a breast cancer and many other health problems due to the different implants and surgeries she is doing in her life. (Brantley, 1996)

However, these three women meet in a doctor's waiting room and each one of them tells her story to another and they make a beautiful friendship between them. All of them suffer from serious illnesses due to the customs of their cultures and societies. They are obliged to lose their health to be beautiful and to satisfy the males in their life. Victoria tries to satisfy her husband and society by tightening her waist for a long time. As a result of this corseting, she destroys her organs. Forgiveness from heaven attempts to please her husband by binding her foot from a young age. As a result of the foot's binding custom, she loses her toe. Wanda makes many facelifts to attract the attention of men and society; thus, she sustains herself from these surgeries and has cancer. All three of these women have sacrificed to be what others want them to be. (Watson, 2013)

Foucauldian Biopower in *The Waiting Room*

The *Waiting Room* is one of the best examples of Foucault's theory of biopower. Loomer exposes the relationship between doctors and patients in her play and shows the inhumanity of medical institutions and the subjugation of patients in front of such powerful establishments. Foucault explains that these institutions use various techniques to control and subjugate others. (Foucault, 2003) In addition to that doctors are used as an instrument for achieving this ideology. As Foucault clarifies in *Power/Knowledge that* "Power must be analyzed as something which circulates, or as something which only functions in the form of a chain . . . Power is employed and exercised through a netlike organization . . . Individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application"(Foucault, 1980, p. 98)

Furthermore, The Waiting Room portrays the suffering of three women and their pain when they are waiting for a solution to their health problem at the physician's office. At the same time, it shows how these health institutions treat their patients with harshness and severity. Loomer depicts the role of biopower and its multiple techniques in controlling the lives of many patients in her play. She shows the role of the medical gaze and discourse in creating a great gap between the patients and the doctor, which leads to anguish and suffering for the patients. For instance, one of the main heroines of the play is Victoria. She tells Forgiveness from Heaven about her hard journey to get a cure for her disease of the ovaries.

VICTORIA. (With mounting hysteria) Well, we've tried everything else! Injections to the womb water, milk, tea, a decoction of marshmallow.... Last week the doctor placed leeches on my vulva (Wanda's mouth falls open. She gets out her cigarettes.) Some were quite adventurous, actually, and travelled all the way to the cervical cavity! (Loomer, 1994, p.14)

In the extract above, Doctors use different experiments on Victoria's body even leeches as if she is not a human being. They treat her as a case or condition. This is the notion of the medical gaze, As Foucault refers that after the eighteenth century, doctors treat patients as "cases" or "conditions" more than as human beings (Foucault, 1994c). In addition, Foucault states that these institutions use various methods to subject and control each other "First the hospital, ... they became, thanks to them, apparatuses such that any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge" (Foucault, 1995, p.224).

Additionally, Loomer articulates the relationship between Victoria and her husband, Oliver, who is a doctor, to portray the exploitation of doctors for their patients, even if they are their relatives. Oliver exploits his knowledge as a doctor with his wife, and he even prevents her from reading books to educate herself. And he fears that if she reads books she may become equal to him. Victoria likes reading books, particularly about Freud, but Oliver tells her that reading books will worsen her hysteria. On one hand, Oliver practices his power over his wife as a male-female relationship. On the other hand, he is more powerful as a doctor and is more knowledgeable than her with medical information, which symbolizes the doctor-patient relationship. As Foucault describes, "power and knowledge directly imply one another; there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, and there is no knowledge that does not presuppose and constitutes at the same time power relations" (Foucault, 1995, p. 27). The medical discourse makes Oliver more powerful in the couple's relationship. Oliver rapes his wife and tells her that it's for her treatment. He uses Victoria's illness as a pretext for his inhumanity and brutality. Victoria feels helpless in such a situation.

