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ATILIM UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE
MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

FEMINIST VOICES IN POST-WAR BRITISH DRAMA: PAM GEMS'S
DUSA, FISH, STAS AND VI AND *LOVING WOMEN*, CARYL
CHURHCILL'S *VINEGAR TOM* AND *TOP GIRLS* AND SARAH DANIELS'S
RIPEN OUR DARKNESS AND *BESIDE HERSELF*

ÖZDEN DERE

Ankara, 2009

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**THESIS ADVISOR
PROF. DR. GÜLSEN CANLI**

Ankara, 2009

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T.C.

ATILIM ÜNİVERSİTESİ

SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Özden DERE tarafından hazırlanan "Feminist Voices in Post-War British Drama: Pam Gems's Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi and Loving Women Caryl Churchill's Vinegar Tom and Top Girls and Sarah Daniels's Ripen our Darkness and Beside Herself" başlıklı bu çalışma, 03/06/2009 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda oybirliği ile başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Anabilim dalında Yüksek Lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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ÖZET

Bu tezin amacı, Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill ve Sarah Daniels'in oyunlarını, yazarların dünya görüşü ile ilgili bir yorum yapmak veya eserlerini siyasi açıdan etiketlemek için incelemek değildir. Dolayısıyla, bu tezin öncelikli amacı, sırasıyla Pam Gems'in *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* ve *Loving Women* adlı, Caryl Churchill'in *Vinegar Tom* ve *Top Girls* adlı ve son olarak Sarah Daniels'in *Ripen Our Darkness* ve *Beside Herself* adlı tiyatro eserlerini etiketlemekten veya onları sadece bir feminist görüş ile sınırlandırmaktan ziyade bu eserlerin kadınların toplumdaki rolünü ve sorunlarını hangi yollarla yansıttığını incelemek ve eserlerde hangi feminist seslerin var olduğunu bulmaktır.

Bu tez, bir giriş, üç esas bölüm, bir sonuç ve tezde ele alınan yazarlar hakkında ilave bilgi içeren üç ekten oluşmaktadır. Giriş kısmı, tiyatro eserlerinin yazıldığı dönemin tanımını – ki bu dönem, farklı feminist seslerin feminist hareketin içinde seslerinin duyulmaya başladığı ve tiyatro sahnesinin yavaş yavaş her oyun yazarının istediği konuyu istediği şekilde ifade edebileceği siyasi bir arenaya dönüştüğü bir dönemdir – feminizmin tanımını ve feminist hareketin içindeki çeşitlilik arz eden seslerin – özellikle liberal, sosyalist ve radikal feminizm – tanımını içermektedir. Tezin esas kısmında yapılan ayrıntılı incelemede ise her bir tiyatro eserinin - Pam Gems'in *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* ve *Loving Women* adlı, Caryl Churchill'in *Vinegar Tom* ve *Top Girls* adlı ve son olarak Sarah Daniels'in *Ripen Our Darkness* ve *Beside Herself* adlı tiyatro eserlerinin – feminist hareket içerisinde aktif olan farklı feminist sesleri içerdiği vurgulanmaktadır.

Sonuç kısmında, tezin esas kısmında elde edilen bulgular ışığında ve bu bulgular arasında karşılaştırma yapılarak, Pam Gems'in *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* ve *Loving Women*, Caryl Churchill'in *Vinegar Tom* ve *Top Girls*, ve son olarak Sarah Daniels'in *Ripen Our Darkness* ve *Beside Herself* adlı tiyatro eserlerinin, farklı feminist sesleri içerdiğinden, II. Dünya Savaşı sonrası İngiliz feminist dramının çok sesli doğasını yansıtır nitelikte olduğu ileri sürülmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Feminizm, radikal feminizm, liberal feminizm, sosyalist feminizm, feminist drama, Sarah Daniels, Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to explore the works of Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill and Sarah Daniels and to examine the diversity of feminist voices existent in their plays rather than making a judgment on their world view, basing their works on a political label. The primary purpose of this thesis is therefore to explore how the above-mentioned playwrights explain the role of women in the society and the solutions they offer to women's problems in their plays, in other words, to find out which feminist voices are to be seen in *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women* by Pam Gems, in *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill and in *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* by Sarah Daniels rather than labeling the plays and limiting them to simply one standpoint.

This thesis consists of an introduction, three main chapters, a conclusion and three appendices giving extra information regarding the playwrights discussed in this thesis. The introduction comprises the basic information about the period in which the plays in question were written - a prolific era in which a variety of feminist voices began to be heard within the feminist movement itself and in which the stage gradually turned out to be a political arena in which any playwright could reflect any subject in any style - about the definition of feminism, and various voices – particularly liberal, socialist and radical - within the feminist movement. In the detailed analyses of the plays in the main body of the thesis, it is emphasized that each play includes a variety of voices operating within the feminist movement.

In the conclusion, in the light of the findings obtained in the main body, and by comparing and contrasting these findings, it is argued that Pam Gems's *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women*, Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls*, and finally Sarah Daniels's *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* can be regarded as reflective of the multi-vocal nature of post-war British feminist drama because all of them include various feminist voices and conflicts within the feminist movement in that era.

Keywords: Feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, feminist drama, Sarah Daniels, Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill.

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INTRODUCTION

Feminism is the political theory and practice to free all women: women of color, working class women, poor women, physically challenged women, lesbians, old women, as well as white economically privileged heterosexual women. Anything less than this is not feminism, but merely female self-aggrandizement. (Barbara Smith qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 8)

[Feminism] is a movement in which women unite to generate “a force which presses society to accept and accommodate femaleness as equal, even if different, in its attributes”. (Devaki Jain qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 8)

[Feminism] is a mode of analysis, a method approaching life and politics, a way of asking questions and searching for answers, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women. (Nancy Hartsock qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 8)

[Feminism] is a theory that calls for women’s attainment of social, economic, and political rights and opportunities equal to those possessed by men. Feminism is also a model for a social state – an ideal, or a desired standard of perfection not yet attained in the world. (Rebecca Lewin qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 9)

Clearly, feminism has always been one of the hard-to-define terms because of the diversity of voices within the movement itself. For this reason, it is possible to find various definitions of the term like those given at the beginning made by those who have different opinions about the meaning of it in different sources. In *Literary Criticism: an Introduction to Theory and Criticism*, Bressler talks of feminism as “advocating equal rights for all women (indeed, all peoples) in all areas of life: socially, politically, professionally, personally, economically, aesthetically and psychologically (167) whereas Freedman in *Feminism* points out that:

(...) any attempt to provide a baseline definition of a common basis of all feminisms may start with the assertion that feminisms concern themselves with women's inferior position in society and with discrimination encountered by women because of their sex. Furthermore, one could argue that all feminists call for changes in the social, economic, political or cultural order to reduce and eventually overcome this discrimination against women. (1)

Taking these various ideas about the movement into account, in its broadest sense, feminism may be defined as a doctrine which advocates equal rights for women, and any activity working towards this objective is generally called ‘feminist’. In other

words, the term 'feminism' applies to any set of principles, any movement, any doctrine or any activity which aims at advocating equal rights for women.

The movement is divided into three phases in terms of its development throughout history. The first phase, which spans from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, is called the first wave. But much earlier an awareness of women of their oppression and second-class position may be said to have been created at the end of the eighteenth century. In this period there were many writings about women's issues, most of which were intended for consciousness raising. Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) is the first major work, in which an awareness of women's struggle for equal rights is reflected.

Women are, in common with men, rendered weak and luxurious by the relaxing pleasures which wealth procures; but added to this they are made slaves to their persons, and must render them alluring that men may lend them his reason to guide their tottering steps aright (...) The laws respecting women, which I mean to discuss in a future part, make an absurd unit of a man and his wife; and then, by the easy transition of only considering him as responsible, she is reduced to a mere cipher. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 67)

Mary Wollstonecraft, who was influenced by the French Revolution and believed that women should also have an active role in public life, argued that women should question who they are and what role they will play in society, denying the assumption of the patriarchal system that women are inferior to men. Thus, Wollstonecraft paved the way to the beginning of the First-Wave feminism which spanned a period from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century.

The American feminist Elizabeth Cady Stanton, in *Declaration of Sentiments*, which was issued in New York in 1848, reflected similar ideas with Mary Wollstonecraft. She tried to extend the idea that the rights of men are universal, that is to say, they are valid at all times and places, to include women.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men and women are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that to secure these rights governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 71)

The rephrasing of Wollstonecraft's ideas in this declaration reminds how at the time women were excluded from political life and it shows the suffrage movement's demand not only for suffrage but also for access to employment, higher education and the right to own property that were considered necessary for the pursuit of happiness.

In *Enfranchisement of Women* (1851), Harriet Taylor, talks about the rights of women as well. She claims that there is an 'organized agitation' on a new question in America and this question is enfranchisement of women, their admission to equality in all rights, political, civil and social with the male citizens by means of legal arrangements. She says that the subjection of women had been a custom because women who "were physically weaker should have been made legally inferior is quite comfortable to the mode in which the world is governed. Until very lately, the rule of physical strength was the general rule of human affairs" (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 76). She claims that women are excluded from political life and she rejects the roles that are considered to be proper for women.

Thus, many persons think they have sufficiently justified the restrictions on women's field of action when they have said the pursuits from which women are excluded are *unfeminine*, and that *the proper sphere* of women is not politics or publicity, but private and domestic life. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 76)

The arguments of Wollstonecraft and Taylor were further developed by John Stuart Mill in his *Subjection of Women* (1870). He asserts "all the selfish propensities, the self-worship, the unjust self-preference, which exist among mankind, have their source and root in, and drive their principal nourishment from the present constitution of the relation between men and women" (<http://www.constitution.org/jsm/women.htm>, 02/06/2009, 22:00). Associating all the selfishness and chauvinism among mankind with the current situation of the relationship between men and women, he claims that the major obstacle for women is the law of servitude in marriage:

The law of servitude is a monstrous contradiction to all the principles of the modern world, and to all the experience through which those principles have been slowly and painfully worked out. It is the sole case now negro slavery has been abolished, in which a human being in the plenitude of every faculty is delivered up to the tender

mercies of another, in the hope forsooth that this other will use the power solely for the good of the person subjected to it. Marriage is the only actual bondage known to our law. There remain no legal slaves, except the mistress of every house. (<http://www.constitution.org/jsm/women.htm>
02/06/2009, 22:00)

Another essential document was Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own* (1929). In her work, Woolf enlarges Wollstonecraft's ideas. She proclaims that men keep on treating women as inferior and they define what is to be female and decide who control the social structure. Woolf, in this work, also presumes the existence of Shakespeare's sister who is as talented as Shakespeare himself. This imaginary sister is not able to use her artistic talent due to her lack of education or employment. She cannot succeed because her gender prevents her from having 'a room of her own', a symbolic world representing privacy and independence she needs to isolate herself from the world and the constraints of the patriarchal society. Woolf, in this work, states that women should reject these constraints and the patriarchal construct of femaleness and should define their own identity for themselves.

The second phase, which is called the Second Wave, begins with the publishing of Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 and it ends in the late 1990s. This period witnessed an enormous increase in the feminist writings and debates since miscellaneous voices began to integrate their own ideals with feminism and each of them evaluated the feminist movement in a different way. As Mark Fortier states in his *Theory/Theatre: an introduction*: "The point is often made that, just as there is no universal woman but only women, there is not one feminism but feminisms" (71). Among these different feminist viewpoints, there are three major voices: the liberal, the socialist and the radical. Gayle Austin, in her *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism*, tries to define these three viewpoints referring to several theorists such as Sue-Ellen Case and Jill Dolan. Austin, in her book, gives Dolan's description of liberal feminism that: "liberal feminism developed from liberal humanism, stressing women's parity with men, based on universal values" (5) and makes his own summary of the qualities of liberal viewpoint as follows: first of all, it minimizes differences between men and women, secondly, it works for success within the system demands not revolution but reform, and finally argues that the individual is more important than the group. In *Materialist Feminisms* written in collaboration by Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, liberal feminism is described

similarly as: “a branch describing the view that women’s oppression will end once women have achieved legal equality and equal opportunity with men through their own efforts” (2). Based on these descriptions, it can be said that liberal feminism primarily focuses on the individual freedom. According to the liberal viewpoint, the female should have an awareness about her potential and try hard to cope with the problems she has in the patriarchal society. Michelene Wandor in *Carry On, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, provides a useful definition of the term although she touches upon the term using a different name *bourgeois feminism* or *emancipationism*:

It often takes the apparently liberal line of ‘men and women are different, but can be equal’, but in practice this usually means that the real basis of power relations between the sexes (personal and political) is concealed. Bourgeois feminism accepts the world as it is, and sees the main challenge for women as simply a matter of ‘equaling up’ with men, in other words, what men already do is seen as the norm... Unlike radical feminism, it does not challenge many of the aspects of femininity with which women are lumbered. The reverse. It asserts that women, if they really want to, and try hard enough, can make it to the top, and they have added strength because they can use their feminine wiles to twist men round their little fingers on the way there. (135)

Two major characteristics can be concluded from the above-given quotation. First of all liberal feminism accepts that women and men are different, in other words, it accepts the current system. Since much liberal feminism is based on a universalist understanding of the individual derived from the Enlightenment thought that rejects many foundational assumptions that dominated earlier theories of government, such as the divine rights of the kings, hereditary status, and established religion, and is based on the assumption of equal worth of individuals, it rather minimizes the differences between sexes. The main problem for women is to possess the same opportunities with men and achieve parity with them. Therefore, liberal feminism encourages women to take responsibility for power. It emphasizes the requirement of women for taking charge of fields normally considered to be in men’s possession. The liberal viewpoint defines the female as a responsible entity who determines her own life and development. In this sense, besides the common characteristics that can be found in every branch of feminisms, the principal qualities of liberal feminism that make it different can be listed as follows: firstly, it accepts the current system,

therefore it is not revolutionary, and for that reason, it is not interested in class analysis and it demands a reformation rather than a change in the social structure of society; secondly, it insists on the significance of women taking responsibility for gaining power. Thus, women's own efforts are the basis of their success in patriarchal society.

Friedan, in an excerpt from *The Feminine Mystique*, which is titled "The Problem That Has No Name", defines women's unhappiness during the 1950s and criticizes the idea that women can only be associated with childrearing and housework. She says:

Millions of women lived their lives in the image of those pretty pictures of the American suburban housewife, kissing their husbands good-bye in front of the picture window, depositing their station wagons full of children at school and smiling as they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor (...) Their only dream was to be perfect wives and mothers; their highest ambition to have five children and a beautiful house, their only fight to get and keep their husbands. They had no thought for the unfeminine problems of the world outside the home; they wanted the men to make the major decisions. They gloried in their role as women, and wrote proudly on the census blank: 'Occupation: housewife'". (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 199)

Friedan argues that women are trapped by a belief system that necessitates them to find identity and meaning in life by means of their husbands and children and she continues:

If I am right, the problem that has no name stirring in the minds of so many American women today is not a matter of loss of femininity or too much education, or the demands of domesticity. It is far more important than anyone recognizes. It is the key to these other new and old problems which have been torturing women and their husbands and children, and puzzling their doctors and educators for years. It may well be the key to our future as a nation and a culture. We can no longer ignore that voice within women that says: 'I want something more than my husband and my children and my home'. (203)

Friedan's call for American women's liberation and their participation in domains which are generally considered to be under men's control led to the formation of many local, state, and federal, governmental women's groups such as the National Organization for Women, as well as many independent women's liberation organizations. The Second Wave grew with several legal successes such as an Equal

Pay Act in 1963, Women's Educational Equity Act in 1972 and Pregnancy Discrimination Act in 1978 in United States and an Abortion Act in 1969, a Divorce Reform Act in 1969, and an Equal Pay Act in 1970 in Britain.

Betty Friedan's views in her *The Feminine Mystique*, which were also reflected in The 1966 Statement of Purpose of the National Organization for Women (NOW), can be regarded as providing an example of the liberal viewpoint. The National Organization for Women was founded by Betty Friedan in 1966 and in its statement it declared that women must be free to develop their fullest human potential and that they could do so only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with all other people in society. It is stated that the organization is:

(...) dedicated to the proposition that women, first and foremost, are humanbeings, who, like all other people in our society, must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential. We believe that women can achieve such equality only by accepting to the full the challenges and responsibilities they share with all other people in our society, as part of the decision-making mainstream of American political, economic and social life. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 211-212)

Speaking out in favor of women's rights and declaring that women are equal to all other people in society, the statement minimizes the differences between sexes. It is claimed that women, like men, have the right and capacity to participate in the mainstream of American society. The statement ends with a call for women to take action for their rights:

WE BELIEVE THAT women will do most to create a new image of women by acting now, and by speaking out in behalf of their own equality, freedom and human dignity – not in pleas for special privilege, nor in enmity toward men, who are also victims of the current, half-equality between the sexes – but in an active, self-respecting partnership with men. By so doing, women will develop confidence in their own ability to determine actively, in partnership with men, the conditions of their life, their choices, their future and their society. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 213)

The individual efforts of women and the partnership with men rather than hostility toward them in women's struggle to achieve equality and freedom are emphasized. For the organization, it is women's responsibility to determine their choices and their future.

Socialist feminism, on the other hand, combines Marxist theory with feminism. It includes elements from the form of class analysis developed by Karl Marx and from feminism. Austin, in her *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism*, refers to Jill Dolan's description of socialist feminism, which Dolan calls materialist feminism, as "deconstructing the mythic subject Woman to look at women as a class oppressed by material conditions and social relations" (5). She also summarizes the socialist viewpoint as a theory minimizing the biological differences between men and women, stressing material conditions of production such as class and gender and giving greater importance to group (6). Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean define socialist feminism as a branch which claims that "unless the economic inequalities and class oppressions of capitalist society are specifically addressed, even radical feminist alternatives will end up repeating them" (2). In socialist feminism, men are challenged due to both their class power and their gender power in that the male in patriarchal societies is regarded as superior to the female. In *Carry On, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, Wandor further clarifies:

It aims to analyze and understand the way in which power relations based on class interact with power relations based on gender-again, at both the individual and the social level. Socialist feminism recognizes that there are times and issues over which solidarity between women can cut across class or cultural barriers, but it also recognizes the importance of struggles based on class, which necessarily involve men, and that women can have important differences among themselves, based on class difference... Socialist feminism, on the other hand, proposes changes both in the position of women as women, and in the power relations of the very basis of society itself – its industrial production, and its political relations. (137)

Therefore, it can be claimed that the purpose of socialist feminism is to examine the interaction between power relations based on class and power relations based on gender. It includes a demand for change not only in the position of women in terms of gender biases but also in the basis of society in terms of class, production and political relations. Thus, like radical feminism, socialist feminism can be regarded as revolutionary. Karl Marx's class analysis is applied to feminism and men are challenged owing to both their class power and their gender power.

Barbara Ehrenreich in her *What is Socialist Feminism?* Defines socialist feminism in a similar way and she examines socialism and Marxism separately, initially underlining an important common characteristic of them:

They are critical ways of looking at the world. Both rip away popular mythology and “common sense” wisdom and force us to look at experience in a new way. Both seek to understand the world – not in terms of static balances, symmetries, etc. (as in conventional social science) – but in terms of antagonisms. They lead to conclusions which are jarring and disturbing at the same time that they are liberating. There is no way to have a Marxist or feminist outlook and remain a spectator. To understand the reality laid bare by these analyses is to move into action to change it.

(<http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>, 08 June, 2009, 02:36)

Marxism and feminism, both being critical ways of looking at life, have a tendency to understand the world in terms of conflicts. Marxism, for Ehrenreich, deals with the class dynamics of capitalist society. Capitalist societies are based on systemic inequality. Marxism considers this inequality to arise from processes peculiar to the capitalist economic system. In this system, a minority of people possess all the resources which everyone else depends on to live. Those who depend on these resources should work under conditions set by capitalists, for wages the capitalists pay. Because the capitalists earn by paying less than the value of what workers actually produce and the capitalist system owes its existence to the exploitation of working class, the relationship between these two classes is almost always a kind of antagonism. By the same token, feminism underlines another inequality. All societies are characterized by some degree of inequality between the sexes. Throughout history, human societies have been marked by subservience of women to male authority, the objectification of women as a form of property and a sexual division of labor in which women are restricted to childrearing and personal services for men. Ehrenreich, then, suggests that it is possible to add up Marxism and feminism and call the result ‘socialist feminism’ and this would be the best approach to women’s problems.

Heidi Hartmann, for her part, talks about similar subjects and criticizes the radical viewpoint in a similar manner in her *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union*. Hartmann draws an analogy

between the marriage of Marxism and feminism and the marriage of husband and wife in English common law, that is, “Marxism and feminism are the one and that one is Marxism” instead “Husband and wife are the one and that one is husband” (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 356), meaning that both wife and feminism has no function in that “one”. Hartmann argues that Marxist analysis provides essential examination of laws of historical development and those of capital, but the categories of Marxism are sex-blind. Nevertheless, feminist analysis is by itself inadequate in that it has been blind to history and insufficiently materialist. Thus, the best way to address women’s problems is to have a socialist approach which includes both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism.

In *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism*, Austin refers to radical feminism, to what Jill Dolan describes as the form that “bases its analysis in a reification of sexual difference based on absolute gender categories” (5). For Austin, radical feminism stresses the superiority of female attributes and difference between male and female modes, it favors separate female systems and the individual is more important than the group. Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean, in their collaborative work, *Materialist Feminisms*, describe radical feminism as an approach “arguing that the key to women’s oppression is men’s power over women, a power so embedded in all existing social structures that it cannot be overcome without a general transformation of the society” (2). The manifesto of Redstockings which was a short-lived radical feminist organization can be regarded as an illustrative document for radical feminism. The organization was founded in 1969 and its name is a combination of the word ‘bluestockings’ used in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries for educated women with ‘red’ for the group’s radical and socialist roots. The organization sets out its objective as building a unity between women and achieving liberation from male supremacy. In the said manifesto, it is declared that women are an oppressed class. For the organization, women’s oppression is total and it affects every facet of women’s lives. They are exploited as sex objects, breeders, domestic servants and cheap labor. Women’s humanity is denied and the agents of all these suffering is primarily men:

We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest, most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism,

capitalism, imperialism, etc.) are extensions of male supremacy (...) All power structures throughout history have been male-dominated and male-oriented. Men have controlled all political, economic, and cultural institutions and backed up this control with physical force. They have used their power to keep women in an inferior position. *All men* receive economic, sexual, and psychological benefits from male supremacy. *All men* have oppressed women. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 221)

The chief task of the organization, then, is stated to raise female consciousness through sharing experience and publicly exposing the sexist foundation of all institutions. Within this context, it would not be wrong to suggest that radical feminism claims that the root of women's oppression is men's power over women and this oppression predates capitalism, therefore, it is the most basic kind of oppression in society. Secondly, men's power over women is so firmly set in all social structures that it cannot be overcome unless society has undergone a general transformation. Thus, radical feminists think that the root cause of women's oppression is not legal systems as the liberal feminists claim or class conflict as the socialist feminists claim but patriarchal gender relations. For this reason, radical feminists believe that the way to deal with patriarchy and oppression of all kinds is to attack the underlying causes of these problems and address the fundamental components of society that support them such as social systems and institutions which are used as means to maintain male power. According to radical feminists there are different kinds of oppression of women but they are not limited to race, class, perceived attractiveness, sexuality or ability.

