

CARYL CHURCHILL AND GENDER ROLES:
OWNERS, CLOUD NINE, AND TOP GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

CARYL CHURCHILL AND GENDER ROLES: *OWNERS*, *CLOUD NINE*, *TOP GIRLS*

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This thesis evaluates Caryl Churchill's criticism of culturally defined roles imposed by patriarchy on both sexes in her three plays *Owners*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls* by referring to Kate Millet's definition of the aspects of patriarchal ideology in *Sexual Politics*, and the thesis contends that gender roles are arbitrary. Churchill's attempt to draw attention to patriarchal essentialism is discussed within this framework.

Key words: Cary Churchill, aspects of patriarchal ideology, arbitrariness of gender roles, Kate Millett, patriarchal essentialism.

ÖZ

CARYL CHURCHILL VE CİNSİYET ROLLERİ: *OWNERS*, *CLOUD NINE* VE *TOP GIRLS*

Fırat, Serap

Yüksek Lisans, İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı

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Bu tez Caryl Churchill'in üç oyunu *Owners*, *Cloud Nine* ve *Top Girls*'de Churchill'in cinsiyet rollerinin ataerki tarafından empoze edilmesinin eleştirisini Kate Millet'in *Sexual Polityics* kitabında tanımlanmış olan ataerki ideoloji ve işleyişi teorisini temel alarak sunmaktadır. Daha sonra, bu çerçevede, Churchill'in ataerki eleştiri sürecinde ataerki gereklilik kalıplarına takılma tehlikesine dikkat çekme çabası tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Caryl Churchill, ataerki ve ideolojisi, cinsiyet rolleri, Kate Millet, ataerki gereklilik

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Caryl Churchill, one of the most significant British dramatists of the late twentieth century, first emerged as a major playwright in the 1980s. In *British Playwrights 1956 – 1995*, American critic and writer Amelia Howe Kritzer says that what makes Churchill so important is her rejection of realism in favor of being inventive and writing subversive comedy. Kritzer also mentions that Churchill is best known for works dealing with gender issues. Her plays focus on social criticism and philosophical questioning. However, her recent plays address a broad range of contemporary political topics as well and her political perspective makes her one of the most significant contemporary female playwrights in Britain (107). As Bigby asserts, Churchill is concerned with the suppression of women and the poor and powerless, and with the displacement of social and political inequities onto sexual morality (167). Another issue that makes Churchill one of the most distinguished playwrights among her peers is her insistent experimentation with dramatic form. This experimentation heightens the questioning of power relations and gender roles, and leads to investigation of alternatives, which mold the basis of her drama. Kritzer argues that the questions Churchill raises challenge conventional perception and thought patterns. She concludes her plays with a central question which she determinedly leaves unanswered. This open-ended format stimulates the audience to think about the answers rather than simply identifying with or against the idea generated in the play (114). Kritzer also asserts that Churchill entered the theatrical arena as an agent of change and her works stand out as a new kind of drama that has not only entered the mainstream but has the potential to change the course of that stream (115).

Christopher Innes, in *Modern British Drama*, asserts that Churchill has taken her starting point from Joe Orton, who was one of the major stage satirists of the 1960's. Orton was the first playwright to dramatize the psychopathic style of the 60's, which

is defined as a restless, ruthless, and single-minded pursuit of satisfaction. Churchill in *Owners*, which is her first full length play, makes use of the transparent characterization of Orton's farce (460).

In 1975, Churchill wrote *Objections To Sex and Violence*, which was not tremendously successful, but it was her first play to introduce themes of feminism. *Cloud Nine*, which was first performed in 1979, was her first play to receive wide notice. It weaves several themes simultaneously. In this play, Churchill deals with the relationships of power like colonist and native, master and servant, and man and woman. Churchill's most important stage successes, encompassing a remarkable range of subjects, offering provocative viewpoints, and demonstrating continual experiment with the theatrical form, occurred in the 1980s. Four of the plays she premiered during this time *Top Girls* (1982), *Fen* (1983), *Soft Cups* (1984) and *Serous Money* (1987), brought her critical acclaim, international recognition and major awards (Kritzer 108). In 1982, *Top Girls*, which is about the choice for women between motherhood and business success, was praised as "the best British play ever from a woman dramatist" (Kritzer 112).

Churchill continues to be active as a playwright. She also continues to experiment with theatrical form. She has written several musicals and a number of plays composed of two unrelated but thematically interconnected acts, such as *Blue Heart* (1997), *Far Away* (2000), in which the endless conflicts around the world and people's increasing tolerance of inhumanity are discussed through the life of a girl and her aunt over several years, *A Number* (2002), which takes the audience into the ethical labyrinth of what-ifs and very serious buts, and *A Dream Play* (2005), which is an updated version of Strindberg's 1901 Swedish original. Her plays continue to question gender roles and power relationships in the society, combining political writing with personal experience.

The major theme that Churchill deals with in her works is that of gender politics imposed on individuals by the patriarchal society. Traditional sexual mores, race, and power relationships are examined closely and the values set up by patriarchal society are questioned. Churchill is also interested in time and the possibilities of

change. She highlights the external restrictions of freedom and aggressive individualism which prevent constructive change and which work against the good of society as a whole. Churchill has defined her themes in an interview in *New York Times* as ‘power, powerlessness, and exploitation; people as longings, obsessions and dreams’ (1987). She rejects a female equality within the existing patriarchal society that transforms women into surrogate men by reversing the conventional expectations of male and female behavior. Churchill also draws a parallelism between colonialism and sexual oppression. She demonstrates this through women who take male roles, men who play wives, and a white actor who plays the part of a black servant. Churchill's use of gender- and cultural-reversal underlines the artificiality and conventionality of the characters' sex and race roles. Churchill highlights the argument that changes in the position of women are artificial because the achievements of women characters appear in two forms; they either succeed through taking roles reserved for men or embody the archetypal feminine qualities as defined by the patriarchal system (Innes 460, 461).

Taking the aspects of patriarchal ideology defined in Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics*, this thesis discusses Churchill's criticism of culturally defined gender roles, temperament, and status in patriarchal society in terms of their arbitrariness and will contend that Churchill draws attention to her women characters, who in spite of their apparent rejection of patriarchal structures, remain trapped by patriarchal essentialism regarding archetypes like ‘superwoman’ and ‘motherhood’. These issues are examined in three of Churchill's plays: *Owners* (1972), *Cloud Nine* (1979), and *Top Girls* (1982), and analyzed from the view point of traditional feminist criticism. This thesis is developed thematically.

The second chapter of this thesis provides a theoretical background for feminist criticism which displays the role of patriarchal hegemonic ideology in imposing fixed gender roles on both sexes by referring to Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*. She is one of the critics whose work has discussed predetermined gender roles, arguing that the constructs of “female” and “male” formed by various cultural interpretations of anatomical distinctions between the sexes are artificial and socially constructed.

The foremost assumption of this study is based on Millett's proposition concerning aspects of patriarchal ideology and its impacts on both sexes. Millett's PhD dissertation *Sexual Politics* (referred to as *SP*) introduces the nature of power relationships between the sexes, surveys the fate of feminist struggles and displays how sexual power-politics are enacted in literary works. *SP* established the feminist approach to literature as a critical force. Its impact makes it the 'mother' and pioneer of all later works of feminist criticism in the Anglo-American tradition, and the feminists of 1970s and 1980s have always acknowledged their debt to, or disagreement with, Millett's ground-breaking work (Moi 24). Millett defines sexual politics as the process whereby the ruling sex seeks to maintain and extend its power over the subordinate sex. She also illustrates the persistence and pervasiveness of this process throughout cultural life as it is formed wherever patriarchal ideology manifests itself: ideologically, biologically, sociologically, economically, educationally, physically, anthropologically, mythologically and psychologically (25, 26). She says:

It must be admitted that many of the generally understood distinctions between the sexes in the more significant areas of role and temperament, not to mention status, have in fact essentially cultural, rather than biological, bases. Attempts to prove that temperamental dominance is inherited in males (which for its advocates, would be tantamount to validating, logically as well as historically, the patriarchal situation regarding role and status) have been notably unsuccessful" (28).

Her approach to patriarchal ideology destroys the prevailing image of a leading male figure versus a passive recipient female, displaying the arbitrariness of gender roles.

Millett's views of patriarchal politics are clearly and deeply influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex*. Prior to Millett, Simone de Beauvoir argued that patriarchy has forced women to occupy a secondary place in the world in relation to men in spite of the fact that gender was variable and volitional and constructed by strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of patriarchy. Later theorists have argued along similar lines: Michel Foucault, on the other hand, opposes all social constructs that imply an identity, and focuses primarily on the functioning of sexuality as a regime of power and relates it to the emergence of biopower. Judith Butler, who has been inspired in

part by Foucault, is another well-known theorist of power, gender, sexuality, and identity. Butler criticizes the binary view of gender relations in which human beings are divided into two clear-cut groups, women and men. The anthropologist Gayle Rubin, whose stand is similar to what Judith Butler and other gender theorists have proposed, claims that gender is socially and historically constructed and not natural or essential.

In chapter three, the arbitrariness of gender roles will be analyzed in Churchill's plays: *Owners*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls*. Firstly, this chapter will discuss how Churchill, through the characters in her plays, displays the imposition and internalization of culturally defined gender roles as artificial constructs. Secondly, it will discuss how Churchill reveals the synthetic and debatable nature of imposed gender roles through the characters in her plays who resist fixed gender roles mandated by patriarchy by experiencing the form of new sexual practices and gender roles excluded by the patriarchal norms. The fourth chapter will discuss how Churchill draws attention to how the women characters in her plays appropriate conventional values but then are themselves hooked by the patriarchal essentialism that they are presumably resisting. The conclusion chapter will present a summing up of approaches introduced in the previous chapters and will include comments resulting from the analysis of Churchill's plays.

CHAPTER II

ARBITRARINESS OF GENDER ROLES

Gender as a category emerges within feminist discourse at the site of a series of debates. One of the arguments that Chodorow asserts is that “gender is a set of roles and cultural meanings acquired in the course of self formation within family structures, and the significant impacts of child-rearing practices and kinship organization can alter the meaning of gender and close the hierarchical gap between the genders and of man and woman” (qtd. in Right 140). When ‘gender’ is used in feminist analysis, it is almost always defined in relation to ‘sex’: and gender is defined as the cultural or social construction of sex. As Right states, in both, gender does not reflect or express sex as a primary given, but it is the effect of social and cultural processes. As a sociological and anthropological category, gender is not simply ‘the gender one is’, i.e. man or woman, but rather a set of contingent meanings that sexes assume in the context of society (140,141).

This chapter is going to evaluate the arbitrariness of gender roles in terms of Kate Millett’s arguments in *Sexual Politics*, the book which formed the feminist approach to literature as a critical force and whose impact made it ‘mother’ and predecessor of all later work of feminist criticism of the 1970s and 1980s. Millett is considered to have fueled feminism's second wave and to have changed women's perceptions of themselves. (Moi 25, 26).

2.1. Kate Millett and *Sexual Politics*

Millett discusses the nature of power-structured relationships and arrangements between the sexes in *Sexual Politics*. She defines sexual politics as the process whereby the ruling sex seeks to maintain and extend its power over the subordinate sex. She also illustrates the persistence and pervasiveness of this process throughout cultural life as it is formed wherever patriarchal ideology manifests itself:

ideologically, biologically, sociologically, economically, educationally, physically, anthropologically; mythologically and psychologically (25,26).

2.2 Patriarchal Ideology and Its Aspects

Millett asserts that assent to the ideological aspect of the patriarchy is obtained via the “socialization” of both sexes to basic patriarchal principles regarding status, temperament, and gender roles. Status is a persistent affirmation of the belief in male superiority and guarantees the superior status of the male over the female. Perceptions of temperament, which involve the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category (“masculine” and “feminine”), are based on the needs and the models of the dominant group and they are dictated by what its members appreciate in themselves and find convenient in subordinates: aggression, intelligence, force, and efficiency in the male and passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue, and incompetence in the female. Sex roles, on the other hand, are a constant and highly intricate code of conduct, gesture, and attitude for each sex. In terms of activity, domestic service and attendance upon infants are assigned to the female, while the rest of all human achievement, plus interest and ambition, belong to the male as part of his sex role. The limited role assigned to the female tries to confine her to the level of biological experience. Therefore, almost all that can be described as particularly human, rather than animal, activity is largely held in reserve for the male. Obviously, status again derives from such an advance assignment. If these three categories were to be analyzed, status might be designated the political component, sex role the sociological one, and temperament the psychological. However, their interdependence is indisputable, and they form a chain. Those awarded higher status are inclined to take on roles of mastery, largely because of developing temperaments of dominance. As Millett claims, this is also true in terms of caste and class (26).