Moreover, from the beginning of the play until the end of it, whenever the name of Victoria's husband is mentioned, "every time she says the word "husband," the lower arm flings out from the waist, as if to swat someone" (Loomer, 1994, p. 13), making it clear that Victoria is depressed by the practices of her husband, and thus whenever he is mentioned, she has such behavior. Her victimization is doubled by her husband, who is a doctor and a Victorian man. Loomer invites the audience to psychoanalyze Victoria's hysteria when she emphasizes many times in the play that she likes reading Freud because she thinks that Freud has an opinion that hysteria is a result of a problem with the mind, not with the ovaries, as Victoria's husband tries to convince her. Oliver tries to impose his opinion on Victoria and he decides with another

doctor to remove her ovaries to cure hysteria. Oliver imposes his medical discourse and he refuses to listen to another opinion that is different from his thinking.

As Ley argues through science, society could control, monitor, and make more efficient the individual body, recast in this era as a machine, and harness and direct the entire population, a sort of species body.' (Lay, 2000, p. 4) Oliver controls and takes decisions of Victoria's body since he is more powerful than her with his medical knowledge. He subjects his wife and destroys her life with such practices. He tells Douglas "the poor child is talking about Freud now, wondering if the problem in her ovaries might be cured via the mind" (Loomer, 1994, p. 25). Oliver as a doctor refuses to listen to the patient's points of view since he is the more powerful part in this doctor-patient relationship, thus he abuses his wife and humiliates her as "poor child". As Sherwin Nuland echoes Foucault ideas of biopower "in the personalities of many doctors... fear of failure... that In an attempt to maintain control, a doctor, usually without being aware of it, convinces himself that he knows better than the patient what course is proper" (Nuland, 1995, pp. 258–259).

In fact, the beginning of the play when Victoria talks about her disease to the audiences, she says "it is a disease of ovaries" and she channels her husband's ideas about hysteria by saying "the ovaries control the personality" (Loomer, 1994, p. 13). It is obvious that Oliver uses the medical knowledge to maintain Victoria's personality by trying to convince her that her hysteria is a disease of ovaries and he also assures her that sexual intercourse will be useful in her case. Oliver practices what Foucault calls medical discourse:

Behavior through disciplinary institutions and the propagation of authoritative discourses, producing individuals who have internalized its logic and who reproduce its norms of their own accord. In its medical manifestations, bio-power derives an enormous persuasive capacity from its suggestion that one might evade death, disease, and suffering if one cleaves to what has been defined as the "norm. (Foucault, 1994, p. 78)

In addition to the medical discourse, Oliver misuses Victoria as patient and as wife. He convinces her that these entire things are meant to cure her illness. Victoria says "six weeks on one's back in a dimly lit room ... no reading, no visitors, no potty" (Act One, p.13-14). It is clear that Victoria lives in a hostile setting and she suffers physically and spiritually. In addition to the medical discourse, Oliver also reflects on the medical gaze by saying "A sick woman should never be exposed to medical information, which can only confuse an already weakened and gullible mind" (Loomer, 1994, p. 25). Oliver has such an opinion since he has the "medical eye", the eye that knows and decides about the "docile bodies", as Foucault describes it in Discipline and Punish:

It was a question not of treating the body, en masse, 'wholesale,' as if it were an indissociable unity, but of working it 'retail,' individually; of exercising upon it a subtle coercion, of obtaining holds upon it at the level of the mechanism itself – movements, gestures, attitudes, rapidity: an infinitesimal power over the active body. (Foucault, 1995, p. 138)

Loomer chooses Oliver's career as a doctor to highlight doctor- patients' relationship. As clarified above, Oliver exploits his position as a doctor, so he has the privilege of such interaction with his wife. Medical knowledge and discourse empower Oliver and make him a

more powerful part of such a relationship. Oliver ignores the feeling and health of his wife and he mistreats her by exploiting his knowledge as a doctor and hurts his wife. He even rapes her in the name of medical treatment for her hysteria. The most ironic situation in the play is the (golf scene), Douglas tells Oliver about one of the cases that he has to deal with it