Kate Millett is an influential writer who was active during 1960s. Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1969) gave way to a new kind of feminism. She was the one who challenged the concept of gender, the social roles determined by patriarchal society for the first time. Heidi Hartmann, in the *The Second Wave* refers to Kate Millett's definition of patriarchy:

Our society... is a patriarchy. The fact is evident at once if one recalls that the military, industry, technology, universities, science, political offices, finances---in short, every avenue of power within the society, including the coercive force of the police, is entirely in male hands. (101)

As Kate Millett describes, according to feminist thought, the sources of power existing in the society including military, industrial, educational, scientific, financial,

industrial and political fields are dominated and controlled by men. As every means of power belongs to men, every order and system in society is constructed in such a way as to support male domination. Millett claims that a female is born but a woman is created by the society. She means that one's sex is determined at birth but her gender, the qualities that are peculiar to the masculine or the feminine are social elements created by cultural values. Women and men respect these roles consciously or unconsciously. Millett calls this act of complying with these rules determined by society as sexual politics. In Western societies, she thinks, political power is in the hands of men and it forces the subordination of women. Women, according to her, should put an end to male dominance in their culture and by this way they would manage to establish their own conventions as defined by themselves.

Anne Koedt's *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm*, in which sex and sexuality were discussed, can be considered to be one of the notable examples of radical feminism. Koedt presents a paradoxical situation in which women accept a definition of their sexuality imposed by men, or particularly, by Sigmund Freud. Koedt challenges the myths of the frigidity and the inferiority of female sex. She criticizes Freud's theory for "Freud did not base his theory upon a study of women's anatomy, but rather upon his assumptions of women as an inferior appendage to men, and her consequent social and psychological role" (qtd. in Keetley and Pettegrew 228). For her, the ban on clitoral orgasm and the focus on reproductive function through penetration, that is to say, these kinds of suppression are based on the patriarchal system. As a radical feminist, Koedt sees sexual intercourse as a political institution which has the power to maintain the survival of the species. While this institution is threatened by women's demand for sexual freedom, the patriarchy supports it by means of the myth of the vaginal orgasm. Such an institution ignores women's eroticism and the idea that the real erogenous zone for women is not the vagina but the clitoris. Koedt asserts that Freud's theory of feminine sexuality is therefore the denial of feminine sexuality in the same way as in the historical practices of clitoridectomy.

Another radical feminist Andrienne Rich, in her *Compulsary Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*, argued that heterosexuality is not a natural orientation for women, on the contrary, it is systematically forced on them by a wide range of

practices that make women sexually submissive and accessible to men. It also conceals and declares lesbianism punishable. Such practices that enforce men's sexual access to women constitute the core of women's oppression. Rich argues for the essential place of mother and daughter relationship on her 'lesbian continuum' and asserts that "All women exist on a lesbian continuum – from the infant suckling at her mother's breasts, to the grown women experiencing orgasmic sensations while suckling her own child, perhaps recalling her mother's milk smell in her own" (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 350). Rich uses the term 'lesbian continuum' to include a wide range of women-identified experience, not just to refer to the fact that a woman has had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another women. Rather, by using this term, she expands the term to embrace more forms of intensity between women including the sharing of a rich inner life, the bonding against male oppression, the giving and receiving of practical and political support. In that sense, she considers the relationship between mother and daughter to exist on the lesbian continuum.

As a socialist feminist, Ehrenreich criticizes the radical feminism for its generalizations about women's problems. She argues that radical feminism remains absorbed in the universality of male supremacy; in the idea that all social systems are patriarchies; imperialism, militarism, and capitalism are all simply expressions of innate male aggressiveness.

The problem with this, from a socialist feminist point of view, is not only that it leaves out men (and the possibility of reconciliation with them on a truly human and egalitarian basis) but that it leaves out an awful lot about women. For example, to discount a socialist country such as China as a "patriarchy" – as I have heard radical feminists do – is to ignore the real struggles and achievements of millions of women. Socialist feminists, while agreeing that there is something timeless and universal about women's oppression, have insisted that it takes different forms in different settings, and that the differences are of vital importance. There is a difference between a society in which sexism is expressed in the form of female infanticide and a society in which sexism takes the form of unequal representation on the Central Committee. And the difference is worth dying for.

(<http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>, 07 June, 2009, 12:30)

Ehrenreich accepts the fact that there may be something universal and timeless in terms of women's oppression but she, at the same time, criticizes the radical view on the grounds that it is a theory which excludes men and therefore it has developed on a non-egalitarian basis. For her, radical viewpoint is inadequate because women's problems take different forms in different times and places. Hartmann also criticizes radical feminism on the grounds that it has a limited approach to history and it has ignored the class distinctions. She says: "Women's discontent, radical feminists argued, is not the neurotic lament of the maladjusted, but a response to a social structure in which women are systematically dominated, exploited, and oppressed" (<http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>, 07 June, 2009, 12:30), and she further adds that "The use of history by radical feminists is typically limited to providing examples of the existence of patriarchy in all times and places" (<http://www.marxists.org/subject/women/authors/ehrenreich-barbara/socialist-feminism.htm>, 07 June, 2009, 12:30).

The third phase of feminism which is called the third wave begins with 1990s and extends to the present. The third wave feminism actually arose as a response to perceived possible failures and backlash against initiatives and movements created by the Second-Wave feminism. In *Up against Foucault: Explorations of Some Tensions between Foucault and Feminism* by Caroline Ramazanoglu, the backlash against feminism that emerged in 1990s is described:

In the early 1990s, there is considerable pessimism about feminism. The causes of this are legion and they might include: the backlash against it, particularly from the mass media; the power of the now not-so-new right; the dominance of conservative governments in Britain, the United States, Canada and other western countries; economic recession; and so on. (164)

The basic motto behind this backlash was the argument that the Second-Wave feminism has been a predominantly white, middle-class phenomenon that failed to speak to the experiences of women of color, the working class, and other marginalized individuals, has gradually emerged. According to this argument, the feminist ideal of the Second-Wave feminism is therefore inadequate in that it fails to appeal to the problems of all facets of the society. Later on, the term 'post-feminism' began to be used for a wide range of approaches emerged after this period including critical approaches to the Second-Wave Feminism. In *Feminism in Popular Culture*

by Joanne Hollows and Rachel Moseley, the development of post-feminism is recounted. According to the survey given in this book, the earliest use of the term was in Susan Bolotin's 1982 article *Voices of the Post-Feminist Generation*, published in New York Times Magazine. This article was based on a number of interviews with women who largely agreed with the goals of feminism, but did not identify themselves as feminists. Several feminists, such as Katha Pollitt or Nadine Strossen, consider feminism to hold simply that "women are people". These writers considered that views, which separate the sexes rather than uniting them, are sexist rather than feminist. Christina Hoff Sommers, in her book, *Who Stole Feminism? How Women Have Betrayed Women* (1994), argues that majority of modern academic feminist theory and the feminist movement is female-centered and misandrist. She calls this "gender feminism" and proposes "Equity feminism" instead which is an ideology that is intended for full civil and legal equality. She claims that while the feminists whom she designates as gender feminists portray women as victims, equity feminism provides an alternative form of feminism. Susan Faludi in her book *Backlash: The Undeclared War Against American Women*, talks about the backlash against feminism and argues that a backlash against the Second-Wave feminism in the 1980s has successfully re-defined feminism through its terms. She claims that it constructed the women's liberation movement as the source of many of the problems alleged to oppress women in the late 1980s. She also argues that many of these problems are illusory, constructed by the media without reliable evidence. According to her, this type of backlash is a historical trend, which recurred when it appears that women have made substantial gains in their efforts to obtain equal rights.

The diversity of voices which revealed itself primarily during The Second Wave had its implications on drama too. As the most suitable genre for the discussion of the debates within the feminist movement itself, feminist drama developed in parallel with the women's movement. The genre was suitable because it could reflect conflicts more clearly through dialogue. It also could reach masses easily and this would allow the consciousness-raising activities to be more effective as well. The examples of first wave drama in England can be found in the plays on women written for the groups of suffragette theatre such as the Actress's Franchise

League supported by the suffragette movement that was mainly an effort of women to gain the right to vote. These were plays which were written and performed to raise awareness. Katharine Cockin recounts the development of suffrage drama in her *Women's Suffrage Drama* as follows:

Many women, including actresses active in the women's suffrage movement in Britain, wrote plays and sketches as an integral part of their political campaigns, especially between 1908 and 1914. They did not necessarily regard themselves as writers, but moved to write for the first time because the vote promised to change women's lives in ways that went far beyond their participation in party politics. Enfranchisement, they believed, would represent a fundamental transformation of women's lives. It is this conviction which inspired specifically feminist interventions in the arts and the theatre, as distinct from the more generalized lobbying for democratic change. (Cockin 128)

Many women writers who wrote plays in this period believed that enfranchisement would provide women with more than their participation in politics and these writers' aim "was a conscious attempt to construct an 'authentic' woman's drama" (Stowell 1). Elizabeth Robin's *Votes for Women* (1907) and Cicely Hamilton's *Diana of Dobson's* (1908), which deals with the same themes as her essay *Marriage as a Trade* (1909), can be regarded as examples of drama supported by the suffragette movement. Elizabeth Robins, who was an actress, playwright, novelist and suffragist, recounts her conversion to the suffrage movement in her *The Feminist Movement in England*.

I AM one of those who, until comparatively recently, was an ignorant opponent of Woman Suffrage (...) I was not alone in my error. It turns out that not only have men a great deal still to learn about women, but that women have a great deal to learn about themselves. I have been prosecuting my education in this direction almost daily since a certain memorable afternoon in Trafalgar Square when I first heard women talking politics in public. I went out of shamefaced curiosity, my head full of masculine criticism as to woman's limitations, her well-known inability to stick to the point, her poverty in logic and in humour, and the impossibility, in any case, of her coping with the mob (...) I had found in my own heart hitherto no firm assurance that these charges were not anchored in fact. But on that Sunday afternoon, in front of Nelson's Monument, a new chapter was begun for me in the lesson of faith in the capacities of women.
(<http://www.jsu.edu/depart/english/robins/waysta/way03fem.htm>, 14/06/2009, 23:11)

Her play *Votes for Women* includes a recreation of the above-mentioned Trafalgar Square suffrage rally and she writes about the aspects of sex antagonism which had brought about women's resentment about being disenfranchised (Kelly 109). Cicely Hamilton, who was an actress, suffragist, writer, and journalist, wrote for suffrage as well. For Hamilton writing and political activity were interconnected and inseparable. The transition from street demonstrations and the visual arts to drama was straightforward and the movement from one to the other would demonstrate the diversity of women's talents and would pave the way for women to the role of intellect (Cockin 129). Cicely Hamilton in her *Marriage as a Trade* argues that "woman, as we know her to-day, is largely a manufactured product" (Hamilton 202) and they have been allowed a single reputable "trade marriage". As a consequence, all her education is intended to teach them obtaining a husband. Her *Diana of Dobson's* also deals with "these same trade aspects of marriage" (Stowell 3).

After the development of suffrage drama, the abolition of censorship in Britain by the Act of Parliament in 1968 can be regarded as a landmark and as the second step in terms of the development of feminist drama in Britain because it gave the feminist playwrights of the time the opportunity to deal with subjects that were formerly regarded as taboo. Colin Chambers, in his *Playwrights' Progress*, describes the influences of this significant action in the following words:

Around 1968 a moral and political curtain dropped in the theatre, with the alternative movement on one side, feeding off its own energies and motivated by a common ideology of being separate from and rejecting all that lay on the other side... It was now the era of instant theatre, on any issue, created by anyone, in any style, performed anywhere. A radical, flamboyant, egalitarian edge to the work permeated the whole process: workshops and collectives replaced traditionally atomized ways of working; old hierarchies and divisions were broken down. Censorship in the shape of Lord Chamberlain's office was abolished in 1968 and no subject was taboo. (17)

The period after 1968 was a prolific era in which any playwright could reflect any subject in any style. It was the time of alternative theatres that advocated equal rights. These alternative groups led to the emergence of playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Pam Gems, Sarah Daniels, along with those who continued to write in that period such as David Edgar, Trevor Griffiths and David Hare and regional theatres became stronger. In this respect, it can be said that the stage gradually turned out to

be a political arena through which any play could reflect its own ideal independently. This prolific period also allowed women writers to deal especially with female topics and women's problems in a patriarchal society and even with taboo topics such as pornography and child abuse in their own style. Within this context, almost all different feminist approaches were able to express themselves on stage. Most of these contemporary woman playwrights received consistent support from smaller, alternative theatres, and women's companies.

Actually, the development of feminist theatre in Britain in the late 1960s was based on three factors: women's movement, leftist movement resulting from the political and the social upheavals of the period and the rise of the fringe theatre. This was a turbulent period (1968-1969) in Europe, in Britain, as well as in the United States where there was an abundance in academic conferences, university conferences and street protests voicing problems concerning cultural and sexual politics. The rise of the feminist movement in this period paved the way for the first gender-based political demonstrations since the suffragette movement. For instance, demonstrations against Miss World and Miss America Contests were staged between 1969 and 1971 and these demonstrations included a critique of long-accepted stereotypes of women as sex objects by rejecting such forms of representation (Wandor 37). Women participating in these demonstrations discovered the effectiveness of giving their messages by means of public performance on the grounds that it reached more people than the methods such as isolated group discussions or newspaper distribution which they had previously used. In this sense, such demonstrations can be regarded as the first step to a transition from early female consciousness-raising to professional feminist theatre. The next step in this progress can be considered to be the development of the 'fringe' theatre. The emergence of fringe theatre companies allowed separate groups dealing with women's issues to develop. For instance, fringe companies such as Red Ladder, Portable Theatre, The Pip Simmons Group, and The Warehouse Company were influential in terms of the development of The Women's Street Theatre Group and Monstrous Regiment. In Britain, playwrights including Sarah Daniels, Ann Jellicoe, Jane Arden, Doris Lessing and a second generation of feminist playwrights such as Caryl Churchill, Pam Gems, and Louise Page worked with these groups (Goodman 25). Among these

playwrights, the diversity of voices reflected in the plays of Sarah Daniels, Pam Gems and Caryl Churchill will be the major concern of this thesis.

In analyzing a feminist text, the most dangerous failure would be to say that one writer has only one particular idea or she/he tries to reflect merely one feminist approach as it would be without doubt wrong to judge a person in accordance with only one of his/her characteristics forming his/her personality in actual life. People can behave differently in different environments, conditions and psychologies. Likewise, to look into a feminist literary work and say that the author has adopted one feminist ideal on the grounds that there are a number of qualities peculiar to one strand of feminisms would be wrong to the same extent as the above mentioned judgment. One author may have been influenced by the social, economic and political developments of her time, however to limit her viewpoint to merely one kind of feminism would mean to have a limited approach in analyzing her text, in that it can be easily observed that the said author has different tendencies concerning different topics. It would also be wrong to say that a single play reflects the whole of a writer's view of the world.

In that sense, this thesis is not an attempt to examine the works of the playwrights under discussion and to make a judgment on their world view basing their works on a political label but to show which feminist voices appear in their plays. The primary purpose of this thesis is therefore to explore in which ways Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill and Sarah Daniels explain the role of women in the society and their solutions to women's problems in their plays, in other words, to find out which feminist voices are to be seen in *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women* by Pam Gems, in *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill and in *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* by Sarah Daniels rather than labeling the plays and limiting them to simply one standpoint.

In the first chapter, Pam Gems's *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women* will be studied in a way as to illustrate and prove that a diversity of feminist voices are reflected in both plays. It will also be mentioned that the matters of debate in the period in which plays were written are reflected in the plays. The plays will be examined through compare and contrast method.

In the second chapter, the major concern will be Caryl Churchill's two plays *Top Girls* and *Vinegar Tom* and this chapter will include an examination of the mentioned plays so as to prove that various feminist voices are reflected. While comparing and contrasting these plays, common qualities with other types of feminisms will be mentioned.

In the third chapter, Sarah Daniels's two plays *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* will be analyzed in detail by means of comparing and contrasting the said plays in order to illustrate the main ideas within the plays and after referring to the common qualities that allow the reader to regard these works as feminist plays a conclusion will be reached that Daniels's plays deal with various subjects of debate and exemplify the contradicting nature of feminist movement itself.

Finally, in the conclusion part, in the light of the findings designated in the main body of the thesis, it will be claimed that the plays of Sarah Daniels, Pam Gems and Caryl Churchill constitute examples for the multiplicity of voices observed within the feminist movement during the Second-Wave era, that is to say, a range of feminist voices rather than only one standpoint on certain issues about women is observed in Pam Gems's *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women*, in Churchill's two plays *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* and finally in Sarah Daniels's two plays *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself*.

CHAPTER I

FEMINIST VOICES

IN

DUSA, FISH, STAS AND VI AND LOVING WOMEN

I think the phrase ‘feminist playwright’ is absolutely meaningless because it implies polemic, and polemic is about changing things in a direct political way. Drama is subversive. (Gems qtd. in Goodman 15)

As opposed to Sarah Daniels, whose plays are examined in the last chapter, Gems distances herself from feminism, stating that the term implies polemic, even though she was involved in the development of feminist theatre, particularly with her plays produced by the Almost Free Theatre and Women’s Theatre Company. According to Gems, drama encompasses a process of changing things not in a direct but in an indirect and obscure way. In an article about political drama titled “Not in Their Name”, which Gems wrote for *the Guardian*, she describes the function of drama:

The irony is all theatre is political in a profound way. Why? Because it is subversive. It can, without resort to the vote or the gun, alter climate, change opinion, laugh prejudice out the door, soften hearts, awaken perception. Of course it can because human learns not by precept (the exhortations of so much political theatre) but by imprinting. Yell at a child to be quiet and you are teaching him to yell (<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2003/may/17/politicaltheatre/print> 26/04/2009, 14:51).

In the same article, she also states that “Drama is not, as we are often reminded, in the business of offering solutions. Drama influences. Not frontally, but subtly, through the stratagems of entertainment, through popular engagement”. Within this context, the function of drama is not to impose doctrines on the audience but to influence the audiences’ minds and to open up their perceptions by means of entertainment. For this reason, Gems distances herself from feminism and distinguishes her plays from extremely political plays of recent drama which she considers to include precepts, exhortations and a direct criticism of men. The gender-based nature of her subject matter is probably the result of the fact that she thinks there is a need to give women voice and presence on the male-dominated stage. She says: “We have our own history to create, to write” (Innes 237). She, therefore,

presents women's problems on stage without ever implying hostility between the sexes. In the afterword Gems wrote for *Dusa, Fish Stas and Vi*, she says:

The antagonism between the sexes has been painful, an indictment of our age. It is true that many women have been drawn, properly, to the Women's Movement after abuse by bad husbands, fathers [...] they have had hopes pushed aside, seeing brothers favoured from infancy. It makes for grievances, fear and resentment. But, as often, one sees men hopelessly damaged by the women (...) their mothers. We cannot separate ourselves. (Pam Gems, (1982) 71)¹

According to Gems, it is true that many women have been abused by their husbands or their fathers, and for this reason they began to be interested in Women's Movement. However, it is not only women who are abused; men are also damaged by women, i.e. by their mothers or by their wives. Men suffer as much as women in the patriarchal system. Hence, men as well as women are both victims of the patriarchal system. In her essay "Imagination and Gender", Gems touches upon the same subject saying that: "There will always be the chauvinists among us, of both sexes (...) but, if we believe that there is only Us, then something is released, something egalitarian" (Gems (1983) 150). For Gems, the way and means are therefore to find a solution that would meet the needs of both sides, to believe that there is only 'Us' rather than 'you' and 'me' and this is the way to advocate equal rights for everyone, for both women and men.

Even though Gems distanced herself from feminism, she was closely connected to the feminist movement. Similar to many women playwrights who were active during the post-war era, she started her writing career on the fringe with smaller theatre groups. In fact, Gems's writing career can be divided into three periods. The first period is the one spanning the 1950s and 1960s. In this period, she wrote some pieces for radio and television before her direct contact with Almost Free Theatre and Women's Theatre Company after her move to London in 1970. It was only in the second period of her career that she primarily gained recognition. After she moved to London, she wrote some 'sexy pieces', *My Warren* (1973) and *After Birthday* (1973), for Almost Free Theatre and Women's Theatre Company. She also worked on some productions by Women's Company such as *Go West Young Women*

¹ Hereafter all references to *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* will be to this edition and will be marked as "Dusa".

(1976) and *My Name is Rosa Luxemburg* (1976). The third period, in which she reached the West end, starts with her play *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976). After that, she wrote approximately thirty plays most of which were performed by the most prestigious theatres of England such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Other Place, and the Royal Court. The most famous plays among those she wrote in this period are *Queen Christina* (1977), *Piaf* (1978), *Loving Women* (1984), and adaptations such as *Uncle Vanya* (1978), *Camille* (1984), and *The Seagull* (1991).

Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi (1976) is one of Gems's best plays that has attracted the attention of critics. Written in the third period of her writing career, the play was originally titled *Dead Fish* and it was written for the Women's Company. After the premier at the Edinburgh Festival, it was transferred to the commercial stages, reaching the Hampstead Theatre in 1976, and was titled *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*. The play consists of two acts; a series of scenes that display the different problems of four women. Gems, in her play, dramatizes the story of four different women in their twenties and she creates a connection between the different problems of these four women by putting them in one flat which belongs to Fish. The common ground for these women is their struggle to survive in a male-dominated society. All of these women, three of which can be regarded as minor characters, are shown as trying to make progress in gaining their own identities and with the story of each character a different feminist issue is revealed from a different perspective. In that sense, it can be claimed that the play presents a blend of three major feminist voices. With Fish's story, Gems both examines the conflict between patriarchal politics and sexuality in private life and she underlines the difficulty women have in reconciling personal life with political life. She deals with maternity through Dusa, prostitution through Stas, and the male gaze through Vi.

The radical voice reveals itself in the patriarchal ideology that dominates, in a sense, haunts the lives of almost all female characters in the play. Even though no male character appears on stage, they keep controlling and dominating female characters and they may even determine their survival and death. In Fish's case, patriarchal ideology functions as a motif that drives Fish to an in-between state. Fish is split between patriarchal politics, i.e. sexual politics, and her personal sexual life. She has: "all the natural authority and self-confidence of the upper-middle classes.

She is from a background of intellectuals...Having considered the inadvertency of her privilege and the mores of middle-class values; she has attached herself to a political group on the left, and is seeking to find a supportable adventurous and equitable way of life with her long-standing lover. ("Dusa" 47) Fish can be regarded as ostensibly the strongest character in the play as she helps others. She keeps reinforcing others' belief in and hope for the future. Nevertheless, she cannot help herself even though she is the one who encourages others to survive. Since she is not satisfied with the middle-class values, she joins a left-wing political group and her major purpose is to establish an equitable relationship with her long-standing lover Alan that would "break the moulds" ("Dusa" 69), meaning that it would change the traditional sexual roles completely in the relationship, by doing something that has not been done before. In this way, Fish creates an ideal relationship in her mind that would provide both sexes with an equitable and fair way of life. Her gradual decay resulting from her inability to accept the fact that her long-standing lover did not want to struggle for such a relationship that would deprive him of the advantages he had as a man and the fact that he left her for another woman leads her to suicide.

At the beginning of the play, Fish is seen on stage for the first time, talking to Dusa. It is revealed that Fish has got married to someone and they have stayed for a while in his brother's farm where he lives. However, Fish is not satisfied with this marriage.