On the biological aspect of the patriarchal ideology, Millett argues that although patriarchal religion, popular attitudes, and, to some extent, science presume that psycho-social distinctions between the sexes rest upon biological differences, the distinctions created by patriarchy do not appear in human nature. Millett concedes

that the masculinity of the male is biological in origin but it is also culturally encouraged through breeding, diet, and exercise. According to Millett, male supremacy is not the result of greater physical strength but the acceptance of an enabling and manmade value system. What is more, despite the belief that patriarchy is endemic in human social life, Millett states that it was preceded by pre-patriarchal social forms in ancient societies (e.g., fertility cults). This later turned to patriarchy and displaced and downgraded the female function in procreation and credited the power of life to the phallus alone. Millet dismisses the argument of physical strength as the basis for patriarchal origins and asserts that:

It is also probably irrelevant to contemporary patriarchy, where we are left with the realities of sexual politics, still grounded, we are often assured, on nature. Unfortunately, as the psycho-social distinctions made between the two sex groups, which are said to justify their present political relationship, are not the clear, specific, measurable, and neutral ones of the physical sciences, but are instead of an entirely different character – vague, amorphous, often even quasi-religious in phrasing – it must be admitted that many of the generally understood distinctions between the sexes in the more significant areas of role and temperament, not to mention status, have in fact, essentially cultural, rather than biological, bases (28).

Most explicitly, Millett refers to the studies carried out under Robert J. Stoller's direction at the California Gender Identity Center, where a discovery was made that the sex of an adolescent male could be reversed from what he was "assigned" and conditioned to be, through surgery; the subject then became temperamentally feminine in gesture, sense of self, personality, and interests (30). Stoller in his work *Sex and Gender* suggests that gender is so arbitrary that it may even be contrary to psychology:

Although the external genitalia (penis, testes, scrotum) contribute to the sense of maleness, none of them is essential, not even all of them altogether [...] Gender role is determined by postnatal forces, regardless of anatomy and psychology of the external genitalia. Therefore, psychosexual personality is learned (qtd. in Millett 30).

That gender identity is not biological but psychological can be best observed during its development throughout childhood, being the sum total of the parents', the

peers', and the culture's notions of what is appropriate to each gender in the way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture, and expression. When patriarchy's biological foundations are viewed as inconsequential, socialization, exclusively through an acquired value system, emerges as the sole determinant of sex roles. Reinforcing the maintenance of these artificially fostered temperamental differences between the sexes takes place through conditioning during early childhood. This process runs in a circle of self-perpetuation and self-fulfilling prophecy. Therefore, the claims suggesting the biological foundations of male supremacy are deceptive. As Millett claims, the result is that the expectations of the culture encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses and the young female to develop the virtue of passivity, and "sexual behavior" is almost entirely the product of learning (31, 32).

For the sociological aspect of patriarchy, Millett identifies the chief institution of the patriarchy as the family and asserts that this is a patriarchal unit within a patriarchy that serves as the agent of a larger society and controls and ensures conformity where political and other authorities are insufficient. The patriarchal state rules its citizens through its family heads/males, who represent its authority. Female heads of household tend to be regarded as undesirable and have little or no relation to the state. The patriarchy has granted the father nearly total ownership over his wife and children, including the rights to commit physical abuse and often even murder and sale for profit. There are obvious parallels between the relationship of ruler and subject and that of the father and the other members of family (33). Millett declares that family-society-state are interrelated; otherwise, they would fall apart and that the main contribution of the family in patriarchy is the socialization of the young into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status. Marriages are financial alliances, and each household operates as an economic entity much like a corporation. The position of the masculine figure within the family is extremely strong (35,36).

Another aspect of patriarchy with which Millett demonstrates the arbitrariness of gender roles, temperament, and status is class. She points out that in a society

where status depends upon the economic, social, and educational circumstances of class, certain females can appear to stand higher than some males; however, not when one looks more closely at the situation:

A black doctor or lawyer has higher social status than a poor white sharecropper. But race itself is a caste system which subsumes class, persuades the latter citizen that he belongs to a higher order of life, just as it oppresses the black professional in spirit, whatever his material success may be. In much the same manner, a truck driver or butcher has always his "manhood" to fall back upon [...] Incidents from life (bullying, obscene, or hostile remarks) are probably another sort of psychological gesture of ascendancy [...] The existence of sexual hierarchy has been reaffirmed and mobilized to "punish" the female quite efficiently. The function of class or mobilized ethnic mores in patriarchy is largely a matter of how overtly displayed or how loudly enunciated the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become (36).

Millett draws attention to how one of the major effects of class within patriarchy can be observed in the way it sets one woman against another, creating a vigorous antagonism between whore and matron or career woman and housewife. Through the multiple advantages of the double standard, the male operates in both worlds, empowered by his superior social and economic resources in order to play the alienated women off against each other. Other subsidiary status categories among women are virtue, class, beauty, and age (38).

As a final analysis, Millett argues that economic dependency makes a woman's connection with any class a tangential, vicarious, and temporary matter. According to the economic and educational perspectives, women function in modern reformed patriarchal societies as a shadow labor force: cheap labor occupying lower-grade service and clerical positions. As Millett puts forward "in general the position of women in the patriarchy is a continuous function of their dependence. Just as their social position is vicarious and achieved through males, their relation to the economy is also typically vicarious or tangential." (40) In terms of industry and production, the situation of women is in many ways comparable both to colonial and to pre-industrial people because of their subordinate position, which is a result of systematic ignorance that patriarchy imposes upon them. Economy and

education are closely related because traditionally the patriarchy has permitted only occasional, minimal literacy to women and closed higher education to them. The cultural programming that educational institutions apply maintains the division between “masculine” and “feminine” by assigning the humanities and certain social sciences to the female and science and technology, business and engineering to the male. Divisions of learning reflect the imbalance that the patriarchy encourages in temperament. Patriarchy has always been restrictive by keeping women within the supposedly inferior sphere of the culture (42,43).

As Millett points out, physical force has always been associated with patriarchy. The features of force appear as racism, colonialism, and sexism. Most patriarchies have institutionalized force through their legal systems and they strictly punish those who violate taboos of class and property. Patriarchal force relies on a form of violence like rape, aggression, hatred, contempt, wife-beating and the desire to break down personality. Laughter and misogyny are other ways to express hostility. The history of patriarchy presents a variety of cruelties and barbarities like footbinding in China, the trading in and enslavement of women, child marriages, and prostitution. The rationale behind this is that women are considered inferior (43-46).

Evidence from anthropological studies, religious texts and literary myths also assert the lesser value of women. The ideas that have shaped culture in regard to the female have always been male-designed in order to meet their needs and provide a means of control over women (Millett 46). Patriarchy also assumes women’s sexual functions are impure. As Millett asserts there is a large anthropological literature on menstrual taboo (47). Sexual segregation is so common in patriarchy that nearly every powerful circle in contemporary patriarchy is a men’s group whose culture is sadistic, power-oriented, latently homosexual and frequently narcissistic in its energy and motives. Sadistic and brutalizing facets are distinguished especially in military glory (50). The two leading myths of Western culture are the classical tale of Pandora’s box and the Biblical story of The Fall. Both introduce the mythic version of the female figure as the cause of human suffering and sin and these

myths are still the foundation of sexual attitudes. The connection of women, sex, and sin constitute the fundamental pattern of Western patriarchal thought (52-54).

According to Millet, one of the most pernicious aspects of the patriarchal ideology is the psychological one. The inculcation of certain beliefs or values has managed to undermine women's self-perception. Despite the fact that women make up half of the world's population, they exist in the margins of society and have status equal to that of minorities everywhere. The patriarchy not only demeans women but also turns them against each other and even themselves. Women are forced to interiorize the myths of the patriarchy. One of these is that the certain roles which women are allowed to play through the patriarchal system of marriage and family. Further, women's sexuality is an anathema to the patriarchal world unless it conforms to men's needs as a sexual object or partner and, ironically, the women must bear guilt for occupying these roles whether they have enjoyed it or not. The roles that women must play occupy the space of entertainment, pleasure, gratification, satisfaction and flattery of men. Even the language denies women any dignity or self-respect in this world of man; the terms of "man" and "humanity" are applied to both sexes. Once women violate the rules of the patriarchy, they are punished disproportionately to the crime. Even the most educated of people says Millet believe that there is an inherent intellectual inferiority and emotionality to the nature of woman. In addition, according to the patriarchal values, women's intellectual inferiority is mirrored by their physical inferiority. Finally, men's access to financial power providing them with a superior economic position immediately puts women into contrast with them: as inferiors (54-58).

In short, in *Sexual Politics*, Millett illustrates that the constructs of "female" and "male" are shaped by varying cultural interpretations. "Woman", "female", "man", and "male" are always artificial and socially determined.

As Moi asserts, Millet's views of patriarchal politics are deeply influenced by Simone de Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex* (25). In the introduction of *The Second Sex*, it was pointed out that the central theme of the book is that women have been forced to occupy a secondary standing in the world in relation to men.

This is a position comparable with that of racial minorities and this position is the result of strong environmental forces of educational and social tradition under the purposeful control of men (vii). Prior to Millett, Simone de Beauvoir argued that gender was variable and volitional and suggested that “one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one”. She claims that the figure that the human female presents in society is not determined by biological, psychological, or economic fate. It is the civilization as a whole that creates this figure.

One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine (267).

For Beauvoir, gender is “constructed.” Beauvoir implies in her formulation that one who somehow takes on or appropriates one gender could, in principle, take on some other gender. Beauvoir clearly states that one “becomes” a woman, but always under a cultural compulsion. The body has always been interpreted according to cultural meanings; thus, sex does not qualify an anatomical certainty. In the conclusion of her work, she points out once more that woman is a product that is embellished by civilization:

It must be repeated once more that in human society nothing is natural and that woman, like much else, is a product elaborated by civilization. The intervention of others in her destiny is fundamental. The abyss that separates the adolescent boy and girl has been deliberately opened out between them since earliest childhood (725).

Beauvoir claims that passivity, coquetry, maternity, superiority and, aggressiveness are the influence of society upon female children; therefore, they are indoctrinated with their vocation from the earliest years. According to Beauvoir:

There is no difference in the attitudes of girls and boys during the first three or four years; they both try to perpetuate the happy condition that preceded weaning; boys are as desirous as their sisters of pleasing adults, causing smiles, making themselves admired (269, 270).

However, the demands that are placed upon boys lead them to evaluate themselves in a different way. They are told that they are men and they have nothing to do with women; thus, they should “leave those women”. The child is persuaded that more is demanded of boys because they are superior. This is done to give him courage for the difficult tasks he has to deal with. Pride in his manhood is instilled into him. And this abstract notion takes on for him a concrete aspect through the attitude of the people around him including mothers who keep alive the tradition which, ironically, brings about their submission (271).

Beauvoir argues that the position of men who are assumed to embody manliness is not different from women because the same civilization enforces men to appear important, superior, aggressive, and uneasy, whereas women are expected to be passive, devoted and docile. Actually, the two sexes are the products of the society persistently controlled by men (719-21).

The third chapter will analyze how Caryl Churchill displays the arbitrariness of gender roles in her plays *Owners*, *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*.