DOUGLAS. Double mastectomy, hysterectomy, and I had to treat a toe

OLIVER. Toe

DOUGLAS. A Chinese woman, foot binding, I can't describe to you the smell

OLIVER. Barbaric Utterly (Loomer,1994, p.24)

Douglas and Oliver converse about the cases which they have to deal with. Their discussion reflects their humiliation and contempt for their patients. Douglas considers the smell of his patient's toe as disgusting and Oliver accuses Chinese people as barbaric but he doesn't pay attention to his barbaric behavior with his wife. Oliver represents the brutality of the husband and the doctor at the same time. He doesn't care even for his wife's feelings and personality and he insists on his opinion to remove her ovaries. Feminist critics have noted that Women's bodies have historically been portrayed and treated in medicine as particularly damaging to the social order and cultural stability of society, largely because of the apparent uncontrollable and destructive nature of their sexuality (Turner, 1995)

Simultaneously, Loomer exposes another victim to the practices of the medical institution; Wanda is another heroine of the play who suffers from a problem with her breast due to the implants she did to her breast. In the examining room, the nurse tries to get information about Wanda. By getting such information about the patients, the doctors become more powerful than the patients because they become more knowledgeable about the problems of the patients, so all this information and the patient chart are considered forms of biopower and have been used as sources of power in such a relationship. This is what Foucault refers to as a medical discourse. "It is a double process, then: an epistemological "thaw" through a refinement of power relations; a multiplication of the effects of power through the formation and accumulation of new forms of knowledge" (Foucault, 1995, p. 224)

BRENDA. Name?

WANDA. (Loves it) Wanda. (Hates it) Kozynski. BRENDA. Date of birth?

WANDA. (Smiles) I'm thirty-five.

BRENDA. Date of birth?

WANDA. (Figuring it out) Uh... nineteen-fifty- (Seamlessly.) -- Sixty-one. (Smiles; sure) June twenty-first.

BRENDA. Place of birth?

WANDA. (Proudly) New York.

BRENDA. (Suspicious) What part of New York, Ms. Kozynski? WANDA. Jersey, Hey, I'm sorry I forgot to fill out my forms. (Loomer, 1994, p. 16)

In the examples below, Douglas, Wanda's doctor deals with her as she is no more than a case. He treats her as if she is a non-human being, even though he mispronounces her name many times. If she were a non-human being, even though he mispronounces her name many times. The doctor builds his judgment on Wanda from her information and shape so he considers her lesser than him. Foucault regards the examination as an important element of the gaze because it "combines the techniques of an observing hierarchy and those of a normalizing judgment," and it also "establishes over individuals a visibility through which one differentiates them and judges them" (Foucault, 1995, p. 184)

DOUGLAS. "Ms. ... (checks chart; mispronounces) Koz ... nicki? (Loomer, 1994, p. 18)

In fact, when Wanda wants to get more information and a solution for her disease, the doctor again speaks with her about the medical dossier, and he treats her as text to be analyzed or decoded... Waitzkin argues that doctors' waiting rooms are miniature replicas of the macro power structures in capitalist U.S. society. His examination of audio recordings of doctor-patient discussions uncovers the various ways in which doctors serve as social control agents. The issue of objectification has been acknowledged even by conventional medical educators (Waitzkin, 1979).

WANDA. (Flirtatious) What do you think?

DOUGLAS. Well, the FDA believes there is not enough evidence to justify having silicone implants removed if the woman is not having symptoms.

WANDA. (Pats chest) Good!

DOUGLAS. Unfortunately, there is no sure way to monitor for bleed, leakage, and rupture

WANDA. What would you advise your daughter?

DOUGLAS. (Bewildered) I don't have a daughter

WANDA. But if you did.

DOUGLAS. (Looks at breasts) And she had, uh...

WANDA. Yeah.