I picked up the carving knife. . . he was sitting at the table on one of those mod stools...you know, tipping backwards and forwards. I went to cross behind him and I had this terrible feel wanted to stick it in his back. . .that it was the correct thing to do. ("Dusa" 52)

She does not love her partner, on the contrary she is so full of hatred that she wants to grab him and stick the knife in his back. Then, she accepts that the relationship has been a mistake: "Oh, you're right, I should never have done it. It was only to spite Alan" ("Dusa" 52). Fish's words indicate that she is still under the influence of her relationship with the man called Alan, in the past. After that, Fish says that her old lover, Alan, has been going out with another woman. She says: "All of a sudden he wants a house and garden. We should have had a child... I should have done it last autumn, we both wanted it then" ("Dusa" 52). It is understood that their relationship has come to an end because Alan wanted her to be an ordinary woman conforming to

the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal society. Then, she adds: "I should have done it. The only reason I didn't is because he wanted it to shut me up" ("Dusa" 52). In the previous quotation, it is seen that Fish also wanted to marry Alan but she did not marry him because she thought that he wanted marriage to restrict her life into domestic servitude. Being a feminist, she does not want to dedicate her life to Alan or sacrifice it for him as many women conforming to the culturally and socially determined roles of patriarchy do. She rather wants to have a relationship which will go beyond the patriarchal norms providing her with the right to use free will and with equal opportunities with the opposite sex. Fish, who has been left by her lover because of her unwillingness to have an ordinary marriage and to have a child, tries to suppress her disappointment by having another marriage. However, her confession about the fact that she has this relationship only to make her ex-lover disturbed reveals that she is still interested in him. All through the play, Fish maintains the same manner, hiding her disappointment and trying to seem strong. In spite of all her efforts, she cannot overcome her sense of loneliness in maintaining her struggle for establishing the ideal relationship she has created in her mind and her psychological situation becomes gradually worse in the course of the play. Not willing to accept that her lover has left her for a dependent woman, Fish progressively becomes more upset. Even though she tries to conceal her feelings, she cannot hide the fact that she hopes to renew their relationship and she constantly expresses her regret for her reluctance to have a baby. "I'm prepared to change myself! Anything he wants! I'll swing from the chandeliers...I have done!... You know she threatened to kill herself?" ("Dusa" 60). Realizing that she cannot fulfill her personal needs, such as having a child from the man she loves without conforming to the traditional sexual roles, Fish is now ready for the change Alan wanted her to make. She wants to make all the necessary changes to become the kind of woman Alan wanted her to become, in other words, to become the kind of woman patriarchal society wants her to become. Next time, Fish appears on stage "wearing a dress, jacket, and makeup" ("Dusa" 61) in a manner which is exactly the opposite of her appearance in the previous parts of the play. Realizing that Alan has chosen a woman who is more feminine and more inclined to undertake the conventional feminine sexual role, Fish wears more feminine clothes probably to show Alan that she is ready for the change

he wants. However, her makeup is “crooked” reflecting the fact that she is unable to conform to the socially constructed idea about what women should do.

In Fish’s speech during which she directly addresses the audience when she appears on stage the second time, the major problem of Fish and the major theme of the play are reflected through a parallel between Fish and a historical figure Rosa Luxemburg:

So why is Rosa Luxemburg relevant? She fought for socialism, but that was sixty years ago. Why is she important?... She is relevant because amongst other things she fought Lenin on the notion of necessity for a central part of intellectuals to run a revolution...The nature of the social and political contribution of women is, at this moment, wholly in question. (“Dusa” 55)

Rosa Luxemburg is a German pacifist and a revolutionary leader. She is a political figure who fought for socialism. In the above-given quotation, it is revealed that she was appalled by socialism because she thought that any mistake made by people who do things for themselves, that is to say, by the working-class people, were more valuable than any theory coming from an elitist committee. She called for peace during World War I and was killed by the reactionary forces. Rosa Luxemburg experienced the problematic situation of women’s participation in politics and she lost her life for it. Fish says that this event took place sixty years earlier but women still have similar problems. The contribution of women to politics is now in question and there is a wonder about the power of feminism. Fish asks what women should do.

Rosa constantly demonstrates that the emergence of women thinkers in politics modifies the Marxist theory as we know it. It is not enough to be told that we may join... that they will let us in... when they need our labor force. To be outside may be oppression. To be inside may well be total irrelevancy. It’s not just a matter of equal pay... equal opportunity. For the first time in history we have the opportunity to investigate ourselves... For the first time in history we are not bleeding to death... we are more than receptacle for genetics (“Dusa” 55).

Fish remarks that it is not enough to say that women can join politics. For them, participating in politics means to be regarded as individuals who can be more than child-bearers. Rosa’s attempt was not only a matter of joining politics; Rosa was trying to know herself, to assert her identity, to discover her potential and finally to

prove herself that she could do more than childbearing and domestic tasks. However, the society in which she lived did not allow her to achieve complete satisfaction in all aspects of her life. Fish continues:

Rosa never married Leo. She never had the child she longed for. The painful hopes in the letters from prison were never to be realized. She writes to him from Zurich about seeing a fine child in a park, and wanting to scoop him up in her arms and run off with him, back to her room. Usually when people write about her nowadays they leave all that out. ("Dusa" 55)

Luxemburg fought for socialism, she died for it, and however she never had the child she wanted. Due to socially and culturally determined roles of sexes, she had to sacrifice her life to assert her identity and become a complete 'self'. Fish goes through the same dilemma as Luxemburg. She sets out an ideal relationship in her mind which would give her the chance for self-knowledge. However, her lover Alan does not want to renounce the advantages bestowed on him by the male-centered society. He wants to shut her up; to limit her life to the roles determined by the patriarchal society; to become dependent on him. For this reason, he marries a dependent woman whom Fish describes as somebody willing to give Alan the life he longs for: "She's 'dependent'. She needs him. So... forget the struggle, forget politics." ("Dusa" 60) Things get worse when Stas reminds Fish of the fact that Alan's wife may be pregnant, but Fish rejects the idea.

I trust him! Oh I know he's said some nasty things... about being fed up with me... the pain... but that is not what it's all about. We're breaking the moulds together. Not easy. Alan?... it's tiring... We have to break new ground. Together... We were tired! She must have seemed like a rest anyway, I ran off with. ("Dusa" 69)

Till the end, Fish maintains her belief and trust in Alan and in his commitment to the ideal relationship she has created in her mind. Only after Stas has reminded her of the fact that Alan's wife may have a child, does she realize that she has lost him. In the end, she commits suicide, leaving a note for her friends:

Oh my loves... How could I have got it so wrong? I thought there was understanding. I thought we were getting somewhere. There is no love, and I can't face the thought of fighting... forgive me. It's hard. I wanted so much to sit under a tree with my children and there doesn't seem to be a place for that any more, I feel cheated. ("Dusa" 70)

Her note shows that Fish has failed to survive in the patriarchal society. She has tried to keep the balance between her personal and her political life. She really wanted to have a child and she really wanted to transform herself into a woman that Alan and the patriarchal society would accept but it was too late since Alan had already left her for an ordinary woman who met his expectations. At the end, she has no power to fight; she has no courage, so she commits suicide. The play ends with her question: "My loves, what are we to do? We won't do as they want any more, and they hate it. What are we to do?" ("Dusa" 70). Fish's question reminds the audience of a serious problem of women, the failure of the family unit to balance sex and power relations. Fish could choose marriage but this time she would not have had a chance to assert her identity through political activism. She chose her identity as a woman, working for a political cause, she chose to live as an independent woman, but this time she lost her chance to marry. Feeling isolated and being unable to fulfill her emotional and personal needs due to her commitment to establish an equitable relationship, Fish kills herself. Her commitment to establish an ideal relationship is damaged by her inability to keep her personal and political life balanced.

Violet is also caught by the patriarchal ideology operating in her life. At the opening of the play, the audience is introduced to the fact that Violet, who can be regarded as the weakest and the most helpless of the four characters, is anorexic. "She is one of the vast numbers of working-class adolescents who are bright, restless or maladjusted" ("Dusa" 47). Her reluctance to eat exacerbates her health problems and other three women are obliged to take her to hospital in the last scene of the first act. Gems touches upon a common problem of contemporary women, anorexia, through Violet's reluctance to eat. It is clear that there are many causes for anorexia. The researches on this illness commonly focus on explaining the existing factors, including biological, social and psychological. According to these, there have been various reasons of anorexia in different periods. The idea arguing that the body is a prison confining the spirit and the will and it should be therefore controlled dates back to classical times. The same idea is transformed into an act of self-starvation by women for religious reasons in Middle Ages (Wykes and Gunter 2). In feminist terms, there have been attempts to explain anorexia in terms of the "male gaze". According to these theories, male gaze expresses a power relationship. For instance,

Morag MacSween, in *Anorexic Bodies*, provides an overview of the feminist explanations of anorexia and she refers to Kim Chenin's *Obsession: The Tyranny of Slenderness*. MacSween says that Chenin looks at the negative effects of the male-gaze on women and cultural pressures on them to achieve and maintain a single socially approved body shape (54). In *The Hungry Self: Women, Eating and Identity*, Chenin argues that anorexia should be regarded as a struggle for self-development and it is directly related to women's identity. She states that anorexia is a consequence of the fear and guilt which women feel when they move into male sphere of self-development and power. The result of these fear and guilt is the transformation of this desire for change and self-development into isolation and eating disorders (MacSween 56). In contemporary society, the contribution of perceived media pressure on women to be thin has been considered to be particularly important (Wykes and Gunter 15). All media in contemporary society, including the film industry and advertisements promote thinness as the ideal female form. In *The Media and Body Image* by Wykes and Gunter, it is suggested: "The female form is traditionally conceived as soft and rounded while the masculine form, in contrast, is taut and lean" (5). It is also claimed that:

For over 30 years in Western societies, however, young females have reported more positive attitudes towards a small body size and thin physique with the exception that a well-developed bust is often preferred (...) A thin body shape is associated with success personally, professionally and socially. (7)

For this reason, most women in contemporary patriarchal society have to pay great attention to their appearance because women are appraised in accordance with their appearance and with their physical attractiveness rather than their personality. With regards to media, film industry and advertisements which should appeal to the viewer's expectations, the viewer is put into the position of a heterosexual man. The images of women in film industry and advertisements are therefore presented in such a way as to appeal to the gaze of the heterosexual man and to measure up to the image of women existent in his mind. For instance, in a scene there may be a panning on the curves of a woman's body or there may be an allusion to the beauty of female body to make a product more attractive in an advertisement. Considering all these factors, feminist theory suggests that women are reduced to objects, particularly to sexual objects by media. Under the influence of these films,

advertisements and programs promoting thinness as the ideal female form, most contemporary women try to conform to this ideal image that appeal to the gaze of heterosexual men. Violet's unwillingness to eat and rejection of her own body can be said to result from her wish to appeal to the male-gaze and to conform to the ideal female shape represented in media. Her isolation, in that sense, represents the discomfort the male gaze creates in many women. Violet endangers her health because of the distress which is caused by the male-gaze and the patriarchal oppression operating in the form of male-gaze. On the other hand, in the second act, she is depicted as healthier and stronger. With the help of the other three women, she begins to feel better and by the end of the play, she starts going out and even finds a job. She manages to overcome her illness and distress, thanks to other women's support and her own efforts. Thus, her story can also be thought to include liberal voice in that it emphasizes the power of human potential that forms the basis of liberal feminism.

Stas also suffers from patriarchal ideology. She is working as a physiotherapist in a hospital during the day and as a prostitute at night for the purpose of becoming a marine biologist. She leads a miserable life so as to achieve her goal. "Her metamorphosis from physiotherapist to hostess is startling. Before our eyes, she transforms herself from an unremarkable female employee to a glittering, heavy-headed, mesmeric-eyed Klimpt painting" ("Dusa" 47). In Stas's story, Gems deals with the nature of prostitution which is one of the major concerns of feminism and feminist theory. Catharine E. MacKinnon, in her *Sexuality*, states that sexuality is a pervasive force existent in the whole of social life. It is a dimension through which gender is pervasively constituted. She continues:

So many distinctive features of women's status as second class – the restriction and constraint and contortion, the servility and the display, the self-mutilation and requisite presentation of self as a beautiful thing, the enforced passivity, the humiliation – are made into the content of sex for women. Being a thing for sexual use is fundamental to it. (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 477)

Women's submissiveness, her need to present herself as a beautiful object, her subservience and display are all qualities that are attributed to femininity and being a sexual object forms the basis for all these attributes. In *American Feminism: A Contemporary History* by Ginette Castro and Elizabeth Loverde-Bagwell, Ti-Grace

Atkinson's argument about prostitution is given to exemplify the feminist ideas about prostitution. For Atkinson, prostitution has always been presented by men as the only alternative to the feminine role, in other words, women have been subjected to a conflict between respectability in a life confined to the home and humiliation and submissiveness in a life of independence and violence. Women should pay with their bodies and souls for autonomy and economic success (82). In the play, Stas practices prostitution and uses her body so as to achieve her goal to become a marine biologist. On the other hand, Stas's story can be claimed to reflect the liberal voice as well. She gradually makes progress and in the end she manages to save enough money necessary for her to go to Hawaii in order to study marine biology. Her determination to save money for her education and her ability to reverse a disadvantage to her favor can be regarded as an evidence of liberal stance in the play.

Dusa is "split, displaying the angst and the particular vulnerability of the breeding bitch; also the restless boredom" ("Dusa" 47). She is an ordinary woman with very little money. Even though she is divorced from her husband, he remains a major factor in her life. Dusa can be regarded as the reflection of maternal instincts in the play. She is informed that her husband has kidnapped her children. Her children mean everything to her. She reflects the unconditional love she feels for them:

You love them too much. It's unbearable. From the moment they're born. The way they look – they're beautiful... oh never mind if they are good-looking or not. Your bowels are never still. They are late. Was it a lorry... a man in a mac?... Hostages to fortune for the rest of your bloody life, I mean they can let go when they're ready. You can't.
("Dusa" 64)

In a way, she describes what is to be a mother, emphasizing that maternal instincts lead women to put their children first and to do their best to protect them. Likewise, Dusa tries hard to take her children back from her husband. From time to time she loses her hope. For instance hearing that her children are in Argentina, she tries to jump from the window, having lost her hope and courage to live. When she hears that her husband has kidnapped her children she feels paralyzed because she has no money to hire a lawyer: "What the fuck can I do! I haven't got any money! How can I find the bugger when I haven't got any money! They won't even look at you, I've had all this already with the lawyers" ("Dusa" 54). Seeing that Dusa is helpless,

Violet offers to steal the money which Stas has saved for her education. Dusa, rejects the idea at first:

DUSA: I can't take this.

VI: She won't mind. All the same if she does. Go on – steal it!

DUSA: I feel sick. (But she clutches the money with resolve. Fervently;) Thanks!

VI: Don't thank me. ("Dusa" 54)

Dusa knows that it is not the right thing to do but her economic condition forces her to steal the money. Her maternal instincts overcome her morality and, thinking that her children are the most important components of her life, she takes the money. In the end, she manages to take her children back, owing to her determination and to her efforts. She prefers to struggle for her children, even if her struggle requires immoral conducts such as stealing. In this respect, it can be claimed that there is a liberal voice in terms of her individual determination, along with the radical voice reflected in the oppression of patriarchy upon her.

Collectivity in the struggle for women's rights has always been an important issue. With regards to which kinds of feminism call for collectivity, it can be attributed particularly to radical feminism. For instance, Redstockings, in their manifesto, called for women to unite against male supremacy stating that "We call on all our sisters to unite with us in the struggle" (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 221). The backbone of this idea was that radical feminists thought all women suffer from patriarchy and the individual struggle is not enough to completely overthrow the male supremacy. With the statement in the manifesto: "After centuries of individual and preliminary political struggle women are uniting to achieve their final liberation from male supremacy. Redstockings is dedicated to building this unity and winning our freedom" (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 220) the significance of the unity of women was underlined. On the contrary, in *the Statement of Purpose* of National Organization for Women, there was no such call, instead the emphasis was on the human potential of women: "NOW is dedicated to the proposition that women (...) must have the chance to develop their fullest human potential (...) We organize to initiate or support action, nationally, or in part of this nation, by individuals or organizations, to break through the silken curtain of prejudice and discrimination against women" (qtd. in Kolmar and Bartkowski 212). As to the socialist feminism,

it can be said that there is no such call for collective struggle because the basis of this branch is class and gender relations. For socialist feminists, like Barbara Ehrenreich or Heidi Hartmann, all women do not suffer from a common patriarchal oppression because there are other factors such as class that have a significant role in women's oppression. Sometimes, even women can suppress other women due to class differences. In this respect, since socialist feminists think that women's problems are the results of both class and gender, it would be wrong to claim that there is a call for a unity that would include all women in socialist feminism. In the play, the bond between these four women is not sufficient to offer an alternative to the oppression of patriarchy in their lives. Certainly there is a strong friendship between them. Each character in the play has a different problem but none of them ignores the others' problems. Stas is seen taking Dusa to bathroom when she is about to have a nervous breakdown. Dusa and Stas are seen warning Fish about her situation. Fish uses her contacts so as to help Dusa find her children. Fish assists others in their struggle either financially or spiritually, encouraging them to believe in the happy days to come:

I really think I'm ready to have a child, I've got it together in my head... by this time, next year, I intend to be, a mother! The kids'll be back... Stas'll be in Hawaii...and you... you, my girl... will be on a good vegetarian, compost grown, chemical-free diet and weigh a heady seven Stone! ("Dusa" 58)

As opposed to other characters in the play, Fish, seemingly the strongest one of these four women cannot bear and cannot overcome her disappointment with her ex-lover on her own. The friendship between these women cannot help Fish either, to overcome her depression because she persistently rejects help from others. For instance, when Dusa attempts to help her, Fish refuses: "Only I get the notion that you're keeping an eye on me. It's unnerving (...) That's all right. It's just when I think you're trying to... look after me... It makes me feel that you're trying to climb on my face" ("Dusa" 65). In the same way, all through the play she wants to avoid seeming weak and she pretends to be happy to prevent the others from helping her. The friendship between these women is their major support. None of them would be able to succeed without this support. Fish commits suicide as a consequence of her refusal to accept support from other women. However, their friendship can be regarded as a bond which is intended for solving individual problems with men

rather than a collective fight against patriarchy. In this sense, on the surface, it can be concluded that the feminist voice operating in the play in terms of collectivity is either liberal or socialist feminism. However, since the lack of collectivity is not related to class differences and because it stems from the individuality of women in finding solutions to their problems the feminist voice which appears in terms of collectivity in the play can be regarded as liberal.

The socialist voice can be observed in several scenes in which class difference is brought to the fore in the play. Some of these references to the class differences can be said to be actually aimed at underlining the fact that the struggle of those with middle-class background who are after socialist ideology is futile in that they cannot understand the problems of lower classes as it is reflected in Fish's speech on Rosa Luxemburg: "She believed that the mistakes made by people doing things for themselves were more valuable than any theory coming from an elitist committee" ("Dusa" 54). The same idea is reflected in the conversation between Vi and Stas about Fish's situation. Stas states that she cannot understand why Fish does not give up politics.

STAS: She should give him the push. What's she trying to prove? She can slum as much as she likes, she's never going to be one of the workers.

VI: She takes it very serious.

STAS: Upper class twit, they're always the worst. ("Dusa" 55)

Stas thinks that Fish's involvement in politics is meaningless. According to Stas, who is of lower class background, getting involved in politics is a common mistake among those who are from the middle class. They think that they can do something for the poor but they will never succeed because they cannot be one of the working-class people and they cannot understand the problems of people from lower classes. For this reason, Stas gives an answer to Vi's question: "What about the workers?" with a harsh remark: "I am the workers" ("Dusa" 55). As to the characters in the play, the only middle-class character in the play is Fish and the others are from lower-class background. Stas, Dusa and Vi are doubly oppressed because of both their gender and their class. Stas has to make prostitution and accept the humiliation coming from men in order to save enough money to study marine biology. Dusa has to steal money to hire a lawyer for taking back her children. Violet has no

accommodation so Fish accepts her to her house. It is only Fish who does not have financial problems. The significant point is that there are differences between people, particularly among women, in terms of class, for this reason it is not possible for women who are from middle-class background to understand those who are from working class. And particularly because of these differences women who are from working class are doubly oppressed. In this respect, it can be claimed that a socialist voice is active in the play even if it is not as evident as other voices operating in the play.

Thus, in the entire play, various feminist voices appear and the play in fact reflects several arguments over women's issues that continued their existence during the Second-Wave period. Radical voice which reveals itself with the oppression of women by patriarchy, liberal voice which appears in the individual struggle of women to survive in the patriarchal society – which may be considered to be as a reference to the human potential of women – and in the lack of sisterhood between women, and finally socialist voice operating in several scenes by means of a focus on class differences, all reflect the contradictions and the diversity of voices within the feminist movement itself.

Loving Women (1984) is similar to *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* in that sense. The play consists of two acts first of which has two scenes. The setting is London, in 1973. The play's cast is comprised of only three characters. The first character is Frank who has a middle-class background. He is in between two women, Susannah and Crystal. Susannah is a political activist who is of middle-class background with socialist tendencies. Crystal is a hairdresser who is a member of the working class. As in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, *Loving Women* consists of different feminist voices. Radical voice operates via the emphasis on negative effects of the patriarchal system on the characters and the collapse of patriarchal values as reflected in Crystal's and Frank's marriage and on the radical settlement that is reached by the two women at the end. A liberal voice is existent in the lack of sisterhood – even though it turns out to be a cooperative effort between two women in the end - and the individual efforts of women to struggle for their identity in the patriarchal system. Finally, the socialist voice operates in class differences reflected in several parts of the play.

This play is also similar to *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi* in that the male character, like Alan in the first play who does not appear on stage, prefers physical attractiveness and domestic comfort to a partner who is interested in politics. Susannah and Frank, who are depicted as lovers at the beginning of the play, end their relationship due to Frank's choice of a girl who is physically more attractive. The patriarchy and sexual politics are emphasized at the very beginning of the play. The play opens in a bed-sitting room of a flat in London. Frank is seen lying in bed, probably just recovering from an illness. Crystal, a beautiful but unintelligent girl, takes care of Frank who has just had a breakdown and she begins to attract Frank with her charm and beauty. Unaware of her lover's inclination towards the beauty and housewifely comfort of Crystal, Susannah visits Frank so as to tell him the recent developments about the Theatre in Education group that they run together to help poor children in the Third World. At the beginning of the play, during Susannah's visit, there are several signs indicating that Crystal would take him from Susannah. The opening of the play suggests the difference between the two women through their clothes. Susannah is "thin and angular in tight, faded jeans. She is not particularly good-looking or noticeable until her face becomes alive with humour or feeling" (Gems (1985) 159)² whereas Crystal is "dazzling, young and fresh with long limbs and shining hair, her clothes bang on fashion" (LW 159). Susannah is not an attractive or noticeable woman whereas Crystal is very attractive and young. Susannah is in plain clothes while Crystal is in fashionable clothes. Likewise, throughout the play Crystal's physical appearance and her beauty are emphasized as opposed to Susannah's plain and unadorned appearance: "She is wearing the most beautiful, semi-see-through kimono in fragile silk, with floating wisps and panels, making her look like a creature from another world" (LW 166). Gems emphasizes the difference between these two women, the one who conforms to the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal ideology, thus who is submissive, dependent and sexually attractive and the other who is not submissive, attractive and dependent. Crystal gradually takes control of Frank and his way of life even though Susannah does not realize it. Susannah, who is trying to carry out the work in Frank's absence,

² Hereafter all references to "Loving Women" will be to this edition and will be marked as LW.

wants to tell him the recent developments about their work, but Crystal prevents her from telling, saying that he is not supposed to talk about work.

FRANK: What are you doing?

SUSANNAH: Oh a fantastic new scheme ... we're involving *all* the kids – music, design, dance... everybody involved, we're after total interdependence. (Hugs him) Natural follow-on from you, love.

FRANK: Sounds quite a big thing.

CYRSTAL: Come ON! He's not supposed to talk about it!
(LW 160)

Her interruption can be regarded as a foreshadowing of her interference in the relationship between Susannah and Frank. Frank also begins to do things that he has not done before under the influence of Crystal. When Crystal brings Frank's meal, Susannah is surprised to see that Frank eats meat.

SUSANNAH: Darling, I can shove it all in my *Evening Standard*, she'll never know.

FRANK: (mouth full) It's fine, thanks.

SUSANNAH: You should be on a decent diet – that's dried potato!