CHAPTER III

CARYL CHURCHILL'S THREE PLAYS: *OWNERS*, *CLOUD NINE*, AND *TOP GIRLS*

3.1. The Imposition of Gender Roles

This chapter discusses how conventional gender roles, status, and temperament are formed and imposed on both sexes through patriarchal hegemonic ideology in Churchill's three plays: *Owners*, *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. Churchill challenges perceptions of rigid distinctions between men and women in her plays, and displays the arbitrariness of gender roles by examining the values of patriarchal society, sexual mores, race, and power relationships. As Millett asserts in *Sexual Politics*, one of the ways that patriarchy imposes fixed gender roles upon both sexes is to condition them ideologically. This is achieved through the socialization of the young to basic patriarchal principles in the family. Sex roles are a constant and highly intricate code of conduct, gesture, and attitude for each sex. (26).

In *Owners*, the character of Clegg, who is a family butcher and Marion's husband, is a stereotypical example of conventional male-gender role and displays the oppressive nature of the dominant masculine structure of patriarchy. Clegg's opening lines to a woman customer apparently illustrate the prejudice of straight paternalism, implying that women are passive, ignorant, and incompetent, while men are superior (Keysar 81). In Act 1, Scene 1, Clegg says: "Lovely day, dear. Been sitting in the park in the sun? I know you ladies. Twelve ounces of mince. And what else? Some nice rump steak, dear? You don't keep a man with mince. No? Twenty p, thank you very much. Bye-bye dear, mind how you go" (7).

As Millett argues, the unrelenting approval of the prejudice of male superiority guarantees superior status in the male, inferior in the female. The dominant group and its members, males, appreciate the qualifications like aggression, intelligence,

force and efficiency in themselves, whereas they find appropriate qualities like passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue in the female (26).

In Act 1, Scene 1, Clegg explicitly declares the rightness of male chauvinism based on physical strength, attesting the female inferiority:

CLEGG: But you still don't see a lady butcher. Apart from the physical weakness a lady has a squeamishness which is very proper in the fair sex but shameful in a man. We were taught to look up to my father. My mother literally worshipped him. I've see her on her knees. And he would raise her up, very gracious. She knew how to give a man the right support. He had his chair. The tea was hot on the table when he came in. We never made a sound. (9)

Clegg's words not only display male prejudice in terms of their superiority but also spotlight the role of the family in submitting to the patriarchal ideology on both sexes in order to establish the gender roles. It is apparent that Clegg has gained his point of view through his socialization in his family, which imposed his "masculine" gender role on him. As mentioned in *Sexual Politics*, the chief institution of patriarchy is the family whose main contribution is socializing the young into patriarchal ideology's prescribed attitudes toward the categories of role, temperament, and status (33-36). Millet claims that the consent for sexual politics is obtained via the "socialization" of both sexes to basic patriarchal policies. Furthermore, temperament, which involves the formation of human personality along stereotyped lines of sex category is based on the needs and the models of the dominant group (26). Millet also points out that the sexes are conditioned in early childhood, which runs in a circle of self-perpetuation and self-fulfilling prophecy (31).

Likewise, in *Cloud Nine*, Clive, who governs his family and Africans by patriarchy's and colonialism's divine right, explains his duty to his son, saying: "My son is young. I'm doing all I can to teach him to grow up to be a man" (252). And in

Act 1, Scene 3, Clive, as the head of his family, explains to his son, Edward, what his manly duty is:

CLIVE: You should always respect and love me, Edward, not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I respected and loved my own father, because he was my father. Through our father, we love our queen and our God, Edward. Do you understand? It is something men understand. (276)

The notion of “it is something men understand” is a stereotypical representation of manliness. Clive is suggesting that Edward should respect him because of their hierarchical power relationship and the historical concept created by previous hierarchical relationships. The focus here is not only on parental privilege, but also on the power that is hidden beneath the value that advocates “understanding” as a masculine ability. Clive introduces masculinity within a conventional sense of duty. The firmness of duty and Clive’s aptitude of functioning within its restrictions give him security in his own manliness. Clive typifies the emotional and physical strength of the privileged male and manifests his dominance over others. Proposing repeated frameworks to his son, Clive maintains a maxim that enables the boy to reconcile his own notions with his father’s and authenticate his own masculinity within the blurred parameters that are established by his father (Barber 242).

Clive emphasizes what masculinity should mean and how it should be practiced at every chance he gets. In Act 1, Scene 2, when Betty tells him that he hurts Edward’s feelings, his response is: “A boy has no business having feelings” (266). And when he catches Edward playing with his sister’s doll, his reaction is sharp:

CLIVE: What are you holding?

BETTY: It’s Victoria’s doll. What are you doing with it Edward?

EDWARD: Minding her

CLIVE: No, we had you with Victoria’s doll before, Edward... let Ellen mind the doll.

ELLEN: Come, and give it to me.

EDWARD: Don't pull her about. Vicky's very fond of her. She likes me to have it.

CLIVE: Yes, it's manly of you, Edward, to take care of your little sister. We'll say no more about it." (257)

Then he startles his son by saying: "You spend too much time with women. You may spend more time with me and Uncle Harry, little man" (276). And while talking to Harry, Clive says: "A disease more dangerous than diphtheria. Effeminacy is contagious" (283). Through repeating the archetypal patriarchal values of the ages, Clive provides the matrix of patriarchal ideology in which Edward can practice and gain confidence in his manliness (Barber, 242).

Churchill demonstrates how sex-oppression and how the concept of manliness are both established via an indistinct sense of learned or patterned behavior as seen in other males viewed as "successfully" masculine (Barber 242). As Millett asserts, the general effect of uniformity as regard to gender roles is achieved and reinforced through learning sources, formal or informal. Millett emphasizes that the entire culture supports masculine authority in all areas of life (35). The strength of socialization through an acquired system is apparent. The temperamental differences between the sexes are maintained through conditioning in early childhood. The result is that the expectations of the culture encourage the young male to develop aggressive impulses and the young female to develop the virtue of passivity. Therefore, sexual behavior is almost entirely the product of learning (31,32). Further, Millett points out that, conventionally, patriarchy offers the father nearly total ownership over the wife or wives and children, including the powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale (33). Similarly, in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*, Foucault displays the roots of this hegemony, stating that the ancient *patria potestas* grants the father the right to "dispose " of the life of his children and his slaves: just as he has given them life, so he can take it away (135). Foucault also argues that as one of the institutions of power, the family acts as a factor of segregation and social hierarchization, guaranteeing relationships of domination and the effects of hegemony (141).

In *Cloud Nine*, Clive's masculine role as a husband affirms Millett's and Foucault's arguments noticeably. In Act 1, Scene 1, Clive introduces his family: "This is my family [...] I am a father to my family [...] My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be. / And everything she is she owes to me" (251). What Clive implies is that he has chosen a woman who serves his desires and ignores her own, he means that a female cannot develop the symbols by which she is described because the ideas that shape culture as regards the female are also male-designed. The image of women is created by men and shaped in order to meet their needs (Millett 46).

Correspondingly, in *Owners*, Clegg's attitude towards his wife, Marion, is typical of this. In Act 1, Scene 1, Clegg says: "She is legally mine [...] It's very like having a talking dog, and it's on the front page at breakfast, the radio at dinner, the television at night – that's mine, look, that's my clever dog. But a time comes when you say: Heel. Home. Lie down" (11). In Act 1, Scene 2, the idea of possession is emphasized again when Worsely says; "A wife is a person", and Clegg's response is, "First and foremost a wife. One flesh" (36). Clegg sees the role of "wife" as more important than that of "person". He believes that husband and wife are "one flesh", and, as Cousin states, that the husband should be the dominant partner in all aspects of marriage (92).

In *Cloud Nine*, Martin is another example of a dominant husband figure. He forces Victoria, who wants to go to Manchester in order to get promoted, to stay with him implying that she is not qualified enough for the post there, and he pushes her to be perfect in their sexual relationship. In Act 2, Scene 2, he says:

MARTIN. Do you think you're well enough to do this job? You don't have to do it. No one's going to think any the less of you if you stay here with me. There is no point being so liberated you make yourself cry all the time. You stay and we'll get everything sorted out. What about sex, when we talk while it's happening I get to feel it's like a driving lesson. Left, right, a little faster, carry on, slow down – [...] So I lost my erection last night because I'm not prepared to talk, it's just that taking in technical information is a

different part of the brain and also I don't like to feel that you do it better to yourself. [...] I'm not like whatever percentage of American men have become impotent as a direct result of women liberation [...] nor am I one of your villains who sticks it in, bangs away, and falls asleep. [...] My one aim is to give you rolling orgasms like I do other women. So why the hell don't you have them? My analysis for what it's worth is that despite all my efforts you still feel dominated by me. [...] I don't think you're being a whole person. God knows I do everything I can to make you stand on your own two feet. [...] You don't seem to realize how insulting it is to me that you can't get yourself together. (300,301)

According to Millett, to be “a man's creation” means to conform to masculine expectations by leaving nothing to the woman except the name and the clothes. Classically, the “wife” is the product of patriarchal ideology in which women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no rights of their own (33). In *Cloud Nine*, Betty, who stands for a stereotype of the female figure created by patriarchal values, admits that she is “a man creation.”

BETTY: I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life
Is to be what he looks for in a wife.
I am a man's creation as you see,
And what men want is what I want to be. (251)

The message Betty gives is that she has no sense of her own worth as a woman; she wants to be whatever men want her to be (Cousin 40). Betty's self-denial to which all women condition themselves and their children is apparent when she is scolding Edward, who rejects identifying with his father, saying “I don't want to be papa. I hate papa”, Betty's reaction is: “You're a horrid wicked boy, and papa will beat you. Of course, you don't hate him; you love him” (275). Her self-denial goes to such an extent that Betty claims that she cannot throw a ball in a game of catch at a

picnic, despite the competent display of her skill (277). Millett explains this situation:

The female is continually obliged to seek survival or advancement through the approval of males as those who hold power. As the history of patriarchal culture and the representations of herself within all levels of it have a devastating effect upon her self image, she is customarily deprived of but the most trivial sources of dignity or self respect (54).

Millett also asserts that in a society where status depends upon the economic, social, and educational circumstances of class, certain females can appear to stand higher than some males; however, not when one looks more closely at the subject. The position of the masculine figure within the family is extremely strong, even if he is a servant (36). In Act 1, Scene 9, when Betty complains to Clive about Joshua, who resents having to fetch her book and tells her that she's got legs under her dress, Clive pretends to be punishing Joshua, but actually he winks at him, unseen by Betty (254,255). As Millett claims, everyday incidents from life like bullying, and obscene or hostile remarks are likely to be the sign of ascendancy. The function of class or ethnic traditions in patriarchy is largely a matter of how explicitly displayed or how loudly explained the general ethic of masculine supremacy allows itself to become (36).

In *Top Girls*, on the other hand, the case of Isabella, who is a Victorian traveler, is not different from Betty's when the issue is gaining a certain gender role under the control of a male figure. She internalizes the values imposed upon her by her father to such an extent that she is not aware that she is in a situation of self-denial. In Act 1, Scene 1:

ISABELLA: I tried to do what my father wanted [...] I tried to be a clergy man's daughter. Needle work, music, charitable schemes [...] I studied the metaphysical poets and hymnology. My father taught me Latin although I was a girl. But really I was more suited to manual work. Cooking, washing, mending, riding horses. Better

than reading books [...] My father was the main string of my life and when he died I was so grieved. (2,3)

Since patriarchy considers women to be men's property, inferior, ignorant, and incompetent, its value system claims that women cannot take their own decisions and need to be led by a male figure. Since the early ages, females have been thought of as lesser beings. As Millett argues, in general, the position of woman in patriarchy is a continuous function of their dependence. This is achieved through the systematic ignorance of patriarchy towards the demands of women. Women's social position is vicarious because traditionally patriarchy has permitted women to achieve occasional minimal literacy. The educational institutions of patriarchy maintain the division between "masculine" and "feminine" by assigning the humanities and certain social sciences to the female and science and technology, business, and engineering to the male. Divisions of learning reflect the imbalance causing women's dependency on man, which patriarchy encourages (42,43). Millett also asserts that the presence in women of the expected traits like self-rejection is the result of continual reiteration of her inferiority which she eventually accepts as a fact (56).

