T.C.

ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

FEMINIST READING OF *THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE*, *THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE* AND *TOP GIRLS*

MASTER'S THESIS

Mine TUSU

Department of English Language and Literature

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Thesis Advisor: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gillian Mary Elizabeth ALBAN

March, 2022

ONAY FORMU

DECLARATION

I hereby declare with respect that the study “Feminist Reading of The Grace of Mary Traverse, The Love of the Nightingale and Top Girls”, which I submitted as a Master thesis, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the works I have benefited are from those shown in the Bibliography. (28/01/2022)

Mine TUSU

FOREWORD

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FEMINIST READING OF THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE, THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE AND TOP GIRLS

ABSTRACT

Women have always aimed to construct their identities and transgress socially gendered roles in patriarchal societies. However, their goals have caused some problems in patriarchal society as they have represented the silenced part of the society. Women subjugated to the socially constructed gender roles have not been able to make themselves heard in patriarchal society. When women have not conformed to ideal roles like an angel in the house or nurturers of home and their family, they have been identified as marginalized or unnatural women. However, this identification has caused a negative connotation, and thus women have aspired to change those roles. The reason why they have been obliged to conform to myths leading to passivity and inferiority is that patriarchal society has aimed to exert its power over women in order to dominate them. Showing them as mysterious and dark, men have established an artificial identity for women and they have been able to dominate them. Concerning their subjective interpretation, men have caused gender oppression as they have not seemed to understand women. Gender oppression which is the weapon of male supremacy have prevented women from holding their own identity and voice. This thesis will study the three plays; The Grace of Mary Traverse and The Love of The Nightingale written by Timberlake Wertenbaker; and Top Girls written by Caryl Churchill. It aims to analyze them regarding gender oppresion within the context of Second Wave Feminism and its two viewpoints; Radical Feminism and Socialist Feminism.

Second Wave Feminism mainly focuses on inequality in every area as houses and workplaces, and it is proper to study these three plays according to this feminist movement. Besides, analyzing women's struggles written by female playwrights are highly significant. Rather than experiencing women's issues within the masculine discourse, female playwrights display their own problems. Mary in The Grace of

Mary Traverse, Philomele in The Love of The Nightingale and Marlene in Top Girls are women who act against the rules of patriarchy and as a result of their acts, they are oppressed and become victims. It is a study comparatively analyzing oppression of women in patriarchal society. Besides, it demonstrates how women victimize each other as a result of patriarchal oppression. It will study the acts of patriarchal society that put women into inferior positions through the gender roles and bias, class discrimination, physically, sexually and economically abusive manners. Besides, it will discuss how Second Wave Feminism effects contemporary British feminist theatre and American theatre regarding women and their suffering. In conclusion, this study aims to discuss gender oppression on women whose problems are shown by female playwrights.

Keywords: feminist theatre, second wave feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, gender oppression

THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE, THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE VE TOP GIRLS OYUNLARININ FEMİNİST OKUMASI

ÖZET

Kadınlar kendi kimliklerini oluşturmak ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerin aşmak için her zaman mücadele etmişlerdir. Fakat gayeleri ataerkil toplumda bazı problemlere sebebiyet vermiştir çünkü kadınlar toplumun susturulmuş bölümünü temsil etmektedirler. Toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine maruz kalan kadınlar, ataerkil sistemde seslerini duyuramamaktadırlar. Öteki rolünü, evdeki melek figürü, evi ve aileyi besleyen kişi gibi olarak atfedilen rolleri kabul etmediklerinde, kadınlar sıradışı ya da doğal olmayan olarak tanımlandılar. Fakat bu tanımlama kadınlar için negatif çıkarımlara sebep olmuştur çünkü bu rolleri değiştirmek istediler. Kendilerini pasif ve ikinci sıraya iten mitlere uymak zorunda bırakılmalarının sebebi ataerkil düzeninin gücünü kadınlar üzerinde kullanmayı istemiş olmasıdır. Kadınları gizemli ve karanlık gösterek, kadınları ötekileştirmek için sahte bir kimlik yaratırlar ve kadınlar üzerinde egemenlik kurabilmişlerdir. Erkeklerin öznel yorumlamasına bağlı olarak, kadınları anlamayı istemedikleri gibi göründükleri için cinsiyet baskısı ve cinsiyet taraflılığına sebep olmuşturlar. Erkek egemenliğinin silahı olan kadın üzerindeki baskı kadınların kendi kimlik ve seslerine sahip olmasını engellemiştir. Bu tez çalışması üç oyunu inceleyecektir; Timberlake Wertenbaker tarafından yazılan *The Grace of Mary Traverse* ve *The Love of The Nightingale* ve Caryl Churcill tarafından yazılan *Top Girls*. Bu çalışma, oyunları İkinci Dalga Feminizm ve onun iki dalı olan Radikal Feminizm ve Sosyalist Feminizmi kullanarak analiz etmeyi amaçlar.

İkinci Dalga Feminizm çoğunlukla kadınlara karşı yapılan eşitsizlik ve ayrımcılığa odaklanır ki bunlar evlerde ve işyerlerinde yani hayatının her alanında görülebilecek yerlerdedir ve bu sepeble üç oyunu bu feminist akıma göre okumak uygun olacaktır. Ayrıca, kadınların yaşadığı zorlukları kadın oyun yazarları

tarafından analiz etmek de olukça önemlidir. Kadınların problemlerini eril anlatımdan görmek yerine, kadın oyun yazarları kendi problemlerini gösterirler. *The Grace of Mary Traverse* oyununda Mary, *The Love of The Nightingale* oyununda Philomele ve *Top Girls* oyununda Marlene patriarkinin kurallarına karşı hareket eden karakterlerdir ve bunun sonucu olarak da baskıya maruz kalıp mağdur edilirler. Bu tez, kadınların sıkıntısını ve mağduriyetini karşılaştırmalı olarak analiz eden bir çalışmadır. Bu tez, kadınların nasıl erkek egemen toplumun kurbanı olduklarını inceler. Sonrasında, ataerkil baskı sonucunda kadınların nasıl birbirlerini mağdur ettiğini gösterir. Ataerkil toplumun hareketleriyle, kadınları, cinsiyet rollerini ve önyargıyı, sınıf ayrımcılığıyla, fiziksel, cinsel ve ekonomik olarak istimar ederek nasıl değersiz gösteriğini inceleyecektir. Ayrıca, İkinci Dalga Feminist hareketin çağdaş İngiliz ve Amerikan tiyatrosunu kadınlar ve onların sıkıntıları açısından ele alarak nasıl etkilediğini gösterecektir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma kadın oyun yazarları tarafından yazılan oyunlardaki kadınların maruz kaldığı cinsiyet baskısını tartışmayı amaçlar.

Anahtar kelimeler: feminist tiyatro, ikinci dalga feminizm, radikal feminizm, sosyalist feminizm, cinsiyet baskısı

TABLE OF CONTENT

I. INTRODUCTION

> "One is not born but rather becomes, a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine."
>
> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*

When the history of humanity is studied, we can notice that there are always definitions for women and men. Those definitions are highlighted and open to being changed. As women and men create the society, issues regarding gender and class appear at the same time. The issues and definitions are created through binary oppositions. It is a usual method to utilize binary oppositions in patriarchal societis so that men can justify the hegemonic masculinity. Aristotle states that male is superior and ruler while female is inferior and ruled (qtd. in Jaggar, 1983: 36). Patriarchal society supports male supremacy that has power over the family and the society. All the definitions and patterns about women and men are created and imposed by this conventional system. Besides class differences are usually subject to gender roles. When we consider the gender patterns, which are neither neutral nor natural, women are described below men. They are expected to be obedient and listen to their husbands. Contrarily, a man must be dominant, authoritarian, and the only voice at home.

Man has been seen as the superior and defined with these roles. This approach is defined by binary oppositions, and those oppositions always connote the negative meanings for women. Women are considered as weak and nurturers while men are defined as strong and active. Cixous explains binary oppositions as hierarchical opposition so that men can create an inferior position for women and can subjugate them. The superiority of men both at home and in society has led women into a troubling position which has restricted them. If a woman attempted to leave

her inferior position and start to act against the rules of patriarchy, she would be seen as an unconventional figure in the eyes of patriarchal society. She struggled to destroy the conventional roles of patriarchal society. In order to achieve their goal, women needed a movement. They could abolish all those limitations and make themselves noticed with the help of the movement. Later, that movement would be known as feminism, and women would start to achieve their aims gradually.

When definition of feminism is studied, it is possible to find more than one definition. “Feminism has in fact given way more precisely to feminisms each of which implies distinct ideological interpretations and political strategies” (Dolan, 2012: 3). With the changes in the orders and systems, feminism has also changed and brought some different points in the course of time. Despite the changes, its main aim has remained same and feminism has supported women and their rights. Although feminists have objected to the patriarchy and struggled to raise their voices, female subjugation has continued.

It is likely to indicate that First Wave Feminism emerged with the “Vindication for Women” which was the declaration of Mary Wollstonecraft in 1792. Wollstonecraft wanted women to raise their voices, protect their rights, and be active in society. This movement starting with Wollstonecraft was known as the First Wave Feminism. Although feminism became apparent through the end of the 19th century in England, women had already been opposed to oppression. They were not able to protest as effectively as at the beginning of the 19th century. In the 19th century, one of the major issues was the rights of married women. They had no right to inherit when their husbands passed, besides the inheritance of their fathers used to belong to their husbands and brothers. As a result, they did not have any rights, security or money in order to support themselves in the future. The same rule was valid for the daughters while sons had the right to have all inheritance. Under these circumstances, there were two choices for the daughters.They would either marry or live in the streets as thieves or prostitutes in order to survive as a result of patriarchal society’s constructed roles.

Women did not have a proper education in the field of sciences or social studies; on the contrary they were taught feminine professions like playing the piano, sewing, dancing and cooking that can be performed at home. In order to avoid these problems that placed women in ineffective conditions, women initiated a new

movement. First, they demonstrated to draw attention to the inequality between man and woman in marriage. As a result of this, the Married Women's Property Act was accepted on behalf of women in 1882. Thus, women were able to hold their wages and property. Later, they obtained their rights for inheritance, custody, and education immediately. Women's voices started to increase with the protests, and thus women's demands were acknowledged in the laws. As a result of this movement, an official declaration was published. The main aim of this movement was to declare that women were part of patriarchal society. Besides, it defended the equality between women and men.

Women were not able to express themselves, and they were restricted. They were obliged to be weak, inferior, and obedient. As a result, they were forced to obey the rules. Although every period brought different rules, the main goal was to dominate women. Before the 20th century, women were considered as commodities rather than individuals. To exemplify, when they got married, their fathers decided on their husbands. Their opinions were not significant because their fathers had already chosen their spouses. Marriage was held between two families as an agreement. They had to stay at home and look after their children. While they were oppressed, women succeeded in voting and equality in society in the early 20th century. Besides, they worked in many places from schools and hospitals to factories with the beginning of the First World War (Walters, 2005: 86). Moreover, they were elected, and they had seats in the parliament. They also called for acts that protected widows with children and unmarried women.

However, in the 20th century when they worked, they had to struggle with gender wage gap. Besides, they were forced to choose either their jobs or families. This time, women asked for equality in wages and conditions in workplaces. However, equality could not be the necessary answer which women looked for. Instead of equality, women aspired to highlight the difference. Eleanor Rathbone, who was a member of the parliament, stated, "what women need to fulfil the potentialities of their own natures and to adjust themselves to the circumstances of their own lives" (qtd. Walters, 2005: 88). Men continued to describe women within the frame of domestic chores and promote the old rules, women aspired to change the conventional roles. They were fighting for not only equality but also recognition of their difference. They also had to struggle with gender inequality in workplaces.

Regarding the difference, Second Wave Feminism emerged in the 1960s. Second Wave Feminism started with the Women's Liberation Movement as difference became more important than equality. Women expected people to realize that women and men were two different sexes. There was a huge need to release women from socially constructed gender roles and reevaluate the traditional discourse of patriarchy. Moreover, Second Wave Feminism included many branches concerning the aim of women.

Second Wave Feminism has mainly three parts; Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism and Socialist feminism. Liberal feminism is a movement that defends the equality between woman and man, individuality, justice, and freedom. It supports women to be more active in patriarchal society. Besides, it states that women should not tolerate male dominance. Radical feminism aims to eliminate patriarchal society and its discourse. In contrast to Liberal feminists, Radical feminists aspire to suppress everything that belongs to patriarchy. Furthermore, female solidarity emerges as Radical feminism believes that only if women support each other, they can have power to change the structure. Also, it states that women are sexually exploited both at home and in workplaces. If we analyze Socialist feminism, we understand that it is a mixture of Radical feminism and Marxist feminism. It declares that women are oppressed by the patriarchal and capitalist society. Therefore, they aim to change capitalist structure in the society.

While men have more salaries and get better positions, women are obliged to wait for a better position and work hard. As a result of this inequality, the Socialist feminist movement starts to rise because the exploitation of women occurs in the capitalist structure and under the male dominance. After all, Astell's rhetorical question is a decend example of these issues, "If all men are born free, how is it that all women are born slaves?"(qtd.in Springborg, 2005: 1). Women aspire to unburden themselves from all the oppression and stereotypical roles created by patriarchal society.

This thesis will study *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, *The Love of The Nightingale* and *Top Girls* in the context of Second Wave Feminism and its strands that are Radical and Socialist Feminist viewpoints. In *The Grace of Mary Traverse,* written by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Mary tries to adapt a male behaviour in order to have an identity, and a voice in patriarchal society. She traverses the boundaries of

socially constructed gender roles set by her father. Her desire for knowledge leads her to determine her own identity. In *The Love of The Nightingale*, written by Timberlake Wertenbaker, Philomele always asks questions, and she is open to learning. However, her voice is taken at the end as punishment as she questions everything.

In *Top Girls*, written by Caryl Churchill, Marlene leaves her daughter and chooses her career. She tries to get a masculine role in order to be a part of the capitalist system so that she can achieve her professional goals. Also, sisterhood cannot be noticed in the play but acknowledged as a failure because while creating a superior role for herself, she gives the inferior position to her sister and her daughter. In order to have a powerful identity, Marlene seems to choose a male identity rather than keeping her own female identity or maintaining female solidarity. The purpose of this thesis is to compare and contrast how women are abused through gender bias, gendered social norms, their classes, and their economical conditions. When a woman tries to gain her rights, she struggles with a male-dominated society. Patriarchy tries to control women physically, ideologically and economically because patriarchal society aims to control women and prevent them to have their voices and rights.

Therefore, they aspire to impose their superior positions upon women by enclosing them at home, exploiting them physically and sexually, creating institutionalized roles, and giving less wages to them.

Here, it is essential to mention women's writing about women as it is one of the most appropriate ways for women to make their voices heard. Cixous indicates the importance of writing with this quote,

> "Woman must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies - for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into history - by her own movement" (1976: 875).

Written by female authors, these three plays highlight the real problems of women without falling into men's writing. Instead of defining women as a dark continent or madwoman in the attic, the reader can experience the actual problems of

women.