FRANK: She puts butter and pepper in, it's good. (LW 166)

Thinking that he does not want to eat meat, Susannah offers Frank to take the meal away with her secretly, so that Crystal cannot see. However, much to Susannah's surprise, Frank likes it and says that it is delicious. Frank, who begins to change under the influence of Crystal, is captivated by her beauty. Frank watches Crystal dancing with "a dazed expression on his face" (LW 167). Their relationship and Frank's interest in Crystal are completely revealed only after Susannah leaves. When Crystal asks Frank if he feels bad, he says "No, I feel fine" (LW 169) and "Frank grabs her with a sudden, urgent savagery, and they embrace so fiercely (...) She hooks her knees round him in a fierce, prolonged embrace" (LW 170).

In the second scene all characters are represented as being completely under the control of patriarchy. Marriage is depicted as a means to maintain the patriarchal ideology. The scene takes place in the same flat, where everything, including Frank is depicted as changed. Mao and Che posters on the wall have gone and instead of them there are "Aristide Bruant and a Mucha poster of a girl" (LW 171), indicating that there have been changes in the lives of these three characters. Meanwhile, Frank and Crystal have been married. Susannah visits them upon Crystal's invitation. The

scene starts with the dialogue between Susannah and Crystal. During their conversation, Crystal confesses that she and Frank had already decided to marry when she came to see Frank. Susannah feels dejected when she learns this. She says that Susannah and Frank were never serious, implying that they never planned to marry.

SUSANNAH: Serious?... This was my home! I found it!...
God knows it took long enough. I even plastered the walls.
When I found this flat... when I found this flat there was
one cold tap sticking out of the wall over there... that was
it! (LW 174)

She remembers her efforts to find the flat where Crystal and Frank are living now and to restore it. Her anger and disappointment intensify when Crystal tells her their excuse for the situation. Her reaction to Crystal's argument that Frank has changed is much the same as Fish's reaction in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*. "He'll never give up. I know that. That is one thing I know. For certain. You're obviously what he needs" (LW 177). In *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, Fish maintains her hope and believes that Alan cannot give up the fight until the end of the play. Likewise, at first, Susannah does not want to believe in the fact that Frank has abandoned their struggle for helping others who are poorer. However, when she talks to Frank, she realizes that he has abandoned the revolutionary ideals and the Theatre in Education Group that they have been running together. He says: "Because it was nothing to do with them. That was your life... Anyway, ours not to point up the gap. Bridge-building? Common ground? Skiing, for the likes of black kids in North Kensington (LW 184). Frank, who has adopted the socially constructed roles of fatherhood and teaching, criticizes their former activities claiming that they are false and they do not appeal to the real interests of those who have lower social and economic status. Frank considers their activities to be unreal. Since they are from the middle-class, they cannot understand the real problems of the lower-class children. That is why what they do is not real. The only thing that he considers to be real is being with Crystal.

FRANK: It's real. I feel real.
SUSANNAH: Well, good luck to you... What's she like in
bed?
FRANK: A goer. I have trouble keeping up.
SUSANNAH: I notice she does all the cooking and
shopping, all the work. What's in it for her?
FRANK: She wants a husband, children. She's not after the
world. (LW 184)

Describing his reason for choosing Crystal, Frank reveals that he prefers an ordinary woman who conforms to the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal society to the one who is ideologically determined. Crystal just wants a husband and children; she is not interested in politics nor is she concerned about the poverty in the world and that is why he feels that she is real. Susannah realizes that Frank has changed and he will not be able to overcome his reluctance to relinquish the advantages bestowed on him by the patriarchal society. Susannah cannot answer Frank's criticism about their former activities and she leaves the house saying: "A breakdown, yes. But you never came back" (LW 180). As opposed to Fish, who is unable to continue struggling, she maintains her commitment and decides to go to work in the Third World.

The traditional values set by the patriarchal society are depicted as having collapsed in the second act. Susannah returns to the same flat ten years later. In this act, it is revealed that each character has undergone a significant change. It is revealed that Crystal has made a fortune in her job and the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal ideology are turned upside down. Crystal, who earns much more than Frank now, neglects her domestic duties. The audience sees a bolder, a more rebellious woman on stage. Crystal goes out at nights and says "Listen, love. I don't ask about your things" (LW 188) when Frank wants to learn where she is going. She begins to neglect her responsibilities toward her children, too. She always emphasizes the fact that she earns much more than Frank: "I earn it, I gotta right to spend it... I'm the one that pays the bills" (LW 189). Frank, on the other hand, is not satisfied with his wife in that she cannot meet his intellectual needs. He has seen that the patriarchal values and marriage as an institution because of which he has left his career and Susannah have not satisfied him. He confesses:

Oh, fantastic, just to be with her. It's a big aphrodisiac being with a woman other men want. And I'd done it... married a straight-down-the-line-working-class girl... It wasn't the reason I'd married her, but it was damned exhilarating. She was magnificent. Brave. Like a lion... And then... She went back to work... We needed the bread. The hours are dodgy, it's a strain (LW 204).

As Frank points out, Crystal is magnificent; she has physical beauty that could attract other men around her. For that reason, it was good to be with her. However, after a while, Crystal has begun to work again and everything has changed. Crystal has changed. The gender roles in their marriage have been changed. Crystal now is the

earner and she wants sexual freedom. Frank is not happy with his wife. Neither can he accept her demand for sexual freedom nor can Crystal meet his intellectual needs. The only thing she wants is to have a child every other year.

She is restless. She doesn't know it but what she really wants is a child every other year. That's what her body wants. They're all breeders, the women in her family. Insatiable. She has such a body... breasts... contours... valleys... all-alive! It's a crime to clothe her... She should be decked with flowers and worshipped. I'm a mere mortal. I deprive her. So she takes it out of me (LW 201).

Realizing that his marriage with Crystal was a mistake and that she cannot satisfy his intellectual needs, Frank turns to politics once more. He says: "Select... win where possible, influence, subvert, create models, communicate – God knows the channels are open now. Anything's possible, d'you see? Because everything is collapsed. Politics... religion... imperialism. At least it makes for clarity" (LW 199). Unable to accept the sexual freedom she demands and understanding that the traditional norms and values for which he has sacrificed Susannah cannot satisfy him, Frank once more devotes himself to changing the society.

Besides the change in Frank's viewpoint, Susannah's view of politics has also changed, but her change has been exactly in the opposite direction. She has seen the social and economic deprivation of the people in the Third World and a bad mine accident has made her disillusioned. When she is talking about her experiences in the Third World, Frank says that she sounds bitter. Her response is a confirmation: "Oh, I am, I am. No one in their right mind would stay there for an hour if there were anywhere else on God's earth. For the last year I've been counting the days – and it rained for most of them" (LW 195). After seeing the difficult conditions of life in the Third World, Susannah decides that sacrificing individual feelings and life for an ideological objective can exhaust the personal life. She understands the fact that she has lost her love because of her inability to reconcile her personal life with her political life, just like Fish. "I should have been there. That bloody project – God, we were so intense! We were going to change the world. Hah" (LW 197). Realizing that ideological determination is self-defeating, Susannah decides to turn to her personal life and she wants to raise a family with the man she still loves. Expressing her wish to fulfill her maternal instincts, she says "God, I'd love my own patch... a few rooms, an apple tree to sit under with my children" (LW 197). She asks Frank to run

away with her. Frank rejects the idea since he is not ready to give up his children in a separation. The stalemate is broken by the decision of Crystal and Susannah to set up a common house in which Frank can serve as a father for the children of both.

As opposed to *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas and Vi*, the stalemate of which remains unbroken with the suicide of Fish, *Loving Women* ends with two women reaching a radical settlement, deciding that they would share the same house with Frank. In this play, it is Frank who is oppressed rather than the female characters in the end because he witnesses that the patriarchal values which he chose have been collapsed and he has lost the power bestowed on him by the sexual roles determined by patriarchy. Susannah and Crystal do not need him anymore. Hearing Crystal's idea, Frank says:

It is a marriage. We have created a marriage. We are family. There are your parents, my parents... (To Susannah)... I know you'll understand... there are facts and truths and values here... I'm not prepared to overturn, not just my life, God knows that's worth little enough, not a shallow would be affected, oh, I'm well aware of that, of what the world thinks... my mates... (To Crystal)... you... nonetheless... (He looks up at Crystal without expression)... it is our marriage. (LW 214)

Frank cannot accept Crystal's demand to go beyond the traditional rules of marriage. Besides his feelings about the idea, he is also worried about what other people will think if they live together. He threatens to kill Crystal, himself and the children. However, Crystal's answer prevents him from insisting on his rejection of the idea: "I'm not yours. You don't own me. If you want me to go, I'll go... but the kids come with me" (LW 215). In this respect, considering the content and the resolution of the play, the radical voice can be said to appear in the play since Gems shows the negative effects of patriarchy on the three characters even though she does not directly challenge the patriarchy and the male-power. At the beginning of the play, the impact of patriarchal ideology on people's minds is reflected through a contrast between Crystal and Susannah. It is because of the stereotypical image of women as dependent, subservient and sexually attractive that Frank chooses Crystal to marry.

As opposed to the first play, the cast of *Loving Women* includes a male character; a fact that allows the audience to observe and evaluate the male point of view. However, Frank in this play never treats women as inferior. On the contrary,

Frank tries to evaluate his marriage in an objective way. “She’s very good with the children... natural mother. As they say” (LW 201). Nor does his point of view about women have an influence on the progress of the two women. The major problem in the play is the patriarchal norms that are regarded as inviolable. It is the established patriarchal system that leads all the characters into a stalemate. Due to the traditional values which regard marriage as an institution, Frank cannot accept the sexual freedom Crystal demands. Crystal cannot experience the sexual freedom because of the domestic responsibilities that are put on her shoulders by the patriarchal system. Susannah, realizing that extreme determination in politics is self-defeating, wants to fulfill her maternal instincts but she cannot do it due to her reluctance to ruin Frank’s and Crystal’s marriage which is an institution regarded as valuable by the patriarchal system. After dramatizing the negative impacts of the patriarchal system on the three characters; she offers an alternative for the traditional patriarchal values that are depicted as collapsed. Dealing primarily with the same theme as *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, with the dilemma of women who are trying to participate in the various aspects of life that are regarded as the fields belonging to men by patriarchal societies such as politics, in the second play Gems offers an alternative to Fish’s situation in the first play. Unlike Fish, Susannah chooses to struggle for her identity and for her personal life and this way she invites the audience to reassess the sexual roles set down by the society and suggests an extra-ordinary relationship between the three as an alternative for the collapsed values. However, this time the male character Frank is the oppressed one due to his loss of power bestowed upon him by the patriarchal ideology. It can be said that Gems points out the fact that the patriarchal system can harm both men and women; the important action to be taken is to find a way that would accommodate women in society in a way that would appeal to the needs of both sides while not harming either of them and in this play the solution comes with a radical alternative that will serve the needs of all.

Although the play has a radical element in terms of the power of patriarchy and in terms of changing gender roles between Frank and Crystal, it may also be regarded as a play that includes a liberal viewpoint. The play is not a confrontational dramatization merely challenging the existing patriarchal system and depicting it as the source of all evil, it is rather a play about male dominance and sexual roles

women have in marriage which includes the individual efforts of the two women to escape from the patriarchal norms that have trapped them in a love triangle. Notwithstanding all the difficulties they have, Crystal and Susannah manage to find a common ground and find a solution that will probably appeal to the needs of all. Crystal's endeavor to gain her identity and freedom and Susannah's efforts to reunite with her ex-lover can be regarded as evidences of liberal voice in the play. In this sense, it would not be wrong to say that even though the radical voice operates in the play through the depiction of the negative effects of patriarchal society on the characters, the play still emphasizes the importance of women taking responsibility for their own life and the individual efforts of these women to survive within the patriarchal system.

As in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, even though class analysis is not a major concern in this play, a socialist voice operates in the play in several scenes in which class differences are brought to the fore, for example, when Susannah talks to one of the miners' wives, who has just lost her baby and she tries to comfort her:

I was talking to one of the miners' wives just before I left. She'd lost another bay. I tried to console her. No, she said, you don't understand. I said I thought I did but she said, no, I couldn't. I was rich. I tried to tell her that I wasn't, that I didn't own a thing. And she looked me in the eyes, it's a thing they never do but she was a bit mad from losing the child, and she said, 'You're white. You're rich'. (LW 196)

According to her, since Susannah is white and lives in better conditions, she cannot understand the problems of those who try to survive in hard conditions. In another scene, Frank also points out this fact, saying: "Anyway, ours not to point up the gap. Bridge-building? Common ground? Skiing, for the likes of black kids in North Kensington" (LW 184). As in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, references to the differences between classes can be said to be actually aimed at underlining the fact that the struggle of those of middle-class background who are motivated by the socialist ideology is futile in that they cannot understand the problems of lower classes. There are also several references to class distinction between Crystal and Frank. At the very beginning of the play, Susannah emphasizes her lower-class background: "She's pretty single-minded really. After some up market guy in a sports car. You can understand it, her background is pretty deprived... still... I mean... they are her own sort" (LW 165). At another instance, Susannah asks Crystal to go with her to a talk to

the children she cares for, however Crystal does not want to go there. Susannah thinks that she does not want to come because of her lower-class background which lacks any education or any ideological discipline. Susannah believes that the only thing that concerns Crystal is a guy in a sports car. Frank also talks about her background when he tells Susannah the problems in their marriage: “And I’d done it... married a straight-down-the-line-working-class girl” (LW 204). Frank realizes that he has made a mistake marrying a working-class girl. He understands that her physical attractiveness cannot satisfy his intellectual needs. The main reason of the disharmony between Frank and Crystal is her lower-class background. In this respect, it can be said that a socialist voice operates via the class differences reflected in the play along with the radical voice appearing in the form of patriarchy.

Despite the fact that Frank has left Susannah because of Crystal, the relationship between the two women never turns into a relationship that includes jealousy and hatred. Crystal invites Susannah to their house after she is married to Frank. Even though there are scenes reflecting Susannah’s anger for Crystal, it can be said that in general they do not hate each other. On the contrary, from time to time they feel sympathy for each other. For instance, at the end of Act I, during her visit Susannah decides to leave their house after Crystal says that they had already decided to marry before Susannah’s first visit when Frank was ill. Susannah gets up and picks up her bag but Crystal bursts into tears and Susannah says:

SUSANNAH: Oh love... oh... tch! Sit down... (she
cuddles Crystal, who weeps) Don’t cry... oh my
dear... all right, you cry – have a good cry.
CRYSTAL: I’ve been a bit tired lately, what with working
and the baby... he’s late!
SUSANNAH: Bastard was always late – hang on, I’ve got a
hankie somewhere. (LW 176)

All of a sudden Susannah feels sympathy for Crystal and calls the man she loves “bastard”. In the same way, during their discussion, Crystal and Susannah are depicted as supporting each other. For instance, Crystal says “It’s what it’s all about. What it’s always been about. Watch it Susannah. They are not going to change.” (LW 215) At the end of the play the bond between the two women is also emphasized in Crystal’s words: “Sod him, who needs him!” (LW 217). In the end: “She laughs and tilts slightly, then she and Crystal, heads together, begin to gossip and giggle, their voice inaudible under the music of the blues” (LW 217). After

Frank leaves the house, Susannah and Crystal start gossiping and laughing as if nothing has happened. As in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the bond between women cannot be regarded as a collective effort to completely overthrow the patriarchal ideology but the bond between Susannah and Crystal rather remains within the limits of personal relationships, in other words, it remains at an individual level. However, it is still a radical effort and their solution presents an alternative way of life for their relationship. In that sense, a radical feminist voice can be claimed to operate in the relationship between the two women.

To sum up, Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976) and *Loving Women* (1984) can be regarded as plays exemplifying the diversity of voices within the feminist movement itself. Radical voice reveals itself with the oppression of women by patriarchy. Gems, dramatizes the story of four different women in their twenties and she creates a connection between the different problems of these four women by putting them in one flat. Patriarchal ideology dominates the lives of almost all female characters in the play. Even though no male character appears on stage, they keep controlling and dominating female characters. Liberal voice operates in the individual struggle of women to survive in the patriarchal society and in the lack of sisterhood between women. The main problem for these female characters is to possess equal opportunities with men and to achieve parity with them. Gems defines the female as a responsible entity who determines her own life and development. Finally, the socialist voice operates in several scenes by means of a focus on class differences. Gems's *Loving Women*, on the other hand, deals with the same stalemate of women who are in between their personal lives and political ideals. In this play, a man, Frank prefers a woman who conforms to the socially and culturally determined roles of female sex to a woman who does not conform to these roles. Gems also offers a solution in this play, implying that women's problems in patriarchal society can be solved only if patriarchal values are reevaluated and overturned in a way so as to conform to the needs of both men and women. The play therefore includes a radical voice because of the emphasis on the patriarchal values and the role of women which is determined by these values. However, as opposed to the protagonist in *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the protagonist in this play chooses to follow her ideal and then returns to her ex-lover to be able to have a child from the man she still

loves. Meanwhile, her ex-lover Frank and Crystal also realize that the patriarchal values cannot meet the needs of either side. As opposed to the failure of Fish at the end of *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*, the stalemate of women in *Loving Women* is broken at the end of the play with two women's decision to live in the same house in order to establish a relationship that will appeal to the needs of all sides. Even though the two female characters empathize with each other from time to time in the play and they find a solution together, this relationship cannot be regarded as a totally collective effort to solve their problems. Again, the bond between women remains at an individual level. As a consequence, there appears a liberal voice in terms of the individual efforts of women to solve their problems. Yet since their effort is to nullify the man and set up a new order of life, it may be considered as a radical approach. Finally, the socialist voice can be regarded as existent in several scenes in which class differences are emphasized such as the class difference between Frank and Crystal.

CHAPTER II

FEMINIST VOICES IN *VINEGAR TOM* AND *TOP GIRLS*

For years I thought of myself as a writer before I thought of myself as a woman, but recently I have found that as I go out more into situations which involve women, what I feel is quite strongly a feminist position and that inevitably comes into what I write. (Churchill qtd. in Wandor 167)

At the beginning of her writing career, Caryl Churchill rather preferred solitary writing mostly for the radio. In this period, which begins with her student productions at Oxford and ends with her first stage production *Owners*, she wrote plays that are not necessarily feminist, but which included social contents and a socialist viewpoint. Her first professional play *The Ants* (1962) deals with the subject of emotionally violent and damaging family relationships. After that, her plays such as *Lovesick* (1967), *Abortive* (1971), *Henry's Past* (1972), and *Perfect Happiness* (1973) present marital and familial relations as their theme while the theme of identity crisis in *Identical Twins* (1968) and the schizophrenic world in *Schreber's Nervous Illness* (1972) were chosen as subject matters.

The major characteristic that makes Churchill a distinctive playwright is the fact that she preserved her sense of social responsibility throughout her writing career. The stories of the oppressed are depicted in most of her plays which are primarily a product of her commitment to socialism. Only when Churchill collaborated with theatre companies in the middle period of her writing career, did she gradually expand her feminist and political outlooks. Most of Churchill's collaborative work was with two companies called Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock. Churchill states that her collaboration with Monstrous Regiment influenced her idea about her own role as a writer and as a woman:

(...) this was a new way of working... which was one of its attractions. Also a touring company, with a wider audience; also a feminist company- I felt briefly shy and daunted, wondering if I would be acceptable, then happy and stimulated by the discovery of shared ideas and enormous energy and feeling of possibilities in the still new company (Churchill (1985) 129)

Churchill worked with the performers in Monstrous Regiment and that collaboration had an impact on her future work. Her work after that underwent a change in terms of Churchill's tendencies and her plays from then on became gradually more

feminist. The plays written during this period include *Vinegar Tom* (1976) written with Monstrous Regiment and her best known plays *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976) *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Fen* (1983) written with the Joint Stock. When she began working with Monstrous Regiment and Joint Stock her feminist outlook was incorporated into her socialist view. Thus, as opposed to the plays written in early and later part of her writing career, which are not necessarily feminist plays, the plays written in the middle period of her writing career are products of her commitment to both feminism and socialism. Churchill says in an interview in the late 1980s quoted in Aston's *Feminist Views on English Stage* that she felt "strongly about both and wouldn't be interested in a form of one that didn't include the other" (18). She also points out the difference between feminism in America and feminism in England:

When I was in the States in '79 I talked to some women who were saying how well things were going for women in America now with far more top executives being women, and I was struck by the difference between that and the feminism I was used to in England, which is far more closely connected with socialism (qtd. in Goodman 16).

According to Churchill, it is surprising that women in America think that they have made progress because there are many women top executives while feminism in England is much more related to socialism. In most of her plays written in this period she deals with class differences. For instance in *Vinegar Tom* (1976) class distinction is emphasized whereas *Top Girls* (1982) includes the idea which advocates the importance of individual choice and effort which began to be popular in England during the Thatcherite era.

In the late period of Churchill's writing career, primarily after late 1980s, in which she has moved more and more into a combined theatre of text, dance, and music, she returned to the writing of works on various social subjects with a socialist outlook again. Her more recent works on social subjects are *Serious Money* (1987), which depicts the financial world of 1980s, *Ice Cream* (1989), which is a look at British attitudes to America and vice versa, *Mad Forest* (1990) which is a play about Romanian Revolution, *The Skriker* (1994), which is a play about fairies combining English folk tales with modern urban life, *Lives of the Great Poisoners* (1991) which

deals with ecological issues, *Iraq.doc* (2003) which is a play on Iraq war and *Seven Jewish Children-A Play for Gaza* (2009) which is a play on the situation in Gaza.

Since the purpose of this thesis is to explore the diversity of feminist voices which appear in the plays of Sarah Daniels, Pam Gems and Caryl Churchill, the two plays to be discussed in this chapter; i.e. *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Top Girls* (1982) have been chosen from the plays written in the middle period of Churchill's writing career in which she was predominantly concerned with feminist politics. The central concern in this chapter therefore will be the analysis of the various voices of feminism operating in Churchill's two plays *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Top Girls* (1982) and the plays may be regarded as examples of post-war feminist drama which reflect the opposing voices within the feminist movement.

Vinegar Tom was written by Caryl Churchill in 1976 for Monstrous Regiment. Different feminist voices appear both in dramatic narrative and the songs which are about superstition, fear of female sexuality and ignorance in the play. The dramatic narrative of the play does not present witch hunt as something which merely men are accused of. In that part, there is rather an emphasis on class distinction and patriarchy. The female characters in this play suffer doubly because of both their gender and their poverty. The events in the narrative parts of the play take place in a small village in the seventeenth century. In the preface to her work, Churchill says: "I wanted to write a play about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria and possession by the devil, but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves" (Churchill (1985) 133). She adds that during her research when writing *Vinegar Tom* she realized "the triviality of the offences of witches and that the women who were accused of witchcraft were generally those who are nearly outside the boundaries of society, old, poor, single and sexually unconventional" (Churchill (1985) 133). The female characters in the play are therefore depicted as oppressed because of both their gender and their material conditions.

Along with poverty, patriarchal oppression, patriarchal abuse and fear of female sexuality remain recurrent themes within the play, each functioning as a major factor in the false accusation of each different female character. The various

qualities of women who are accused of witchcraft are demonstrated primarily by sensuous Alice and her mother Joan Noakes. They are the two female characters who are first accused of performing witchcraft. They are property owners who are on the verge of poverty because Alice's father has died and they have no income. Alice is depicted as a poor and a sexually unconventional woman at the beginning of the play. She has an illegitimate baby of whom she has to take care and she has no income to feed the baby. In the first scene of the play, the Man and Alice appear on the roadside talking about witch-hunts. It is understood that they have made love just before the beginning of the scene. Alice sleeps with a man she has never met before probably because of her desire to escape from the village in which she lives. Alice's reply to the Man who thinks that the sexual relationship with Alice is a sin reflects how boring and difficult it is to live in such a village like the one in which she lives. When she says that making love with the Man in the first scene is not a sin, the Man feels uneasy and tells her not to say such things. Following Man's disapproval of the idea, she says to Man: "You'd say worse living here" (Churchill (1985) 133)¹. The Man in this scene can be regarded as the representative of masculine desires for women and of the prejudices of society against them. Man's response to Alice's request to take her to London also shows how the society in which these women live has preconceived ideas about women.