However, women who attempt to take their responsibilities into their own hands and reject being governed incite men's hatred towards them. In *Owners*, Clegg hates Marion due to her success and lack of subservience, which wipes out his masculine self-image. Clegg is an unsuccessful butcher who must eventually close his shop, in the face of competition from a nearby supermarket and his wife's career in real estate (Keysar 81). He wants to kill the more successful Marion for being the cause of his suffering. In Act 2, Scene 1, in the talk between Clegg and Worsely:

CLEGG: Every morning, she leaves me to go to work [...] And every evening, she leaves me, leaves me, leaves me.

WORSELY: Goes out?

CLEGG: Or stays in. But not with me. Not being my wife. Not paying. Attention [...] I will chop her mind into little pieces and blanch them in boiling water. (36)

Clegg's attitude towards his wife visibly exemplifies the traditional patriarchal thought pattern which views the female figure as the cause of human suffering, as it is seen in the myths of, Pandora's box and the Fall.

Correspondingly, in *Cloud Nine*, Clive can be observed reflecting patriarchy's categorization of those women who torment men. In Act 1, Scene 4, he says, "There is something dark about women that threatens what is best in us. Between men, that light burns brightly [...] Women are irrational, demanding, inconsistent, treacherous, lustful, and they smell different from us" (282). This definition, which establishes differences and enforces the opposition between men and women, allows Clive to practice his manly suppressive authority over women and gives him the right to control (Kritzer 119). He defines sexuality and sexual standards in the way that best serves his own desires. Although he reveals the homosexuality of Harry, who has already bestowed his favors on his adolescent son and African servant, Joshua, he keeps Harry's homosexuality secret, and he refuses to acknowledge Ellen's (homosexuality). He has the power to compel Mrs. Saunders into having sex with him, but when his affair with her becomes obvious, he shifts the blame for it onto her, ordering her out of the house. Clive's attitude is not different towards his wife when he learns of Betty's interest towards Harry. He tells Betty that if she were unfaithful to him, it would be his duty to compel her to leave the family (277). It can be observed that Clive exercises authority over the people around him in two ways, which are to establish the differences and to maintain them. Clive wants to tame both his family and the Africans so that they internalize oppression and become obedient to patriarchal rules (Kritzer 118, 119). Upon discovering Betty kissing his friend, Harry, Clive condemns Betty and all women:

CLIVE: Women can be treacherous and evil. They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that; you can protect me from that. [...] If Harry Bagley was not my friend, I would shoot him. If I shot you, every British man and woman would applaud me. But no. It was a moment of passion such as women are too weak to resist. [...] We must resist this dark female lust, Betty, or it will swallow us up. (277)

Millett points out that this fierceness with which women are judged displays the double standard of patriarchy. Generally an accused woman acquires a notoriety out of proportion to her acts (56). Another application of the double standard of patriarchy can be best observed in a vigorous antagonism between the whore and the matron. As Clive's attitude explicitly illustrates, through various advantages of this double standard, males move in both worlds, using their superior social status to play the alienated women off against one another (38).

The subordinate position of women is in many way comparable to that of colonial people. In his speech to Mrs. Saunders, Clive constructs parallels between women and colonized people: "You are dark like this continent. Mysterious. Treacherous" (263). Clive's definition indicates an intense hatred of women that perpetuates the power of manliness. Women and colonized people are the same in the eyes of patriarchy. The situation of women in patriarchy is like that of other minorities "who are singled out from others because of their physical or cultural characteristics and they live differential and unequal treatment" (Qtd. in Millet 55).

The inferior situation of women and hatred towards female can also be observed in the position of passive homosexual, which is also called "femininity", in homosexual relationships. As Millett argues, "he is feminine because ravished and subjugated by the male; therefore, he must study the slavish gestures of "femininity" "[...] The virility of the other partner is a transparent egotism posing strength [...]" All he has learned has taught him to identify "masculine" with force, cruelty, indifference, egotism, and property" (18-20). In *Cloud Nine*, The dialogue between Edward and Gerry in Act 2, Scene 3, displays the lower status of the passive partner and the higher, masculine status of other:

GERRY. You're getting like a wife.

EDWARD. I don't mind that.

GERRY. [...] Stop it.

EDWARD. Stop what? [...] Everyone's always tried to stop me being feminine and now you are too. [...] I like cooking. I like being fucked. You do like me like this really.

GERRY. [...] I'm bored [...] Well I'm divorcing you. [...] do stop playing the injured wife, it's not funny. [...] What are you trying to turn me into?

EDWARD. A monster, which is what you are.

GERRY. I'll collect my stuff from the flat in the morning.
(306,307)

No matter in which form femininity appears, the masculine attitude continues to establish and ratify a system of oppression which underlines and corrupts all human relationships (20,21).

Violence emerges as another control mechanism of patriarchy in terms of the formation of gender roles. As Millett argues, that violence is particularly sexual in its character and it takes the form of aggression, hatred, contempt, wife-beating, rape, and the desire to break personality. The rationale underlying this is the belief that women are inferior and dangerous. Unless women meet men's needs, they deserve to be punished, to the most severe degree if necessary (43-46):

Excepting a social license to physical abuse among certain class and ethnic groups, force is diffused and generalized in most contemporary patriarchies. Significantly, force itself is restricted to the male who alone is psychologically and technically equipped to perpetuate physical violence [...] Before the assault the female is universally defenseless both by her physical and emotional training. Needless to say this is the far-reaching effects on the social and psychological behavior of both sexes (44).

The utilization of violence by patriarchy can be best analyzed in *Top Girls*. The characters of the play illustrate the instances of suffering and exploitation of women through the ages. The descriptions of their lives consist of their achievements, but more of their being raped, deprived, and psychologically battered (Innes 464). The character Pope Joan, a legendary female, disguises herself as a man to be able to pursue a career and ends up serving as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church.

However, she forgets what it feels like to be a woman until she gives birth to a child in public. She is stoned to death for having broken one of the patriarchal taboos and having become a pope which is one of the most precious status positions reserved for men. In Act 1, Scene 1, Joan: “I was on the horse [...] And the baby just slid out onto the road.[...] They took me by the feet and dragged me out of the town and stoned me to death “ (11).

Millett argues that, like other totalitarian ideologies, patriarchal ideology would be imperfect unless it had the rule of force as an ever-present intimidation. Patriarchy institutionalizes force through its legal system. Strict patriarchies back up the prohibition against illegitimacy or sexual autonomy with a death sentence. Needless to say, there is no penalty upon the male correspondent (43). Foucault, also, points out that if someone dares to rise up against the hegemonic power and disobeys its laws, then direct force is exercised over the offender’s life, which generally leads to the death penalty (135).

Nijo, a Japanese imperial courtesan of the thirteenth century, is another example of a female who is exposed to violence. Her story explicitly depicts how she is forced to lead a life in service of the emperor to be one of his lovers. When she was only fourteen, her father sent her to the emperor and told her to obey the rules of patriarchy. In Act 1, Scene 1:

NIJO: In fact, he was the ex-emperor. [...] Well, I was only fourteen, and I knew he meant something, but I didn’t know what. He sent me an eight-layered gown. [...] I belonged to him; it was what I was brought up for from a baby. [...] Just before he (my father) said to me, “Serve His Majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favor, enter holy orders.” (2)

As Millett argues, the history of patriarchy presents variety of cruelties and barbarities like the sale and enslavement of women under one disguise or another, involuntary and child marriages, and prostitution to impose the male authority and female inferiority (46). In Nijo’s case, she is enslaved and deprived of her three

children; two of them by her lover; one by the emperor. She is also beaten by the emperor himself and his attendants before and after sexual intercourse. In Act 1, Scene 1, referring to Japanese men, Nijo says; “[...] they beat their women across the loins so they’ll have sons and not daughters. So the emperor beats us all very hard as usual [...] That’s normal; what made us angry, he told his attendants they could beat us too” (17).

According to Millett, patriarchal societies typically link feelings of cruelty with sexuality, equating both with evil and power. The emotions of aggression, hatred, contempt, and desire to break or violate personality take a form of sexuality. Patriarchal violence particularly appears in the act of rape. Wife-beating is another of a number of ways to express hostility towards women. In all artistic forms of hostility in patriarchy, misogyny is common, since its aim is to reinforce both sexual factions and their status. Ancient, Medieval, and Renaissance literature in the West and the Confucian strain in China and Japan have large elements of misogyny. In the case of Petrarch and Boccaccio, however, who represented a courtly sober pose that transformed courtly love into romantic love, misogyny grows somewhat out of fashion (44,45).

In *Top Girls*, again, the character Griselda, who is a poor peasant chosen to be the wife of a Marquis if she promises to obey him always, is forced to prove her loyalty to her husband by allowing her children to be killed - or so she is led to believe. She becomes the emblem of an obedient wife, complete with patience and submission. In Act 1, Scene 1:

GRISELDA: He couldn’t believe I would always obey him. He had to prove It[...] He said all the people hated me because I was just one of them. And now I had a child, they were restless. So he had to get rid of the child to keep them Quiet[...] It was Walter’s child to do what he liked with. (15)

Griselda's case is a typical example of courtly cruelty or the patriarchal mentality, which holds that women are inferior and therefore of a lower order; thus, they deserve the oppression they live (Millett, 46,47).

Labor division is one of the endless ramifications of patriarchy imposed on both sexes, transforming them into discrete genders (Millett, 54). Gayle Rubin argues that "the sexual division of labor is implicated in both aspects of gender – male and female. It creates them and is at once mandated by cultural institutions - the family, the residual forms of "the exchange of women," obligatory heterosexuality - and inculcated through the laws that structure and propel individual psychic development." (Rubin, 180,189) In *Owners*, as a conventional male figure, Clegg refuses to look after the baby that he and Marion have taken from Alec and Lisa by force. In his opinion, taking care of a baby is a waste of time for a man capable of greater tasks. In Act 2, Scene 6, he says: "A man can't be expected to stay at home and look after a baby. He can do it, of course, because it's not difficult. Even a woman can do it easily. But it is a waste of real abilities." (54)

In the same Act and Scene, Clegg and Lisa are in Clegg's bed, him on top of her, bouncing up and down under the bedclothes. The dialogue between Clegg and Lisa, who wants to see her baby, displays more explicitly what being feminine means to him.

LISA: I only came to see the baby[...]You will do all you can do for me, won't you?

CLEGG: Give you the baby?

LISA: That's what it was for[...]We agreed before we started. [...] I want my baby. [...] I want to see him.

CLEGG: I didn't say you could get up. You won't be suitable unless you lie flat, did you know that, very feminine and do just as you're told. On your back and underneath is where I like to see a lady. And a man on top. Right on top of the world. Because I know what you ladies like. You like what I give you. I didn't say you mustn't move at all. But just in response. (52,53,55)

And Clegg makes more overt his point of view while he is talking to Lisa's husband, Alec: "I wouldn't want to waste myself on something as second - rate as your wife. She was quite useful. A handy receptacle. But quite disposable after." (56) Clegg repeats the archetypal ideas about women asserted by patriarchal ideology. For him women are the ones who lacks identity (44).

To sum up, through her plays *Owners*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls*., Churchill displays how gender roles are established and imposed on both sexes by patriarchy, which, as Millett argues, is managed through the various aspects of patriarchy. Churchill claims that since the gender roles are forced and dictated by agents who are strictly under the control of male domination, they are arbitrary.

3.2. The Rejection of the imposed Gender Roles

As another example of the arbitrariness of gender roles, Churchill displays how rigid social norms and sexual oppression dictated by patriarchy in order to produce determined gender roles lead to resistance in the behaviors of the characters, which appears in the form of excluded sexual practices like homosexuality and lesbianism. As Foucault argues:

Where there is power, there is resistance, yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. The points of resistance are everywhere. There is plurality of resistance [...] by definition they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. Resistances are inscribed in the power as an irreducible opposite. Resistances are spread over time and space at varying destinies, at times mobilizing the groups or individuals in a definite way, inflaming certain points of body, certain moments of life, certain types of behavior [...] As to the sex, all the anxious gazes are directed at it and all the hiding places whose discovery is made into an impossible task, to the unique form of a great Power, we must immerse the expanding production of discourses on sex in the field of multiple and mobile power relations" (95-98).

In the same way Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, argues that received notions of masculinity and femininity that restrict the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of their own practice set up exclusionary gender norms. Idealization of certain

expressions of gender might produce new forms of hierarchy and exclusion (vii,viii).