In Literature Review part, Second Wave Feminism will be studied elaborately. The discussion will be about its emergence, its development, its significant figures, and its viewpoints. Then it will be argued how British theatre and American theatre are affected and changed by Second Wave Feminism. In the third part, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* will be discussed, and its analysis will be based on the Radical and Socialist feminist movements. Later in the fourth part, *The Love of The Nightingale* will be read in the context of Radical feminism. In the fifth part, *Top Girls* will be discussed within the frame of Socialist feminism. Then there will be a comparative part in order to compare and contrast three plays in regards to female characters and their struggles. With the conclusion part, the aim of the thesis will be displayed and completed.

These three plays, *The Grace of Mary Traverse, The Love of the Nightingale* and *Top Girls*, were set at different times even though they were written in the 1980s. However, they share the same theme that is gender oppression. In the light of this information, gender oppression will be studied in this thesis. This thesis aims to prove that gender oppression does not end, and this statement will be supported with elaborative examples from the plays. As is known, all kinds of oppression of women are rooted in their gender. Oppression is utilized as a medium by dominant forces in order to confine women to constructed gender roles. Female characters in these three plays are confined to the patriarchy's norms, subjugated to oppression and discrimination, and victimized. When they raise their voices and transgress the patriarchal society's constructed rules, they encounter with gender oppression like being silenced, being raped or being obliged to sacrifice their children. This thesis study aims to display how socially constructed gender roles restrict women in the patriarchal society through these three plays which are the reflection of Radical and Socialist feminist movements. This study analyzes *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, *The Love of The Nightingale* and *Top Girls* plays written by female playwrights and it aspires to reveal women's problems depicted through the eyes of female playwrights within the context of Radical feminism and Socialist feminism.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Background of Second Wave Feminism

The emergence of Second Wave Feminism was through the end of the 1960s in the United States and the United Kingdom. It aimed to raise consciousness about sexism and patriarchal society as women needed to reveal the domestic abuse and marital rape instead of a need for voting or property rights as in First Wave of Feminism. Besides, sexual liberation, legalizing abortion, and inequalities in workplaces were the main themes of Second Wave Feminism. It was mainly affected by the Civil Rights Movement in America because it opened the way for justice and equality for black people. It was a movement that banned discrimination of race, religion and sex in all the places of society and the workplaces. It became significant for Second Wave Feminism as it focused on the discrimination and inequalities between men and women.

Second Wave Feminism had significant people and organizations helping women to raise their voices like Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, the National Organization for Women (NOW) held in 1966 in the USA or Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex in Europe. Some acts such as the equal pay act, familiy planning act, contraception act or the pregnancy discrimination act provided more powerful conditions for women. Rather than accepting existing act, women needed more regulations. Second Wave Feminism was a notable movement because women attempted to eliminate gender oppression and gender inequalities in patriarchal society. During the Second World War, when men went to the war and fought there, women took the roles of men, worked in factories, earned money and at the same time they handled their houses and children. Women realized that it was not about gender but the conventional roles.

After Second World War, men came back to their houses and took back their roles while women lost their jobs and found themselves in domestic chores again. Besides, they lost their identities in patriarchal society because that society no longer needed their help. It created a lack of self-reliance for women. They became middle-class women who were married and had children. It turned into a humdrum life for them because they had already experienced this lifestyle. Although women obtained the right to earn, they were exposed to restriction and inequality once again. “They looked after their husbands, children, and homes, and always behaved in a manner that was ‘discreet, chaste and sober” (Walters, 2005: 16). They had certain gender roles, and they were obliged to fulfil them in order to create a healthy and safe environment for their family and the male-dominated society.

“Anatomy is destiny,” said Freud (qtd.in Friedan, 2001: 52), and that statement created some certain limitations for women and men. It was not about the biologically defined sex but socially constructed gender roles. However, when women earned nearly the same amount of money as their husbands, those roles started to be shaken. As women started to realize their full potential, the conventional roles for both sexes were about to change. In order to bring back the old way of oppression, women's magazines were utilized by male supremacy. In the 1960s, the aim of women’s magazines was to create an ideal woman image so that women could act according to socially structured gender roles and go back to their daily chores at home. Judith Hole and Ellen Levine stated, “media created woman is (1) wife, mother and housekeeper for men, (2) a sex object used to sell products to men, (3) a person trying to be beautiful for men.” (qtd.in Mendes, 2009: 14). Those artificially created images made women believe that those roles were their actual identities; however, images were constituted by patriarchal figures.

While the patriarchy was in control and possessed the power to give a name to everything, she became only a thing to be looked at and defined. Thus, women were obliged to internalize those artificial identities. To give an example, the image of a working woman was illustrated as a unnatural woman with black suit and short hair as opposed to a natural wife. While her only occupation could be a housewife, she performed the same role as her husband. She was restricted by male supremacy so she could not have a voice or establish her own identity. As she was the other of the man, she could not possess her own identity. Lacan explained this situation, “We

have only to understand the mirror stage as an identification, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image" (qtd.in Leitch, 2018: 1112).

In the mirror stage, the infant creates his ideal-I by looking at the mirror and taking figures as ideal ones. After its interaction with the language in the symbolic order, ideal-I evolves to constructed I according to the rules of the patriarchal discourse. As the language belongs to patriarchy, the infant accepts the name of the Father which is "the figure of the law" (Lacan, 2007: 50). Therefore, while a woman tries to define herself by using I, a man does not need it because he dominates and has power to name women. In order to acquire their identity and transgress the boundaries, women must give a name to the problem. With Second Wave Feminism, they realize what the problem is.

"The personal is political that male power is exercised and reinforced through 'personal' institutions such as marriage, child-rearing and sexual practices" (Gamble, 2001: 26). With the help of this influential slogan, Second Wave Feminism gained more speed as the slogan explained that women's problems were rooted in the ideology of patriarchy. Displaying constructed gender roles created oppressive and unequal conditions for women, and this situation led to what Kate Millett calls sexual politics. As women were exposed to both politically and socially constructed definitions, they aspired to eliminate those patterns. They desired to control their bodies and voices rather than accepting the patriarchy's rules.

Second Wave Feminism leans to the root of the problem that was based on the socially constructed gender roles. Women needed to exist for themselves. They needed higher education, jobs, liberation from sexual oppression and violence at their home, and a solution for inequalities and discrimination in every area of life like equal wage in their workplaces or in society. While they tried to avoid those problems, different strands of Second Wave Feminism appeared owing to different needs. Women needed equality and individuality but they also needed female solidarity in order to support and vindicate their rights. Moreover, they were oppressed by the capitalist system in workplaces; therefore, they wanted a change in the male-dominated social structure. It is possible to sort those branches as Liberal Feminism, Radical Feminism, Cultural Feminism, Marxist Feminism and Socialist Feminism. However, this thesis will only focus on Radical and Socialist Feminism,

and these two viewpoints will be analyzed.

B. The Prominent Strands of Second Wave Feminism

1. Radical Feminism

Radical feminism arose with the rise of Second Wave Feminism in the USA in the 1960s. “It was sparked by the special experiences of a relatively small group of predominantly white, middle class, college-educated, American women in the 1960s” (Jaggar, 1983: 83). Radical feminists seek a radical change in the social structure, and they ask to end male domination. The new system should depend on maternal rules, maternal structures, maternal language and maternal culture. As it is patriarchal society, women have no right or power to speak up, and they struggle with lack of self-reliance. Radical feminists discuss that men have the power to define and govern national institutions and national culture. Therefore, they aspire to eliminate this gender bias.

While male power is visible, women are situated in an invisible place. While male culture is based on power, supremacy, and superiority, female culture consists of chores, cooking and cleaning (Jaggar, 1983: 250). Thus Radical feminists desire a change in this male culture. “Millett explains that patriarchy is maintained because of social conditioning, and is ideologically embedded in institutions such as education, religion, media, the state and literature.” (qtd.in Mendes, 2009: 34) It is the same statement that Gamble says; personal is political. Radical feminists aim to change the social structure rather than focusing on equality. Besides, Radical feminism promotes the female solidarity. Women can share and voice the difficulties which they are exposed to like sexual exploitations at home or wage inequality in workplaces. It aims to abolish all forms of gender hierarchy as Radical feminists emphasise the female superiority.

Radical feminists consider that all the problems related to gender oppression are based on men. “Gender is an elaborate system of male domination. Theoretical task of radical feminism is to understand that system; its political task is to end it.” (Jaggar, 1983: 85). It aims to remove those socially constructed gender roles that are unnoticed in society. Kristeva summarizes the situation as, “Women reject the male symbolic order in the name of difference. Radical feminism. Femininity extolled”

(qtd in Moi, 1985: 12). Radical feminists intend to create a new system based on women's culture and language so that they can abolish men's rules and discourse. Thus, men will not be able control women's bodies or their identites. Hence, change can be achieved through Radical Feminism as it supports the change of society's structure completely.

2. Socialist Feminism

> "Socialist feminism views human nature as defined in part by biological characteristics of the human species. These characteristics, however, are subject to change because a unique feature of the human species is that it continuously transforms itself through its conscious and cooperative productive activity" (Jaggar, 1983: 303).

Women are exploited economically in regard to their classes. Socialist feminists urge to avoid this exploitation. Therefore, a change in productive activity on behalf of women can mean a change in socially constructed gender roles and social classes. However, capitalist society does not allow this change as the upper class men dominate the working class and women through money and power. Capitalist and patriarchal societies aspire to dominate women because if women work and earn their money, they will have their economic freedom. In order to avoid it, social class and money are used for gender oppression.

As Socialist feminism is a synthesis of Marxist and Radical feminist movements, it is about women's oppression in the capitalist society dominated by white males. Thus, Socialist feminists ask the same question as Radical and Marxist feminists address. "What constitutes the oppression of women and how can that oppression be ended?" (Jaggar, 1983: 124). This movement aims to show women's oppression in the capitalist system and the exploitation of wives by their husbands. It advocates the theory of Radical feminism that is based on a radical change in the society. Socialist feminists aim to deconstruct socially constructed gender roles to eradicate gender bias. Thus they want to change the social structure based on capitalism as the ruling class operates capital in order to maintain the class distinction between rich and poor, and men and women.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e. the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual

force" (Marx). As white males dominate the ruling class and give meaning to things, they control the society, the capital and "the means of mental production" (Marx). In order to sustain their power, the authoritative figures must defend the ideology, which is "the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness" (Marx), for himself. Therefore, he can maintain his power in patriarchal society through the institutionalized roles, constructed ideas and dominant material relationships known as hegemony. Moreover, he is the head of the family, and he needs to protect his power at home, too.

To maintain his dominance, he represses women by silencing them, taking their economic freedom, and abusing them both physically and emotionally. In addition to those difficulties, women are ostracized because of the constructed gender roles like weak or submissive. They are alienated from workplaces in order to fulfil their roles. Capitalist and patriarchal societies do not aspire women to have solidarity as it creates a supportive environment for women. Socialist feminists defend female solidarity as it is a highly effective way to suppress male domination. As a result, this strand seeks to end sex discrimination, and women's victimization economically, politically, socially and culturally. In order to carry out its aim, it focuses on the capitalism since it is one of the main reasons for women's oppression in patriarchal society.

C. British Feminist Theatre

Theatre becomes one of the mediums for the interaction between the playwrights and the audience. It is a significant way for transferring the feelings of a group of people. However, since women are seen as in the second place, it will not be surprising not to see any women taking part in plays without disguising themselves until a certain period. If we consider the 16th-century theatre plays, we can observe that women did not take place on the theatre stage, men disguised themselves as women instead. "... theatre was thought of as Satan's haunt and actresses often equated with harlots whose "lascivious smiles, wanton glances, and indelicate attitudes" threatened the ideal of "womanhood", the women who worked in theatre had a difficult time." (Chinoy, 1996: 24). Since women were seen as angels in the houses, good mothers and wives, it was not acceptable to see a woman on the theatre stage. They were obliged to live their lives in regard to certain roles. Besides,

the theatre was dominated by men, and they led the culture that came out of their tradition. Therefore, it was not possible to have a theatre that belonged to only women or focused on women's struggles or experiences. That kind of theatre that was subject to men is called mainstream theatre. “The term ‘mainstream theatre’ requires qualifiers, as it encompasses two major varieties of theatre. The body of theatre funded by the state, and not relying exclusively upon public demand for the individual production, is generally known as mainstream subsidized theatre” (Goodman, 1993: 17).

In this mainstream theatre, plays were not an outcome of a feminist thinking. They were traditional male-oriented plays. In mainstream theatre, one of the most significant things is self-recognition; however, in feminist theatre, the issue was the recognition of others and displaying them. As a result of this problem based on mainstream theatre, there was a need for women theatre or feminist theatre as the feminist movement was on the rise, and women were no more silent and passive. The theatre which did not conform with the rules of mainstream theatre was called alternative theatre. “Feminist theatre as a term and as a genre is considered vis-à-vis the development of the ‘alternative politics’ and the corresponding ‘alternative theatre’ which emerged in Britain in and after 1968” (Goodman, 1993: 9). It was alternative politics because women’s struggle was out of the traditional conceptions.

Feminist theatre is open to change according to the time and needs of women as the theatre is the extent of feminist movements. The development or result is expected to be shown on the stage because those stages are one of the most significant places for women for raising their voices and showing their existence. They are aware that they can eliminate gender oppression by going out of the boundaries. It is possible to notice this awareness by touching on the essential characteristics of feminist drama such as “significant stage roles for women, a concern with gender roles in society, exploration of the texture of women's worlds and an urge towards the politicisation of sexuality”(Keyssar, 1984: xi).

The slogan “personal is political” has a vital place in British theatre. Keyssar indicates the problem, “For women in Britain, however, the framework of politics was class structure, and at least one obstacle in the women's movement was a clear understanding of the relationship between gender conflict and class conflict.” (Keyssar, 1984: 33). The ones who have both money and power lead the politics, and

they utilize gender roles for their own benefit. In this context, British feminism heads for Marxism more and it is expected to see reflections of this political framework in British theatre. Moreover, the definition of gender becomes a problematic issue for theatre because they want to raise awareness for the feminist conscious. When women fully appreciate what feminism is, it becomes easy to figure out the problems.

In order to state these problems, the theatre becomes one of the most important places for the supporters of the feminist movement. On the stage, dramas about gender problems, women's struggles in patriarchal structure, class problems, inequality are performed, and the main character becomes the woman herself, not the man helping her or disguising himself as a woman. Theatre plays a significant role for the feminist movement and especially for Second Wave Feminism in Britain as women's struggles and positions change in patriarchal society regarding their classes and sexes, and they can have consciousness for their constructed roles. Thus they can show, and they have solidarity as long as they share their common problems with more women. They express that they are not alone or silent anymore.

In theatre, we also experience the effects of Second Wave Feminism's strands. Radical feminist theatre abandons the realistic tradition. It uses a circular plot structure that is fragmented and based on open-ended plays. Also, it uses the Brechtian alienation method. The alienation method is also known as the distancing effect that presents the familiar things in an unfamiliar way, and thus the audience cannot have any feelings for the story or characters, and they only think of the drama itself. In Socialist feminist theatre, women become the subject of the action instead of the object of it. It aims to deconstruct socially constructed gender roles and eradicate gender oppression. It practices this through female characters who are defined as unconventional since they disrupt traditional gender roles and social classes.