MAN: A whore? Take a whore with me?

ALICE: I'm not that.

MAN: What are you then? What name would you put to yourself? You're not a wife or a widow. You're not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you are? ("Vinegar" 133)

According to the values of the patriarchal society, in which Alice and the other victimized women live, a woman should be either married or a widow if she wants to be accepted. For these women, their only hope is to become the wife or the ex-wife of a man, otherwise they will be called a "whore". Their existence is defined by their relation to men. Patriarchal ideology deprives them of their sexual freedom and renders marriage a prerequisite for women's sexual experience. Since Alice is neither the wife of somebody nor is she a widow, her sexuality is regarded as punishable.

¹ Hereafter all references to *Vinegar Tom* will be to this edition and it will be marked as "Vinegar".

Alice's ideas, which can be regarded as not complying with the social norms of the patriarchal society, are also revealed in her conversations with her friend Susan in various parts of the play. Susan is a married woman, and in most parts of the play she is depicted as psychologically weaker than Alice. Susan is the most pathetic of all the women who are accused of performing witchcraft. She is a housewife who has been worn out by constant pregnancies. Patriarchal oppression shows itself in the constant pregnancies and in the stereotypical ideas of men about women reflected in her husband's attitude to her. In many cases, she can be regarded as a foil for Alice. For instance, in Scene V, Susan and Alice talk about Susan's reluctance to have a baby and her fear of labour pains: "They do say the pain is what's sent to a woman for her sins. I complained last time after churching and he said I must think on Eve who brought the sin into the world that got me pregnant. I must think on how woman tempts man (...)" ("Vinegar" 146). Through the words of Susan's husband here, Churchill is referring to the fact that the gender-biased opinion and the religious doctrines of patriarchal societies about women date back to the beginning of humanity. Based on these doctrines, her husband tells Susan that all women deserve this pain because it is Eve who caused humankind to be expelled from Eden and women tempt men with their charm and beauty. Upon this, Alice adds:

I hate my body... Blood every month and no way out of that but to be sick and swell up, and no way out of that but pain. No way out of all that till we're old and that's worse. I can't bear to see my mother if she changes her clothes. If I was a man I'd go to London and Scotland and never come back and take a girl under a bush and on my way. ("Vinegar" 146)

Alice is aware of the fact that being a woman is hard at all ages. When younger, women have to endure pain during menstruation, and they get rid of this pain at older ages but now the female body loses its beauty and attractiveness. Alice envies men who do not have such difficulties and reflects her desire to be like the Man in the first scene with whom she has slept. It can be said that Alice is the only character who is conscious of men's prejudice against and their mistreatment of women. Following this dialogue, they talk about marriage:

SUSAN: You always say you don't want to be married.
ALICE: I don't want to be married. Look at you. Who'd want to be you?

SUSAN: He doesn't beat me.
 ALICE: He doesn't beat you.
 SUSAN: What's wrong with me? Better than you.
 ALICE: Three babies and what, two, three times miscarried
 and wonderful he doesn't beat you. ("Vinegar"
 147)

Susan, who is a more submissive character than Alice, is glad that her husband does not beat her, even though she thinks he has a right to do this. On the contrary, Alice is aware of the fact that neither Susan's husband nor any husband has the right to mistreat her or any other woman. It is possibly her rebellious and sexually unconventional conduct such as having an illegitimate child that leads the villagers to have a preconceived idea about Alice. Susan expresses the general idea of villagers about Alice: "No one's going to marry you because they know you here. That's why you say you don't want to be married – because no one's going to ask you round here, because they know you" ("Vinegar" 147). Alice is ostracized by society since she does not comply with the patriarchal norms.

Patriarchal abuse is also observed in Alice's neighbour Jack's attempt to exploit Alice. Jack wants to make love with Alice saying that no one will ever know anything about it. Alice, however, refuses him because he is a married man. Jack insists that she should accept him because he has not been interested in his wife for three months. He says: "Alice, I'd be good to you. I'm not a poor man. I could give you things for your boy" ("Vinegar" 153). Understanding that she will not accept him, Jack uses the girl's poverty as a weapon against her. He knows that she is poor and she has to take care of her child, for that reason, he talks about a highly sensitive subject and tries to take advantage of her poverty.

Under the influence of Alice's sexual attractiveness, Jack gradually loses the power of rational thought. He visits the cunning woman, Ellen, alone to ask something private:

Want to ask something private. It's about my... (*He gestures, embarrassed*) It's gone. I can't do anything with it, haven't for some time. I accepted that. But now it's not even there, it's completely gone. There's a girl bewitched me. She's daughter of that witch. ("Vinegar" 158)

Jack claims that Alice has stolen his penis from him. He, like his wife Margery and the other villagers, begins to associate everything bad with Alice. The stereotypical

castrating bitch image in his mind, he blames Alice for stealing his penis and declares that the girl is responsible for his sexual impotence. He claims that Alice emasculated him. The last event that provokes him takes place in Scene XIII. Jack goes to Alice to ask her to give his penis back, thinking that she has taken it. Alice and Susan do not understand what he wants:

ALICE: There. It's back.
 JACK: It is. It is back. Thank you Alice. I wasn't sure you
 were a witch till then...
 ALICE: It's nothing. He's mad. Oh my neck, Susan. Oh I'd
 laugh if it didn't hurt.
 SUSAN: Don't touch me. I'll be touched by a witch.
 ("Vinegar" 164)

Since Alice does not succeed to drive Jack away, she pretends that she gives his penis back to him. When Susan witnesses the event, she thinks that she really returns it to Jack. The influence of superstition and prejudice is so deep on the members of this society that even Alice's close friend Susan believes that she is a witch. Susan's response can also be regarded as the first sign of the lack of sisterhood among these women who are accused of witchcraft. Patriarchy is so permeated in the society that even women work against each other.

Alice and her old mother Joan lead an unhappy life, suffering from poverty and loneliness. Joan seems to have no purpose or hope to live. The hard conditions of life she has to endure with her daughter have driven her to drink. She complains about her old age and poverty.

JOAN: If we'd each got a man we'd be better off.
 ALICE: You weren't better off, mum. You've told me often
 you're glad he's dead. Think how he used to beat
 you.
 JOAN: We'd have more to eat, that's one thing. ("Vinegar"
 141)

Alice reminds her mother of the fact that her dead father used to beat her. It is understood that Joan's husband had a stereotypical male attitude towards her and she was oppressed by patriarchy before her husband died, but the mother insists on the idea saying that all the same it would be better in that at least they would have something to eat. Poverty has made her so weak that even violence coming from somebody that would take care of her and give her food seems a better idea to her.

Joan's husband's attitude incarnating the patriarchal oppression in her life is doubled by her poverty.

Another reason for Alice's and her mother Joan's victimization is their greedy neighbours Margery and Jack who want to take advantage of their poverty. At the beginning of the play, in Scene II, Margery and Jack talk of their land:

MARGERY: That Alice, is it, wandering about?
 JACK: I'm surprised Mother Noakes can pay her rent.
 MARGERY: Just a cottage isn't much.
 JACK: I've been wondering if we'll see them turned out.
 ("Vinegar" 138)

Jack and Margery, who want to earn more, want Joan's land. In the later parts of the play, due to lack of money and hope, Joan visits her neighbors Margery and Jack to ask them to give her some yeast.

JOAN: A little small crumb of yeast and God will bless you
 for kindness to your poor old neighbor.
 MARGERY: You're not so badly off, Joan Noakes. You're
 not on the parish.
 JOAN: If I was I'd be fed. I should be on relief, then I'd not
 trouble you. There's some on relief, better off than
 me. I get nothing.
 MARGERY: What money you get you drink.
 JOAN: If you'd my troubles, Margery, you'd be glad of a
 drink, but as you haven't thank God, and lend me a
 little yeast like a good woman. ("Vinegar" 144)

Margery does not want to give her any, accusing the old woman first of getting drunk and then of not being on the parish, i.e. not on charity. According to Margery, since Joan is not on charity, she does not deserve her help. Joan emphasizes Margery's prejudice against her and invites Margery to empathize with her. Realizing that Margery will not give the yeast, she leaves, cursing everything on their farm: "Devil take you and your man and your fields and your cows and your butter and your yeast and your beer and your bread and your cider and your cold face..." ("Vinegar" 144) Margery's attitude shows the double oppression of Joan and Alice, and the fact that sometimes, women, who are economically more powerful, may oppress other women who are economically weaker is underlined here.

In Ellen's case, it can be said that the same reasons as Joan's and her daughter's persecution lead her to be accused of witchcraft. Ellen is a single woman who tries to help others with the herbal blends she prepares. She has no financial support except the gifts of those who visit her to ask for her help. Ellen helps Susan

in the abortion of the baby to whom Susan does not want to give birth. Ellen also helps Alice, and even Jack and Margery either with her herbal mixtures or with her psychological support. Ellen is depicted as Doctor's rival in the play because her existence in fact constitutes a threat against the profession of Doctor, which can be regarded as a representation of male power. Until the 17th century, healing and helping women during childbirth were in the hands of women but in the 17th century with scientific developments men took over healing profession. In this way, women were disempowered. Ellen's profession in this sense can be regarded as a subversive act against men's power. Doctor's rivalry and his negative attitude towards Ellen are therefore stemmed from the fact that Ellen is transpassing Doctor's domain, that is to say, men's domain. Betty relates the doctor's opinion about cunning woman to Ellen: "The doctor says people like you don't know anything" ("Vinegar" 156). Doctor, who is disturbed by the fact that the majority of people go to Ellen to solve their problems instead of seeing him, tells Betty that Ellen does not know anything. The method of treatment Doctor uses to cure the landowner's daughter in fact Betty is not more scientific than the one Ellen uses, and he is not a doctor in the real sense but only refers to himself as "doctor".

Hysteria is a woman's weakness. Hysterion, Greek, the womb. Excessive blood causes an imbalance in the humours. The noxious gases that form inwardly every month rise to the brain and cause behavior quite contrary to the patient's real feelings. After bleeding you must be purged. Tonight you shall be blistered. You will soon be enough to be married. ("Vinegar" 149)

Doctor's theory is based on a traditional theory of physiology dating back to Greek and Roman physicians and philosophers. According to this theory, the state of health and by extension the state of mind, or character depended upon a balance among the four elemental fluids: blood, yellow bile, phlegm, and black bile (<http://www.wsu.edu/~hanly/chaucer/coursematerials/humours.html>, 18/04/2009, 14:30). The excess of one of these bodily fluids would result in various illnesses and disabilities. According to Doctor, Betty's distress is not the result of other people's attempt to force her to marry a man she does not love but the result of excessive blood in her body. Thus, he tries to cure Betty using his own method, i.e. by bleeding her. Betty's comment on Doctor: "He thinks he's cured me because I said I would get married to stop them locking me up" ("Vinegar" 156) shows that his method is

ineffective. Like Alice, Ellen is aware of the fact that women like her have no chance of surviving in a society which is replete with superstitions and preconceived ideas about lower-class women. In Scene VIII, Ellen advises Alice to forget the man Alice has slept with at the beginning of the play: “(...) There’ll be other men along if not that one. Clever girl like you could think of other things” (“Vinegar” 155). Having seen that there is no chance for Alice to get the Man who is from an upper class, Ellen advises Alice to be interested in something else and offers Alice to teach her the curing methods she uses. Ellen’s handing over her skill will mean for Alice to take control of her own life to be independent. In this respect, this act can be regarded as subversive of the patriarchal norms because it means empowerment of women through healing profession. Ellen’s wish to hand over her healing skill to Alice can be regarded as the only sign of bond between women even if it is not at a level of collective struggle or sisterhood. It will remain at an individual level and it will remain as a solution that will cause a progress not in the position of all women but only in the position of Alice. Like other victims in the play, Ellen cannot cope with the false accusations of villagers because she is not powerful enough to prevent them. As a result, Ellen can also be regarded as a woman who is doubly oppressed both because of her gender and her poverty.

The only character who is not accused of being a witch in the play is Betty who is the landowner’s daughter. In Scene II, in which she appears on stage for the first time, it is revealed that her parents want her to marry a man whom she does not love, but Betty does not accept this man. Even though she has improper conduct that could be regarded as rebellious and outside the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal society such as not obeying her parents, but unlike Alice she is not persecuted:

MARGERY: I hear you’re leaving us for better things.

BETTY. No.

MARGERY: I was only saying yesterday, our little Miss Betty that was and now to be a lady with her own house and...

BETTY: They lock me up. I said I won’t marry him so they lock me up. Don’t you know that? (“Vinegar” 140)

Her parents lock Betty up because they think that she should marry the man they have chosen for her. By not marrying him, she opposes the social norms of her time. The acceptable patriarchal norms in the society in which she lives dictate that she

should marry the man whom her parents choose. For this reason, Margery advises her to marry the man: “Hadn’t you better have him, Betty, and be happy? Everyone hopes so. Everyone loves a wedding” (“Vinegar” 140). In Scene XVI, Ellen, the cunning woman also advises Betty to marry the man whom her parents want her to marry:

Your best chance of being left alone is marry a rich man, because it's part of his honour to have a wife who does nothing. He has a big house and rose garden and trout stream, he just needs a fine lady to make it complete and you can be that. You can sing and sit on the lawn and change your dresses and order the dinner. What would you rather? Marry a poor man and work all day? (“Vinegar” 169)

But by refusing to marry this man, Betty behaves in a manner that is exactly the opposite of the way everyone expects her to behave and deserves to be punished. In her case, instead of a witch-hunter, Doctor tries to remedy these elements of Betty’s behavior considered abnormal by the patriarchal society. Although there is no way for those who are poorer and weaker to survive, there is always a way for the wealthy to be saved from accusations. Her advantage is her class and with the help of her money and power, she is saved from being called a witch. Betty can lead the privileged life of a lady by agreeing to marry the man her parents want her to marry. She can sing and sit on the lawn without thinking about anything except her comfort.

The socialist feminist voice operating through the above-mentioned emphasis on both gender and class differences in the play reveals itself in the relationship between the women who are accused of witchcraft as well. Considering the play, it may be claimed that there is no collective struggle of women for survival. On the contrary, in several parts of the play, women may oppress other women. For instance, Alice’s close friend Susan believes that Alice is a witch and she speaks against Alice at the end of the play. Margery, another female character in the play, works against other women. It is also interesting that Parker’s assistant Goody is a woman. Probably she does this job for money.

(...) For two pounds and our expenses at the inn, you have all that saving, besides knowing you’re free of the threat of sudden illness and death. Yes, it’s interesting work being a searcher and nice to do good at the same time as earning a living. Better than staying home a widow. I’d end up like the old women you see, soft in the head and full of spite with their muttering and spells. (“Vinegar” 168)

She says that she supports herself with this job and she is glad that she does it since otherwise she would probably be like Joan, an old widow who is accused of being a witch. Along with Margery and Susan, her existence in the play is significant because the two women demonstrate that Churchill does not accuse only men for being the cause of these women's suffering but that there is a lack of collectivity between women in the play as well. As a woman, instead of helping other women who are accused of performing witchcraft, Goody prefers to function as an accomplice to the persecution of these women. Churchill does not present men as the root cause of women's problem. The significant point is the socialist feminist principle about women's oppression. According to this principle, the sexual oppression is not common to all women. Sometimes, there may be differences between the women because of their material conditions. For this reason, it is not possible for women to form a unity, since class is an important factor that cannot be ignored and each class will be subjected to a different kind of oppression. Even women may oppress each other every now and then. In the play, it is also implied that poverty may lead women to harm other women around them. Otherwise, they may be treated in the same way as Joan and Alice are treated.

In contrast with the dramatic narrative of the play that employs a socialist voice, it can be claimed that there appears a radical message in the last scene of the play. This scene can be considered to have a radical message that all men are responsible for the suffering of women who are accused of witchcraft since they consider women merely as sex objects. The scene includes Sprenger's and Kramer's conversation preceding a song that refers to the major subjects handled in the play. Sprenger and Kramer are the authors of the book titled *Malleus Maleficarum*, *the Hammer of Witches*² which was highly influential in the seventeenth century. Churchill touches upon the misinterpretation of and prejudice against women that have existed for centuries with the conversation between Sprenger and Kramer. In

² *The Malleus Maleficarum* (Latin for "The Hammer against Witches") is a famous text about witches, written in the Middle Ages by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger. It is a misogynist book accusing women of being specifically inclined to witchcraft, claiming they were vulnerable to demonic temptations because of their various weaknesses. It was believed that they were weaker in faith and were more carnal than men. For more information see the official website of the Jesuit University of New York at <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/witches1.html>.

this scene, they explain the reason why a greater number of witches is found in female gender. They say:

SPRENGER: Here are three reasons, first because
 KRAMER: women are more credulous and since the aim of
 the devil is to corrupt faith he attacks them.
 Second because
 SPRENGER: women are more impressionable. Third
 because
 KRAMER: women have slippery tongues and cannot
 conceal from other women what by their evil art
 they know.
 SPRENGER: Women are feebler in both body and mind so
 it's not surprising. ("Vinegar" 177)

Sprenger and Kramer think that women are specifically inclined to perform witchcraft. They claim that women are more vulnerable to the devil's temptations owing to their various weaknesses. According to them, the main reason is that: "she is more carnal than a man... formed a bent of rib/and so is an imperfect animal" ("Vinegar" 177). This way, through Sprenger's and Kramer's words, Churchill emphasizes one of the reasons for women's suffering in the seventeenth century. The belief that women are weaker in body and mind and are created from the rib of man led to the development of a strong prejudice that forced women into the position of servers. In this respect, the main reason for the frequent accusations of women for performing witchcraft is the preconceived belief that argues women to be more sensual than men and they are therefore more open to the temptations of the devil and more inclined to tempt men with their charm.

Churchill's songs on the other hand present a blend of socialist and radical voices. The songs used either before or after different scenes relate the major themes in the play such as superstition, ignorance and fear of female sexuality, and sometimes they emphasize the root causes of witch-hunts such as class differences and gender. For instance, by putting the song at the end of Scene XVI immediately after Betty's and Ellen's speech in which the class privilege of Betty is reflected, Churchill directs the audience's attention to the fact that the targets of this kind of accusation are almost always young, sensuous and poor women.

If you float you're a witch
 If you scream you're a witch
 If you sink you're dead anyway.
 If you cure you're a witch
 Or impure you're a witch

Whatever you do, you must pay...
 Got big tits you're a witch
 Fall to bits you're a witch
 He likes them young, concupiscent and poor. ("Vinegar"
 170)

With the song following the conversation between Ellen and Betty, it is reflected that there is no chance to survive for those who are accused of performing witchcraft because whatever they do they cannot change the prejudiced and superstitious opinions of the society in which they live. Under each circumstance, the victims of this prejudice and superstition are those who are young and sexually attractive as well as those who are poor as reflected in the narrative parts of the play. In this song, women's gender and poverty are reflected as the major motives for the accusations against women. In the last line of the above-given quotation, the pronoun 'He' is used to imply that men are to blame, instead of referring to those who accuse women with the pronoun 'they' or 'she'.

There are similar messages in the song titled "Evil Women" at the end of the play. But the difference is that in this song, men are directly addressed and they are challenged for their wish to see women as sexual objects, the sexual power of whom comes from evil. The stereotypical image of women as evil is depicted as the product of men's sexual desires, i.e. the product of the way men are inclined to see women.

Evil women
 Is that what you want?
 Is that what you want to see?
 On the movie screen
 Of your own wet dream
 Evil women (...)
 Do you ever get afraid
 You don't do it right?
 Does your lady demand it
 Three times a night?
 If we don't say you're big
 Do you start to shrink? ("Vinegar" 178)

Churchill refers to men's castration fear and reminds the audience both of Jack's blaming Alice for his sexual impotence and also of the Man in the first scene, who gets angry with Alice and calls her a whore, when she says that he is not big and strong. Thus, it is emphasized that women are deemed evil because men have a tendency to see them as evil and to attribute their own impotence to women because of their fear of female sexuality and attractiveness.

Therefore, it may be finally said that, in the entire play, there is a blend of various feminist voices. Socialist voice which reveals itself with the oppression of women by both patriarchy and poverty and with the lack of collectivity between women who are accused of witchcraft, and radical voice operating in the emphasis on the continuing oppression, misinterpretation of and prejudice against women that have existed for centuries – especially with the conversation between Sprenger and Kramer and several songs – all mirror the oppositions and variety of voices within the feminist movement. Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982) is similar to *Vinegar Tom* because it also includes a mixture of different feminist voices.

Churchill wrote *Top Girls* (1982) six years later than *Vinegar Tom* and it was first performed by the Royal Court Theatre. The play is one of the well-known plays of Churchill and it was awarded Obie prize in 1982. *Top Girls* dramatizes Marlene's life, a professional who is employed at the employment agency called 'Top Girls'. It also depicts her interactions with the family she has left for her career. Marlene leaves her working class background to pursue financial success, leaving her illegitimate child Angie with her sister, Joyce. Churchill brings up many questions in the course of the play, including what success is and if women's progress in the workplace is a good or bad thing. Elaine Aston, in her *Feminist Views on the English Stage*, comments on Churchill's *Top Girls* saying that:

Characteristic of her playwriting in the 1990s, therefore, is a concern to make audiences see the potentially catastrophic consequences of late twentieth-century capitalism (to which events of 9.11 bear witness). Within this theatrical landscape women's lives continue to emerge as the most at risk, the most damaged. More specifically, it is the organization of mother-child relations in a social and cultural economy that continues to privilege production over reproduction, that remains a focus of her feminist critique (20).

Aston states that *Top Girls* is a socialist play showing the negative effects of twentieth-century capitalism. It emphasizes the fact that "top girls" principle of liberal feminism is not enough to improve the lives of the majority of women by portraying Marlene at work and her lost past with her child left alone due to Marlene's ambition.

In Keith Peacock's *Thatcher's Theatre: British Theatre and Drama in the Eighties*, it is again suggested that Churchill criticizes the individualistic approach to women's problems that was dominant during Thatcher's governance:

Churchill's socialist-feminist interrogation of women's status in Britain under Thatcher therefore concludes that in spite of its high profile during the 1970s, the feminist movement had not significantly advanced the cause of women (...) The mere presence of a woman Prime Minister, herself a bourgeois feminist, offered no greater opportunities for the majority of women who could not or did not aspire to be "top girls." (95)

As Aston and Peacock point out that Churchill underlines the fact that the capitalist way of looking at women's problems based on other's oppression on account of economic advance and success is, whether or not related to Thatcher's viewpoint, cannot help women overcome their problems by showing the negative effects of this kind of a viewpoint on women, and particularly on mother-daughter relationship reflected in the relationship of Angie and Marlene.

Although Aston and Peacock consider *Top Girls* a socialist play, it presents a more complex structure which consists of a blend of feminist voices revealing themselves in different scenes in the play. Churchill, in an interview in *Interviews with Contemporary Women Playwrights* by Betsko and Koenig, talks about her own play:

What I was intending to do was make it first look as though it was celebrating the achievements of women and then – by showing the main character, Marlene, being successful in a very competitive, destructive capitalist way – ask, what kind of achievement is that? The idea was that it would start out looking like a feminist play and turn into a socialist one, as well. (78)

As Churchill states, the play gives the impression of a liberal play, depicting various women from history each of whom has succeed in patriarchal society in subversive and radical ways, however, the play, then, gradually turns out to be a mixture of different ideas with the reflection of the suffering underlying the successes of women in the first scene and with the introduction of the major character Marlene in the play, portraying the cost of her success.