In order to demonstrate the multiple nature of sexuality; and hence the arbitrary characterization of gender roles, one of the strategies that Churchill makes use of is to reverse the conventional expectations of male and female behavior. In *Owners*, for instance, Churchill sets up a graphic reversal of conventional expectations of male/female roles; a completely passive male, Alec, versus a very active female figure, Marion. Alec is educated and a skilled glazier; however, he has not got a salaried job. He prefers to stay at home to take care of the family, and perform domestic chores. Therefore, as Keysar points out, he is an antithesis of both Marion and any available male figure. He is a man with a perfect absence of desire, either for property or for control of others. Alec thwarts others' attempts to reveal his aggression each time by retaining his moral autonomy, while refusing all obligations to social convention (82,83). Marion, on the other hand, is a very successful estate agent, earning a lot of money. She works very hard; "she eats in bed; sleeps at her desk' She always knows what to do; she is very determined. Her favourite hymn when she was seven was *Onward Christian Soldiers*; "Keep on, get better, be best. Onward"(*Owners* 30).

In Act 1, Scene 1, with Marion's entrance into Clegg's butcher shop, the conventional paternalistic patterns instantly vanish. Clegg has to close up his shop because of financial reasons; therefore, he is distressed by this. Marion, however, contrary to the expectations from a conventional wife who is supposed to be tearfully supportive in such situations, refuses to be part of this failure. When they close the doors of the butcher shop for the last time, she tells Clegg; "I know very well it's a sad moment," then adds, "I can't be a failure just to help" (12). As Innes points out, she reduces Clegg, who feels emasculated because of bankruptcy, to the state of incapacity (460).

As Cousin states, Marion represents acquisitiveness. The value of possessions is the power that she confers over others. Even love is acquisitive, regardless of the wish of the other (92). Though her relationship with Alec ended some years ago, she still

wants him and believes that he belongs to her. In Act 1, Scene 5, Marion says; “Empires have been lost for love. We men of destiny get what we’re after even if we have destroyed by it... We split the atom. Onward. Love me [...] I want you badly now [...] And always. I’m keeping you Alec (31,32). She insists that they live together. In Act 2, Scene 3, Marion says: “Leave Lisa. I’ll leave Clegg. You can choose where we go to. I can pay for anywhere in the world” (46). However, when she learns that Alec doesn’t want to live with her, she threatens him: “One day I’ll have the pleasure of knowing you’re screaming. Even if you do it silently “ (48).

Marion takes the Christian hymn “Fight” for her motto and that is how she conducts life, always asking for more and seeking to possess. Hating being a wife of a butcher, she has struggled hard to reach her present level of success. In Act 1, Scene 5, Marion says; “I always said I wasn’t a butcher’s wife. You could do something even greater [...] I want to hold. Everything I was taught – be clean, be quick, be top, be best [...] what matters is to try hardest [...] Onward Christian soldiers[...] Fight the good fight “(29,30). When Alec tries to explain that there is no point in being so greedy, saying: “It was all here before you were born and you don’t resent that” (30), Marion replies that “getting” is her philosophy leading her life, saying: “Do what you want. Get what you can” (43).

As Cousin states, Marion’s attitude is very covetousness rather than being that of a predictable woman. Her utterances are remarkable in showing her aggressive manner. She can easily become hostile, forceful, violent and belligerent in order to get what she wants. Marion rejects any conventional womanly stance. She is incapable of empathizing with other women. For example, she has no compassion towards Lisa when she wants to get her baby back. Marion is deaf to all her pleas and insists on keeping the baby (94). In Act 2, Scene 6, Marion says: “I know my own mind. The legal position is perfectly clear. What can there possibly be to discuss? I won’t have tears, Lisa. Clegg and I united as the child’s parents in our opposition to any interference[...] I shall do as I like (60). When Clegg comes up with a suggestion to ease the conflict, having Lisa look after the baby while they are working, Marion viciously turns him and says: “I said I will have a nanny. Are you going to against me, Clegg? It was entirely for you I got the baby. I bought him a

shop, for you. If you don't like the arrangements you can go. Clear right off. It would be a delight never to see you again" (61). She has no hesitation in getting rid of anybody, even her husband, who crosses her. This single mindedness is conspicuous in the lines: "No. No no no [...] you won't get the baby. I'll keep what's mine. The more you want it the more it's worth keeping [...] Everyone of you thinks I'll give in. Because I'm a woman, is it. I'm meant to be kind. I'm meant to understand the feeling of a woman wanting her baby back. I don't. I won't. I can be as terrible as anyone. Soldiers have stuck their swords through innocents. I can massacre too. Into the furnace. Why shouldn't I be Genghis Khan? Empires only come by killing. I won't shrink "(63).

Interestingly her role model is Ghenghis Khan, one of the cruelest figures in history known for his ruthless massacres. Like him, Marion does not hesitate to target people's very lives in order to reach her goals. In Act 2, Scene 7, she asks Worsely if he could do a favor for her. "Something to hurt Alec". When Worsely offers to set the house on fire, Marion's reply is: "What a good idea. What a very nice thought"(64). When the deed is carried out, she is indifferent to the fatal ramifications of her decisions. Learning of Alec's death and that of the second baby, she says: "I'm not sorry at all about Alec. Or about that other baby. Not at all. I never knew I could do a thing like that. I might be capable of anything. I'm just at the beginning to find out what's possible" (67). Far from bringing Marion to her senses, deaths embolden her to think what she might be capable of. She begins to discover how ruthless and determined she can be. Marion's self discovery displays the potential existence of new directions and possibilities for gender roles (Cousin,94).

Alec, on the other hand, represents a man who is certainly the opposite to the definition of "man" of patriarchy. He is passive, peaceful, weak, and dismissive of all obligatory social conventions. He has turned his back on the business world to stay at home and deal with household chores. His philosophy is: "Sitting here quietly. Doing nothing. The day goes off by itself "(14). Nothing changes his manner. When Worsely alarms Lisa by urging them to leave the house, his reaction is to do nothing. He says: "I'm not moving [...] The best thing is to ignore him [...]

We don't have to do anything" (18-20). He can be best observed through Lisa's point of view.. In Act 1, Scene 4, Lisa says: "He hasn't been at work for six months. He don't remember to eat if I don't make him [...] He just wants nothing. He seems to feel everything's all right" (24,25). Alec does not care to make the things better. He prefers a simple life. For him, there is no point in being demanding. In Act 2, Scene 3 he says;

Slowly everything [...] fell through. Lisa, children, work – there was no point. There was no point in things I wanted instead. There wasn't any point in killing myself. That went on from some time. I didn't know how to make things better. I didn't care if they were better or not. I didn't know what better meant. But now the same things seem quite simple. Lisa, children and work, why not? [...] I'd had a lot of difficulty. Wanting things. Or seeing no point in them. And since then I haven't" (47).

Reversing the conventional expectations of male and female behavior, an active female versus a completely passive male through the characters of Marion and Alec, Churchill points out the potential existence of new directions and possibilities for gender roles. Marion shows how cruel, aggressive, violent, forceful, determined a woman can be, whereas Alec displays how passive, peaceful, weak, and indecisive a man can be. As Case affirms, Churchill, refuses the logic of patriarchal ideology in which women are inevitably constrained and conceded inferior, while men are considered as superior. Churchill insists on bringing to light to the exclusion or distortion of the female in cultural discourse (104,105). As Millet argues, the distinctions created by patriarchy do not appear in human nature. Millet claims that the masculinity of the male is culturally encouraged. Male supremacy is not the issue of physical strength but the acceptance of a value system (26,27). For Foucault, on the other hand, the categories of female and male, woman and man, are produced by power within the binary matrix (83,85).

As Kritzer asserts, another strategy that Churchill utilizes to show the arbitrary nature of gender roles is cross-casting, "which challenges assumptions that gender and the social definitions are natural concomitants of physical difference" (120). In the first act of *Cloud Nine*, a Victorian woman, Betty, is performed by a man, which

makes gender visible by separating feminine gender from the female body; her adolescent son, Edward, who attempts to elude conventional role expectations, is played by a woman, which illuminates the role of socialization in the formation of identity; and a young girl, Victoria, is played by a man to show more clearly the issues involved in learning what is considered correct behavior for a girl; likewise, to demonstrate the artificial nature of social conditioning, a white actor plays the part of the black servant, Joshua. In this case, the reversal exposes the separation in the identity of Joshua caused by his internalization of colonial values (113). These reversals are carried through into the children's behavior; while the son, Edward, is prevented from playing with his sister's doll, a lesbian mother encourages her daughter to play with toy guns. In the second act of the play, cross-casting is repeated. As Innes states, the inversion between sex and the role indicates that the characters have become integrated individuals and they represent sexual liberation that goes against every conceivable taboo. The Victorian daughter in the first Act, now a mother herself, leaves her husband for another woman, Lin, and her brother, Edward, who, now, is a gay gardener and declares himself a lesbian, joins them; all three are 'sick of men'. Their aging mother Betty leaves Clive, as well and prefers to live alone and claims that she is 'a separate person' through masturbation (461,462).

According to Kritzer, in *Cloud Nine*, Churchill seeks the Victorian, patriarchal, origins of contemporary gender definitions and sexual attitudes, and the recent changes in societal regulations and implications of the changes. The play challenges norms of consistent linearity through manipulation of past and present time. With this manipulation of time, the second act takes place one hundred years later, in present-day London. The importance of this is two fold: one, colonial and sexual oppression are the same resulting in feminization of colonized person; and two, people can grow into adults who are radically different from what they are led to expect in their childhood (111,112,113).

Act 2 opens up with Victoria, Edward Cathy, and her mother Lin, in a park. Cathy chants a scatological rhyme and plays with a toy gun. Lin, who is a working-class lesbian, chats with Victoria, who is now a middle-class professional, married with a son, Tommy. Victoria's brother, Edward, who works as a gardener in the same park,

has a lover named Gerry. All are involved in working out sexual and relationship problems and exploring new options. Lin and Victoria become lovers. Edward tries to adjust to Gerry's abandonment of their exclusive relationship, but decides to be a "lesbian" and live with Lin and Victoria. Victoria's husband, Martin, who is always pushing her to be perfect in terms of her personality and their sex relationship, accepts her decision to live apart from him and takes responsibilities for Tommy and Cathy. Having discovered her own sexuality and decided to live on her own, Betty reaffirms the unconventional sexual choices of her children.

All characters in Act 2 try to change for the better, revelling in the new freedoms conferred by their choices of sexual practices in conflict with hegemonic patriarchal values. In the first scene, Lin tells Victoria that she is a lesbian and straightforwardly initiates a relationship with her; "I'm a lesbian (291) [...] "Will you have sex with me? ... You'd enjoy it" (296). Later, in the talk between Lin and Edward, Lin says : "You're gay, aren't you? [...] I really fancy your sister. I thought you'd understand [...] You can go on pretending you don't, I don't mind" (292). In the coming scenes, both Gerry and Betty explicitly describe their previously hidden sexual behavior. Gerry admits to his homosexual relation of two years (297). And Betty admits to initiating masturbation during young adulthood: "And one night in bed in my flat I felt so frightened I started touching myself" (316). As Kritzer points out, of this group of people, Betty is the most dramatic example of change because her attainment of sexual freedom follows the achievement of economic independence. She starts living by herself after starting work in a doctor's office. She emphasizes the close relationship between the sexual freedom and economic independence saying; "You can't separate fucking and independence" (309). In Scene 4, Betty says: "I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them" (316). Her recognition of her value as 'a separate person' affects her reasoning in an innovative and creative way and she asserts that "if there isn't a right way to the things you have to invent one" (319). With her new self-awareness, Betty exemplifies Luce Irigaray's characterization of female sexuality as simultaneously one and more than one (123- 127). Irigaray argues that "A woman 'touches herself' constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continuously. Thus, within herself she is already two – but not divisible

into ones who stimulate each other” (qtd. in Kritzer 127). From these lines Kritzer concludes that “the double image of the embrace breaks apart the unitary patriarchal construction of woman” (127). Through Betty’s openness, Churchill offers that the potential for personal empowerment and change could be obtained through the enjoyment of sexual pleasure previously denied by hegemonic societal constraints (128).