DOUGLAS. Well (Thinks.) I'd have to speak with her doctor. (Loomer, 1994, p. 18-19)

Even when Wanda asks him to consider her as his daughter and advise her, the doctor answers her with great pride "I don't have one". Wanda feels that she is no more than a condition for him. Wanda turned to a silent object under the examination of the medical eye, "the eye that governs" "isolates" "classifies" and decides about the powerless patients. (Foucault, 1994, p. 89). Notably, Douglas looks to Wanda as a text to be analyzed and her body as a sign to be decodified. She is no more than another statistic number on his chart. Foucault hints "a simple,

conceptualized confrontation of a gaze and a face, or a glance and a silent body; a sort of contact prior to all discourse, free of the burdens of language, by which two living individuals are 'trapped' in a common, but the non-reciprocal situation" (Foucault, 1994, pp. xiv-xv)

By gathering information about his patient, Douglas uses techniques of biopower to regulate and guide his patients to what he wants them to do. At the beginning, he imposes his power in his encounter with Wanda by taking full information about her, and then he guides her to get a biopsy from her, which is also considered a form of control for her. According to Foucault, "the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, and their distribution in a given 'population". (Foucault, 1990, p.221) All these factors "whose functions are for the most part regulatory" (Foucault, 1994, p. 190) control and subjugate the patients.

Conclusion

The present study concludes that medical gaze and medical discourse play a crucial role in defining such a relationship. However, less attention is paid to the doctor-patient relationship in light of Foucault's theory of biopower. Foucault argues that medical gaze and discourse play crucial roles in defining the relationship between doctor and patient. More importantly, these two techniques empowered doctors and, in return, weakened the patient's status in such interactions. At the same time, the study proves that medicine is used as a site of power to propagate certain agendas of such organizations. Lisa Loomer's play is used to examine such a relationship.

The Waiting Room unmasks the ugly face of medical institutions and shows doctor-patient relationships. The play highlights the notions of exploitation through the medical gaze and discourse as factors of power by medical practitioners in maintaining and controlling helpless and powerless patients. Not only does the play show the inhumanity and savagery of medical institutions, but it also depicts the utilitarianism and selfishness of such institutions. It is clear that health institutions are systematic organizations. Its target aims to achieve financial and social control. In fact, Lisa Loomer makes a cry for her generation to be careful around such an organization and rethink its practices. Her masterpiece aims to open eyes and change society into a better world where doctors and patients are equal and no one has power over the other.

قراءة النظرية والخطاب الطبي في مسرحية ليزا لومر (غرفة الانتظار) باستخدام نظرية السلطة الحيوية لفوكو

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ملخص البحث:

جذبت نظريات فوكو عن السلطة الحيوية انتباه العديد من الكتاب الذين أوضحوا هذه الفكرة في كتاباتهم. بالنسبة لفوكو، فإن الطاقة الحيوية هي استخدام تقنيات مختلفة لتحقيق استعباد الجسم والسيطرة على السكان. ومع ذلك، في ضوء نظرية فوكو للسلطة الحيوية، فإن العلاقة بين الطبيب والمريض تحظى باهتمام أقل. يؤكد فوكو أن النظرية الطبية والخطاب يلعبان دوراً مؤثراً في تحديد هذه العلاقة. وبالتالي، تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى فحص العلاقة بين المريض والطبيب في ضوء نظرية فوكو للسلطة الحيوية. إنه يبحث في دور السلطة الحيوية، وتحديداً النظرية والخطاب الطبي، في السيطرة على مثل هذه العلاقات في مسرحية ليزا لومر "غرفة الانتظار". تصور هذه المسرحية المؤسسة الطبية على أنها بيئة غير إنسانية تستخدم معرفتها وقوتها لتجريد المرضى الضعفاء من إنسانيتهم. يتم استخدام النظرية والخطاب الطبيين كأداة منهجية للتحليل لإظهار دورهم كمواقع قوة. وتخلص الدراسة الحالية إلى أن النظرية والخطاب الطبيين يمكن أن الأطباء في مثل هذه العلاقات، وفي المقابل يضعفون المرضى بسبب افتقارهم إلى مثل هذه الأساليب.