It also uses Brecht's alienation method by cross-dressing, doubling, and tripling gender roles. Although cross-dressing belongs to the early centuries, it is utilized to deconstruct the gender roles so that audience can alienate from the constructed roles. "More frequently, feminist plays attempt to pay attention to the lives of women - as individuals, in relation to each other, and in relation to men" (Keyssar, 1993: 3). Playwrights rather focus on the theatre "as an action-oriented

genre" (Goodman, 1984: 9) as their aim is obvious. Churchill utilizes the methods of British theatre so that she can alienate the audience and demonstrate women's real problems.

D. American Theatre and Feminism

With the independence of America and acquiring their own identity and culture, the theatre started to gain popularity. Although it was not easy to eliminate the effect of other countries' contributions to the theatre, it showed its values and experiences.

> "America was, for more than 170 years, a colony and displayed the characteristics of a colony, conceding cultural primacy to an imperial centre. Yet, even with independence, in the world of theatre England was still liable to define the content, style, and subject matter" (Bigsby and Wilmeth, 1998: 7).

With the help of ongoing revolutions, shifting from one style to another, creating more authentic plays peculiar to America, theatre finally found its essence.

Then theatre became a medium to display changes occurring socially and culturally. "... as America moved from a rural to an urban economy, engaged a modernity which both delighted and appalled, and found in social inequity the source of dramatic energy" (Bigsby, 2000: 1). While theatre was shifting, it struggled because of the emergence of the newly appeared shows such as Broadway or Hollywood. However, theatre achieved a solid place in America with the help of significant movements such as the Civil Rights Movement, Postwar theatre or African American women's suffrage movements. As Bigsby stated, "As the ruling metaphor of American society changed, from melting pot to rainbow, the theatre acknowledged this" (Bigsby, 2000: 2). Thus, American theatre could maintain its power by adapting the changes with its plays.

After theatre's division, which was based on identity and genres, it was possible to classify theatre as African American theatre, Asian American theatre, Hispanic theatre, gay and lesbian theatre, and feminist or women's theatre. Since this thesis is based on feminism and women, this part will be about feminist theatre in America. Theatre was always open to women as there were limited work fields for

women. However, women's positions in America were not different from other countries. They faced oppression, double standards, and exploitation as well. As in the UK, women's suffrage gained strength in the 19th century in the USA. Then women's voices continued to rise with the campaigns such as equal rights, and equal pay with the effect of First Wave Feminism. Later the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Second Wave Feminism notably changed women's position in the country.

They asked for the abolishment of discrimination in every area of patriarchal society like home and workplace. While those developments were occurring, the theatre was changing as well. Although the display of women was sexual with their dresses or dances, they had roles showing newly appeared social roles after their movements and campaigns. "From the sentimental heroines of melodrama women became the protagonists of plays that explored equally their marginalization and their new sense of self-awareness" (Bigsby and Wilmeth, 1998: 15). Intending to alienate themselves from conventional roles, women utilized Brechtian techniques as well. Especially in the 70s, women theatre groups expressed feminist concerns and raised awareness for women's consciousness in the places like the Caravan Theatre in Lexington, The Rhode Island Feminist Theatre and Lucy Winer's and Claudette Charbonneau's New York Feminist Theatre.

The emergence of feminist drama in the 70s was based on many movements such as the civil rights movements, the student movements, anti-war movements, Betty Friedan's The Feminine Mystique, war in Vietnam, and the National Organization of Women (NOW). Women were gathering and sharing their concerns about equality in workplaces, the structure of society, and poverty. They also formed support groups which were "gatherings of women who had wished to support each other's struggle for self-respect" (Keyssar, 1984: 15). Being politically conscious was the main objective of women's struggle to gain their rights. When women took part in politics, they could reflect their concerns about gender issues in society. Thus, the key notion which was personal was political became the main issue for them.

With feminist theatre, women focused on issues like political and social problems. Feminist theatre in America gave important to politics because it shaped women's roles and created conventional gender roles. They stated that every inequality which happens in the domestic areas or society was the result of politics, even their emotional struggles was based on politics. They supported the phrase

“personal is political”' for personal reasons. Women playwrights did not aspire to define the theatre as they did not aim to restrict it to the limited definition. However, the theatre was feminist conscious, and it was about women’s roles and their problems in patriarchal societies. Schroeder explained the situation, “a feminist play resists the oppressions of traditional dramatic practice in theme and form as well as in characterization; it may also resist the hierarchical power structures of traditional theatre practice” (1993: 107). They were not under the domination of “masculine-oriented theatre” (Keyssar, 1984: 21). They aimed to support each other and prevent negative connotations against men’s theatre. Wertenbaker utilized the methods of American theatre in order to show women’s problems. As American theatre was politically conscious, Wertenbaker demonstrated its effect in her plays as well.

III. FEMINIST READING OF THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE

A. A Brief Overview of the Play

The Grace of Mary Traverse written by Timberlake Wertenbaker premiered at London's Royal Court Theatre in October 1985. Although it was set in 18th century London, it was not a historical play. On the contrary, it was a valid metaphor for contemporary preconceptions. Timberlake Wertenbaker who was born in the USA is a British based playwright. Timberlake questioned and examined the patriarchal society, gender identities, and gender oppression in her plays. In her play, Wertenbaker did not utilize an environment that was identified with women as the kitchen or attic. Instead, she chose the outside of the house like coffee shop, library or streets. As Roth stated Timberlake's explanation,

> "Those "quite realistic, naturalistic plays, often set in a kitchen or a domestic environment" dealt with women's problems "with love basically," explains Wertenbaker. They were accepted "because that wasn't the male territory. It was a female territory and it wasn't really going to bother anybody" (Roth, 2001: 20).

As long as women stay at home and do the chores, they are identified as normal. When women seek to have voice and transgress the boundaries created by men, then they are called lunatic or unconventional women as they seek to disengage themselves from patriarchal society's constructed roles.

It is significant to specify that Wertenbaker questions those roles through Mary Traverse. The play is about a girl exploring the teeming streets of the 18th century London. Mary Traverse lives in the 18th century London with her merchant father. She is the ideal woman of her time and she complies with patriarchal norms as being an angel in her father's house, playing the piano or sewing. Mary is a lovely and obedient girl, and she does not talk too much. She always stays at home and obeys her father's rules. One day, Mary aspires to leave her father's house in order to

discover the outside world. While she and her nurse are walking on the streets of London, a man whose name is Lord Gordon wants to terrorize Mary. A little girl, Sophie, tries to help Mary; however, he rapes Sophie. Although Mary and Mrs Temptwell witness the situation, they do not help her. Later Mary wants to enter a coffee house; however, she is not accepted because of her sex.

Later in the play, her father is obliged to think that his daughter is dead because of his position in the cabinet. On the other hand, Mrs Temptwell finds a male prostitute so that Mary can have a sexual experience. However, Mary is not pleased with that experience, and she wants to play gambling. She wins for once but loses other games. She even races two old women in order to get back her money. In the end, she faces poverty and becomes pregnant. Although she does not accept her baby, she embraces it later. She prostitutes herself to her father so that she can have money. Then she joins the Gordon Riots in order to support the middle class for their rights; however, she is forced to leave the riots by her father. In the end, she reunites with her father. Mary's hunger for knowledge and experience forces her to confront restrictive institutional structures of family, class and gender. She aspires to transgress the conventional norms of her society to find out her identity, her voice, and discover the external world. However, she does not expect to expose such an abusive environment in the streets. Then, she understands that other women are exposed to physical and social oppressions in public and private spheres.

B. Discussing the Gender Oppression

The play opens in the drawing room of the Traverse family in the 18th century London. Mary enthusiastically questions things and tries to talk about new discoveries with her father, Giles, and she should know that she should not ask "a direct question" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.1.67). It is not her job to ask any questions or talk about irrelevant things like salt mines as she can faint as her father states. Talking about the things that are not defined for women may cause them to faint because it is not in accordance with their nature as patriarchal society marks. Giles clearly indicates his ideas about women when he argues with his daughter; "You are here not to express your desires but to make conversations", and "To be agreeable, a young woman must make the other person say interesting things" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.1.68). A woman's job is to act according to her domestic sphere, and she is

expected to play the piano, sew or dance. She cannot talk about science or logic as her role is obvious. Since a man is the subject of the patriarchal discourse, he is the one who generates the discourse in a constructed way.

Therefore, while Mary is not allowed to study politics, a man is allowed as it is a study of an area that belongs to men according to the institutionalized roles. Furthermore, she is not allowed to enter a coffee house because of gender bias. Giles says, “A woman talking about reason is like a merchant talking about the nobility” (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.1.69). Both gender oppression and class discrimination are experienced in the play. Mary is perceived as a simple creature who only exists to amaze male figures and live in her restricted environment. When she attempts to look out of the window, her father warns her not to watch because he gives her everything in order to spend her time in the house.

In fact, Mary shows a rebellious act concerning the period and her father and crosses the boundaries in order to understand things thoroughly. However, her father becomes a clear archetypal example of how a man behaves towards a woman in the 18th century. He wants his daughter to be silent, obedient, and a bright adornment as if she is a decorative object. The only thing he gives her daughter is a kiss, not a discussion about reason or politics. When Giles defines her as his joy and his hope, she wants to oppose it. However, she is interrupted and she is not permitted to continue and complete her argument by the head of the home. In other words, although her tongue is not cut physically, her father eliminates her right to speak. She is taught to become like air; weightless, still, and invisible while she aspires to be delighted and visible with the help of knowledge. Rather than being weightless, she aims to have a place for herself in patriarchal society. Stephenson asks a question to Wertenbaker if women’s journey and the potential abuse of power are exactly the same for a woman as for a man,

> “It might change if they have a great deal of self-knowledge at the same time. But the idea that you just get power and then it's all going to be different is naive in the extreme and rather dangerous... As women gain power and hope they have the courage to continue to gain power, they have to know what the failings are. And that's what I wanted to show with Mary, that it would be very easy at that point to get discouraged, which is what happens to her. And women have retreated

from the world in the last few years" (1997: 141).

Here the important thing is power. When a woman has power, she should be aware of it, and she must not be abused by a strong figure because of it. In the play, Mary holds power and thinks that she can do anything that a man can do. Thus, she becomes an open target for men as she does not know how to hold it. She is abused and oppressed as a result of the failings. Besides, a woman's power creates a dangerous condition for patriarchal society. When a woman has power, she can raise her voice, get her own identity and change the rules of a male-dominated society. In order to avoid that threatening situation, men try to find ways to oppress women.

Then, we meet Mrs Temptwell who is the nurse of Mary. She actually becomes a critical voice for Mary and other women who seem to obey to patriarchal society in the play. To give an example, she talks with Mary about breathing,

"Mary: You don't understand anything, I'm trying not to breathe.

Mrs Temptwell: Your mother was good at that.

Mary: Was she?

Mrs Temptwell: Said it thickened the waist. She died of not breathing

in the end, poor thing, may she rest in peace, I'm sure she does, she

always did" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.2.72).

Mrs Temptwell obviously states that Mary's mother became an angel in the house as she was trying to conform to the traditional rules of society. She adds that it took one week for Mary's father to realize that her mother was dead. It is possible to understand that she was a weak and weightless character; however, she wanted to change her situation. Mrs Temptwell states that Mary's mother could not manage to go outside. Here, she tries to put her ideas in Mary's head so that she can go out and see the real world. The reason why Mrs Temptwell uses her mother is that she belongs to lower class. She tries to lead Mary in order to revenge Giles. That class distinction also causes intrasexual oppression between them.Therefore we experience the effect of Socialist feminism in the play. In contrast to her surname, she does not tempt Mary well through the play because of the class related issues.

> "Class is a hierarchical structure in which the owners of the means of production garner their privileges through the oppression of the workers. The definitive role that class plays in a social organisation means that there are crucial differences between upper-middle-class women and working-class women - not only are all women not sisters, but women in the privileged class actually oppress women in the working class" (Case, 1988: 83).

When Mary starts to explore the filthy streets of London, she openly reveals her ideas, which are embedded by her father, about lower-class people. For instance, Mrs Temptwell states a quote that belongs to her own family but Mary cannot believe the possibility of Mrs Temptwell's having her own family as she always lives with them. Moreover, she thinks that people on the streets should not be so dirty, "they ought to go back to their villages and be beautiful villagers" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.3.77). She acts according to the rules of patriarchal and capitalist society. As in the example of Sophie, we have the same oppressive attitude. As she is the member of lower class, she becomes an example of the distinction between the rich and poor. Her feelings are not significant, and the upper class thinks that she is obliged to do every nasty thing instead of them because of her social class in the patriarchal society.

"Sophie, in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, is a rural peasant displaced by economics, navigating eighteenth century urban life, vulnerable by her class and gender; her body and sex are positioned as "available" because she circulates, like others' dispossessed, in the streets." (Roth, 2001: 24). Although we do not have enough background information about Sophie, we can deduce significant things about her life. When Lord Gordon attempts to rape her, no one tries to save her because of her social class. She is forced to have sexual intercourse because of the men's greed for power but everyone blames her. The important thing is that upper class is be able to oppress the lower class so that they can continue to be strong and lead the patriarchal society by creating class distinction. Socialist feminist states that class distinction between women causes intrasexual oppression since upper class women are in a more powerful position than lower class women. Besides, upper class women seem to display similar attitude towards other people as upper class men do in the play. These women are economically in a better place in comparison women

like Sophie, and thus their social classes place them in a powerful position. As they do not want to lose their position in patriarchal society, they do not aspire to create female solidarity as in the example of Sophie and Mary. Similarly, women belonging to lower class like Mrs. Temptwell do not aspire to create a strong female solidarity with those upper class women as upper class is the reason of their oppression.

Sophie looks for her aunt on the dangerous streets of London, and people try to abuse her sexually instead of helping her. When Mary asks what will happen to her, Mrs Temptwell says, “Rape her. But she won’t mind. Virtue, like ancestors, is a luxury of the rich” (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.3.80). Since she is lower than Mary and Mrs Temptwell, they think that she deserves to be abused. Even virtue cannot belong to Sophie’s class. In addition to class discrimination and gender oppression, we observe that women victimize other women with their attitudes. Socialist feminism also states that female solidarity between women is important as it is one of the most significant solutions to stop gender oppression. Later in the play when Mary gambles, she throws Sophie some money and says, “You must work for it”. Mrs Temptwell supports Mary and tells Sophie to take the money.

Sophie as a little girl does not understand what to do. Mary lifts her skirt in front of other men and wants them to watch her. It is a pathetic scene for both Sophie and Mary. While Mary acts as men and wants to assert her dominance over Sophie by humiliating the little peasant girl in front of other upper-class men, she actually causes intrasexual oppression and victimizes her. As Socialist feminism suggests that they are not able to create female solidarity because of the class distinction. The reason why Mary humiliates Sophie is that she wants to have power so that she can prove herself. She experiences this rule on the streets. Furthermore, Mary races two old women to take her money back. When the one whom she supports loses the race, Mary beats her. It shows how power abuses its owner and victims if the owner does not use it carefully.