By the end of the Act 2, Lin, Vic, and Edward enter into a sexual relationship which is simultaneously homosexual, heterosexual, which takes its participants near the boundaries of contemporary tolerance and it evokes possibilities beyond any simple pairing based on difference, antagonism and exchange and challenges the most pervasive patriarchal normatives. As Butler argues in *Gender Trouble*, alternative gender roles like homosexuality emerge as the self-evident anatomical facticity of sex, where “sex” designates the blurred unity of anatomy “natural identity”, and “natural desire” (91).

To sum up, the cross-casting promotes the conscious awareness of the doubleness of the representation, exposing this usually hidden assumption inverts its function and explicit questions regarding the true or false sexualities and roles presented in the varying combinations. As Kritzer states, the continuation of this exposure provokes a complex question about future, which is far from being a reassuring reification of patriarchy’s construction of “femininity” and “masculinity” (130). Correspondingly, in *Bodies That Matter*, Butler argues that:

Although sexual difference is invoked as an issue of material differences, “sex” is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is enforced and the materialization takes place or fails to take place through certain highly regulated practices. Sex is not a simple fact or static condition of body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize it and achieve this materialization via a forcible reiteration of those norms [...] The notion of gender performativity must be understood not as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names. The regulatory norms of “sex” work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and to materialize the body’s sex, to materialize sexual difference. Once “sex” is understood in its normativity, the materiality of the body will not be thinkable apart

from the materialization of that regulatory norm. “Sex”, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which “one” becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility” (1,2).

Butler proposes returning to the notion of matter, not as site or surface, but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface called matter. She thinks that matter is always materialized and has to be thought in relation to the productive and, indeed, materializing effects of regulatory power (in the Foucaultian sense)... sex is both produced and destabilized in the course of reiteration (9,10). Further, Butler argues that:

As a result of this reformulation of performativity, a) gender performativity cannot be theorized apart from the forcible and reiterative practice of regulatory sexual regimes; b) the account of agency conditioned by those very regime of discourse/power can not be conflated with voluntarism or individualism, much less with consumerism, and in no way presupposes a choosing subject; c) the regime of heterosexuality operates to circumscribe and contour the “materiality” of sex, and that “materiality” is formed and sustained through and as a materialization of regulatory norms that are in part of those of heterosexual hegemony; d) the materialization of norms requires those identificatory process by which norms are assumed or appropriated, and these identifications precede and enable the formation of a subject, but are not, strictly speaking, performed by the subject; and e) the boundaries of bodily life where abjected or delegitimated bodies fail to count as “bodies” (15).

As Keysar points out, Churchill exposes the hypocrisy of patriarchal moral codes, and draws a parallel between the racial inequalities of those times with the supposedly ‘liberated’ post-sexual revolution of the 1970s. The parallels between status and gender are explored through the power of past to influence the present. Churchill mismatches the performers with their stage roles, through which she underlines the artificiality of the gender roles (94,95).

CHAPTER IV

PATRIARCHAL ESSENTIALISM IN TERMS OF GENDER ROLES

In her plays, Churchill displays her objection to gender essentialism because it oversimplifies and defines hierarchically what is manly and what is womanly. That is, essentialism defines traditional gender roles, to an extent, contingent upon an underlying biological determinism, or the view that "biology is destiny." As a result, essentialism expects women to have primary responsibility for parenting and housework, and men to be the breadwinners and to hold the positions of prestige in business and government. It is obvious that Churchill does not share this common set of attributes of essentialism. She criticises patriarchal essentialism that cut along gender lines. Therefore, in her plays, Churchill portrays characters who refuse to adopt conventional values which mold them into stereotypical males and females. However, while doing so, Churchill is also aware of the traps of patriarchal essentialism that might hook especially women as they are trying to liberate themselves. As Steele points out, there are three main positions, namely liberal position, gynocentric position and the constructivist position, that women can take in the way to their liberation and thereby, remain hooked by patriarchal essentialism. The liberal position argues that women ought to be thought of as free and equal agents to men, but neglects the fact that the terms "free" and "equal" come from male world and this idea accepts the male as the model human being. The gynocentric position, on the other hand, sees women's oppression as the devaluation and expression of women's experience by a masculinist culture but they idealize women and their actions that exalt violence and individualism. Finally, the constructivist position exposes the system of gender as a story of force and highlights body and desire but they do not account for women's historical achievements and their own escape from the network they describe, and they do not recuperate the values to which they appeal (77). Therefore, Churchill urges that, while trying to deal with patriarchal structures, one must and should be aware of irrelevant categories of essentialism and avoid remaining trapped by them. In her plays, Churchill highlights the two of these categories which are superwoman and motherhood

4.1. Superwoman

Society, dominated by man, decrees that woman is inferior. The essentialist position views men as strong, aggressive, violent, brave, logical, disciplined, lustful, and independent, while women, on the other hand, are viewed as weak, passive, gentle, cowardly, and emotional. From the essentialist point of view women are considered as lacking self-control and stamina, and limited in sexual appetites and are highly considered to be invested in their relationships with others. In order to do away with this inferiority, women who believe that they have been stereotyped and devalued claim that they can and should do all and everything to be recognized and tend to claim that they are “free” and “equal” to men. Yet, as Steele argues, their notion of being “free” and “equal” come from the dominant male culture and they use existing patriarchal values, vocabularies and methods to deal with inequality (76), which transform them into a superwoman, or a surrogateman. For instance, in *Owners*, in order to achieve, Marion accepts male models of success. The values and attitudes she holds are manly. Through her character it can be observed how a woman can become a straightforward wicked authority gained by being a landlord and holding the power over others by controlling where and how they live. Marion, who is a heartless and conniving real estate developer, displays aggressiveness to do well. In Act 1, Scene 2, she is very straightforward when she tells her husband, who is an unsuccessful butcher, to “shut the shop and throw it all away” (12). Then, they go to celebrate this event in a strip club where they all drink and watch the stripper. Seeing Clegg’s interest towards the girls, Marion offers to buy one of the girls for him, if he wants (20). Marion has adopted manly attitudes to such an extent that she can buy a woman for her husband. What’s more, she brutally dominates her husband Clegg, her assistant Worsley, her former lover, Alec, and his wife, Lisa, to get what she wants. She stops at nothing to gain a piece of property for redevelopment. In Act 1, Scene 2, Lisa, who desperately asks Marion for help to keep the house, where she, Alec and their children live, realizes that it was Marion who was forcing them to leave: “ You mean it’s you buying the house? It’s all you, Marion, is it? I always hated you, you horrible bitch...” Marion’s response is very cool: “Have a cry. Have a good cry. Then we’ll see ” (27). Another example for Marion’s manly attitude can be seen in Act 2, Scene 6, when she is talking with Lisa, who wants to go to court to get her baby back, Marion says: “It would take a

lot of time. A lot of money. Meanwhile he's used to us and our home. Have you got a home that would impress a judge?" Lisa replies with: "You're only doing it to be cruel to me. Why should you? How can you?" Marion's answer demonstrates her savageness once more: "I shall do as I like [...] Worsely, please make them all go away" (60). Marion believes strongly in the power of money. In order to restart a relationship with Alec, who does not want to give up his wife, children and his mother, she tries to persuade him to leave them by offering him money. She suggests: "I'll give you a thousand pounds for Lisa. For your mum. For the boys. Whatever you like to think it's for. And find you somewhere to live [...] What I want is you to wake up. We're going to better ourselves" (27). She does not stop until she gets what she wants. Not being able to persuade Alec with the money does not discourage her; she comes up with another suggestion: "You could stay here (she means the house she would like to get from them) as long as you like. If we could go back" (31). For Marion, working hard and facing challenges are important. She says: "I was never a lazy girl [...] I work like a dog. Most women are fleas but I'm the dog" (30). The idea of the woman who "has it all" and "does it all" confirms the ethos of "superwoman" which is embodied by Marion. In her attempt to be free and to become equal to men, Marion turns into an oppressor with her new superwoman identity. As Aston points out, the image of the high-flying female achiever who is capable of transcending class boundaries and of attaining material success at home and in the work place is another oppressive factor (76, 77).

Likewise, in *Cloud Nine*, Lin demonstrates manly attitude through her aggressive and savage personality. And she imposes manly values on her four year old daughter, Cathy, as well. In Act 2, Scene 1, when Lin, Victoria, Cathy, and Tommy are in the park and when Cathy asks Lin what to paint, she suggests: "Paint a car crash and blood everywhere" (289). And when Lin is watching Cathy, who is playing with a toy gun, Lin says: "Don't hit him, Cathy, kill him. Point the gun, kiou,kiou,kiou [...] War toys. I'll give her a rifle for Christmas and blast Tommy's pretty head off for a start" (291,292). Then, she says: "I hate man [...] I just hate the bastards" (292). It is very ironic that although Lin hates men, she expresses her feelings towards them using their language and she uses the same tactics and values of patriarchy in raising her child. What's more, in order to frighten Cathy, who throws stones at the ducks, Lin says: "Cathy, stop throwing stones at the ducks. The

man is going to get you” (303). She refers to “the man” as the symbol of authority, which is very patriarchal.

On the other hand, Victoria’s way of dealing with patriarchal structures is different from Lin’s. When her husband, Martin, refuses to go to Manchester with her when she gets a job promotion, she says to Lin: “Why the hell can’t he be a wife and come with me? Why does Martin make me tie myself in knots? [...] No, not Martin, why do I make myself in knots [...] And I feel apologetic for not being quite so subordinate as I was. I am more intelligent than him (Martin). I am brilliant” (302,303). Victoria idealizes women, and their activities to cope with manly domination. She leaves her husband to live with Lin and moves to her flat: “It’s got to stop, Lin. I’m not like that with you. Would you love me if I went to Manchester? [...] Would you love if my teeth fell out?” Victoria rejects the egoistic and exploitive patriarchal norms which ignores women’s needs and she wants to deconstruct them by idealizing women and their activities. As Steele points out, such an idealization ignores the fact that women have internalized oppression (77,87). This can clearly be seen in Lin’s criticism of Victoria: “You read too many books, you get at me all the time, you’re worse to me than Martin is to you, you piss me off” (303). As Benjamin points out, “to idealize the oppressed, as if their politics and culture were untouched by the system of domination, as if people did not participate in their own submission is to take a wrong turn” (qtd. in Steele 93).

The idealization of women is also seen in the orgy that Victoria, Lin and Edward hold to call up the goddess, who, they believe, will help them construct a social system they miss. Holding an orgy is Victoria’s idea that she has read in a book. She leads the ceremony and under her speech they all chant: “Innin. Innana, Nana, Nut, Anat, Anahita, Istar, Isis.” Victoria says: “Goddess of many names, oldest of the old, who walked in chaos and created life, hear us calling you back through time, before Jehovah, before Christ, before men rove you out and burnt your temples, hear us, Lady, give us back what we were, give us the history we haven’t had, make up us the women we can’t be” (308). Through the orgy, they affirm the women’s achievements experienced before patriarchy and call for the help of Goddess to reconstruct the same system, which is supposed to be ideal. For Victoria, Lin, and

Edward, one of the ways of reconstruction is sexual liberation. They all sing a song *Cloud Nine* :

The wife's lover's children and my lover's wife

Cooking in my kitchen, confusing my life.

And it's upside down when you reach cloud nine.

To her children's surprise, Betty, on the other hand, leaves her husband and starts living in a small flat by herself, which she thinks is fun. However, she still accepts male as the ideal and views the world through existing patriarchal values. For example, she criticises Victoria for not being a woman like the ones in *Vouge*. She says: "I think Victoria is pretty but she doesn't make the most of herself [...] There are still women who dress out of *Vouge*, we hope that's not what Martin looks for, though in many ways I wish it was" (293,294). And Betty says to Lin: "It's strange not having a man in the house. You don't know who to do things for" (301). Betty finds doing things for herself "very selfish", and she does not find women "interesting": "They don't have such interesting conversations as men. There has never been a woman composer of genius. They don't have a sense of humor. They spoil things for themselves with their emotions. I can't say I like women very much, no" (302). When Lin says: "But you're a woman." Betty says: "There's nothing says you have to like yourself" (302). As it is overtly seen, Betty's ideal human being is man, who should be pleased and served. The talk with Martin and Betty also exemplifies Betty's approach: "Martin, I think you're being wonderful. Vicky will come back. Just let her stay with Lin till she sorts her out [...]. But really Vicky must be in the way" (314). As Steele argues, women who idealize man and their values reproduce Western tradition of oppression and they separate themselves from any gender specific practice (76).