The first scene, in which six women appear on stage in order to celebrate Marlene's promotion at the 'Top Girls' employment agency, on the surface, gives the

impression that a liberal feminist voice operates in the stories of these women. The scene includes historical female figures assembled to tell one another the travels, intellectual accomplishments, and love affairs that have made them "top girls". First, they share their extraordinary achievements. It seems that the liberal voice reveals itself in the conversations between these women because all these women are dramatized as courageous women who changed their lives and had extraordinary achievements. However, through a deep analysis of their stories and the atmosphere in dinner scene, it can be claimed that the feminist voice operating in the scene is actually radical because all female historical figures suffered from patriarchy and the decisions they had to take to escape from patriarchal oppression includes a radical and subversive motif with the exception of Griselda. Except Griselda, they have all assumed a masculine standpoint to react against patriarchal oppression or in some cases to assert their own identity. The first woman who joins Marlene is Isabella Bird (1831-1904) who was the child of a clergyman. Suffering from gout, she was prescribed frequent travel. Taking the advice of her doctor, she made trips all over the world. Isabella's travels prevented her from forming close relationships and she had short periods of agony when she returned home between her travels. She describes her regret about the past due to her failure to establish a close relationship with her sister Hennie and her husband John.

Whenever I came back to England, I felt I had so much to atone for. Hennie and John were so good. I did no good in my life. I spent years in self-gratification. So I hurled myself into committees, I nursed the people of Tobermory in the epidemic influenza; I lectured the Young Women's Christian Association on Thrift. I talked and talked explaining how the east was corrupt and vicious. My travels must do good to someone beside myself. I wore myself out with good causes. (Churchill (1990) 72)³

Having realized that she had not helped anyone in her life, Isabel decided to help other people and dedicated herself to committees. She nursed people during an epidemic influenza, she lectured them but meanwhile she neglected her sister and her husband. After Hennie and John died, she came to regret that she has not been interested in them before. She adds:

³ Hereafter all references to *Top Girls* will be to this edition and it will be marked as "Top".

I did wish marriage had seemed more of a step. I tried very hard to cope with the ordinary drudgery of life. I was ill again (...) I ordered a tricycle, that was my idea of adventure then. And John himself fell ill, (...) I began to love him with my whole heart but it was too late (...) And he faded and left me. There was nothing in my life. ("Top" 65)

After she married, her husband John felt ill as well. She began to be interested in him but it was too late because he died soon after he was ill. Isabella too was not well. However, she never thought that everything was over and she continued to travel. She says: "I determined to leave my grief behind and set off for Tibet" ("Top" 66). Although she lost her most beloved ones Hennie and John, she was not overcome with grief. She was always determined to overcome the griefs in her life. She made her own choice and decided to continue her travels until she died. But her travelling also can be regarded as a subversive act against patriarchy since traveling was men's pursuit in Isabella's time. As a consequence of her subversive behaviour, she was punished even though her punishment was a personal one depriving her of her sister and her husband.

Lady Nijo's story includes subversion of patriarchal values as well. She is the second historical female figure who joins Marlene and Isabella. She grew up in the Japanese Court. When she was 14, she became a courtesan of the Emperor, who was 15 years older than herself. Nijo gave birth to four children; one was the emperor's child, and the others were from lovers she had without the emperor's knowledge. She recounts how she saved a dangerous situation when she gave birth to her second child by a lover.

(...) I announced I was seriously ill, and Akebono announced he had gone on a religious retreat. He held me round the waist and lifted me up as the baby was born. He cut the cord with a short sword, wrapped the baby in white and took it away. It was only a girl but I was sorry to lose it. Then I told the Emperor that the baby had miscarried because of my illness, and there you are. The danger was past. ("Top" 70)

Since she was the courtesan of the Emperor, she did not have the right to have a lover. She had to conceal her relationship from the Emperor saying that the baby had been miscarried. She also talks of another incident that made her angry. She says that when she was eighteen the men at a ceremony beat their women with a stick across their loins so that they would give birth to sons instead of girls. For this reason, the

Emperor beat all his courtesans along with Lady Nijo but he also told his attendants to beat them. Because of their anger Lady Nijo and one of her friends made a plan.

(...) and the ladies all hid/in his rooms, and Lady Mashimizu stood guard at the door, and when His Majesty came in Genki seized him and I beat him till he cried out and promised he would never order anyone to hit us again. Afterwards there was a terrible fuss. The nobles were horrified. 'We wouldn't even dream of stepping on your Majesty's shadow. And I hit him with a stick. Yes, I hit him with a stick. ("Top" 80)

Lady Nijo had the courage to punish the Emperor by beating him until he promised that he would never order his attendants to beat his courtesans. This event frightened the nobles and they were banned from being close to the Emperor and his court. After she fell out of favor in the court, she decided to leave and became a Buddhist nun and walked throughout the country. She gave up her three children by her various lovers and was denied the privilege of seeing her father when he was about to die. Even though Lady Nijo had many difficulties and accepted the role given to her in the past like Griselda, she made her own way and became an independent woman. But, her actions as in Isabella's situation can be regarded as complete reactions to and subversive against patriarchal rules. She, at first, had love affairs with other men even though she was not permitted to have a relationship with someone other than the emperor. Then, she broke up the mother-children bond by leaving her three children from her lovers. And finally, she beat the Emperor to punish him because of his mistreatment of the courtesans. As a consequence of her subversive acts she was punished and banned from being close to the Emperor's court. She led the rest of her life as a Buddhist nun in isolation.

Dull Gret is the subject of the painting *Dulle Griet* by Pieter Breughel. She is a woman wearing an apron and armor. She leads a crowd of women dressed in aprons and attacks Hell, fighting the devils. Like other women, she assumed a masculine standpoint by declaring war against Hell even though women were not supposed to fight. At the end of the scene, she tells her own story.

(...) My big son die on a wheel. Birds eat him. My baby, a soldier run her through with a sword. I'd had enough, I was mad, I hate the bastards. I come out my front door that morning and shout till my neighbours come out and I said, 'Come on, we're going where the evil come from and pay the bastards out'. And they all come out just as they

was/from baking or washing in their aprons... Oh we give them devils such a beating. ("Top" 82)

She lost her ten children by a murderous invading army. Therefore, she invited her neighbors to go to where the evil comes from, to Hell, to take revenge of her children's death and they fought a war against all the devils of Hell. In the end, she managed to take revenge for her children. Although she does not tell anything other than her fight with the devils of Hell, her determination to take revenge for her children and her revolt against the devils of Hell can be regarded as evidences of her courage as a woman. In this respect, her act of fighting can be regarded as a subversive effort against patriarchal sexual roles which dictate women cannot fight.

Pope Joan joins the other women following Gret's arrival. Pope Joan is a legendary female who is thought to have disguised herself as a man and served as Pope of the Roman Catholic Church between 854 and 856. Joan, who is English, chose transvestism and disguised herself as a man in order to follow manly pursuit of education. She fled to Athens to study with her lover when she was 12. "There was nothing in my life except my studies (...) I was poor I worked hard I spoke apparently brilliantly (...) suddenly I was quite famous, I was everyone's favorite. Huge crowds came to hear me" ("Top" 66). She became a priest, then a cardinal and she succeeded the Pope soon after. She took pleasure in being Pope: "Yes, I enjoyed being Pope. I consecrated bishops and let people kiss my feet" ("Top" 68). However, her success did not last long. She had a new lover, one of her chamberlains. She became pregnant.

(...) I just had to get off the horse and sit down for a minute... Great waves of pressure were going through my body, I heard sounds like a cow lowing, they came out of my mouth. Far away, I heard people screaming, 'The Pope is ill, the Pope is dying'. And the baby just slid out onto the road... They took me by the feet and dragged me out of town and stoned me to death. ("Top" 71)

Since Pope Joan was not used to being woman, she did not realize that she was pregnant and she gave birth in public. After that, she was stoned to death as a heretic when the fact that she was a woman was discovered. Pope Joan, made her own decision like other women and disguised herself as a man to continue her studies. After that she even became Pope although "women, children and lunatics can't be Pope" ("Top" 69). In this respect, hers is a success story like other women's stories

in the play but she got a severe punishment for her subversive act against the patriarchal system. Like other women, as a consequence of her conduct, which is outside the boundaries of sexual roles determined by the patriarchal system, she was stoned to death in the end.

Griselda, who joins the other women last, is based on the wife in "The Clerk's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales* by Chaucer. Griselda was a poor peasant who was chosen to be the wife of the Marquis if she promised to obey him always. They were married and had a baby. However, when the baby was only six weeks old, the Marquis told her to give the baby up. Later Griselda gave birth to a son. The Marquis had their son taken away after two years saying that people were angry about it. After twelve years, she was forced to go home:

He sent me away. He said the people wanted him to marry someone else who'd give him an heir and he'd got special permission from the Pope. So I said I'd go home to my father. I came with nothing/I took off my clothes. He let me keep a slip so he wouldn't be shamed. And I walked home barefoot. My father came out in tears. Everyone was crying except me. ("Top" 78)

Having promised to obey her husband unconditionally, she went to her father's house. Then, she was invited again to prepare for her husband's new wedding. She made the preparations obediently and planned his wedding ceremony. In the end, she was rewarded by being reunited with her children and her husband. In Griselda's case, it can be said that she is the second character who may be regarded as exceptional in terms of her submissiveness. Unlike the other women in this scene, she was dependent on her husband and obeyed him unconditionally. She is different from other women in the scene because she was a stereotypical perfect wife who chose to obey her husband unconditionally. When she recounts how her husband decided to marry her, she says: "My father could hardly speak. The Marquis said it wasn't an order, I could say no, but if I said yes I must obey him in everything" ("Top" 75). Thus, she chose to obey her husband it was not forced on her by him.

The conversations turn to dialogues revealing events of suffering and loss by each of these women. Increasingly, the audience realizes that these women have suffered to the same extent they have gained and the sufferings are particularly related to the beloved ones lost or given up. All women in this scene have suffered

from patriarchy and all assumed masculine standpoints to assert their own identity and as a result of their subversive attitudes they were punished or they suffered in some way. In this way, the radical feminist voice appears as a contrast to the seemingly liberal voice which operates in the independence and individual efforts of historical female figures in the first scene. However, after Griselda recounts her story all the other women are annoyed because of her stereotypical attitude and with Marlene's toasting "We've all come a long way. To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements" ("Top" 72), they form a collective attitude – which is a radical element in essence – towards patriarchy and their common oppression by deep-rooted patriarchal practices that have continued throughout history. All these historical figures exemplify strong and talented women who were successful in the past while foreshadowing the nature of Marlene's choice which resulted in her achievements and success at the 'Top Girls' employment agency but also led to her abandoning her family. After the dinner scene, the plot focuses on Marlene. Churchill utilizes the female character Marlene to show how women may be successful and may get what they want if they try hard and take responsibility for their own lives. Until the last scene, Marlene is represented as a "top girl", displaying her material achievements and the power she has even though she has it at the expense of her personal life.

The rest of the play until the last scene, Marlene's achievements at the employment agency and her ambitious nature along with the demanding nature of her colleagues Nell and Win are reflected. Nell and Win are self-assured, clever women who have achieved success and independence in a male-centered system and they reversed their secondary position they occupied because of their gender in the working world which has always been in the hands of men. In other words, they have been emancipated and started to get equality with men in the competition for work. In such a competitive environment in modern society in which women and men vie for success, these women's ambitious and demanding nature, and particularly their challenge to men may be acceptable. For instance, in Act II, Scene III, Win talks about men's attitude and says to Angie: "Men are awful bullshitters, they like to make out jobs are harder than they are. Any job ever did I started doing it better than the rest of the crowd and they didn't like it" ("Top" 119). However, in the play, it is

increasingly revealed that women's humiliating attitudes and criticisms are not directed at only men but also at women. The treatment of the candidates looking for better positions demonstrates that the patriarchal practices preventing women from going up are continued by women who have achieved top positions themselves. Nell calls probable female employees "half a dozen of little girls" ("Top" 103) In Scene I, she talks to an applicant Jeanine who wants to move to a better position. Hearing that the applicant wants to marry, Marlene says:

MARLENE: So you won't tell them you're getting married?
 JEANINE: Had I better not?
 MARLENE: It would probably help.
 JEANINE: I'm not wearing a ring. We thought we wouldn't spend on a ring...
 MARLENE: There's no need to mention it when you go for an interview. ("Top" 85)

Marlene tells the girl that she had better not tell her plans to marry in a short while at an appointment, because it would cause the employer to have a negative attitude towards her. In a way, she tries to tell her that if she wants to be successful, she will have to sacrifice her personal life. The marriage for Marlene is not something appropriate for those who want to make their way to the 'top'.

Marlene's attitude towards Jeanine lacks any sense of empathy and solidarity as well. It is true that Marlene's job is to help people in finding jobs but she talks to Jeanine more like a boss talking to her employee and criticizes her preferences about the kind of job she wants in a harsh way, implying that they do not comply with her marriage plans.

JEANINE: I'd like to travel.
 MARLENE: We don't have any foreign clients. You'd have to go somewhere else.
 JEANINE: Yes I know. I don't really... I just mean (...)
 MARLENE: Does your fiancé want to travel? (...) Is that what you want to be in ten years?
 JEANINE: I might not be alive in ten years.
 MARLENE: Yes but you will be. You'll have children.
 JEANINE: I can't think about ten years.
 MARLENE: You haven't got the speeds anyway. ("Top" 86)

Marlene says that she should be decisive if she wants to go up in her career and implies that Jeanine can make plans for the next ten years if she makes plans about her marriage. After that, Marlene sends the girl to an interview for a job which

Marlene herself wants her to go rather than to an interview for a job which the girl prefers.

Marlene's ambitious nature is also demonstrated in the meeting between Howard Kidd's wife Mrs. Kidd and Marlene, who have contradicting views about the role of women in society. Mrs. Kidd whose husband's promotion has been prevented by Marlene's promotion visits the agency to ask Marlene to refuse her promotion so that Howard Kidd could get it.

MRS KIDD: ... What's it going to do him working for a woman? I think if it a man he'd get over it as something normal... It's me that bears the brunt. I'm not the one that's been promoted. I put him first every inch of the way... It has crossed my mind if you were unavailable for some reason, he would be the natural second choice...

MARLENE: If he doesn't like what's happening here he can go and work somewhere else.

MRS KIDD: It's not that easy, a man of Howard's age. You don't care. I thought he was going too far but he's right. You're one of these ballbreakers/that's what you're. You'll end up miserable and lonely. You're not natural. ("Top" 113)

It is revealed that Howard, who has a stereotypical male attitude created by patriarchal system, cannot stand the idea of working under a woman executive. His wife says that if a man had received the promotion instead of Marlene, he would probably accept the situation thinking that it is normal. However, since the one who has been promoted is a woman, he cannot accept it. Marlene says that he can go and work somewhere else if he does not like the administration in the employment agency. Even though Mrs. Kidd's request is unreasonable, Marlene's reply "Could you please piss off?" ("Top" 113) causes Mrs. Kidd to lose control and say: "You're one of these ballbreakers (...) you're not natural" ("Top" 113). Mrs. Kidd's answer in fact describes Marlene's ambitious and demanding nature and it is the response of a stereotypical wife.

The same attitude is observed in the interview with a woman named Louise conducted by Win who is another employee working for "Top Girls" employment agency.

WIN: You shouldn't talk too much at an interview.

LOUISE: I don't. I don't normally talk about myself. I know very well how to handle myself in an office situation. I only talk to you because it seems to me

this is different, it's your job to understand me,
surely. You asked the questions.
WIN: I think I understand you sufficiently. ("Top" 107)

Louise is a woman who has a good job, but she wants to change her job because she has spent twenty years working for the same company and she has achieved nothing except staying at the level where she is. After Louise answers her questions, Win warns Louise not to talk too much at interviews although Win is the one who asks questions. Then, to Louise's surprise, Win suddenly asks Louise an irrelevant question "Do you drink?" ("Top" 107), as if she is not the one who has warned Louise. Louise does not understand the reason for being asked such a question but Win does not explain the reason, instead says only "I drink" ("Top" 107), referring to her drinking which is a masculine practice in fact.

The results of Marlene's ambition and success are unfolded in the last act. It is revealed that Marlene has chosen to leave her daughter Angie and has had two abortions for material success. In this act, Churchill explores the nature and meaning of the economic, social and professional success for women in a world dominated by men. If women have to sacrifice something or redefine an essential part of themselves, what is the value of the highest achievement? What kind of an accomplishment is it to be successful in a competitive world? And, what is the price of it? In this scene set a year before the other scenes, Marlene visits her sister and Angie thinking that Joyce has invited her. Angie, thinking that her aunt is her real mother calls Marlene secretly and says that her mother Joyce has invited her to visit them. However, after Marlene comes, she understands that Joyce has not invited her but it was only Angie's idea. The crisis that arises during the sisters' conversation allows the audience to witness how different the two sisters are. On the surface, the stories of the two sisters can be said to reveal a liberal feminist voice because like the women in the first scene, they resume responsibility for what they have done. Each argues for what she has done and neither of them is dependent on men. However, through a deep analysis of their discussion, it is understood that the two sisters represent the two opposing ideas; Marlene, like other women in the first scene represents the ambitious woman who preferred to achieve equity with men whatever it costs and Joyce represents the sacrificing woman who preferred to stay as a working-class woman. Joyce is divorced from her husband and lives on her own and looking after Angie. She says:

He was always carrying on, wasn't he? And if I wanted to go out in the evening he'd go mad, even if it was nothing, a class, I was going to an evening class. So he had this girlfriend, only twenty-two poor cow, and I said go on, off you go, hoppit. ("Top" 136)

Male sexuality and patriarchal oppression reveals itself in the form of the dissatisfaction of Joyce's husband with his wife and in the form of his search for another woman. Joyce, who realized that her husband had a girlfriend, instead of accepting the situation, divorced her husband and decided to live on her own. She also complains about her father's "animal" like behaviour, his drinking habits and the violence their mother experienced because of her husband, which are stereotypical male behaviours as well. In a similar way, when Joyce stresses that they do not need men, Marlene replies: "Well I do. But I need adventure more" ("Top" 137). Marlene like her sister is not dependent on men, but she needs them only for adventure. Marlene's statements, which reveal the fact that she is sorry for the wasted life of their mother due to her father, disturb Joyce who pays weekly visits to her mother. The two also argue about whether Marlene's abandonment of Angie was an advantage to Joyce who has lost her own baby. Joyce also mentions that she has to do four cleaning jobs to take care of Angie because she can only find these jobs that were available for women due to her lack of education and her class. Then the tension rises when the argument turns into a political one.

MARLENE: who's got to drive it on? First woman prime minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on. / You must admit. Certainly gets my vote.

JOYCE: What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if he was a woman. Ms Hitler. Got a lot done, Hitlerina/Great adventures.

MARLENE: (...) Haven't learnt to think for yourself I believe in the individual. Look at me (...) I hate working class/which is what you're going to go on about now, it doesn't exist anymore, it means lazy and stupid/I don't like the way they talk.

JOYCE: What about Angie? ("Top" 139-40).

The direction of Marlene's and Joyce's argument leads them into a discussion about Margaret Thatcher. Elaine Aston, in her *Feminist Views on the English Stage*, comments on Churchill's *Top Girls* talks of the historical context of the play:

When *Top Girls* was first performed it was some three years after Thatcher came to power (1979) and a year before her re-election for a second term of office. Already, the idea of materially driven 'Super-woman', Churchill's

kind of 'top girl' Marlene figure, was taking hold. But career and economic advancement consequent upon inter- and intra-sexual oppression, (...) does not necessarily provide a progressive way forward, can hardly, as the play shows, be equated with feminism in any positive sense at all. (21)

When the play was written, the first women Prime Minister of Britain was in power. She was the first woman elected Prime Minister of the country and the only in the 20th century to serve three consecutive terms which was the longest since 1827. While her uncompromising style brought about many changes in Britain such as low taxes and privatization of state-owned firms, she is known for her "commitment to harsh economic individualism and people cannot forget one of her most famous quotes: "There is no such thing as society" (<http://www.euronews24.org/europe/thatcher-legacy-stalks-britains-conservatives/> 10/04/2009, 20:30). According to Aston, Churchill in her play underlines the fact that women cannot get ahead by means of any career and economic advancement achieved by means of the intra- and inter-sexual oppression. Aston's interpretation in one hand, above all, the governance of Thatcher as the first woman who managed to achieve such position can also be regarded as a radical change in the political arena. Marlene admires Thatcher as the first prime minister whereas Joyce disapproves her policies saying that Marlene would admire Hitler if Hitler had been a woman. In that sense, it can be said that Marlene's opinion which is also emphasized throughout the play is much more individualistic. She believes in the future "I think eighties are going to be stupendous" ("Top" 137). She is ambitious and demanding, sacrificing everything for her future advancement. But her future is her daughter Angie and Angie's future cannot be regarded as a dim future rather than a bright one. Marlene claims that anyone can succeed in anything if they have what is necessary for it. Joyce's answer "What if they haven't, like Angie?" ("Top" 140) is a question that is asked throughout the play. Even though Marlene answers "she'll be all right" ("Top" 140) she knows that Angie will not going to make it to the top as she says "she isn't going to make it" ("Top" 120) in earlier parts of the play. After the end of the argument between the two sisters, Marlene is seen alone on stage sleeping until Angie comes asking "Mum?" ("Top" 141). The fact that whether she is seeking her mother because of a nightmare or she has overheard their argument is not revealed. But through Angie's statement "Frightening" ("Top" 141) Churchill implies that the future for which Marlene

sacrifices her personal life and her family is bleak. The difference between the selfish nature and the sacrificing nature is dramatized with the relationship between the two sisters. As Marlene enjoys her career as a 'top girl', her working class sister Joyce has a less successful life caring for Marlene's daughter whom Marlene has ignored and sacrificed for her career. The difficulty women have in reconciling work with the family life is examined as an unresolved problem in the play. The individualistic views of women and radical changes in working environment for financial advancement which were reflected in Marlene's ambition in the play cannot help women make progress because it leads them to ignore their personal lives as it does in Marlene's situation. Marlene's ambition is also frightening in that it includes the oppression of others who are in a lower position like the potential 'top girls' in the employment agency and an indifference to personal life. As a result, it can be claimed that the play examines the meaning of women's achievements in society and questions whether individualistic approach and the extreme ambition of women to take the lead in working environment which are foregrounded by radical feminism could be adequate to improve the lives of women.

In conclusion, Churchill's two plays, *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* include different feminist voices rather than reflecting only one feminist standpoint. In the play, a blend of various feminist voices may be regarded as existent. Socialist voice which reveals itself with the oppression of women by both patriarchy and poverty and with the lack of collectivity between women who are accused of witchcraft, and radical voice operating in the emphasis on the continuing oppression, misinterpretation of and prejudice against women that have existed for centuries – especially with the conversation between Sprenger and Kramer and several songs – all reflect the different ideas and variety of voices within the feminist movement itself. Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982) is similar to *Vinegar Tom* because it also provides a complex picture of the variety of voices existent in feminist movement. The radical voice reveals itself in the first scene – which is seemingly liberal because of the recounted achievements of women – through the subversive positions women and Marlene take against patriarchal oppression with the exception of Griselda and the liberal feminism operating in the criticism of the extreme radicalism in the end.

CHAPTER III

FEMINIST VOICES IN *RIPEN OUR DARKNESS* AND *BESIDE HERSELF*

Feminism is now, like panty girdle, a very embarrassing word. Once seen as liberating, it is now considered to be restrictive, passé and undesirable. I didn't set out to further the cause of Feminism. However, I am proud if some of my plays have added to its influence. (Daniels *Plays I* xii)

As one of the most important playwrights of the period in which she was active, Daniels reflects her uneasiness with the term “feminism” or more precisely of “being labeled as a feminist”, common among many playwrights of this period within the context of an approach – of post feminists - which views feminism as something “passé and restrictive” and makes a distinction between being labeled “a feminist” and being “a feminist playwright”. She explains that she did not attempt to be a feminist playwright, that, however, she would be proud if some of her plays have contributed to the influence of the movement. Daniels does not deny that she is a feminist and that her plays are feminist plays. She rather claims that the feminist topics included in her plays have come out of her own concerns and perspectives. She argues that she did not take a decision consciously to write her work so as to suit an existing label. On the contrary, the label suits her work.