Moreover, in order to prove that she is as powerful as men, she tries to lead a riot against the government. When the guard states that they have the strength to build a new world, Mary says they have done all the things by her command as a prideful leader. However, the riot ends with their loss, Mary, as their leader, cannot believe, and she always repeats the phrase “Please tell me it did not happen” (Wertenbaker, 1987: 3.9.148). When the riot begins, she acts as a powerful general

leading and commanding people. However, at the end of the riot, she is the victim of her power. Mr Manners, who is the sanctimonious politician, talks about the importance of the rules,

> "Don't damn the rules Mary. Rules keep you from horror and emptiness. They bring peace to the heart, they're clear and simple, they hide the lengthening shadows. I'll do anything to keep the rules safe, not only for myself but for the good of the world" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 3.9.150)

He must talk about rules because he can protect his oppressive power with help of those rules. Unlike his surname, Mr Manners is not a man of manners and he abuses Mary's father to keep him on his side. He causes massive deaths in the riot. However, the results of intrasexual violence and lack of solidarity increase the men's power. Besides, it is significant to talk about Radical feminism at that point.

"Radical feminism is based on the belief that the patriarchy is the primary cause of the oppression of women." (Case, 1988: 64). Mary becomes one of those oppressors. We can observe how she turns into a tyrant through Mrs Temptwell. She explains how Mary abuses Sophie and her situation; "She had you raped, she made you a whore, she caused the misery that killed your child and now you'll slave to bring up her reject?" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 3.7.136) Since Mary becomes a representative of the upper-class men with her attitudes towards women, it cannot be supposed to assume that women characters support each other. Besides, women are also divided by class. They seem to serve a capitalist and male-dominated society, and thus it causes lack of female solidarity.

As opposed to Mary, Sophie always supports Mary. When Mary has her baby, she does not want to see her. With the help of Sophie, she starts to embraces her. In the play, Sophie always tries to create female solidarity. On the other hand, Mrs. Temptwell does not help either Mary or Sophie. She only highlights the class difference. At the end of the play, Mary says that the world will not be confusing when they understand everything about it. This statement is about changing the patriarchal structure which is supported by Radical feminists. When someone understands something, they try to change it. Thus it can be in a better position. When Mary and other women understand the world, they will be able to create solidarity and stop intrasexual oppression. Then they will have power to change the

patriarchal structure and form their own maternal values.

Radical feminists suggest that patriarchy is the reason for women's. When Mary gains power, she becomes a patriarchal figure. As a result, she carries out what she is taught. For instance, she thinks that if she humiliates Sophie or Mrs Temptwell, she will protect her dominant position. This is not Mary's fault as Lord Gordon and other men perform the same thing. Only through the end of the play, she realizes what she does. Therefore, she is not able to create female solidarity and end intrasexual oppression at the beginning of the play. Mary's hunger for knowledge and power turns her into a member of the patriarchy. It will not be proper to blame Mary for her attitudes while she is searching for the outer world. She thinks that it is the only way to have knowledge and power. She reflects her father and traditional roles taught for centuries.

Mary's condition can be compared with Shakespeare's Sister in *A Room of One's Own* written by Virginia Woolf. Judith does not want to marry and she leaves her home in order to be a successful actress. However, men do not take her seriously, and they mock her. Even one of them tries to abuse her. An actor manager pities her and takes her home. When Judith finds out that she is pregnant, she kills herself. Woolf criticizes patriarchal society. When a woman wants to leave her home and tries to seek the outside world, she is always restricted with boundaries while men are free to go wherever they want. Judith wants to become successful, and Mary wants to discover the world in patriarchal society. They need to cope with men and protect themselves. Otherwise, they will abused, raped, and oppressed. They do not have the freedom to choose their own paths, and thus they are always subjected to the violence. Besides, when solidarity cannot be formed, and power is used abusively, women become the figures whom they try to avoid.

If we analyze the theatre, it is possible to experience the period's reflections on the stage. First of all, the play premiered in 1985 when Margaret Thatcher, also known as Iron Lady, was the prime minister of the United Kingdom. During Thatcher's period, the left wing was on the rise and theatre and plays were circling around the ideas of the left-wing. Besides, oppression for women and the lower class continued. As Toynbee states, Thatcher was a surrogate man and was not interested in policies for women. Being suppressed by those super women, lower-class women were obliged to obey the rules of the patriarchy. Wertenbaker defined theatre as

means to reveal the facts and to disturb the audience (qtd.in Chaillet 554, Dahl, 1993: 1). Therefore, we had characters like Mary, Mrs Temptwell, Sophie or Mr Manners. Wertenbaker illustrated those characters in order to show the realities of the period. Mary did not care about Sophie or her nurse as Thatcher did not seem to change the abusive environment for women in patriarchal society. Women such as Sophie continued to live in the filthy streets and were oppressed because of the rules established by men like Mr Manners in the Thatcher regime. Thus it could not be proper to review the theatre and plays without considering that period.

IV. FEMINIST READING OF THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE

A. Brief Overview of the Play

The Love of The Nightingale, another play written by Timberlake Wertenbaker, premiered at The Other Place by the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1988. It is an adaptation of the Ancient Greek version of the myth written by Ovid. Wertenbaker takes the tragedy of Philomela from Ancient Greek mythology as a basis for her play; however, she criticizes it from a feminist point of view by highlighting gender oppression. Raped by her sister's husband Tereus, Philomele tries to reveal the truth and revenge herself on Tereus with her sister Procne. Helping the King of Athens Pandion I who is at war with Thebes, Tereus is allowed to marry his daughter Procne. She obeys her father and gets married to Tereus. However, she is neither happy in her marriage nor her life in her husband's land. Since she misses her sister, she wants Tereus to go back to Athens and bring Philomele. When Tereus brings back Philomele, he seems to fall in love with her.

After she realizes his intention, she asks for help from the captain; however, Tereus kills him because of jealousy. He lies to Philomele that Procne is dead. Then, he rapes her. Philomele aspires to tell everything to Procne. Since he cannot handle her insistent attitude, he cuts out her tongue. After returning home, Tereus tells another lie that Philomele died on the journey. For five years, Tereus keeps Philomele on an island with Philomele's servant Niobe. One day, she asks Niobe to take her to Bacchus. Bacchus is a festival that only women can attend and have fun. At that festival, women drink and dance. Philomele shows the rape to her sister Procne with big dolls. After revealing the truth, Philomele kills Itys who is the son of Tereus and Procne in order to revenge. As a result of this act, Tereus aims to kill women. However, when he is about to kill Philomele and Procne, the gods turn Tereus into a hoopoe, Procne into a swallow, and Philomele into a nightingale. The play becomes an example of an open-ended play.

B. Discussing the Gender Oppression

The play opens with two soldiers' insults to each other through women,

"Second Soldier: You son of a bitch.

First Soldier: You son of a lame hyena. You son of a woman" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.1.4).

At the end of Scene I, the male chorus states; "Athens is at war, but at the palace of the Athenian King Pandion, two sisters discuss life's and the attractions of men" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.1). These are the examples showing that how women are considered in patriarchal society. They cannot be in a superior position as men oppress women in order to protect their position. Besides, talking about only life and men shows that it is a womanly act as they do not have any idea about war which is a symbol of man and his power. As women are simple and other, they cannot understand masculine way of life according to those quotations. In Scene III, Tereus helps King Pandion to win the war and wants something from them. The king offers tutors or philosophers as Tereus wants their civilized culture. The Queen is smart enough to understand his intention which is about marrying one of their daughters. Without asking his daughter, Pandion gives Procne to Tereus. Asking help from her mother becomes a useless attempt as the Queen also has no right to speak or argue back.

This marriage becomes an example of a contract which Irigaray quotes Balzac as "woman is a property acquired by contract: she is part of one's personal estate as possession gives title" (1985: 122). She states that a woman's virginity is protected by her father; then, she is given to her husband in order to keep the house safe. After starting to live on her husband's land, Procne becomes silent and she does not talk too much. She turns into an outsider during five years and Iris who is one of her companions says, "And if it is the land of your husband can you even say you have chosen it?" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.4.2). She does not even have a right to choose what she wants as she lives on her husband's land, in his society, and house. Although her companions try to talk to her, she wants her sister as Philomele is the only one who can understand her. When one of her companions says that she has her own family, she knows that she cannot talk to them because her husband and son see themselves as dominant characters who have their own voices and power.

At the end of Scene IV, Procne's sentence, which is "This silence…this silence", foreshadows her sister's tragedy. After learning the will of Tereus about marriage, King Pandion cannot decide what to do and organizes a play in order to "catch a phrase or recognize a character" (Wertenbaker, 1990:1.4.5). The story of Hippolytus is performed during the decision part. Neglecting Aphrodite and honouring Artemis, Hippolytus is cursed by Aphrodite. Phaedra who is his stepmother falls in love with Hippolytus but she is rejected. Then she lies that Hippolytus rapes her; however, Theseus, his father, does not want to kill his son and he asks for help from Poseidon. Hippolytus is attacked by a sea monster, which is sent by Poseidon, while he is racing chariot horses. Losing their control because of the sea monster, horses throw Hippolytus out of the chariot. Hippolytus tangling horses' reins dies in the rocky mountains. While the play is continuing, Tereus makes comments about how Phaedra's feelings towards Hippolytus are wrong. When Phaedra wants them to pity her, Tereus says "Why should we pity her? The plays condone vice" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.5.3). He also thinks that Phaedra should be silent, and the nurse's advice, which is to love and be bold, is terrible advice. Although he opposes what Phaedra does, he performs worse things to Philomele.

King Pandion is aware of his daughter's situation during the sailing and does not want her to go with Tereus. When he expresses his feelings, Phiolmela says "But, Father, I'm not Hippolytus. You haven't cursed me. And Tereus isn't Phaedra, look" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.5.10). Tragically, she becomes Hippolytus and Tereus becomes Phaedra.

"Male Chorus: Fate is irresistible.

Female Chorus: And there is no escape". (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.5.11)

Scene V ends with the comments of the chorus. In fact, they show the tragedy of Philomele that she will experience in the sailing. In Scene VI, we read the dialogue of the male chorus. They express that Tereus falls in love with Philomele; however, she does not realize it. After then, they start to record the tragic event.

In Scene IX, Hero, one of Procne's companions, talks about the danger. She does not understand, and she states that their land is safe. However, the danger Hero mentions is about the power of a lord or master. Danger cannot be related to an

accident or animal but men. Something that requires power and force should belong to men, and as a result of this expression, it is not surprising to understand that women are placed into a weaker position. By the way, four days pass on an island as Tereus makes the ship stop. When Philomele and Niobe collect flowers, Philomele expresses her annoyance about Tereus who follows her everywhere. Niobe tells her not to make him angry and the only way to follow Niobe's advice is to be silent. After all, Niobe is always a silent character and she does not want to comment on everything.

She knows what will happen in the end. She is the exact example of a woman that patriarchal society aspires to create. Rather than helping Philomele and forming female solidarity, Niobe goes to her room. As opposed to Radical feminists who support the sisterhood in order to end gender oppression and change patriarchal structure she does not help Philomele to end the violence Tereus commits. When Tereus rapes Philomele, Niobe does not try to save or help her, she only tells what happens during that time. Wilson says, "Women are raped by men for whom the violence of the act is empowering and consequently heightens their sense of manliness" (1993: 156). Only in that way Tereus thinks he can dominate Philomele as her talkative nature, which is against the traditional roles, should be oppressed by him. Besides, Case states that rape becomes a patriarchal weapon that directly wounds or violates women and indirectly it keeps women off the streets (1988: 66). When Tereus is not able to oppress Philomele, he chooses to use his patriarchal weapon. As Radical feminists suggest, he becomes the root of Philomele's oppression.

It is not possible to observe any solidarity between Philomele and Niobe. Niobe conforms to the constructed gender roles while Philomele becomes an unnatural figure in regard of patriarchal society through the play. Niobe advises Philomele;

> "In the meantime, get him to provide for you. They don't like us much afterwards, you know. Now he might still feel something. We must eat. Smile. Beg. Don't be so mighty, Philomele. You're nothing now. Another victim. Grovel. Like the rest of us. Be careful. Worse things can happen. Keep low. Believe me. I know. Keep silent." (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.15.2)

If Philomele wants to continue her life, she must be silent according to Niobe. She is not a supportive woman in Philomele's life. On the contrary, she is an obedient and weak character. As Wilson suggests this silence is a way of subjugation (1993: 157). During the rape scene, we learn that Philomele is not silent, and she humiliates the body of Tereus. She says that he is ridiculous and is not like that in the statues. At that point Wandor says,

> "Active radical feminism encourages women to unite, to develop solidarity based on their gender; it asserts that women are strong and powerful, and not feminine and weak; it refuses sexual passivity and objectification and exploitation by men, and it encourages women to become sexually self-determining…"(1986: 135).

However, we cannot observe any union between Philomele and Niobe. Philomele, as always an active woman, objects to the exploitation of Tereus and appears as a strong figure.

As Philomele continues to humiliate Tereus and insists on revealing the rape, he constantly tries to oppress her. Philomele says, "Never, as long as I have the words to expose you. The truth, men and women of Thrace, the truth –" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.15.7). When he realizes that she will tell the truth, he cuts out her tongue in order to prevent her from talking about his violent acts. He victimizes her without hesitation and acts as he is the victim. He cannot take responsibility for his actions. Since he is not able to kill her physically, he metaphorically kills her. Besides, he knows that he will not be able to turn her into a passive, obedient character. Only in that way he can use his power over her. The thing Tereus does is what Wilson exactly states, "the exercise of power which forces the victim into silence;..." (1993: 158). Hero's statement supports it as power is seen as a male feature and it brings danger. His power leads to a violent act when he tries to protect his power.

Silence does not only belong to Philomele, other women appear as silent figures as well. Tereus silences Procne by not answering her questions. Procne's companions do not speak the same language with her; thus, they do not understand each other clearly. Niobe, on the other hand, tries to make Philomele obedient by advising her to be silent. While experiencing these problems, women do not support each other. Only Procne and Philomele understand and support each other as they

speak the same language and share the same culture.

How Philomele's silence irritates Tereus is seen through Niobe's speech; "Tereus said, get her out, quickly into the city. She'll be lost there. Another madwoman, no one will notice" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.18.1). Trying to find ways to get rid of her shows how the power of Tereus is threatened as he knows that she is an unconventional and smart woman who can reveal everything despite her lack of ability to speak. When Philomele appears on the stage with two dolls, Niobe tries to get her back. However, when she attempts to catch Philomele, they actually show the rape scene. Procne watches the show when her doll appears on the stage. The show ends, and Procne goes near Philomele. First, she does not want to believe and she blames her sister because of her unconventional nature. However, when she sees her tongue is cut out, she believes and asks for justice. In one of her interviews, Wertenbaker answers a question about Love of the Nightingale,

> "Does the future promise nothing but violence if justice remains absent and all members of society are not given their voice?
>
> I did feel very strongly that if you can't speak, if you don't have the language, the only way you can express yourself is violently, and I think we have evidence of it all around… And the sections of society now, the people who have no voice, are violent, inevitably. If you refuse to listen to a section of society, you are silencing them." (Stephenson, 1997: 143).