In *Top Girls*, Marlene is also a product of gender equality; she, too, adopts male models of success, and represents a woman affected by competition and male-dominated society, which turns her into an exterminator. Act 1 opens with a gathering of women at a dinner party in a restaurant. They celebrate Marlene's promotion; she has just become the Managing Director of an Employment Agency, which is traditionally a male position, for which she has beaten out her male peers. Her guests at the party are from different eras, each with unusual and peculiar

achievements. When the majority of her guests are assembled, Marlene toasts to her own success and theirs with the words: “We’ve come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements.” Then, she, who is portrayed to be the essence of a working-woman, turns overtly manly when she orders the meal, rare bloody steak, which is traditionally a men’s choice. In the first scene, Marlene tells the waiter: “Make that two steaks and a lot of potatoes. Rare” (4). As Kritzer points out, the first scene, which seems imaginary, appears to be a showcase of the women’s accomplishments. However, it gradually reveals itself as a replication of familiar forms of power (142). Marlene’s new career seems to harbor the possibility of caring and competition through its function of finding jobs for people. However, Marlene defends the power base that she has acquired by patronizing, intimidating, and further narrowing the options of women who come to her to seek opportunity (145). In Act 1, Scene 3, the interview she has with Jeanine for a secretarial job illustrates her attitude clearly. .Since Jeanine is planning to get married and might get pregnant, Marlene narrows the job options she might get (20,21). Further, in Act 2, Scene 2, when she is talking about her business with her working-class sister, Joyce, she says: “If they’re stupid or lazy or frightened, I’m not going to help them get a job; why should I?” (54) What Marlene demonstrates is the ethics of the traditional male model. She sees women less beneficial in working life and discriminates between people as stupid or clever; lazy or hardworking; and frightened or not, which is typically patriarchal that sees and explains the world in terms of binary oppositions. Marlene, also, displays her ruthlessness in the office when she gets a job promotion and her male counterpart does not. Even when the man’s wife, Mrs. Kidd, comes to tell Marlene how the decision has ruined her husband, Marlene simply answers in a cold fashion: “If he doesn’t like what’s happening here he can go and work somewhere else” (37). It could even be said that Marlene is cold and indifferent to Mrs. Kidd because she represents the complete opposite of Marlene: a wife who puts her husband first and thinks women should let men be promoted before women. As Kritzer mentions, Marlene’s position shows that gender based division constructs an opposition between an ethic of caring and an ethic of competition. The ethics of caring have historically been performed by women, while the ethics of competition have structured the competitive nature of men (141). In that sense, Marlene’s attitude is overtly manly.

Even Marlene's co-workers confirm this male tendency when they endorse Marlene's promotion over Howard. Nell says: "Marlene's got far more balls than Howard" (29). However, Marlene and her co-workers do not consider women for 'high-flyer' sales jobs. Women who conform to traditional standards are not even able to have interviews for any top jobs. In an interview with another woman client Nell, a co-worker of Marlene, says: "You're not after management status, (are you)?" (38) In short, the women in Marlene's agency by promoting masculine criteria, which urge them to accept basic jobs for other women rather than the challenging ones which help to advance women's position become the oppressors over females like their role models.

Act 3 opens with Marlene at her sister's house. Marlene is visiting Joyce and Angie, who is Marlene's daughter but raised by Joyce, after a gap of six years. Joyce represents traditional working-class female patterns. Unlike Marlene, Joyce has taken on many traditionally feminine tasks like caring for Angie and her parents, which Marlene does not even want to talk about. In Act 2, Scene 2, when they talk about their father, Joyce says: "Working in the fields like an animal. /Why wouldn't he want a drink?... You want a drink. He couldn't afford whisky." Marlene says: "I don't want to talk about him" (53). She is determined to escape from the limitations of her background no matter what the cost is. When Joyce says: "You couldn't get out of here fast enough" , Marlene says: "Of course I couldn't get out of here fast enough. What was I going to do? Marry a dairyman who'd come home pissed?" (51) As Kritzer points out, Marlene has achieved career success at the expense of isolating from her family and oppressing her sister.(144). In the passionate and angry debate with Joyce, Marlene says: "I hate the working class/which what you're going to go on about now, it doesn't exist any more, it means lazy and stupid. /I don't like the way they talk. I don't like beer guts and football vomit and saucy tips/and brothers and sisters" (53). Marlene believes in class hierarchy and uses it to abuse her sister. As Millett points out, patriarchy exerts class distinction to oppress and to set the women against each other: "One of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one woman against another, in the past creating a lively antagonism between whore and matron, and in present between career woman and a housewife" (38).

With go-getting, success-oriented philosophy, Marlene supports the present political system in their country which, actually, causes the poor become poorer and the rich become richer. She believes that society should pay its top people good rewards, but care little about the losers. Marlene claims that their country gives people golden opportunities to get whatever they want if they are intelligent and have the necessary energy or resourcefulness. In Act 2, Scene 2, Marlene explains her philosophy to Joyce: “I think I’m going up up up... and for the country, come to that. Get the economy back on its feet...this is country needs to stop whining. /Monetarism is not stupid. It takes time, determination. No more slop... Bosses are still walking on the workers faces. Haven’t you learned to think of yourself? I believe in the individual. Look at me” (52). Marlene’s values are the prevailing ones of the patriarchal society, which constructs a hierarchy culminating in the top people. However, it is an overt fact that a small number of women can scramble to the top of the ladder, alongside, and sometimes ahead of, men. As Millett asserts:

It is in the area of class that the castlelike status of the female within patriarchy is most liable to confusion, for sexual status often operates as a superficially confusing way within the variable of class. In the society where status is dependent upon the economic, social, and circumstances of class, it is possible for certain females to appear to stand higher than some males. Yet, not when one looks more closely at the subject [...] The literature of the past thirty years provides a staggering number of incidents in which the case of virility triumphs over the social status of wealthy or even educated women (36).

Since Marlene is excessively demanding with her masculine authority, she is unable to deal with family relationships. As Aston points out, “children and a career in a man’s world are mutually exclusive, as it is powerfully seen in Marlene’s relationship with her daughter” (40). Despite Angie’s desperate demand for Marlene’s attention, she is always too busy to take care of her to the extent that when Angie suddenly appears in her office one day, she does not recognize her and asks if she has an appointment (34). Then she says: “Unfortunately you’ve chosen a day when I’m rather busy, if there’s ever a day when I’m not...What time do you have to be back? Have you got a day return?” (35) Marlene has chosen to ignore her daughter in order to succeed.

To sum up, although Marion, Lin, Victoria, Betty, and Marlene all want to get liberated, they remain trapped by patriarchal essentialism, taking either the liberal position or gynocentric position. Marion, Lin, and Marlene take liberal position; they believe that they could be “free” and “equal” to men if they succeed in manly deeds. They become “successful”; however, it happens through internalizing patriarchal values that they try to cope with. They become oppressors of other women, even of men, around themselves. In that sense, their success is their failure since they accept patriarchy’s view of what a human being is. This ontology reproduces the Western tradition’s oppression of nature and nurture, freedom and mere life, spirit and body. Betty, on the other hand, takes the same position but her situation is different from Marion, Marlene, and Lin. Although she frees herself from Clive’s hegemony, she does not try to be “equal” to men. On the contrary, her ideal human being is still man. Victoria, by the way, takes gynocentric position in her struggle with patriarchy. Like Betty, she does not ask for equality by male standards or want to access a man’s world. Rather, she rejects these norms. However, she idealizes women and their activities like men idealize men and their activities. The result is that the existing patriarchal value system is left in place (Steele 76,77).

4.2. Motherhood

Motherhood appears to be another handicap in the path of women’s liberation. In patriarchy every woman is a mother by definition. A mother is seen as the source of reproduction the biological children of patriarchy and the material goods of patriarchal culture. Through motherhood, patriarchy continuous the structure in which female is kept in the service of male. Therefore, motherhood is oppressive. As Chodorow asserts:

Over the few centuries, women of different ages, classes and races have moved in or out of the paid labor force. Marriage and fertility rates fluctuated considerably during the same period. Despite these changes, women have always cared for children, usually as mothers in families and occasionally as workers in child care centers. Women’s mothering is one of the few universal and enduring elements of the sexual division of labor introduced by patriarchy [...]Women’s maternal role has profound effects on women’s lives, on ideology about women, on the reproduction of masculinity and sexual inequality, and on the reproductuion of particular forms of

labor power... Women's mothering determines women's primary location in the domestic sphere and creates a basis for the structural differentiation of domestic and public spheres. But these spheres operate hierarchically. Kinship rules organize claims of men on domestic units, and men dominate kinship. Culturally and politically, the public sphere dominates the domestic, and hence men dominate women...In Western society, the separation of domestic and public spheres – of domestic reproduction and personal life on the one hand and social and production and state on the other – has been sharpened, through the course of industrial development, producing a family form reduced to its fundamentals, to woman's mothering and maternal qualities and heterosexual marriage, and continuing to produce male dominance. Both, sexual division of labor and heterosexual marriages, reproduce gender as an unequal social relation (3,10,11).

However, women who try to free themselves from traditional patriarchy's institutionalization of motherhood can also be trapped. In *Owners*, Marion, although she claims that she can be something greater than a butcher's wife, behaves like a stereotypical wife and struggles for the male descendants. She refuses to give Lisa's baby back, claiming that: "I and Clegg are united as the child's parents in our opposition to any interference [...] It was entirely for you (Clegg- who wants to have a son carrying his name) I got the baby. I bought him a shop for you" (60,61). By insisting on keeping the baby that is a boy and buying a shop for him, Marion (unknowingly) reproduces the traditional patriarchal gender system in which women are imprisoned. The desire for a son to carry on the family's name is one of patriarchy's ways to give immortality to the masculine structure. As Chodorow claims, motherhood is a crucial link between the contemporary organization of gender and the organization of production. It produces men with personality characteristics and psychic structures appropriate to participate in patriarchy (219).

In *Cloud Nine*, Lin leaves her husband after a two-year marriage because he hits her. She says: "He let me keep Cathy and I'm grateful for that" (291). Like a traditional mother, Lin takes all the responsibility of the child and she says she is thankful for that. By doing so, she accepts patriarchal values which assign women as the ones who not only bear children but also take primary responsibility for infant care. Patriarchy also expects women to spend more time with the infants than do men and sustain primary emotional ties with children (Chodorow 3). The emotional ties Lin maintains with Cathy affirm patriarchal values, as well. Lin says: "She is

frightened that I'm going to leave her...it's no good blaming me. She clings around my knees every morning up the nursery [...] I'm desperate for her to go to school. I did cry when I left her the first day" (290). Lin's attitude reinforces patriarchy's values that idealize and enforce women's maternal role in child rearing, and highlight women's emotional role and their psychological mothering role. According to patriarchy, women's mothering stands out in its emotional identity and meaning (6).

Although Victoria's attitude toward life is fairly different from Lin's, her attitude in terms of motherhood is identical to hers. When she moves to Lin's place, she takes her son, Tommy, with her. Martin sees and takes care of him (if he can) just at the weekends. Victoria argues with Martin for her right to choose where to work but she does not mind taking all the responsibility of the child. Although she has not got much time for herself and it is difficult to do her job which requires lots of reading, she does not mind minding Tommy. To be able to do this she has developed an odd skill like talking while reading:

LIN: I suppose Tommy doesn't let you read much. I expect he talks to you while you're reading.

VICTORIA: Yes, he does.

[...]

LIN: I don't know how you can concentrate.

VICTORIA: You have to or you never do anything. (290)

Victoria's attitude, like Lin's, backs up patriarchy's essentialist view which claim that women should carry on the child-care responsibilities along with other range of work; child-care is exclusive domain of mothers. Their participation in the paid labor does not change this. Rearing of children is their major responsibility (5). Another example for Victoria's position as a mother can be observed when Tommy gets lost while playing around the pond.