Daniels was one of the leading playwrights of her time. She was also one of the most criticized and the most controversial playwrights who were active during the same period with her. She was even deemed as a man-hating playwright when she had her first plays produced in the most prestigious theatres of Britain (Stephenson and Langridge 4). To those arguing that her plays are filled with anger against men, Daniels provides an answer: “It's not about hating men; it's about putting the focus on women and trying to say, ‘Hey, look, this is going on. This is how it feels from here. How can we redress it?’” (Stephenson and Langridge 4). Daniels's answer to those who regard her as a man-hating playwright in fact gives an idea about the objective or the logic of her criticism of male power. She says that it is not about hating men; rather, it is an attempt to raise awareness among women about their problems and to ask them to consider appropriate ways to solve these problems. In other words, it can be regarded as an endeavor to bring the problems of contemporary women to the fore and to raise consciousness about the root causes of

these problems and about the ways of solving them rather than merely reflecting the writer's hatred for the opposite sex.

Daniels's most distinct quality, observed in almost all of her plays, is her notion of challenge. Her plays coherently include a direct challenge to male authority and male superiority as well as the institutions reinforcing this authority such as marriage, religion, and the legal system. At an interview cited in *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting* by Stephenson and Langridge, Daniels describes her notion of challenge as follows:

Some plays are more political than others, but within a context of challenging a status quo and putting forward ideas or ideology that have a different perspective, then my work is political. I do want my plays challenging. A play, to me, should be relevant to today's society: that's part of why I think you write plays. It should tell a story and it should also challenge. (4)

Daniels's words given as an answer to a question about a critic's interpretation describing her as 'overtly political' are explanatory in terms of her notion of challenge. It may be this aspect that makes the tone of her plays seem radical.

Daniels's writing career can be divided into three periods. In the first period, in the early to mid-1980s, the purpose of the playwright might be said to reflect the contemporary women's voices on stage. The repeated dilemmas represented in these plays are that of the house-wife who may be defined as dependent on the husband during a long-term marriage and on the demands of men and on the traditions of society, and that of the working mother and the damaged daughter (Aston (2000) 154). *Ripen Our Darkness* (1981), *Masterpieces* (1983), and *Neaptide* (1984) are plays produced in this period. In the second period which covers the latter part of the 1980s, Daniels returned to historical female representations. *Byrthrite* (1986) and *Gut Girls* (1988), the first of which deals with witch hunts in the seventeenth century, and the second of which dealing with slaughterhouses in the beginning of the twentieth century can be regarded as the examples of the plays produced in this period. In her third period, in the 1990s, Daniels limits her focus. Examples of the plays produced during this period include *Beside Herself* (1990), *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992) and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994). In these plays, Daniels concentrates on a problem which she has touched upon throughout her writing career: madness and women. The plays of concern in this chapter will be *Ripen Our*

Darkness (1981) and *Beside Herself* (1990), the first of which was produced in the first period and the latter in the third period of her writing career.

As the purpose of this thesis is to examine the reflections of the different voices within the feminist movement on post-war British drama, the primary focus of concern in this chapter will be the analysis of the diversity of feminist voices in the said plays. To begin with, in *Ripen Our Darkness*, there is direct challenge to patriarchy as the major cause of women's problems. It is men's point of view about women and patriarchy that cause almost everything bad or problematic in women's lives in the play. Also, it is demonstrated in the play, that problems concerning women are all-pervasive and they are not limited to one particular class or culture. In addition, the play deals with such taboo subjects as sexual abuse and homosexuality that could not be performed on stage before. In *Beside Herself*, Daniels emphasizes the male-centered society and suggests that problems concerning women are not limited to one particular class or culture as she does in *Ripen Our Darkness*. Likewise, she also deals with taboo subjects of child abuse and homosexuality in this play.

In *Ripen Our Darkness*, all through the play, patriarchy and the heterosexual relationship, which is imposed on women as *normal* human tendency, remain as demolishing forces in the lives of almost all the married female characters. At the very beginning of the play, by portraying the daily life of a church warden's wife Mary, Daniels draws attention to the problematic nature of heterosexual relationships imposed by patriarchal society and of the male attitude towards women. The first scene of the play in which Mary is seen for the first time is set in Mary's kitchen indicating the fact that most of her life revolves around her work in the kitchen. The attitudes of her husband and her children are traditional male attitudes towards the female whose life is limited to domestic servitude. For Mary, her life is "a half finished jigsaw while everybody else seems to have completed their pictures" (Daniels *Plays I* 11)¹. Her responsibilities as a wife and as a mother are more than she can cope with. Her husband always complains about the fact that she is always late. David says: "If the church warden's wife isn't able to come to church how do

¹ Hereafter all references to *Ripen Our Darkness* will be to this edition and it will be shown as "Ripen".

you expect us to reach the masses of Potter's bar?" ("Ripen" 5). It is her duty to cook for the guests after they come back from Church. Meanwhile, she should also be interested in her children; she should cook for them, and talk to them. "Look at this mess. These plates. They come in at all hours, help themselves to something, I do wish they would be more considerate" ("Ripen" 6), she says complaining about her children's indifference to her burdens. Even though she has little time, the boys come to the kitchen and expect her to be ready to serve them. She does not have time even to write a letter to her daughter. She only can write to her: "Dear Anna, sorry I can't write much as I have to get on with the beds, love Mum" ("Ripen" 18). Moreover, she does not have the right to make her own decisions. Her husband always instructs her as if she does not have the ability to think about them. In Scene I, he says: "What we worked out about being methodical, and getting things sorted out in a logical order so that it will give you more time to do things, to get important things fitted into the day" ("Ripen" 5). He instructs her about everything she does; he advises her not to be late, reminding her of her responsibilities as a church warden's wife, he advises her not to nag children. In fact, it can be said that she does not have any identity except as the church warden's wife and the children's mother and this is the only identity that patriarchy allows women to have.

The second time Mary appears on stage is in Scene Four which is set in Mary's kitchen again. David wants Mary to do more than she can do. Mary can never succeed in satisfying his wishes. He never thinks that his expectations of her are actually what make her paralyzed and make her behaviour seem chaotic and irrational. In fact, the major problem in Mary's life is what her husband wants her to be. The dialogue between David and Roger representing the male authority in Mary's life demonstrates their biased opinion about her manners:

DAVID: Oh, sorry. There, see what I mean? Very absent-minded.

ROGER: Well, for the short time we've known you, Mary has always seemed a, well, a vague sort of person.

DAVID: It's not so much that as this 'couldn't care less' sort of attitude. I told her you were coming, but she didn't have anything ready. Time and again it's been the same. Last week, there was a twenty-minute gap between the first course and the pudding. Time and time again. ("Ripen" 25)

Although she does her best to please her husband, he sees her as a silly woman who has no idea about anything. In this scene, Roger, the vicar, his wife Daphne, David and Mary are playing monopoly. From the beginning of the scene to the end, David continues disdaining Mary. He instructs her all the time and criticizes almost all of her actions. Daphne's comment reveals that while playing monopoly Mary has offered to play to the nearest ten pounds so as to save time at the beginning of the play but they have not listened to her.

DAPHNE: If we'd have taken Mary's advice in the first place and played to the nearest ten pounds we wouldn't have spent nearly two hours getting to the buying stage.

DAVID: Playing to the nearest ten pounds! Have you heard the like, Roger? Sacrilege. I ask you. Pure sacrilege. Well, Roger, you have my sympathy if Daphne plays to the nearest ten pounds with the housekeeping. Ha ha. ("Ripen" 25)

For David, anything Mary says is nonsensical and meaningless like her suggestion about the play. After Mary is dead, David says to Roger: "Shall we play to the nearest ten pounds?" ("Ripen" 70). Even though the idea had seemed ridiculous to him when Mary suggested it, it seems rational when it is his own idea. Likewise, he does not want to take into account the extent to which his wife suffers and is fed up with the works around the house. In that way, throughout the play, Mary's situation is gradually made worse by David's insults and complaints about her. Her depression reaches its climax with an unconscious physical reaction. When they finish playing monopoly, Mary finds the tank which David had lost earlier. She begins to strike it with a rolling pin instead of putting it into the box. Her outburst reflects the extent to which she is overburdened with her efforts to comply with the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal society and saying "yes" to everything David wants or says to meet David's expectations. Her suppressed anger and distress reveals itself with an unconscious reaction directed not at David, but at a toy that bears no relation to her anger apart from the fact that it belongs to David.

At the end of the same scene, David says that he wants to send her to a retreat, a special conference for women married to those connected with the Church. At first, Mary thinks that she would go to see her daughter, Anna. However, David explains that she is in need of a retreat rather than her daughter. Mary's soliloquy at the end of Scene VI reveals that she is on the verge of collapse:

In all the time we've been married this is the first time I've spent a week away from David. I even had the last three children at home... Dear God, if you want me to recommit my life to your service please give me another, more appropriate sign. But this is definitely the last chance you're getting. Otherwise, there are going to be some drastic changes in this servant's life. ("Ripen" 38)

Mary's words show that she is a woman who has never had a life of her own. Her existence has been restricted by her domestic life, by her husband and by her sons. She has three children and has to bring them up, complying with the expectations of her husband, who is a stereotypical husband. At the end of her words, she prays to God for help, saying that her life will be subject to drastic changes unless God gives her an appropriate sign showing her what to do. Following the prayer, typical of her behavior, she shuts her eyes, opens the Bible and puts her finger on a passage: "Go thou and do likewise" ("Ripen" 38). God is considered to be of male gender and with the words Mary sees, he seems to ask her to continue in the way she has always done, i.e. continue to serving the patriarchy. Even God is depicted as in support of patriarchy here. After that, in Scene VII, she escapes from the retreat so as to visit her daughter. There, she talks to her daughter about the retreat. Her description of the retreat "nobody was allowed to talk or communicate in any way, no phone, nothing" ("Ripen" 43) demonstrates how boring and discouraging the retreat is. David sends her to a prison-like retreat that might exacerbate her situation instead of somewhere else that would probably make her happier and more relieved. Mary tells her daughter she realized that her life was problematic when she started to beat the tank, and says that everything is going to change and she will be more assertive when she returns home.

In Scene XI, the audience is introduced to a new and different female figure after Mary has returned home. In this scene, Mary says "Do it yourself" to her husband ("Ripen" 55), which she has said never before. However, Mary's reaction draws her into more trouble rather than helping her achieve relief. Thinking that his wife is not going to end her conduct deemed as outside the boundaries of normality by patriarchal ideology, David decides to invite a psychiatrist, Marshall, for the purpose of talking to Mary and examining her psychological situation. At this point, a recurrent theme in Daniels's plays, insanity reveals itself and it can be regarded as a theme going hand in hand with women's oppression in the play. Throughout the

play, the reason for Mary's submissiveness is her dread of being thought of as 'abnormal' by the patriarchal society which bases its ideas of normality on the male. When Mary begins to question her life and her relationship with almost everybody around her, including her husband David, his friend Roger and her sons, who regard her as mad. In Scene VII, when she visits her daughter, she confesses that she has come to the conclusion that she has wasted her life worrying about a lot of trivial things and adds: "All my life I've dreaded being thought of as abnormal, while I've based my ideas of normality on David" ("Ripen" 44).

Mary's talk to the psychiatrist Marshall reveals the tendency of patriarchal society to interpret any kind of reactionary action of women to escape from male oppression as madness and its prejudice against lesbianism. Marshall is depicted as a man who insists on Mary's madness, interpreting everything she says as an evidence for her madness. At first, he claims that her daughter's lesbian relationship, which is outside the boundaries of social norms, is Mary's fault due to her lack of communication with her daughter during the daughter's formative years:

MARSHALL: You don't feel that her so-called choice of bed partner has anything to do with your non-communication in her formative years?

MARY: Well, she was breast-fed.

MARSHALL: Well, a lot of research has been carried out on the subject of female homosexuality, by very learned men. And if you want I'll précis down some of the relevant facts for you. ("Ripen" 58)

The audience sees that Marshall's tendency to interpret Mary's words as signs of insanity is primarily stemming from his gender-biased opinions. He also comments on the nature of lesbian relationships:

MARSHALL: Mrs. Johnson, are you aware of the nature of the sexual relationship between two women, of the insufficiency of human response?

MARY: Is that so?

MARSHALL: Yes, these people can only rarely achieve any degree of satisfaction, unless one of the two partners has unusually well-defined physical attributes. For example, occasionally a woman may have an unusually large clitoris, maybe two or even more inches in length. ("Ripen" 58)

Daniels here touches upon two subjects, women's sexuality and lesbianism, which have been largely discussed by various feminists during the Second-Wave period. For instance, Anne Koedt, in her *The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm*, argues that

women's so-called orgasm achieved through vagina is a myth created by the patriarchal ideology:

All this leads to some interesting questions about conventional sex and our role in it. Men have orgasms essentially by friction with the vagina, not the clitoral area, which is external and not able to cause friction the way penetration does. Women have thus been defined sexually in terms of what pleases men; our own biology has not been properly analyzed. Instead we are fed the myth of the liberated woman and her vaginal orgasm – an orgasm which in fact does not exist. (qtd. in Keetley and Pettegrew 133)

Koedt also refers to Sigmund Freud and criticizes his discovery about the problem of frigidity in women on the grounds that his theory is not based on a study on women's anatomy:

Once having laid down the law about the nature of our sexuality, Freud not so strangely discovered a tremendous problem of frigidity in women. His recommended cure for a woman who was frigid was psychiatric care. She was suffering from failure to mentally adjust to her "natural" role as a woman. (qtd. in Keetley and Pettegrew 134)

Marshall bases his idea about lesbian relationships on Freud's theory and considers the lesbian relationship of Mary's daughter to be a psychological problem resulting from the lack of communication between Mary and her daughter. After that, he accuses Mary of cannibalizing her son's penis saying that:

When he quite innocently asked 'How long's dinner?' you snapped back, 'Four inches, it's a sausage'. Were you aware that you wanted to undermine his sexuality and render him impotent by alluding to the fact that his penis was four inches long and edible? ("Ripen" 60)

Marshall explains Mary's words in a very different fashion and regards them as signs of her mental situation. A very innocent joke made by Mary is interpreted by Marshall in such a way as to make Mary seem insane. Likewise, he gives an example from the letters she has written earlier. He takes one of them and starts to read one passage aloud: "Dear God, if I have three grown sons, how can it be that I cannot bear to see my husband undressed? Penis running dry. I'm afraid I can't go on" ("Ripen" 61). The audience sees that she was simply trying to say, "My pen is running dry" in the letter. Mary's response to Marshall's argument shows that it is Marshall who needs to see a doctor rather than Mary. The psychiatrist's comments

on the lesbian relationship of Mary's daughter and his exaggerated interpretation of Mary's words reflect the tendency among the members of the patriarchal system to interpret women's reaction to male power as an evidence of her madness. Mary becomes angry and says that Marshall seems to be penis-mad. Upon this Marshall claims that they, in other words, psychiatrists, are trained in those matters. Mary's final answer refers to the idea that it is impossible for them to be trained in these matters on the grounds that they are not women:

In being a woman? Impossible. All you're trained in is a load of men's mumbo jumbo garbage. Oh yes, by your values I'm nuts, but by my values I was – but I am no longer. I've wasted my life in a bitter compromise. I've bitten my lip and said nothing when inside I've been screaming. And when I've practically wanted to wring his neck I've said 'Yes, dear' or 'Whatever you think, dear'. Yes you win. I was no longer alive and now I'm insane. It's great to feel things, it's just great to be mental. ("Ripen" 61)

According to Mary, all psychiatrists are trained in is the way men think about women. Since they are not women and they do not live through what women live, they are not able to understand or more precisely to evaluate women's psychology. According to the values of men and researches conducted by men, which are not actually based on a study on women, Mary can be regarded as mad; however, according to her values she was mad in the past because she has wasted her life nurturing her family. Her patience being exhausted, Mary says what she has not had the courage to say for years. Taking her words into account, it can be said that she finally comes to a realization that she has wasted her life trying to remain within the boundaries of normality. After she talks to the psychiatrist, David informs her of their decision to take her to an asylum which can be regarded as an extreme form of patriarchal oppression. Hearing that, Mary, who is fed up with her "life (at best) monotonous and (at worst) unbearably painful" ("Ripen" 67), commits suicide, leaving a letter for David: "Dear David, your dinner and my head are in the oven" ("Ripen" 65).

The final challenge to patriarchy and institutions supporting it is observed in the creation of an alternative environment for Mary in which the power structure and sexual roles are reversed by Daniels in Scene XIII. By portraying a belief system which is exactly the opposite of manmade religion, Daniels criticizes several aspects

of religion as an institution that relegates women to a secondary position. In this surrealistic scene, Mary is seen in a hospital room. Lying semi-conscious, she meets three women the names of whom are not mentioned. The Old Woman introduces herself to Mary as 'the deity' and tells her that she is in paradise because she has led a monotonous and painful life like many other women. Upon this, Mary says:

MARY: Excuse me, but what happens to men? In the Bible
it says...
TALL WOMAN: (*shrieks*). That libelous load of crap!
OLD WOMAN: That is a myth created by men in their
fear. Men don't have eternal life. How could they?
They have no souls. You must have noticed.
They're all two-dimensional. ("Ripen" 67)

Replete with the doctrines of manmade religion, Mary is surprised at first to see that God, who is always referred to as 'He' or 'the Father' in the Bible, is a woman and secondly to be informed of the fact that men do not have eternal life and that they have created such a system due to their fear. The Old Woman then gives Mary a chance to go back to life. By passing directly to Mary's funeral and to her kitchen in the same scene in which David and Roger, two clergymen, are talking about Mary's suicide, Daniels makes a comparison between the religion constructed in such a way as to reinforce men's privilege and the religion about which Mary has just been instructed:

DAPHNE: (*screams*). Rotten bad luck. (*She checks herself
quietly*) Roger, she reached despair, she killed
herself.
DAVID: I'll thank you to keep a civil tongue in your head.
Mary was always careless about leaving the oven
door open. It is my opinion that she tripped up and
fell asleep before she had time to get up.
ROGER: (*nods*). All part of God's rich plan. ("Ripen" 69)

David and Roger, who have been totally blind to Mary's suffering and are now blind to the reason for her suicide, argue that Mary's death is a part of God's plan. For them, she has died not because of their biased opinion about her and their expectations from her, which are beyond her power, but because of the will of God. As opposed to the religion about which Mary has been instructed before, man's religion gives them the opportunity to justify themselves, putting the blame on something else. They prefer to believe that it was not a suicide but was the will of God. When Mary returns to life in the next scene, she finds Roger and David playing monopoly in her kitchen. In the last scene of the play, Mary, with a female deity's

help at hand, is now in a stronger position than David; she softly calls his name, but David dismisses the idea, even though he is at first irritated by her voice. Mary, in this scene, understands that all her efforts and all her trials have been meaningless in that what David cares about is not her but the tank he lost while playing monopoly. Roger says that monopoly is not the same without his wife whereas David says monopoly is not the same without his tank. The play ends with Mary asking the female God: "Mother Almighty, what, tell me, is the point?" ("Ripen" 71). At the end, seeing that her suicide has not changed anything, including the attitude of David and others, she realizes that she has wasted her life for nothing and expresses her regret for the days she spent being concerned about her husband and her sons. She had nothing but a miserable and unbearable life in return for all her care, nurturing and compassion.

Mary's friend, Daphne lives through the same problems as Mary. She appears on the stage for the first time in Scene IV. She is shown as being within the boundaries of normality at the beginning of the scene. However, later the audience observes that she also has complaints about men in general. When Mary asks her if she was mad, Daphne answers: "Men are such bloody bastards" ("Ripen" 32). In the same scene, in a dialogue between David and Mary, it is revealed that she is regarded as insane due to her conduct:

MARY: Daphne was very strange this evening. Did you know that she hates men?

DAVID: Hates men? What a way for a vicar's wife to behave. Between ourselves she's not very popular. Even the bishop said she was unhinged. ("Ripen" 35)

Daphne is aware that Mary is exhausted and that Mary's major problem is the biased attitude of the men around her and of David, but her psychological situation remains at an acceptable level until Mary's suicide. After her friend Mary's death, she begins to question her life and the meaning of all this submissiveness. Seeing that Mary's suicide has not changed the biased viewpoint of David and Roger about women, she begins to lose her control over her feelings. She reflects her anger when she speaks to Anna: "Bastards. Gits. I'm going to kill them, I am. I'm going to strangle them with a cheese wire and I'll not be satisfied until I see their severed heads bobbing up and down in a washing-up bowl" ("Ripen" 70). Her anger and her realization of the fact that Mary has committed suicide not because of her mental disorder but because of

the attitudes of men around her, lead her to be called mad as well. In the last scene, it is understood that she is sent to an asylum. Roger says: “They’ve done wonders since she first went in. When I managed to speak to the top bod he said that in all his years of psychiatric care he’d never seen anyone in such mental anguish” (“Ripen” 71). As Mary’s suicide does not change anything, Daphne’s anger and her realization of the facts, which are regarded as ‘mental anguish’ by Roger and by the psychiatrists, do not lead her into a better situation. She cannot make any progress; on the contrary, she is thought to be mad and sent to an asylum. Once again, a female character who wants to cope with the patriarchal society cannot succeed.

The story of Rene, one of the villagers, and her daughter Susan’s distress develop in parallel to Mary’s hopeless life. Similarly, Rene and Susan are also victims of the patriarchal society. Rene leads a miserable life trying to bear her husband’s violent and rude attitude to her and to her daughter: “You bleedin’ fuckin’ stupid bitch. Can’t you shut that fuckin’ blabberin’ cake-hole for one fuckin’ minute before I shuts it permanently for you?” (“Ripen” 12). Rene’s husband Alf’s words in this scene reflect the biased opinion of men about women arguing that women are creatures who always nag and who lack the ability to think logically. Although Rene defends her violent and rude husband Alf to others, when she is by herself, in a letter addressed to Mary Grant, she admits her troubles and describes herself as captured:

Dear Mary Grant, I have a husband who drinks all my money away. I have two jobs to try to give him enough so he doesn’t feel the need to slap me and my daughter around, but I usually fail. I have to lie in piss-soaked sheets, as my husband wets the bed every night. My daughter’s severely handicapped baby has just died... I have dreams of doing myself in. Please don’t reply as my husband rips up my mail regardless. (“Ripen” 16)

Like her mother Rene’s daughter Susan suffers from her father’s attitude. Susan is a girl whose baby has just died. It is understood that she has just lost her illegitimate baby. Apart from the pain of having been pregnant to a child whose father has run away, and following this, of losing her baby, Susan has to cope with her father and his humiliating attitude: “Blasted fuckin’ bitch, you reduced the whole fuckin’ family to humiliation, you stupid ignorant slut” (“Ripen” 12). For Alf, the name of his family is more important than the psychological situation of his daughter. Relief for Rene and Susan comes only with the death of the oppressive Alf, in Scene X. Rene shows no reaction to his death; on the contrary, she sits in a chair and reads *Woman’s*

Own as though nothing has happened. She says to her daughter in a calm manner: “Your father’s choked to death on a scone” (“Ripen” 51). Rene’s release from her husband and the psychological relief brought to her by Alf’s death can be observed in Rene’s monologue in Scene XII: “(...) And ‘terday, y’know, I woke up and felt different – everything seemed to have changed. Susan and me had breakfast together and we didn’t have to whisper or try frantically to hush the Rice Krispies up” (“Ripen” 65). In this scene, Rene’s monologue regarding the death of her husband and the changes it brought to their life reveals the fact that Alf’s existence has meant nothing but trouble for the two female characters.