As it can be seen in the play, women are refused to voice their problems and are silenced. As a result of this action, they use violence in order to be heard. Philomele kills Itsy as Itsy is the future of the country. When Procne asks about the rape, he answers;

> "Tereus: I can't say. There are no rules.
>
> Procne: I obeyed all the rules: the rule of parents, the rule of marriage,
>
> the rules of my loneliness, you. And now you say." (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.20.5).

It shows the hypocrisy of the patriarchy. While women are expected to obey

all the rules, men appear as the creators of the rules and they are not obliged to obey the rules. As Millett says "Traditionally patriarchy granted father narly total ownership over wife or viwes and children, including the physical abuse and often those of murder and sale" (1972: 34). Tereus, as the head of the family and society, owns everything and he does not have to explain his oppressive act. Besides, he does not allow Procne to ask questions about Philomele.

> "Hero: But if you silence the question.
>
> Iris: Imprison the mind that asks.
>
> Echo: Cut out its tongue." (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.20.2).

This time Tereus cannot cut out his wife's tongue but imprisons her mind. Procne, as a strong and brave woman, says that he makes their future bloodied and now they do not want it. While he attempts to kill Procne and Philomele, the female chorus comes forward in order to save the two sisters. It is significant as that scene is an example of female solidarity. Not only does Procne help her sister, but the female chorus also tries to form female solidarity. This is the notion that Radical feminists support. They argue that if women aspire to change the patriarchal society, they need to form female solidarity. Although Philomele commits murder, the acts of her sister and female chorus show that they also aim to change the structure. Case argues; "The patriarchy is the system which elevates men to positions of power through the notion of the *pater* or father, placing men in an economic and social executive position within the family unit, the marketplace and the state" (1988: 64). She murders her nephew and the future of the society; however, she tries to kill the source of oppression of women. With the help of other female characters, she creates female solidarity and ends the oppression of patriarchy. Philomele attempts to eliminate male's order, their pain in the society and gender oppression. Radical feminists aim the same thing, they aspire to change the patriarchal society and form their own maternal values with the help of female solidarity. As the play is open-ended, there is not any clue for maternal values. However, women raise their voices and act according to Radical feminism so that they can be heard and understood.

As gender roles are socially constructed in patriarchal society, men use those roles in order to dominate women. It will be appropriate to explain this situation utilizing the concept of myth defined by Roland Barthes. He defines myth as "a

system of communication, that it is a message" (2009: 131). The semiological system introduces two terms; signifier and signified. As Saussure explains, the signifier gives the letters, words or images while signified reflects what evolves in the mind. Barthes explains that myth consists of a signifier, signified, and sign which is meaning and related to signifier and signified. Myth becomes "a second-order semiological system", which is called metalanguage (Barthes, 2009: 137). Instead of concerning the form, myth is about conveying the message, and motivation of the signification which is more than the image in the mind. Regarding the cultural basis, myth is considered as the main source for transmitting cultural norms and values.

> "From a semiotic point of view, however, we may say that myth is a narrative structure whose sign and symbol systems are closely correlated with the central values of the culture, especially those values which express a supernatural validation, extension, or explanation of the cultural norms" (Segal, 1983: 50).

Thus, when we consider the play concerning myth, it can be understood that myth functions here as a vessel that subconsciously conveys the messages like gender oppression or gender bias. For example, cutting out Philomele's tongue has two meanings within this context. The first one is about what Saussure studies; the aim is to silence Philomele. Thus, she cannot tell the rape to her sister. The second meaning is what Barthes creates; Tereus cuts out her tongue in order to show that he has the power. When he rapes Philomele, he not only wants to have a sexual desire but also aims to use his power to put an end to Philomele's questioning nature.

In the context of the play, myth conveys the message that is about gender oppression. Myth is used to create manipulative culture supporting male domination. As Jaggar states "Gender is an elaborate system of male domination. The theoretical task of radical feminism is to understand that system; its political task is to end it" (1983: 92). Instead of providing a solution, the play ends with the questions of Philomele. As socially constructed norms are established through myth, it is not possible to experience any movement for change. However, Philomele's questions make the audience question the system.

Within the context of theatre analysis, Wertenbaker chooses an open-ended play in order to alienate the audience from the play so that she can create an irritating and unfamiliar environment. When Itsy asks what wrong means, Philomele answers

“It is what isn’t right” (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.21.3). She challenges the patriarchal society as notions like right or wrong are constructed by that system. Philomele wants Itsy to find the answer. Since he is considered as the future, those notions also depend on his defining system. Audience cannot see any solid movement to end patriarchal society at the end of the play; however, the owner of that system is alone with the questions. If he cannot do anything to create equality or make men accept the difference, he should be able to question the gender oppression through Philomele’s answer.

V. FEMINIST READING OF *TOP GIRLS*

A. A Brief Overview of the Play

Top Girls, which is a play written by Caryl Churchill in 1982, displays the gender roles in patriarchal society through Marlene as she aims to become a successful businesswoman in a capitalist and patriarchal society. The play shows how gender bias affects the lives of women how gender oppression creates a chaotic environment for women. Churchill utilizes the results of this chaotic environment and oppression in order to display the lack of female solidarity among women. The play opens in a restaurant where Marlene gathers five historical women to celebrate her promotion to managing director of Top Girls employment agency. These five historical women are Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Dull Griet, Pope Joan and Patient Griselda. These women face hardship in patriarchal society. While some of them try to avoid struggles by adapting to the male behaviours, others are victimized by their fathers and husbands. In Act Two, play continues with the scene of Angie and Kit in Joyce's backyard. Kit and Joyce talk about going to an adult film and Angie wears a small dress to kill her mother.

She wears that dress as it is a birthday present of Marlene. She wants to annoy her mother by wearing that dress. In the next scene, Marlene has an interview with a girl named Jeanine. After Marlene learns that she wants a job so that she can save money for her wedding, she warns her not to tell anybody as she will not be able to find a job anywhere. Besides, other women employees continue to interview with women. For example, a woman named Shona lies to get a job or Louise, who is more experienced than men, complains that her effort is not taken into consideration and men get easily promoted. Then, Angie comes to Marlene's office while Howard's wife is telling Marlene to leave her position to Howard because of his responsibilities. Besides, he has a heart attack because of Marlene's promotion. Act Three takes place in Joyce's kitchen and it shows the scene which was one year ago.

Marlene visits Joyce and Angie. One of the gifts Marlene gives to Angie is the dress that she wears in Act Two. In this act, audience has more background information about their relationships. Besides, Marlene learns that Angie is the one who invites her not Joyce. Their discussion reveals the truth about Marlene who is Angie's biological mother. Marlene and Joyce discuss their struggles and family matters. Joyce blames Marlene because of her miscarriage while Marlene blames Joyce as she wants to take care of her baby. When Marlene leaves the house, Joyce takes care of the house, their mother and the baby. Talking about their miscarriage and abortions, they support each other; however, when it comes to class issues and political views they do not agree with each other. It is observed that their political views are opposite of each other. While Marlene supports Margaret Thatcher, Joyce thinks that they are filthy as Joyce does not seem to support monetarism and individuality. Furthermore, they discuss their mother's position at home, and her attitude toward their father. Then, the play ends with the phrase of Angie; "frightening". The play forces audience to question the choices made by Marlene in order to reveal if they are necessary or not.

B. Discussing the Gender Oppression

Before analyzing the acts, it is significant to study the book cover. A woman stands with her two different sides. The woman with her long hair on the left holds iron, and she looks upset. Besides, she is pregnant. On the other hand, the woman on the right is quite happy. Her hair is short and she wears a black suit. She has a strong facial and bodily expression. She is sure of herself. This depiction is significant as it connotes socially constructed gender roles. While the woman with her long hair does not seem to be content with her life, the woman on the right seems to have an ideal life for herself.

The dinner party in Act One becomes a significant scene in order to discuss gender oppression on women. Women from different races, periods, and historical backgrounds come together and talk about their struggles. It shows the never-ending cycle of women's victimization. Besides, it presents that women are not allowed to do things with their own identities. They must act as men or wait for the death of their fathers or husbands; then, they may be free. To exemplify, Isabella Bird only feels free when her husband dies, and thus she is able to travel around the world.

Furthermore, in order to save the country Dull Gret wears an apron, uses a sword and leads women. She acts as a man so that she can have a powerful image in the eyes of the enemies.

Pope Joan is one of the women who is exposed to gender oppression. She disguises herself as a man in order to access the library. She is elected as Pope when she plays the role of a man as she cannot be chosen with her own female identity as "Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope" (Churchill, 2008: 1.17). Thus, when a woman wants to achieve something, she is forced to abandon her real sex and needs to adapt to male behaviour. Griselda, on the other hand, is not able to do anything because of her father and husband. She neither adapts to the male behaviour nor disguises herself. She only conforms to the rules of patriarchal society. As a result of gender oppression, she accepts what is told instead of stating her feelings. When Marlene's situation is analyzed, it is possible to feel a sense of change. In the late 20th century, although she was obliged to perform socially constructed gender roles, she had a powerful and successful position in the company by acting against those roles. However, these women are oppressed by patriarchal society, and they continue their lives according to the norms of patriarchal society. As a result of oppression, they do not seem to listen to each other at the dinner party. They always interrupt each other, and their laughter turns into crying at the end. Capitalist and patriarchal oppressions cause the victimization of women who are not able to establish their own identities and to form female solidarity.

Through the example of Marlene and her sister Joyce, the oppressive environment can be observed clearly. Marlene is seen as an unnatural woman who fulfils the role of a powerful man while Joyce stays at home and continues to be normal as she does not have any other options. Considering the binary oppositions for women, we acquire a positive connotation for men as they are powerful, strong, dominant, and intellectual while women are defined as nurturers, housewives, weak, and obedient. Cixous explains the binary oppositions,

> "Male privilege, shown in the opposition between activity and passivity, which he uses to sustain himself. Traditionally, the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition: activity/passivity…Moreover, woman is always associated with passivity in philosophy. Whenever it is a question of woman, when one examines

kinship structures, when a family model is brought into play" (1986: 64).

She criticizes that hegemonic masculinity puts men in a powerful position like the sun, father, or head. They represents logic which is accepted as the main objective of analytical thinking while women are associated with weaker positions like mother, wife or nurturer as these labels seem to symbolize the emotional way of thinking. As a result of these structures, both boys and girls grow up in accordance with those gender roles. When a woman like Marlene wants to go beyond those limits, she needs to create new roles and leave the old ones behind.

Abandoning their family is presented to women as a compulsory act. A woman is obliged to choose it if she aims to have a voice in men's world. Marlene leaves her child and family behind and becomes a managing director of Top Girls employment agency. In a capitalist society, it is not easy for a woman to have a financially stable and powerful position in a male-dominated world. Since the one who rules the capital and the society is powerful, men will not allow women to work in higher positions. In order to be able to oppress women, men try to find ways to create intrasexual oppression among women.

Case says; "Class is a hierarchical structure in which the owners of the means of production garner their privileges through the oppression of the workers" (1988: 83). When Socialist feminism is considered, Marlene does not seem to support the ideas of Socialist feminism. She oppresses her sister and other women in the company. Because of the class distinction, she separates herself from the lower class. She says that she does not like lower class as they are lazy. While Marlene is able to challenge male dominance with her position, she does not seem to create female solidarity and try to change the situation for her daughter or other women because of class distinction and her belief in individualism. Thus, Marlene turns into a character who is both victimizer and victim. As a victimizer, she does not seem to care for her sister and child. When Angie, her daughter, visits her in her office, Marlene says "She is not going to make it" (Churchill, 2008: 1.73).

She does not see Angie as a successful woman but rather a weak and victimized character. While doing this, Marlene criticizes her within the context of the male discourse. Besides, Marlene represents Margaret Thatcher and her ideology in the play. "Margaret Thatcher is herself a highly ironic figure for women. Tough, uncompromising, and powerful, she is the monster strong woman, the feminist

movement's shadow figure and nemesis." (Aston and Reinelt, 2000: 14). Although the election of Thatcher was expected to create better standards for women in the country, her political ideology showed a tendency to individualism.

With her short hair and dark coloured suits, Marlene appears as a masculine figure in order to dominate people. Marlene is a supporter of bourgeois feminism. "Bourgeois feminism simply seeks a larger share of social power for a small number of women—the 'women at the top' syndrome" (Wandor, 1986: 136). Bourgeois feminism emphasizes an individual's effort therefore a woman as an individual must do anything to become a high flyer. Therefore, Marlene does not feel sympathy for Howard or his wife or the girls whom she has an interview. Besides, when Joyce talks about their mother, she is surprised to hear that Joyce visits her every week. Since Marlene's subconscious seems to perceive her mother as weak and victimized, she does not want to become like her mother.

Thus, it is not possible to feel female solidarity between Marlene, Joyce and Angie. Abandoning her family and child creates conflict for Marlene as she must choose either her family or her career. Because of gender bias and constructed roles, she is not able to choose both of them. As she chooses her career, Mrs Kidd accuses her of not being a normal woman, who conforms to the norms of patriarchal society.

> "Mrs Kidd: It's not easy, a man of Howard's age. You don't care. thought he was going too far but he's right. You're one of these ballbreakers, that's what you are. You'll end up miserable and lonely. You're not natural" (Churchill, 2008: 2.65-66).

Mrs Kidd defines Marlene as a ball-breaker who is a threatening woman destroying a man's self-confidence. Capitalist working life is dominated by men, and a man is chosen as a director or head of a company, not a woman. While Howard wants to be a director, Marlene takes his place. Marlene becomes a "token woman who works in nontraditional jobs" (Zimmer, 1988: 64). In Marlene's case, her status becomes a nontraditional job for her as women are supposed to take part in womanly works such as daily chores. Men like Howard try to create boundaries and difficulties for women like Marlene so that they cannot rise. When a woman becomes successful in that nontraditional job, her status changes as a token woman because she can achieve the things that are related to men. In the case of Marlene, she becomes the director of the company instead of Howard. Thus she becomes a token woman with

her token success.

As Socialist feminism suggests women's struggle is based on both their gender and class. In the play, because of her gender, Howard does not consider Marlene as a rival in a male-dominated workplace. Although he knows that she is a ball-breaker, he does not expect her to be a director. As he cannot endure the result, he is taken to the hospital. This result is significant because his power is shaken by a weak character. Although Marlene deserves that place with her assertive nature, he does not accept the truth. For men like Howard, women are always considered as weak because of their gender. Therefore, what Marlene achieves shocks him.

Socialist feminism supports the sisterhood and female solidarity among women in order to end gender oppression and constructed role. Mrs Kidd does not support Marlene's success as she is also a woman who is constructed as obedient and silent. On the contrary, she asks Marlene "What's it going to do to him working for a woman?" (Churchill, 2008: 2.64). On the other hand, Marlene oppresses other women for her success. While female solidarity helps women to raise their voices, neither Marlene nor other women are willing to come together and oppress the patriarchy. They use intrasexual oppression like victimization or humiliation rather than supporting each other. To give an example, when Joyce says that Angie plays with kids, Marlene directly asks if she wants to be a teacher or a nurse. She does not ask if she wants to be a manager. It is clear to comprehend the results of binary oppositions in Marlene's subconscious. As she adapts to the male behaviour, she thinks in accordance with male discourse. At this point, it is also possible to observe gender bias between Angie and Joyce. Joyce constantly forces Angie to clean her room otherwise she is not able to go to the movie with her friend Kit. Since Joyce is grown up with that duty, she tries to practice the same thing with Angie.