LIN: Where is Tommy?'

VICTORIA: What? Didn't he go with Martin?

LIN: Did he?

VICTORIA: God oh God...I haven't thought about him. How could I not think about him? Tommy!... Tommy! Tommy! (304)

When Tommy gets lost Victoria takes all the blame on herself despite the fact that it is Martin's day to take of Tommy but he leaves the scene without taking him or letting Victoria know that Tommy is in the park. Victoria accuses herself of "not thinking about her child"! Her attitude displays how she has incorporated the sexual division of labor that patriarchy dictates.

In addition, in *Top Girls*, motherhood is shown to put one woman against another, which provides multiple advantages for patriarchy, empowering the superior social and economic status of men. This can be seen when Joyce and Marlene have an argument over Angie:

JOYCE: I don't understand how you could leave your own child.

MARLENE: You were quick enough to pick her.

JOYCE: What does that mean?

MARLENE: You were quick enough to take her.

JOYCE: Or what? Have her put in a home? Have some stranger / take her would you rather.

MARLENE: You couldn't have one so you took mine.

[...]

JOYCE: You'd be stuck here / like you said.

MARLENE: I could have taken her with me.

JOYCE: You didn't want to take her with you. It's no good coming back Now Marlene, / and saying ...

MARLENE: I know a managing director who's got two children, she breast feeds in the board room. (49,50)

Joyce accuses Marlene of escaping and leaving her child and not taking any responsibility in terms of her child's rearing for the sake of her professional success.

Upon this, Marlene proposes that she can get her daughter back. To prove, to herself more than her sister, that she can do this, she recalls a woman managing director with two children, who breast feeds in the board room. Neither Joyce nor Marlene questions that the child also has a father who has responsibility to take care of the child. As Chodorow points out, when biological mothers do not parent, other women, rather than a men (fathers), always take their place. Patriarchy rarely considers the fathers or other men as a child's primary carer (3).

Joyce and Marlene seem to be approving of women's role being centered on child care. They both seem to be eager to continue to perform mothering activities. Instead of questionig the absence of the father, they argue over which of them should take care of the child. Their attitude overlaps with patriarchy's approach in which men's participation in child rearing is curtailed; so that patriarchy can articulate the systematic nature of the social organization of gender roles. Like Marion, Lin, and Victoria, the integration of a set of common patriarchal value patterns causes Marlene to be trapped by patriarchal essentialism.

To sum up, Marion, Lin, Victoria, Betty and Marlene appear to be in a dilemma; they try hard to get rid of their gender roles imposed on them by male dominant society; however, they either attempt to adopt manly attitude to be recognized or take all responsibilities of their children as expected by the patriarchy. This suggests that they remain trapped by essentialism. Therefore, Churchill urges that women who resist and refuse participation in patriarchy should be cautious not to get hooked by the patriarchal essentialist positions like superwomenhood and motherhood.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This Study aimed at discussing Churchill's criticism of gender roles which are imposed on both sexes by patriarchy and are, therefore, arbitrary, and Churchill's attempt in drawing attention to the issue that women should and must avoid being trapped by essentialism in irrelevant categories like superwoman and motherhood while trying to get rid of the patriarchal structures in her three plays, *Owners*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls*. The theoretical reference was mainly Kate Millett's influential work *Sexual Politics* because both Churchill and Millett are the members of the same generation and deal with gender issues of the 1970s and 1980s. Millett, through her theories, and Churchill, through her plays, exposed how gender roles are constantly and artificially shaped by patriarchal ideology. The technique of this study was close reading, and paying attention to the devices arising from the idea of arbitrariness of gender roles and essentialism.

Firstly, it is obvious that gender is a term discussed broadly in feminist theory and practice. Gender issues seemed to be developing during early 1970s, through three discrete strains of feminist theory and practice which are categorised as, French, North American and British. As Murfin argues, North American critics, including Kate Millett, practiced a strand which highlighted the tradition of systematic masculine or patriarchal dominance in the establishment of gender roles (149,150).

Kate Millett attempts to illustrate the power of masculine domination in gender formation. According to Millett, the concept of dominance and subordination in our social order is the birthright priority whereby males rule females. Millett argues that "through this system a most ingenious form of 'interior colonization' has been achieved. It is one which tends to be sturdier than any form of segregation, and more rigorous than class stratification, more uniform, certainly more enduring. However muted its present appearance may be, masculine dominion obtains perhaps the most pervasive ideology of the culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power because the society, like other historical civilizations, is patriarchal" (25). In patriarchies the female half of the populace, is dominated and

oppressed by the male. According to Millett, patriarchy maintains this through the aspects of its ideology and it manifests itself: ideologically, biologically, economically, educationally, physically, anthropologically: mythologically and psychologically.

Millett claims that, ideologically, patriarchy constructs gender roles through the socialization of the young along stereotyped lines of sex category, masculine and feminine. This is achieved through conditioning and role-modelling and based on the needs of the dominant group that appreciates aggression, intelligence, force, human achievement, interest, ambition and efficiency in the male but passivity, docility, virtue, domestic service, attendance upon infants and incompetence in the female. What's more, patriarchy asserts that female and male are different biologically, by nature; men are physically more powerful than women so men can dominate and rule women. Millett disagrees with this postulate, arguing that the gender identity is not biological but psychological because identity development takes place in childhood and what is appropriate to each gender is dictated by parents, peers and the culture in which the child is brought up. Millett points out that the chief institution of patriarchy is the family whose main contribution is the socialization of the young into patriarchy's prescribed attitudes towards the categories of gender roles. In patriarchy, male heads of the family represent the authority and hold the ownership over wife and children, whereas females are responsible for household and rearing infants. An extremely strong masculine figure is produced in families. Millett discusses that patriarchy preserves economic resources for himself causing the economic dependency of women. Similarly, the females are not allowed to get the same education that the males get, which keeps women with the inferior sphere of culture. According to Millett, patriarchy has always been associated with force. Women who violate patriarchal taboos, class and property have always been punished severely. The history of patriarchy has a variety of cruelties and barbarities like rape, wife beating, trading and enslaving women, child marriage and prostitution. Other aspects of patriarchy through which the lesser character of women is asserted are anthropology, religion and mythology. Pandora's box and the Fall are the most known evidence for the female figure who is the reason of human suffering. Women, sex and sin constitute fundamentals of patriarchal thought. Finally, Millett displays the psychological outcomes of

patriarchy's attempt to maintain the male supremacy over the female through different ways like interiorization of patriarchal values by women, patriarchal marriage and family, guilt attached to sexuality placed upon female, tendency toward making female a sexual object than a person, denial of sexual freedom of women through the cult of virginity, female's seeking survival via the approval of males, the equal application of terms "man" and "human" to both sexes, women's dislike of both themselves and of each other, and the conviction that women entertain, please, gratify, satisfy, and flatter men with their sexuality are some of them. In short, Millett overtly shows that the formation of gender roles is achieved through varying cultural interpretations and imposition of patriarchal values. Therefore, Millett asserts that the terms "woman", "man", "female", and "male" are always artificial and socially determined.

Correspondingly, prior to Millett, Simone de Beauvoir argued that gender was "constructed" but not determined by biological fate. Beauvoir asserted that it was the civilization as a whole that created gender roles. She claimed "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one." According to Beauvoir, the two sexes were the products of the patriarchal society.

With regards to the theory mainly based on Millett's arguments, Churchill's criticism of the conventional gender roles imposed by patriarchal ideology in her plays *Owners*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls* has been one of the major concerns of this thesis which is analyzed in two parts. Firstly, this study has shown that, in her plays, Churchill critiques rigid perceptions of distinctions between men and women and the arbitrariness of gender roles by displaying how they are formed through the imposition of patriarchal values. It has been argued that Churchill displays the arbitrariness of gender roles through stereotypical examples of conventional male characters like Clegg, Clive, and Martin and illustrate the oppressive nature of the dominant masculine structure of patriarchy. It has also been claimed that Churchill shows that sex-oppression and the concept of manliness and men's superiority and women's inferiority are learned or patterned behaviors obtained in families in early childhood through conditioning and role-modelling. Edward, Victoria, and Cathy have been analyzed in this sense. In addition, through the women characters like Betty, Nijo and Isabella, it has been shown that Churchill examines the masculine

ideas that shape the female in order to meet the need of the male, causing self-denial and no sense of self-worth in women; and that she displays that patriarchy considers women to be men's property and lesser beings and sees women as the cause of men's suffering, which allows men to practice their manly suppressive authority over women and gives them the right to control them. Clive's attitude towards Mrs. Saunders and Betty is stereotypical in that sense. Similarly, it has been shown that Churchill chastises that men define sexuality and sexual standards in the way that best serves their own desires and that patriarchy tames women so that they internalize oppression and become obedient to patriarchal rules. In the sense of taming, Churchill highlights the parallelism between women and colonized people. Betty and Joshua can be observed as examples of this situation. Besides this, Churchill's demonstrations that patriarchy utilizes violence and institutionalizes force through its legal system in order to impose male authority and female inferiority have been analyzed. The case of Pope Joan and Patient Griselda have been seen as illustrations of this. Finally, it has been displayed that patriarchy uses labor division to transfer women and men into discrete genders as it is seen in the characters of Clive, Clegg, and Martin.

This study has also shown that Churchill shows that rigid social norms and sexual oppression lead to resistance in the behavior of individuals, which appears in the form of excluded sexual practices like homosexuality and lesbianism. It has been indicated that Churchill demonstrates the multiple nature of sexuality, and hence the arbitrary characterization of gender roles by reversing the conventional expectations of male/female; a completely passive male versus a very active female figure. It has been noted that another strategy that Churchill uses to manifest the arbitrary notion of gender roles is cross-casting, which challenges the assumptions that gender definitions are natural ramifications of physical difference. This part has confirmed that Churchill employs cross-casting to increase the conscious awareness of the doubleness of representation and to question what is true what is false in terms of gender roles by presenting varying combinations.

In the last part of this thesis, it has been shown that Churchill draws attention to the fact that women may still remain trapped by the categories of patriarchal essentialism like superwoman and motherhood, even while they are rejecting

gender roles imposed on them as she displays through the characters of Marion, Marlene, Lin, Victoria, and Betty. The damaging effects of masculinist organizational structures bite so hard that women feel they have to be better and work harder than men to achieve recognition. Therefore, they assert that they can do all and everything. Moreover, they claim that they are “free” and “equal” to men but they miss the point that these terms belong to the dominant male culture. Being equal to men requires internalizing patriarchal values and accepting male models of success. As a result, women who are trying hard to cope with inequality through male modelling transform into superwomen, or surrogate men. They become oppressors of other women and men they deal with. This proves that their position is ironic because while trying to eliminate patriarchy, they become a part of it. On the other hand, it has been discussed that Churchill considers motherhood as one of patriarchy’s traps because patriarchy continues its structure through motherhood and keeps the female in the service of the male in this way. Therefore, Churchill urges that women who attempt to get liberated should be wide-awake in order not to get hooked by patriarchal essentialism through motherhood. If they take all responsibilities for bearing children, they will remain trapped by patriarchal essentialism which accepts every woman as a mother and responsible for child care and women’s mothering as the central and continuing element of the social organisation and reproduction of gender in patriarchy. In the light of this study, as has been shown, although the women characters in Churchill’s three plays pretend they are liberated, it is apparent that they are not.

To sum up, taking the aspects of patriarchal ideology defined by Kate Millet’s *Sexual Politics*, this thesis has shown that Churchill points out that gender roles which are predetermined by patriarchy are artificial; there is no such a thing to define one as a “man” or a “woman” because of multiple notions and various combinations of gender roles. And it has been contended that Churchill propels that women must and should avoid remaining trapped by patriarchal essentialism through the archetypes of superwomen and motherhood. However, Churchill only

poses questions and avoids giving clear cut answers. As Kritzer points out, Churchill's plays conclude with the central question intentionally left unanswered. This open-ended format challenges and stimulates audiences to think about answers rather than simply identifying with or against an idea generated in the play (114).

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