Thus, doing daily chores turns into a duty for Angie. However, Angie's role model is her biological mother Marlene. The reason why she refuses them is that Joyce orders her. She wears the dress, which Marlene gives her as a gift, to kill the image of Joyce. She does not want to become like Joyce. She aims to become like Marlene who is a successful business person and bourgeois feminist. Angie thinks that her mother hates Marlene "because she does" (Churchill, 2008: 2.41). Angie, as a child, hates her mother and seeks an idealized figure for herself. When she compares Joyce and Marlene, she supports Marlene. Criticizing Angie is not possible

at this point because as a young girl she wants to go to the cinema with her friend but her mother does not allow her. Therefore, she leans to create an idea to justify her act. She thinks that if she is able to hurt and overcome her mother, she will be successful and she will not be an obedient girl.

These all are socially constructed gender roles and they are not easy to get rid of as seen in the example of Angie. “The lack of a mother results in a search for an alternative female identity, that of the survivor not the nurturer” (Taylor, 2000: 89). In Angie’s case, she lacks her biological mother; therefore, she tries to run away from her nurturer mother. Becoming other is perceived as weakness; however, this perception is created by patriarchal society in order to be able to hold power and oppress the weak sex. Moreover, when the workplace of Marlene is analyzed, issues related to intrasexual oppression or victimization can be found. Win indirectly states her mind about Marlene and says, “It’s the top executive doesn’t come in as early as the poor working girl” (Churchill, 2008: 2.50). It shows the social injustice between Marlene and Win. This is what Socialist feminism indicates. The oppression arises from not only class but also gender. Win knows that she is under Marlene and it will not be easy for her to climb the ladder. Thus female solidarity turns into intrasexual oppression.

Reinelt describes the situation,

> “Churchill, with her finger on the pulse of contemporary culture, wanted to address how material success for a few women did not build solidarity or foster change for the majority. She also began to imagine the personal costs paid by women who attained the status of ‘high flyer’ (a term Marlene uses in *Top Girls* to describe herself)” (2009: 20).

Women like Thatcher and Marlene do not foster change for the majority as they believe in individualism and token success. This is the reason why Marlene does not have sympathy for the working class as she thinks that everyone has capability to achieve the things they want. Another example shows the women’s ideas about each other,

> “Nell: You’ll be upstairs watching over us all.
>
> Marlene: Do you feel bad about it?
>
> Nell: I don’t like coming second.

Marlene: Who does?

Win: We'd rather it was you than Howard. We're glad for you, aren't we Nell.

Marlene: Oh yes. Aces" (Churchill, 2008: 2.52).

The patriarchal society causes women to victimize each other. To be successful in capitalist and patriarchal society, they must not be conventional but unnatural women. Indeed, men do not aspire to have powerful women in workplaces as they do not allow all of them to be high flyers. The majority of women are obliged to stay at home and maintain gender roles.

When Win makes an interview with Louise, Louise says, "I've spent twenty years in middle management. I've seen young men who I trained go on, in my own company or elsewhere, to higher things. Nobody notices me…" (Churchill, 2008: 2.57). As Louise is not able to adapt to the male behaviour like Marlene, she stays in the same position for years. Marlene needs to victimize other women and men in order to illustrate that she is the owner of the power. It will not be proper to criticize Marlene because of her repressive behaviours towards her family, coworkers or other women. The system turns her into victimizer while the same system victimizes her. She is obliged to abandon her daughter and she cannot reveal the truth. She is aware of her situation and she states that by the end of the play. She has a quarrel with Joyce about Angie as she is stupid, lazy, and frightened in Joyce's opinion. Joyce thinks that Angie's children will say what a wasted life their mother has and nothing changes for Angie and them.

"Marlene: Us and them?

Joyce: And you're one of them.

Marlene: And you're us, wonderful us, and Angie's us / and Mum

and Dad's us.

Joyce: Yes, that's right, and you're them" (Churchill, 2008: 96).

She sees Joyce as wonderful as she obeys the patriarchal society's rules and fulfils her nurturer role for her family. Besides, Marlene should not be blamed for what she does as she is forced to do it. Naturally, she is obliged to sacrifice things because of certain patterns existing in her subconscious created by her family and

patriarchal society. Godiwala expresses the situation,

"The 'absent values' of patriarchal systems do speak loudly and clearly. The successful women of the past and present are depicted as almost always single and childless unless they are idealized constructs who are complicit with—have internalized the ideology inscribed within the discourse(s) of—the patriarchy" (2003: 13).

Thus the play ends with the word of Angie, "Frightening" (Churchill, 2008: 2.97). It is frightening because the play does not offer a solution or hope for change. Things will continue to stay the same, and there will be no improvement for women. As Socialist feminists state that women need to raise their voices against patriarchal hegemony as their victimization is based on economic and social oppression of male supremacy. Women need to reveal inequalities and change them. Marlene and other women live in capitalist and patriarchal society and they need to change the system in order to end oppression. As they are not able to create a strong connection because of the patriarchal restriction and oppression, the play leaves the audience in doubt. The future of Angie is frightening, the condition of women is frightening, the relationship between Joyce and Marlene is frightening. Wertenbaker presents unresolved issues rather than promoting hope and female solidarity at the end of the play. If women want to achieve female solidarity, first they will need to understand the problem which is rooted in patriarchal society's constructed gender roles. Without sisterhood, their oppression will continue and they will victimize each other.

The audience is not able to feel sympathy towards any character. "Churchill's use of character doubling as a Brechtian alienation technique not only discourages the audience from "over-identifying with the characters," but also allows them to see the performers as an intimate, cohesive group" (Cameron, 2009: 163). The alienation technique is significant as it allows the audience to see the play from a different and distant perspective. In *Top Girls*, victimization and lack of female solidarity are main issues, and these problems are given to the audience by using this technique. Besides, the concern for the theatre starts to change with the change of the period. As Keyssar states,

> "One of the most powerful feminist dramas have captured moments in history from strikingly distinctive angles of vision … emphasise women's social roles as defined by their sexuality. In

> representing history, these plays call into question conventional notions and theatrical expressions of sexuality and relationships of power to gender." (1984: 3).

The feminist theatre starts to have its own voice and shows the identity struggles of women as in *Top Girls*. It is significant to visualize women's problems on the stage because they can share their troubles and form sisterhood by questioning gender roles. Churchill aims to discuss the result of the system that makes women victims and victimizers. "Aston perceptively claims that "modern women's theatre is characterized by a resistance to being pushed 'offstage' and is replete with explosions, "demolishings' of discourse" (qtd. in Peacock, 1999: 150). In *Top Girls*, we can perceive the resistance of Marlene against patriarchal society.

Churchill utilizes Marlene to show that resisting is one of the ways to achieve your goals like having a voice and an identity. Churchill also offers the importance of demolishing the masculine discourse as it creates trauma among women as in the example of Marlene and Angie or Marlene and Joyce. Consequently, Churchill utilizes the theatre in order to create disturbing and questioning conditions for the audience so that she can display the problem and the reasons of it through Marlene and her relations with other women.

VI. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN'S SITUATION IN THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE, THE LOVE OF THE NIGHTINGALE AND TOP GIRLS

Gender oppression always causes a difficult environment for women. They are obliged to endure male supremacy's oppression. Patriarchal society utilizes gender oppression in order to maintain their superior positions. Male supremacy can implement gender oppression in many ways like silencing women, confining them to certain roles, discriminating them, identifying them with socially constructed gender roles, and creating intrasexual oppression. It is significant to study gender oppression in feminist reading. Therefore, this chapter aims to indicate how gender oppression is carried out by male supremacy. Gender oppression will be compared and contrasted in these three plays; *The Love of the Nightingale*, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *Top Girls*. *The Love of the Nightingale* was set in Ancient Greek and an example of myth, and *The Grace of Mary Traverse* was set in 18th century London. However, Wertenbaker chose to write these two plays in the 1980s. Churchill, on the other hand, wrote *Top Girls* in 1982, and the play was set in the 1980s.

Although the setting differs for these three plays, Wertenbaker and Churchill emphasize the conditions of women in patriarchal society, the gender oppression on them, and the methods which women utilize to have their own voices. In *The Love of the Nightingale* when Tereus rapes Philomele, she does not keep quiet, and she transgresses the rules of patriarchy. She aspires to reveal the truth. Since the play is an example of myth, it is significant to discuss myth. Myth, as described by Barthes, transmits the message. He states, "Myth is not defined by the object of its message, but by how it utters this message" (2009: 131). Those messages connect with the cultural values, and they are related to the explanation of the cultural standards (Segal, 1983: 50). In the play, that message is created by masculine discourse and imposed on women, and its main aim is to preserve patriarchal power through gender oppression. Therefore, when Philomele does not aspire to become a silent character, she experiences oppression.

Consequently, her tongue is cut out by Tereus and she is sentenced to silence.

Philomele shows courage to reveal the truth. She does not accept it in contrast to Sophie in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*. Sophie does not stand against Lord Gordon. She does not threaten him by revealing the truth. Wertenbaker and Churchill utilize a rape scene to indicate that raping a woman is a patriarchal weapon used by men so that they can dominate women by abusing their bodies. While neither Sophie nor Philomele is alone, women do not help them. Niobe only warns Philomele and goes to her room while Mary and Mrs Temptwell watch the scene. The reason why Sophie is raped is Mary. Sophie wants to help Mary because Lord Gordon tries to rape Mary. However, Mary and Niobe do not use their power to save Philomele and Sophie. Besides, Wertenbaker and Churchill show the lack of female solidarity and its importance for women in their plays. In both examples, women who are exposed to being raped are illustrated as alone. In order to end male oppression and his supremacy, solidarity is required as Radical and Socialist feminists suggest. Without solidarity, women cannot achieve their goals. Therefore, obeying the rules and performing the socially constructed gender roles do not create a helpful environment for women.

Wertenbaker and Churchill portray both silent and assertive women characters in their plays in order to compare and contrast their responses to gender oppression. Philomele presents a confident attitude with her curious personality. She does not hesitate to state her opinion. To give an example, when she talks to the captain, she says that she never understands obedience. Then she openly confesses her love to the captain and holds his hand. She wants the captain to take her with him. When the period of time is considered, Philomele shows an act of great courage. Unlike her sister Procne, who is given to Tereus as a commodity, Philomele chooses her lover. Besides, she aspires to learn everything around herself. In *Top Girls*, Marlene is also an assertive character who succeeds in her professional life by herself. Contrary to Philomele, Marlene does not have any supportive figure in her life. Philomele's sister always supports her under all circumstances.

Unlike Procne, Niobe does not help Philomele. While she is the only woman who will help her, she only warns Philomele about Tereus and advices her to fulfil her constructed gender role. She obeys the rules of patriarchal society and continues to be a silent figure. Philomele and Marlene are the examples of assertive women

who do not obey the patriarchal norms. They are obliged to give up many things. These women are depicted as characters who are exposed to men's oppression. They try to eliminate the oppressive structure with the help of female solidarity or separately. However, as the plays include the reflection of Socialist and Radical feminist movements, they can only achieve their aim by creating female solidarity in order to eliminate the patriarchal oppression and change class structure. Besides, Churchill and Wertenbaker demonstrate that women should possess power in order to end gender oppression.

Plays continue to point to gender oppression on women regardless of time. Procne is obliged to be silent due to her marriage to Tereus. She cannot form a view on her marriage or she has no right to oppose to decision. Similarly, Griselda is given to the marquis in *Top Girls*. Even her father is not able to state his opinion. Since she becomes the wife of a marquis, she is subjugated to obey all the rules (Churchill, 2008: 1.23). Her children are taken from her, the marquis sends her to her father's home barefoot. Then she is asked to prepare the new wedding of the marquis. She does not refuse anything as she has no one to support her. Her mother is dead and her father is not able to protect her. There are not any women characters who will help her. The servants are also obliged to obey the rules. All of them are not able to go against the marquis. Other women are supposed to be patient and perform the socially constructed gender roles. Wertenbaker and Churchill indicate that female solidarity becomes a challenging task in patriarchal society as most of the women do not think of opposing to the male supremacy. Hence they are always exposed to gender oppression.

Similarly, Lady Nijo is subjugated to the emperor. In the story of Lady Nijo, her father's opinion is not asked, the emperor wants him to send her. Although Griselda accepts everything and conforms to the patriarchy's rules, Lady Nijo and Procne transgress those rules as married women in patriarchal society. Irigaray criticizes the situation,

> "In any case, two men will come to an agreement whereby the woman passes from one "house" to another and joins another "family circle." And as the father had to protect his daughter's virginity since this was a value necessary for her "exchange," the husband will have to keep his wife at home to ensure the concentration of his wealth in a single

place, and its transmission by inheritance to his own children and no one else's" (1985: 122).

Those three women are taken from their fathers' houses as commodities, and they are exposed to gender oppression in their husbands' houses. When Lady Nijo and Griselda are forced to leave their houses, Lady Nijo does not stay at home but travels the world on foot while Griselda goes back to her father's home and waits there patiently. On the other hand, Procne, whose husband rapes Philomele, does not wait patiently and acts against her husband. Neither Procne nor Lady Nijo performs the socially constructed gender roles.

These women are supposed to act according to the socially constructed gender roles. They are forced to obey the rules of their husbands. If they do not obey the rules, they are exposed to being ostracized and as a result they leave their families. Leaving their families forces women to be more powerful characters as compared to their old versions. Wertenbaker and Churchill imply that when they leave their families, they leave the patriarchal norms in fact. Thus, women become free and gain their own identities. However, in order to prevent that freedom and maintain male dominancy, patriarchal figures utilize binary oppositions. Men are considered as superior while binary oppositions for women connote with the inferior position. Irigaray indicates that,

> "Man has been the subject of discourse, whether in theory, morality, or politics. And the gender of God, the guardian of every subject and every discourse, is always masculine and paternal, in the West. To women are left the so-called minor arts: cooking, knitting, embroidery, and sewing; and, in exceptional cases, poetry, painting, and music. Whatever their importance, these arts do not currently make the rules, at least not overtly" (1993: 6-7).

Since a man is seen as the owner of the discourse, he wants women to conform to his discourse. He does not allow her to speak or state her own idea because he is the one who has the right to discuss the issues related to sciences, theory, morality or politics.

Wertenbaker and Churchill highlight the gender bias in their plays. They demonstrate that the purpose of gender bias is to oppress women. Both Socialist

feminists and Radical feminists suggest that the root of women's oppression is based on patriarchy and class structure. Men are able to oppress women by separating them according to the constructed gender roles and their classes. They victimize women both in private and public spheres. Thus, when a woman has power and belongs to upper class, she seems to use her power for preserving her position. She causes intrasexual oppression as she does not seem to understand the failings of her newly-gained power as in the example of Mary. In fact, she acts in regard to the male discourse.

Wertenbaker chooses to present the issue through women's education rights and masculine discourse. Similarly, Churchill highlights gender bias through socially constructed gender roles. In *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, Giles does not allow his daughter to state her opinion about salt mines. He says that Mary can faint or become sick (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.1.68). Besides, she is not assumed to talk about reason. Her father compares a woman talking about reason to a merchant talking about the nobility (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.1.69). He belittles her daughter within the frame of gender and class. Similarly, in *The Love of the Nightingale*, soldiers insult each other by referring to women. While one soldier says; "You son of a bleeding whore", the other soldier answers back to him; "You son of a woman" (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.1.3). Besides, the male chorus says that Athene is at war but two sisters, Philomele and Procne, discuss life's charms and the attractions of men (Wertenbaker, 1990: 1.1.4).

While two sisters are not responsible for the war, their daily conversation depicts them as inferior and ignorant within the the frame of masculine discourse. Masculine discourse help men exercise their supremacy over women easily. Furthermore, Isabella Bird in *Top Girls* experiences the same gender discrimination. She is supposed to "please her father by conforming to the role of clergyman's daughter" (Churchill, 2008: viii). Therefore, she learns sewing, cooking and cleaning which are the roles associated with women according to the socially constructed gender roles. Only after Isabella Bird is diagnosed with a tumour of the spine, she is sent to Australia for her health. She feels free from all the gender roles that her father tries to impose on her. At the dinner party, she says, "Theology always made my head ache" (Churchill, 2008: 1.7). In fact, her father becomes the reason for her headache as he tries to fit her into a constructed role. When these women leave their

fathers or husbands' houses, they feel free and powerful. They realize their power and identities; therefore, they aspire to learn everything around them. They do not want to be defined within the frame of socially constructed gender roles.

Both Wertenbaker and Churchill criticize men's power and rights. When women need to act freely, they face with male domination that confines them to certain roles. This is another problem that women experience in the plays. When they want to achieve something, they are obliged to sacrifice things from their personal lives. They either live according to the male supremacy's gender roles or become unnatural women. Churchill demonstrates this problem through Marlene. She transgresses the boundaries and creates a new life for herself. When Marlene's situation is considered, she abandons her family and becomes a successful manager in a company. Her daughter Angie does not know that Marlene is her mother. She thinks that her aunt Joyce is her biological mother. Marlene adapts to the male roles, and this can be deduced from her appearance.

For example, she always wears black suits and keeps her hair short. Besides, she is assertive and does not pay attention to other people's feelings. She has a token success and deserves her place in the company. Howard's wife defines her as a ballbreaker (Churchill, 2008: 2.65). Throughout the play, she never tells her daughter the truth. In her subconscious, she knows that if she reveals the truth, she will be forced to take care of her. Moreover, her career may ruin, and she may lose her position in a workplace dominated by men. Similarly, Wertenbaker discusses gender oppression through Mary. Mary leaves her father's home in order to discover the outside world. Although her appearance remains the same, her behaviour gradually changes. As she starts to find out how things work outside, she becomes one of the superior figures. She gambles with men, abuses two old women for money, and then humiliates Sophie. Besides, she cannot embrace her baby for a short time.

As in the examples of Mary and Marlene, Pope Joan also transgresses the boundaries and disguises herself as a man in order to access the library. Similarly, Virginia Woolf experiences the same difficulty when she desires to enter the library.

> "I was actually at the door which leads into the library itself. I must have opened it, for instantly there issued, like a guardian angel barring the way with a flutter of black gown instead of white wings, a deprecating, silvery, kindly gentleman, who regretted in a low voice as

> he waved me back that ladies are only admitted to the library if accompanied by a Fellow of the College or furnished with a letter of introduction"(Woolf, 2004: 8).

This example demonstrates that while Pope Joan was exposed to gender oppression in the medieval era, women in the 20th century still experienced the oppressive attitude. Although the era changed, women still struggled with gender oppression and gender bias. While men were allowed to enter the library, women were not permitted. Pope Joan knew that lunatics, children and women cannot be pope; therefore, she was obliged to disguise herself. As Socialist feminists stated that she was exposed to gender and class distinction and as she was not able to change this situation, hence she disguised herself. She was victimized because of her gender and class. She was obliged to fight with the situation by herself as women did not support her. She was also an ambitious character as she was willing to be a powerful woman in patriarchal society. When she was chosen as a pope, she thought that God would speak to her directly. However, she said, "But of course he knew I was a woman" (Churchill, 2008: 1.15).

As Irigaray states as the sex of God and pope is male, God is not expected to speak with a woman who is subjugated to male supremacy. When women and men's situations are compared, it can be observed that women always face with difficulties like gender oppression or gender bias in patriarchal society. All these three women attempt to have their own identities and voices despite gender oppression. They are not allowed to have both private and professional lives. If they choose their career, they are forced to comply with the men's roles like being authoritative, strict and dominant. If they decide to stay at home, then they must fulfil women's roles like sewing, knitting, dancing, playing an instrument, and cooking.

This identification is seen in the 2008 edition of *Top Girls*' book cover. One woman with her two different appearances is shown. On the left, the woman wears casual clothes and holds iron in her hand with a sad and angry face. Besides, she seems to be pregnant. On the other hand, the other woman, who looks like an influential figure, wears a black suit and puts her hand on the table with a confident facial expression. Their hair is also significant. While the woman on the left has long hair, the other woman's hair is short. This illustration symbolizes the characters of Joyce and Marlene. Colouring is also significant since Marlene is on the bright side

while Joyce stays in the dark. Gender roles are both compared and criticized through the illustration.

Although Joyce's name is associated with joy, she is neither happy in the book cover nor in the play. She is expected to obey the roles and exposed to oppression. On the other hand, Marlene's name means star of the sea or from the high tower. We can deduce that she belongs to the high tower concerning her position in the company. Most importantly, she is depicted as Margaret Thatcher known as Iron Lady. Churchill draws parallels between Margaret Thatcher and Marlene. Marlene supports individualism and does not seem to support other women characters in the play. Besides, Marlene indicates her hatred for the lower class. "I hate working class, it doesn't exist anymore, it means lazy and stupid" (Churchill, 2008: 2.95). She believes that individuals are responsible for themselves, and their sex does not matter. If she achieves things, other women can achieve as well. Thus she does not support solidarity and is not willing to create a better environment for women after she becomes director as Thatcher becomes prime minister.

Equally, Wertenbaker discusses the same issue in her plays. The oppression exists for women, and their choices do not change the situation. They always experience gender oppression. They are not able to oppose those socially constructed roles. Besides, when they adapt to masculine roles, women start to cause intrasexual oppression toward each other. Mary's attitude toward Sophie is an example of intrasexual oppression. She does not show any attempt to help her and humiliates her in front of other men. When Mary gambles with men, she gives some money to Sophie. Then, she tells her to work for it and lifts up Sophie's skirt in front of other men. Her act humiliates the little girl (Wertenbaker, 1985: 106). It is an oppressive scene for both Sophie and Mary. While Mary behaves like men and wants to assert her dominance over them, she humiliates another woman and victimizes her.

On the other hand, Marlene oppresses her daughter and other women characters in the play. Her situation is similar to Mary. When female characters of Wertenbaker and Churchill are compared, it is seen that if a woman gains power, she utilizes it to abuse other women. As this structure is imposed on their subconscious, they act according to the constructed norms. Rather than creating female solidarity as both Radical and Socialist feminists suggest, those women do not change the oppressive environment for themselves and other women. "The economic situation

has created two choices for women: the relative economic poverty of child-rearing, or the emotional alienation of success within the structure of capitalism" (Case, 1988: 87). Thus, female playwrights try to show these two choices in these three plays. These women can exercise their power on their fellow creatures in order to maintain their supremacy.

Conversely, women who are exposed to intrasexual oppression do not change their attitudes toward oppressive figures. They do not victimize them or humiliate them. Sophie still helps and looks after Mary's baby.

> "Sophie: You found me in the streets. I had nothing.
>
> Mary: I pushed you on the streets as well. You took my place with Lord Gordon. What did you feel then? What did you feel in the gambling den, servicing my pleasures? What did you feel?
>
> Sophie: I don't know. I can't remember. Sometimes I don't feel I'm there. It could be someone else. And I'm walking in the fields. So I don't mind much" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 3.4.127).

Sophie can choose to leave Mary; however, she continues to support her. Sophie even prevents her from poisoning her baby (Wertenbaker, 1987: 4.1.155). On the other hand, while Marlene oppresses Angie due to her learning capacity, Angie still wants to be like Marlene. Although patriarchy tries to create an oppressive environment for women, some women keep supporting each other. In contrast with female support, Niobe decides to be silent when Philomele is raped. Besides, when Philomele enters the stage, she does not help Philomele illustrate the rape scene with the dolls. On the contrary, she asks for help because she thinks Philomele is mad (Wertenbaker, 1990: 18.3.5). Churchill and Wertenbaker aspire to display that women who do not support each other are confined to male discourse and his supremacy. As Niobe is confined to the socially constructed gender roles, she identifies Philomele with a madwoman image.

In fact, Marlene, Mary and Niobe are representatives of male supremacy while Sophie and Philomele continue to be oppressed. However, Wertenbaker chooses to end Sophie's oppression when compared to Marlene in Churchill's play. Mary seems to abandon her authoritative part at the end of the play as she understands that the whole system, which consists of society, culture, discourse and

language, is questionable. Both Wertenbaker and Churchill state the importance of female solidarity as opposed to intrasexual oppression; however, Wertenbaker demonstrates it by changing Mary's ideas about the future while Churchill chooses not to alter Marlene's view. Churchill does not seek to end intrasexual oppression in the play. She seems to suggest that that problem cannot be solved if the structure is not changed. Nevertheless, in either case, women's conditions in patriarchal society do not evolve.

Cixous states binary oppositions, which are promoted by the Western men, are carried out to subjugate women. Later Butler states,

> "Power seemed to be more than an exchange between subject or a relation of constant inversion between a subject and an Other; indeed, power appeared to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender" (1999: xxviii)

Motherhood is utilized to oppress women with the help of binary oppositions by patriarchal structure. In *The Love of the Nightingale*, while Procne gives up her son Itsy for helping her sister, Marlene in *Top Girls* leaves her daughter behind Angie and she does not reveal the truth. Only Mary in *The Grace of Mary Traverse* embraces her baby by the help of Sophie. Mary is portrayed as an assertive figure at the beginning of the play, later she gives up and tries to understand the world. As she gives up, she accepts her daughter. Patriarchal society causes Philomele and Procne to kill Itsy, and Marlene to abandon her daughter. Mary accepts her daughter only after she stops fighting.

In fact, Wertenbaker and Churchill aim to illustrate the same thing that is gender oppression. Unlike Mary, Marlene and Procne sacrifice their children not to be dominated by male supremacy. On the other hand, Mary embraces her child, and her act leads a change for the future. Radical feminists and Socialist feminists support the idea that there is a need for change in the structure of society. It should change either radically or partly, and Mary's act demonstrates that there may be some changes for women. Churchill presents a more positive approach in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, compared to her other play *The Love of the Nightingale*, and Churchill's play *Top Girls*.

Wertenbaker chooses to use both actual and surrogate mothers in her plays

while Churchill approaches the mother issue distinctively. When Philomele and her mother separate, she continues her journey with Niobe. She becomes a surrogate mother for Philomele; however, her socially constructed values create a problematic atmosphere for Philomele. As a result, Philomele struggles with male supremacy on her own. Niobe is on the side of male supremacy and she causes gender oppression implicitly. Since she thinks that Philomele should obey the rules or she will become a madwoman. She does not question the patriarchal norms. If she questions, she will experience the same oppression. Niobe's act causes intrasexual oppression and they cannot form female solidarity. However, she does not realize that she has already been subjugated to male dominance.

In *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, Mrs Temptwell does not choose to be on Mary's side like Niobe. She mentally abuses Mary and she does not change her attitude at the end of the play. Wertenbaker demonstrates that Niobe's oppression is related to her socially constructed gender role while Churchill presents that Mrs Temptwell's oppression is about class distinction. Mrs Temptwell is aware of the constructed gender roles, and thus she oppresses Mary because of her social class. If Mrs Temptwell did not belong to lower class, she would not oppress Mary. On the other hand, Churchill depicts a mother figure who humiliates her daughter and she does not tell the truth. Mary, Marlene, Niobe and Mrs Temptwell seem to create obstacles for each other because of their classes in the plays. While women are exposed to oppression, they oppress each other due to socially constructed gender roles and patriarchal norms. Socialist feminists aspire to change the class system based on capitalism. They consider capitalism as one of the reasons of gender oppression.

Patriarchy marks that if a woman attempts to preserve her family and working life, she will end up losing one of her roles. Interestingly, there are no men in *Top Girls*, compared to Wertenbaker's plays; however, their oppression can still be felt. As a result of the oppression, Marlene is obliged to leave her daughter, and she does not seem to want to face her. If she accepts her, she will be obliged to change her life. Marlene's motive becomes her successful working life, and she does not want to lose it. Although *The Love of the Nightingale* and *The Grace of Mary Traverse* are set in different periods, the issue Wertenbaker aspires to express is that it is possible to criticize two plays according to the norms of the 1980s. These two plays highlight

that there is still a need for change, and if women desire to end gender oppression, improve their conditions and change the system, they need solidarity rather than intrasexual oppression.

Despite gender oppression, women continue to constitute female solidarity as in the example of Lady Nijo in *Top Girls*. Churchill includes these historical characters in her play in order to state that it is possible to criticize the past within the context of Radical and Socialist feminist movements. Lady Nijo starts to describe her story which is about solidarity. At the Full Moon Ceremony, when the Emperor tells his attendants to beat the women, Lady Nijo and Lady Genki make a plan. They aspire to beat the Emperor, and they succeed. That moment displays if all the women come together, they can overcome male supremacy. Lady Nijo repeatedly says "And I had hit him with a stick. Yes I hit him with a stick" (Churchill, 2008: 1.29). She feels content because she manages to beat her oppressor. Besides, the Emperor says that he will never order anyone to beat women again (Churchill, 2008: 1.29).

Churchill highlights the importance of solidarity with this example and illustrates that beating a man, especially the head of patriarchal society, symbolizes the sign for change in the structure. Radical feminists aspire to revolutionize the patriarchal norms on behalf of women; therefore, subjugating the Emperor becomes a fundamental step. Likewise, Wertenbaker highlights the same issue. Although killing Itsy makes Philomele a murderer, she also tries to subjugate Tereus. Lady Nijo also becomes an oppressive figure. Since Radical feminists want to eliminate gender oppression and gender discrimination, the solution may be found in violence. Since the silenced part of patriarchal society is repressed, they use violence in order to raise their voices at the end. Those silenced women aim to be heard and aspire to end oppression. Churchill and Wertenbaker who are some of the most influential playwrights emphasize that one of the solutions to end gender oppression can be based on a radical change.

Women are exploited because of their gender and class and this exploitation creates double oppression. They are confined to socially structured gender roles in consequence of double oppression. Their bodies are exploited and they are not even able to voice their feelings. This exploitation can be seen through the examples of rape and marriage. Churchill and Wertenbaker utilize this oppression to demonstrate that women are subjugated to male supremacy. In addition to her gender, Sophie's

rape in *The Grace of Mary Traverse* is subject to her class. Mrs Temptwell says; "Rape her. But she won't mind. Virtue, like ancestors, is a luxury of the rich" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 80).

Furthermore, when people protest the price of white bread, Mary says that people like eating brown bread (Wertenbaker, 1987: 1.3.126). Then Sophie says that they do not like the brown bread. Both women and men belittle Sophie as she belongs to the lower class. The aim of Socialist feminists is significant here again. They aim to change class structure based on capitalist and patriarchal society. Sophie is oppressed because of her gender and class. Wertenbaker states that there is a need for a change in the class structure. On the other hand, Churchill criticizes class system through Marlene. She says that Angie can be a packer in Tesco. She actually refers to her class as Angie belongs to the working class. Churchill utilizes women like Griselda and Lady Nijo in *Top Girls* and demonstrates that they experience class oppression. Although their fathers are superior, they belong to the lower class due to their sex. When these examples are compared, it is recognized that women are not allowed to transgress the boundaries because of their gender and class.

Although women have their own possession or jobs, they still face with oppression. Their positions do not change as long as they do not aspire to change the society's structure. Woolf wants women to have their own money and rooms so that they can be free from all restrictions.

> "Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom. And women have always been poor, not for two hundred years merely, but from the beginning of time. Women have had less intellectual freedom than the sons of Athenian slaves. Women, then, have not had a dog's chance of writing poetry. That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own" (2004: 125).

Woolf continues to criticize gender oppression through Mrs. Seaton. Mrs Seaton was not able to earn her own money because the law denied possession of the money they earned. Even if she had earned her own money, she would have been obliged to give it to her husband (2004: 26). However, in the 20th century, Woolf was able to earn her own money and her own room. Although Woolf explained the importance of woman's freedom in the early 20th century, in *Top Girls* written in the

late 20th century, the problem still continued. Women still struggled with gender oppression and attempted to gain their identities and freedom in modern times.

Marlene, as an assertive woman, holds a powerful position in the company. She dominates both men and women. She is successful, and she deserves her place. After she is chosen to be a manager, Howard is taken to the hospital. His wife blames Marlene and wants her to give her place to Howard. He supposes that he has the right to dominate Marlene Joyce, on the other hand, has four different cleaning jobs and earns her own money. However, as seen in the book cover, she does not seem to be content with her job because she is still oppressed. To exemplify, her husband cheats on her, leaves her family, and he does not attempt to send money to Joyce and Angie. Although he does not physically victimize her, he is still able to oppress her by not taking care of his family.

On the other hand, Louise, who is forty-six years old woman, is as successful as Marlene. She established excellent management for the company; however, men are chosen as manager instead of her. Unlike Marlene, she is not able to show herself and stand for herself; therefore, she experiences oppression at work. When these three women are compared, they experience both gender oppression and intrasexual oppression. However, Marlene portrays a different image as compared with Joyce and Louise. Churchill illustrates Marlene who voices herself and holds her power in a male-dominated society. While Louise and Joyce do not seem to attempt any change or leave their passive states, Marlene changes things for herself noticeably and her effort can be seen through her career.

Significantly, Churchill does not include any male characters in *Top Girls*, compared to Wertenbaker's plays; *The Love of the Nightingale* and *The Grace of Mary Traverse*. The whole story develops around the women. Marlene is represented as authority owing to her assertive nature. Since she never appears as a passive or weak character, Marlene represents male supremacy. She can dominate women in her workplace and understand, and thus she can lead women who look for a job. Beauvoir criticizes women's situation to demonstrate that they must realize their potential.

> "What is certain is that today it is very difficult for women to accept at the same time their status as autonomous individuals and their womanly destiny; this is the source of the blundering and restlessness

which some- times cause them to be considered a 'lost sex'. And no doubt it is more comfortable to submit to a blind enslavement than to work for liberation" (2009: 269).

Marlene is aware of her potential and her limits. She does not allow men to define her in terms of gender roles in order to victimize her. Beauvoir states some women prefer subjugating to a blind enslavement to having their own identities. If they choose to liberate themselves from all oppression, they will need to struggle with both men and women. Women like Niobe and Griselda seem to obey male hegemony while Marlene and Philomele transgress the boundaries. When they transgress the boundaries, they achieve their economic freedom as well. Churchill suggests that women must discover themselves and disengage themselves from gender oppression by not including any male characters in her play.

Unlike Churchill, Wertenbaker utilizes male characters in her plays in order to demonstrate how male supremacy penetrates women. To exemplify, Wertenbaker utilizes Lord Gordon's rape and Mary's father's prejudiced approach to women. Wertenbaker demonstrates gender oppression through a dialogue between Mary and Mr Hardlong.

"Mr Hardlong: Will you come and console me, Sophie?

Mary: Mr Hardlong, it is I who have the money. Will you come to me?

Mr Hardlong: I want Sophie.

Mary: Does she want you?" (1987: 2.4.106).

This dialogue illustrates how men see women. They are weak creatures who only exist to entertain men. Then, she criticizes the socially structured gender roles through Mary and Sophie. Mary tries to dominate Mr Hardlong by saying that she is the owner of money. After lifting Sophie's skirt up, she says,

"What is it, gentlemen, you turn away, you feel disgust? Why don't you look and see what it's like? When you talk of sulphurous pits, deadly darkness, it's your own imagination you see. Look. It's solid, rich, gently shaped, fully coloured. The blood flows the way to the heart. It answers tenderness with tenderness, there is no gaping void here, only

soft bumps, corners, cool convexities" (Wertenbaker, 1987: 2.4.106).

In fact, Wertenbaker criticizes the statement of Freud about women's sexuality (Gallop, 2018: 127). Since the dark continent refers to Africa and unknown places, women are defined as unknown and mysterious as in the definition of the binary oppositions.

> "The Dark Continent is neither dark nor unexplorable. It is unexplored only because we've been made to believe that it was too explorable. And because they want to make us believe that what interests us is the white continent, with its monuments to Lack. And we believed" (Cixous, 1976: 884-885).

Besides, Cixous criticizes women as they allow men to define themselves as a dark place. Men utilize this darkness and fear in order to subjugate women. Wertenbaker discusses women's passive situation like Cixous. She aspires to demonstrate that women should not define themselves according to the patriarchal norms. They are neither dark nor unexplorable and they need to liberate themselves from patriarchal norms. Churchill criticizes the same idea through Marlene. She does not illustrate her as passive and inferior.

Cixous points out male figures who utilize sexual opposition in order to limit women (1978: 883). Later, Cixous states the importance of women's writing which helps them demonstrate that they cannot be defined according to conventional norms (1976: 875). Both Churchill and Wertenbaker, who are prominent female playwrights, discuss the struggles of women. While illustrating the exploitation, they choose to highlight it through gender oppression. Only women can demonstrate the actual problems of women as they experience the same things. Besides, Cixous highlights those female authors should avoid the discourse of men.

> "If woman has always functioned "within" the discourse of man, a signifier that has always referred back to the opposite signifier which annihilates its specific energy and diminishes or stifles sounds, it is time for her to dislocate this "within," to explode it, turn it around, and seize it; to make it hers, containing it, taking in her own mouth, biting that tongue with her very own teeth to invent herself a language to get inside of it" (1978: 887).

In fact, Cixous refers to Radical feminism here as Radical feminists support a new structure based on maternal values.

Similarly, Churchill expresses her aim to create a new world for women in her play by silencing male characters. She creates a world and only women share their issues. As they continue to express, Churchill illustrates how they are victimized and exploited. On the other hand, Wertenbaker uses an example of myth and an event which is set in 18th century London. Utilizing the historical events, Wertenbaker also aims to highlight a new world for women. To exemplify, murdering the future or attempting to understand the world becomes a sign of change. In fact, both female playwrights demonstrate that a fundamental change in patriarchal society is essential. As seen in the examples that gender oppression has always existed and will continue to exist if women do not attempt the change the structure.

VII. CONCLUSION

Studying *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, *The Love of the Nightingale* and *Top Girls* within the context of feminism, this thesis aims to represent the results of gender oppression on women in the patriarchal and capitalist society. As the system is formed on binary oppositions, gender bias for women and men becomes inevitable. However, the negative and passive aspects are used for women while the positive and active are related to men. Preventing those negative aspects cannot be easy for women because when they aspire to eliminate them, they are exposed to many irrational expressions such as unnatural, unconventional, mad or even prostitute. If a society is ruled by patriarchal society's rules, women will always be on the target of oppression.

For patriarchy, it is not important if they live in the middle ages or modern times. Victimization of women is not bound to race, language, religion or class. The situation can be summarized with "oppression is universal" (Jaggar, 1983: 101). Women in these three plays face with oppression both in ancient and modern times, and the results of transgressing the boundaries are displayed in the plays. To exemplify, Mary, Philomele and Marlene weaken the norms of patriarchal society. They always question things and raise their voices. Moreover, they do not accept the roles given to them. They demolish those roles with their unconventional acts. Mary tries to discover the outer world, Philomele constantly goes against the rules of patriarchal society, and Marlene has a man's place by becoming a managing director. Although it is not easy for these women to raise their voices, they attempt to change the patriarchal society for themselves or other women. However, the analysis of the plays indicates that it is not an easy task to accomplish their goals in male-dominated society.

They fought against men and women, because transgressing the boundaries alienated those women from themselves and other women. In order to achieve their goals, they needed the support of other women in order to stop gender oppression. When the female solidarity was not establised, they faced intrasexual oppression.

Thus, it was possible to observe the oppression of patriarchal and capitalist society on women. Besides, while they needed to create their own identities and boundaries, they victimized other women with their power. For instance, Mary's search outside the world made her an oppressive figure and used her power over Mrs Temptwell and Sophie.

On the other hand, Marlene used her power against her colleagues, Joyce and Angie. Marlene and Mary became one of those oppressive figures. However, neither Philomele nor Procne did not perform such a dominant act in the play. They used their power in order to reveal the patriarchy's real face as supporting each other. Later, Mary changed her attitude and chose the power of female solidarity over male supremacy. Besides, Mary said that one day they would understand the structure of the world, and it would be easily eliminated. Rather than constantly fighting with each other, she chose to be in harmony with other people. When she understood the structure, the change would start for her because she could change the structure of the society.

As Radical Feminism is considered, it aims for an essential change in the structure of society. On the other hand, Socialist Feminists support ending the capitalist structure in the society because it suggests that oppression of women are based on capitalist and patriarchal society. In addition to that, Socialist and Radical feminists support solidarity among women because sisterhood is an essential part for women to gain their own identities. The ending of *The Grace of Mary Traverse* is significant owing to its reference to Socialist Feminism, as well. If the structure changes, capitalism may be eliminated, too.

The Love of the Nightingale continued to question patriarchal society's norms and left the reader in doubt. Female solidarity was highlighted in the play. If the women came together and supported each other, they could overcome the patriarchy and change the structure. When Philomele killed Itsy with the help of her sister, she actually killed the future of patriarchal society. It showed how women aspired to free themselves from the values of patriarchal society; however, this change could not have been completed with her transformation into a nightingale. If the goals of Radical feminism were achieved, they would be able to change patriarchal norms, its discourse, its cultural, economical and socio-political values. On the other hand, *Top Girls* ended with the word "frightening" and did not give any hope to women for a

better future.

When an individual held power, he did not want to share it with other people because he became the only owner of the power and voice. Men tried to oppress women in every possible way like using their motherhood, taking away their financial independence or not giving the same rights or wages as men. In *Top Girls*, Marlene held power and did not want to share with anyone else because she was the symbol of token success. She was the top girl. She abandoned many things; however; the same patriarchy continued to abuse her emotionally. She left her daughter, sister, and family behind and followed the path of the patriarchy in order to have her own identity and voice among men. The capitalist system did not offer any other choice to her. She was obliged to choose either her family or career. Instead of Socialist feminism, Marlene supported individualism and bourgeois feminism as she thought that if she managed to be there, other women could be able to achieve it. She did not support female solidarity or express her ideas about change for patriarchal society's rules.

Women in these three plays were forced to leave things by the patriarchal and capitalist society. They were not able to create their own norms. They had to perform the socially constructed gender roles. Wertenbaker and Churchill actively took part in the feminist movement and criticized their period through their plays. Studying these three plays were also essential for the feminist movement because they were written by female playwrights. They showed the actual struggles of the women. Wertenbaker and Churchill represented how women were exploited and oppressed in patriarchal society. Cixous stated that it was essential for women to write about themselves so that they could transgress the boundaries of male discourse. Wertenbaker and Churchill displayed gender oppression that female characters were exposed to.

Continuing with Second Wave Feminism, it was highly remarkable to discuss the plays through this feminist movement. Besides, two main strands of Second Wave Feminism were utilized in this thesis so that the reading and analysis would be more effective. The strands were Radical feminism and Socialist feminism. Radical feminism was on the side of a complete change in the structure and it aspired to create a society based on maternal values. Socialist feminism argued that women were exposed gender and class oppression due to patriarchal and capitalist society,

and it supported the change in class structure based on capitalist and patriarchal society. Radical and Socialist feminists highlighted the importance of female solidarity contrary to intrasexual oppression as solidarity helped women have their own voices.

Although those three plays completely belonged to a different time, they were written in the 1980s. Wertenbaker, as an American playwright, represented 18th century London in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*. Then Wertenbaker used the myth and displayed the events from female perspective in *The Love of the Nightingale*. Caryl Churchill, as a British playwright, represented the problems of women in the 20th century in *Top Girls*. However, *The Love of the Nightingale* was a representation of the 1980s as it referred to the dynamics of the era. Similarly, *The Grace of Mary Traverse* included the problems that women experienced in the 20th century.. Feminists aspired to avoid oppression and exploitation. In addition to that, the feminist theatre aimed to show women's struggles. The theatre was separated as feminist theatre from the mainstream theatre so that women would be able to show their own problems instead of using the mainstream theatre which did not give importance to the minority but accepted the rules of male supremacy. In these three plays, women faced with gender and class discrimination. Besides, they were abused sexually, emotionally and economically.

When they wanted to stand for themselves and to have their voices, they were exposed to exploitation. The place of men and women in patriarchal and capitalist society was criticized to show gender oppression, and the underlying reasons were discussed with the examples from the plays. This study aimed to show why women were exposed to gender oppression. They faced with oppression because of patriarchal and capitalist society. It aspired to demonstrate that if there was a possible answer to be freed from all the identification, how it would be fulfilled. This study revealed that if a woman wanted to have her own identity and freedom, she was obliged to use violence or abandon her family. Because of socially structured gender roles, she was not able to choose her way.

A woman who raised her voice and transgressed the man-made boundaries was considered as an opponent to male supremacy according to the rules of patriarchal society as men did not aspire to share their place with a weaker one. Also, their supremacy was not open to be questioned. When women aspired to fight against

their rules and raise their voices, they were always oppressed. Carrying out institutionalized roles did not be a possible solution for women as they were open to gender oppression in every area of life. Women's fight for power and identity was studied because it was an essential theme for *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, *The Love of The Nightingale* and *Top Girls* and 21st modern society. As a result, if a woman wanted her freedom and voice, she needed to create female solidarity instead of intrasexual oppression. It was not possible to keep their places in patriarchal society by themselves. Eliminating the structure of patriarchal and capitalist society and forming female solidarity could be the fundamental answers to the problem of gender oppression.

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