In the dramatization of the marriages of all these three women, patriarchy remains as a suppressing force. They all are married to men who have stereotypical opinions about women’s role in marriage and sexual life. They are suppressed and mistreated by men. When they attempt to react against the mistreatment or oppression coming from men, they are either regarded as mad or mistreated by men. Thus, they have to remain submissive since there is no possibility for them to escape from men’s oppression. The only way for them to be saved from men’s oppression is to remove patriarchy completely. In contrast to these three submissive women, Marshall’s wife Tara adopts a different method to survive in the patriarchal society. She also suffers from her husband’s oppression. Although the audience sees her once on stage, the monologue in Scene V demonstrates that she has similar problems with Rene and Mary as well. In the monologue, in which Tara talks to herself and reflects her inner thoughts, it is revealed that she is Marshall’s wife who has come to see Mary in Scene XI. Tara talks about her husband’s sexual obsessions and his desires and paranoid fears:

(...) When we were first married we used to go to the Greek islands for our holidays and I adored making love on the beach but Marsh, poor love, was absolutely, obsessively, preoccupied with the fear of getting a grain of sand under his foreskin. He thinks that magazines like *Forum* are where it’s at. That’s where he got the idea to try and train me to relax my throat muscles to perfect my fellatio performance. (“Ripen” 36)

Marshall’s obsessions and self-centered desires can be regarded as a reflection of male attitudes in a sexual relationship. As can be understood from Tara’s words, women somehow have to meet the expectations and desires of men in sexual life whereas men can reflect their fears and their reluctance to do what women want.

Marshall's fear that his sons would be born with one testis too few or too many reflects his obsession with sexual subjects referred to during his conversation with Mary as well. At the end of this monologue, Tara talks directly to the audience and says:

(...) Between you and I, Marsh has begged me to divorce him. Why should I do? I don't want to live in some pokey little flat where some social worker might try and certify me for being batty. No thanks. I like being posh. Don't listen to this live without men rot. The way forward is to use them and have some fun. ("Ripen" 37)

Tara prefers to live a comfortable life benefiting from the advantages of being married to Marshall. According to her, the way ahead is to exploit her husband and to lead a comfortable life in that way. Tara's point of view can be regarded as the closest attitude to the ideal of liberal feminism on the grounds that she accepts the existing system claiming that men and women are different and the only possible way for a woman to survive is to try hard and use her ability and sexual attractiveness to exploit men. Thus, she should use her individual potential and lead a comfortable life. In this regard, the liberal feminist voice can be claimed to operate in Tara's attitude because she prefers to survive using her potential and her own methods within the existing patriarchal system rather than trying to overthrow the patriarchal system.

While the main focus is on male power in family life in the play, Daniels also deals with taboo subjects in *Ripen Our Darkness*. In this play, Daniels portrays lesbianism, which had been a taboo subject until that time. The portrayal of lesbianism in the play is interwoven with the theme of the mother-daughter relationship. Mary's daughter Anna, who is conscious of her mother's oppression by her father, lives with Rene's daughter Julie in a flat. These two feminist figures in Daniels's play prefer women to men, and there seem to be no problems in their lives at all. It is understood that Anna has tried to help her mother by advising her to go to a women's group. Anna and Mary always try to help each other in coping with the troubles they have. David, as a stereotypical man, is strongly against the lesbian relationship of Anna with Julie and calls her a "disgrace" because Anna's relationship is a radical response to and a reversal of heterosexual relationship which is regarded as "normal" by the patriarchal society. On the other hand, Mary's first

reaction to the relationship cannot be regarded as a negative one: "Sorry. Look, I don't think what you're doing is wrong. I don't know what's right or wrong, but it can't be right for everyone. How can it be? Where would we all be then?" ("Ripen" 46). Likewise, she never opposes her daughter's relationship throughout the play. The solidarity between mother and the daughter is reflected in their letters written to each other. Anna's gladness to see the positive reaction of her mother to her relationship with Julie is reflected in the letter she has written to her mother:

Dear Mum, I am writing to tell you how much strength I have gained from our conversation on Sunday, and how much your supportive feelings have meant to me. I think you will probably find things harder than you expected this week, and hopefully I will drop in next Sunday when the old bastard is, when Dad is at Church. ("Ripen" 61-62)

Her mother's approval of her life style means much to her. At the end of the play, Mary sends a letter which includes the following words to her daughter before she commits suicide: "(...) Don't waste any time trying to live up to what you thought my expectations of you were – you have already fulfilled them. I couldn't have loved you more if I'd understand you less, Mum" ("Ripen" 64). Mary's letter demonstrates that Anna has fulfilled her expectations in that she has managed to escape from the oppression from which Mary has suffered throughout her marriage.

There is also a mutual support between Rene and her daughter Susan. Although Alf is not interested in his daughter's psychology, Rene is concerned for Susan's psychology. She always tries to comfort Susan explaining Alf's humiliating attitude as a reflection of his sadness: "He doesn't mean it. He's just upset. He's hurt. It's upset him more than we'll ever know. He doesn't mean it" ("Ripen" 12). In the same scene, seeing that Susan is suffering, Rene advises her to leave the house, thinking that there is no reason for Susan to endure her father's humiliating attitude:

RENE: (rising hysteria). Oh, shit. (Pause.) There's nothing to keep you here now, love. You go.
SUSAN: And leave you alone with him? No way.
RENE: What would have I done if you'd been a boy?
("Ripen" 16)

According to her, this way at least her daughter can lead a happy life. However, Susan rejects the idea because she does not want to leave her mother alone. Whenever they appear on stage, they try to support each other. In Scene XII, in a

monologue, Rene says: “Any men wouldn’t mean that much in comparison to what my daughter means to me” (Ripen, 65). However, the solidarity between Mary and Anna, and Rene and Susan is not a major factor in their survival or success. It undoubtedly brings some relief as reflected in Mary’s letter to her daughter and Rene’s words in the monologue mentioned above, but Anna’s support cannot prevent Mary’s suicide. Similarly, the relief of Rene and Susan is not a result of solidarity between them but a result of the oppressive Alf’s death. Thus, it can be said that Daniels deals with a taboo subject. After making an analysis of heterosexuality as an institution in terms of dissatisfactions in the above-mentioned three marriages, Daniels advocates sexual freedom and lesbianism as a rational result of dissatisfaction with heterosexuality. Besides, it can be concluded from the play that the solidarity between mothers and daughters cannot be an effective means to solve women’s problems when they are surrounded by men, whose attitudes to women are stereotypically male attitudes, that is, who regard women as inferior, passive beings. Actually, solidarity between them cannot be regarded as a collective struggle since they cooperate merely to solve their personal problems rather than take a collective action against patriarchy.

Written eight years later than Daniels’s *Ripen Our Darkness*, *Beside Herself* is similar to *Ripen Our Darkness* in terms of the feminist voices active in the play even though there are slight differences between the two plays. In *Beside Herself*, too, Daniels challenges patriarchy. The play is set in London. Daniels narrows down her subject matter and focuses on child abuse in this play. Through several abuse stories, she presents patriarchal society’s tendency to put the blame on the female while the male abusers are disguised and they are considered to be “normal”. The protagonist’s suffering from trauma due to sexual abuse in her childhood can be said to be more like a disease from which she tries to escape. The criticism of the male perspective starts in the prelude of the play titled “The Power and the Story”. In this part, Daniels chooses female characters from the Old Testament, who are presented as concrete examples of the stereotypical image of femininity as sinful, irrational and insane and puts all of them in a hairdresser. By means of presenting a symbolic world including these figures from the Old Testament Daniels refers to the original sin, which can be regarded as the beginning of the alleged inferiority of women. In

this way, Daniels traces the gender-biased opinion that the female is the root of everything related to evil and lust back to the Old Testament. Therefore, the origin of patriarchy dates back to those times. In the same part again, Eve reflects the patriarchal ideology that has been kept alive since those times:

It was a snake but it didn't talk. Just being. That was my crime. When mankind gets found out he points at me. Her fault – seducer. Made from Adam, for Adam. His wife and his daughter – legitimizer of his will. (Daniels *Plays* 2 102)²

Daniels criticizes religion as an institution, referring to the original sin and all the years of a misconception about women. She emphasizes the fact that women's oppression dates back to the beginning of humanity and that religion is supportive of patriarchal ideology since it depicts women as "seducer, made from Adam for Adam". Religion simply degrades women, implying that she was created for Adam's service and her duty is to obey him. Thus, Eve tries to correct "the burden of guilt and two thousand years of misinterpretation" ("Beside" 97) by taking a tutorial group concerning this subject. However, none of these women is interested in correcting this misinterpretation from their lives. Eve warns them, saying that: "We spend an eternity condemned to wander these aisles alone and the first chance we get to meet, the only thing you want to highlight is your vanity" ("Beside" 98). Eve, here, imply that women have been under an illusion that they are valuable only if they are beautiful. For this reason they spent centuries only paying attention to their physical beauty. Eve cannot get any response to her call for unity of women to correct the system or to react against the illusion male-gaze created in women in this scene. In this sense, it can be said that there is no collectivity among these women. At the end of the same part, a voiceover from the character named Man is heard saying: "Would these women causing absolute havoc please put a sock in it... Some poor devil has collapsed by fresh fruit and we're holding you responsible" ("Beside" 103). Taking the first scene into account, it may be claimed that Daniels creates a symbolic world in the first scene of the play the continuation of which can be seen in the following parts of the play. Eve, in this scene, stands for Eve who reminds the protagonist, Evelyn, of the guilt that is misplaced upon her since her experience of abuse in childhood. As Eve in the first scene does, Eve in the following parts of the play

² Hereafter all references to *Beside Herself* will be to this edition and it will be marked as "Beside".

continuously reminds Evelyn of this mistreatment and warns her that she cannot solve her problem as long as she does not take action against patriarchy to remove this burden of guilt. The name of the character providing voiceover can be said to apply to mankind in general. When Eve in the first scene calls for unity of women, Man is disturbed and tells women to stop the chaos. The voiceover reflects the fact that women have been blamed for the guilt of somebody else's for centuries.

In the following parts of the play, the main focus is on the theme of child abuse. Daniels examines the nature of child abuse principally through three characters, the first of whom is the main character, Evelyn. In this play, what brings radical voice to the fore is the fact that it is mainly the patriarchal system and its evaluation of child abuse which drive Evelyn to distress and to the point of collapsing. The main cause of the protagonist's psychological problems is sexual abuse in childhood. This childhood experience has remained with Evelyn from the time she was sexually abused by her father. Daniels shows Evelyn's abused and disturbed childhood by using a separate figure. This separate figure, Eve, is seen beside Evelyn until she confronts the guilt of her father. Throughout the play, Eve reflects what Evelyn has repressed and puts Evelyn's real feelings into words that she herself cannot. Unlike Evelyn, Eve acts spontaneously and carelessly. Eve is offensive and does not respect the male authorities around Evelyn: "Your brain, Teddy, is the dying throb of a tomcat with tertiary syphilis" ("Beside" 137). Evelyn is actually disturbed by Eve's presence because she not only ridicules Evelyn's attempts to appear normal, but also reminds her of the abuse. Evelyn denies her anger but Eve expresses Evelyn's hatred and aggressive side. Until the play's final scene, Evelyn tries to ignore Eve and to transform her words and anger into polite behavior, so as to conceal her psychological problem:

GEORGE: Oh God, I can't bear getting old.

EVE: Then drop dead.

EVELYN (shocked, responds to Eve): I'm sorry, I didn't mean that.

GEORGE: What?

EVELYN: To make you angry. ("Beside" 108)

Evelyn's activities in a Community Group Home St. Dymphna's are also a means for her to escape from her childhood experience. This Community Group Home is one of the Community Group Homes opened in 1980s for those who had

mental disorder and were discharged from psychiatric hospitals due to the saving measures of the government. In these homes the patients were expected to learn daily living skills again. At the meetings in St. Dymphna's, Evelyn refuses to face disturbing issues. She is deeply disturbed whenever the issue of child abuse is discussed and she actually wants to go somewhere she will see and hear nothing reminding her of the experience she had when she was a child.

Evelyn is an adult who has been living with the burden of a guilt which does not belong to her. Eve, who is seen and heard merely by her and by the audience and shadowing Evelyn wherever she goes, represents the guilt that is misplaced on her which she has to confront and overcome. All through the play Eve tries to remind Evelyn of the fact that everything she does is nonsensical and useless as long as she conceals her distress and she does not solve her problem. Evelyn tries to hide Eve and her problems in order to be seen as normal and she carries on taking care of her father like many women in the play. She continues to do the shopping for her father and she never talks to anyone about her childhood experience. As in *Ripen Our Darkness*, insanity is a theme that goes hand in hand with women's oppression. The reason for Evelyn's submissiveness and her endurance of oppression is her dread of being thought 'abnormal' by the patriarchal society which bases its ideas of normality on the male. Daniels, in an interview in *Rage and Reason: Women Playwrights on Playwriting* by Stephenson and Langridge explains the relationship between insanity and Evelyn's problem:

When women express anger outwardly they're often perceived as mad and dismissed as such – it prevents anyone having to take them seriously – like Mary in *Ripen Our Darkness* (...) The other side of the coin is that it's then internalized and squashed and becomes depression. There's Evelyn in *Beside Herself* who is prevented from taking any worthwhile action by the voices in her head and having to deal with this abused lost child she takes round with her everywhere. (5)

It is this idea of being perceived as insane that prevents her from confronting her father. But, in time, the idea has been internalized by Evelyn and it has turned into depression. It is this depression that prevents her from taking action when necessary. It is also the same depression that prevents her from doing something when she sees that the homosexual Dave, one of the patients at St. Dymphna's, is not well. Shirley,

one of the managers at St. Dymphna's, asks Evelyn to see Gaynor and Richard who are to visit St. Dymphna's on behalf of the local Ratepayers' Association, the duty of which is to protect the rights of local residents. When Evelyn shows the couple around St. Dymphna's, she realizes that Dave is not well. Evelyn acts normally and pretends that nothing has happened. Despite Eve's warnings "Try and say excuse me but I think something's wrong and I can't cope" ("Beside" 162) she does not call a doctor or for an ambulance. After everyone learns that Dave is dead, her psychological situation is made worse. In this scene, Eve reflects Evelyn's anger.

While they stand and point and tell each other you're to blame, I am smashing my fist, splitting my skull. Inside my head someone is wielding an axe. I am smashing all the things in my father's house (...) I am crashing my way through the brickwork and plaster, the rendering and the mortar until nothing, nothing is left of my father's house but rubble and dust. And it goes on and on and it will never stop. ("Beside" 172)

Eve again reminds Evelyn and the audience of her childhood experience that can be regarded as the core reason for Evelyn's depression. Evelyn tries to conceal the facts when Dave is dying as she does in the case of her father's abuse. However, it is Dave's death that shows her the fact that all her efforts to pretend that everything is all right are useless because it cannot help her unless she accepts the facts. If she had managed to take the necessary action when Dave was dying, she could have saved him. This time, the result of her rejection of her pain and anxiety is the loss of somebody else's life and it makes her realize that she cannot solve her problems unless she faces her father. It is only then that she manages to place the blame on her father, to whom it actually belongs. For the first time, in Scene IX, she reveals herself to Nicola:

You see the first time it happened I thought it was my mistake. The bathroom. He came into the bathroom, which wasn't unusual in itself. He asked me for a cuddle, that wasn't unusual either but there was something in the way he touched me that made me feel uncomfortable. Even so, if it had never happened again I would have thought it was my mistake. ("Beside" 177)

Then she explains why she did not tell anybody about the abuse: "The threats got worse. What would be done to me, to him, to my mother? And I wanted none of these things to happen. I just wanted it to stop" ("Beside" 179). The main cause for Evelyn's submissiveness is her fear which is generated by the oppression of

patriarchy. As understood from the quotation above, she dreaded that the situation would get worse if she told someone the truth because “he’s such a well-thought-of man. Important, respected” (“Beside” 177). She has lived with this guilt disturbing her for years whereas the perpetrator of the abuse has lived as if nothing has happened. Finally, in Scene X, she confronts her father:

(calmly) There was a child who was abused by her Father for many years. It hurt. She was in pain and humiliated and eventually robbed of herself. No, Father, I don’t want revenge. What could I possibly do to you that would undo what you’ve done to me? I’ve lived with it and I don’t want to any longer. You can live with it. (“Beside” 185)

Eve is no more to be seen thereafter in the play. Evelyn is finally rescued from this burden because she has succeeded in confronting the root cause of her problem. At the end of the play, Daniels reverses the sexual roles and creates a totally different system in which women are more powerful than men, but this time the female character obtains this power with her own efforts. In this play, Daniels reverses the sexual roles when Evelyn manages to overcome the distress and the pain of her childhood by confronting her father. Thus, Evelyn’s father George, who has occupied a top position for years because of the patriarchal society, is demoted to a lower level and now it is Evelyn who has the power, the power of facing her father resulting in Evelyn’s release from her depression. In the end, she is released from the depression created by a burden which was misplaced upon her with her own effort by using her own potential as a woman to take action against her oppression. Thus, she takes control of her life.

The theme of madness is also examined through Dave. In Part One, Scene IV, when Lil asks him why he does not speak, he answers her:

Under the scrutiny of psychiatric profession each syllable is weighed, waiting to be labeled before it’s even uttered. Such meaning is heaped upon the spoken word that one becomes too inhibited to perform the act. Humour – that’s a no-go area. And as for flippancy, try that out on them and they look at you as if you’re about to self-destruct. (“Beside” 147)

This situation is similar to that experienced by Mary in the previous play. Once people think that one is mentally ill, every word to be uttered is labeled before it is said. People around are ready to interpret one’s words as an evidence of one’s

madness. In addition, as she does in *Ripen Our Darkness*, Daniels deals with homosexuality and opinions about this issue through Dave. Dave attempts to live as a homosexual and tries to go beyond the normal social boundaries of the society in which he lives. He and his partner are imprisoned. His partner's suicide causes Dave to have a mental breakdown and finally brings about his transfer to a mental institution. Dave's situation shows that the existing norms and institutions in the society punish unusual gender practices. Dave remains stigmatized; the diagnosis "homosexual" is still included in his file at St. Dymphna's, even though Greg, one of the executives at St. Dymphna's reflects that homosexuality is no longer defined as a disorder. Another executive Teddy who is also a clergyman refers to the Bible to reinforce the heterosexual norm: "Men leaving the natural use of women, burn with lust for one another and are paid in their own persons the fitting wage for such provisions" ("Beside" 164). In this way, Daniels depicts the social and religious discrimination against homosexuals and brings the ignored issues of child abuse and gay lives to the fore in her play. However, unlike *Ripen Our Darkness*, in *Beside Herself*, Daniels does not offer homosexuality as an alternative to heterosexual relations. The major focus is on people's attitudes to Dave.

Another experience regarding child abuse is Nicola's abuse story. She was abused by her step father. While reflecting this abuse, the issue is approached from a different point of view, that is to say, from the point of view of the mother of the abused child. Nicola's mother, Lil, does not believe that her second husband sexually abused her daughter. When Lil is first introduced to the audience in Part I, Scene II, it is revealed that she has not seen her daughter for years and that she is now trying to conceal something about her:

SHIRLEY: You do have a daughter, or am I mixing you up
with someone else? No, I'm sure...
LIL: Yes, yes, but it's difficult. She's away a lot.
SHIRLEY: What does she do?
LIL: (*hasn't seen her daughter for eight years and has no
idea what she does. Lies*) She's, er, an air hostess.
("Beside" 114)

Seeing her daughter at St. Dymphna's, Lil remembers her suspicion about the fact that her husband might have abused her daughter and she asks him if anything like that has happened.

LIL: What d'you s'pose the men who did do it say when their wives ask them?
 TONY: How the hell should I know? Unless of course you think that I do. Is that it?
 LIL: Sometimes people have an affair for years without their wives or husbands knowing.
 TONY: What are you saying; you've had an affair?
 LIL: No, no. That's not it. ("Beside" 144)

In Scene III, she asks her husband questions about Nicola and about the reason behind her departure. He says that Nicola has gone out of spite and that she has never loved him:

She resented me. She resented our relationship. She wanted to split us up – it's never been the same since – has it? Oh, I know, it's all right but I catch you looking at me from time to time and I think, if it hadn't been for her vindictiveness. ("Beside" 144)

Lil is in a dilemma as to what she should do. She suspects that her husband might have abused her daughter and she knows that she will never learn the truth, at the same time she does not have the courage to accept this fact. After that, to justify himself, Tony asks why Nicola has not told her the truth. Lil says that she might have been frightened. In the end, Tony manages to persuade Lil, reminding her of the fact that they are living together and that they have no secrets. Finally in the last scene, Lil also confronts her daughter. Even though the answer to whether she believes her or not is not revealed, her act of closing the door behind her can be regarded as a positive sign designating her desire to be reunited with her daughter. In this respect, it can be said that she succeeds in coping with her problem as a result of her own decision and decides to meet Nicola.

The daughter of Gaynor, who visits St. Dymphna's to inspect the house, was also abused by Gaynor's own brother when she was a child. The story of the abuse of Gaynor's daughter is unfolded in the monologue of Gaynor:

(...) It only came out at Christmas when my daughter refused to take the baby over to his house. Why didn't you tell me then? She said, 'Because he threatened me with ridiculous things but when you're small you believe them'. 'But' I said, 'Didn't you say no?' She virtually spat back, and she's not like that with me normally, 'Saying no to a grown man makes no difference unless you're trying to make me feel I said no in the wrong way'. 'Of course not', I said. ("Beside" 160)

As understood from Gaynor's words, the abuser threatened the abused child and Gaynor does not tell anyone about the abuse because her daughter is frightened. Her daughter tells Gaynor not to tell anything to anyone including her father: "I don't want any fuss, I don't want them looking at me thinking – whatever they will be thinking. I don't want anyone to know" ("Beside" 161). Like Evelyn, Gaynor's daughter feels ashamed and embarrassed due to a guilt which does not belong to her. It is understood that her mother has never told anyone about her daughter's experience. As in Evelyn's situation, the abuser continues his life as if nothing has happened while the abused child carries the burden of a guilt which does not actually belong to her. The significant point about these cases of abuse is that in each case the primary cause of the evil or of the abuse is the male. Therefore, the male is firstly regarded as the main source of the problem.

As she does in *Ripen Our Darkness*, Daniels portrays the root cause of the problem. Patriarchal society is accused of putting the blame on the female while the abuse has no negative effect on the dignity of the abuser. In Part I, Scene II, when the executives in St. Dymphna's, Roy, Greg and Nicola are discussing child abuse, Roy says: "And where was Dawn's mother in all this. Two safe bets, either gadding about relinquishing her responsibilities or turning a blind eye" ("Beside" 133). Roy, in this speech, puts the blame on another female character, on the mother of Dawn who is one of the applicants to St. Dymphna's. His attitude is representative of the male attitude constructed by the patriarchal society towards the issue of child abuse. Greg also has a similar approach to the subject: "On the contrary, it's part of a very intricate set of family dynamics and family therapy does work. Fathers I've seen, show considerable remorse" (Beside 134). In a way, he suggests that the problem would be resolved if the family members, particularly the mother, are re-educated into their appropriate roles determined by the patriarchal ideology. However, he does not consider the fact that family therapy would probably not undo what fathers might do to their daughters. Daniels demonstrates that this is probably why the abused children and their mothers are frightened to reveal or to accept the truth. Even the female characters in the play such as Gaynor and Lil do not want to believe that their daughter has been sexually abused. They do nothing to support the abused children. Therefore, patriarchal society is accused of putting the blame on the female while the

abuse has no negative effect on the dignity of men. The abused characters in the play are frightened that no one would believe them and perhaps that is why they remain powerless in coping with the abuse. Instead, they continue to nurture and care for the abuser. In that sense, it can be said that Daniels not only challenges the male dominance and patriarchy but also blames women for remaining unresponsive because of fear.

With regards to the characters that can be examined in terms of solidarity between women, first, in terms of mother-daughter relationship, there is no mutual support between the mothers and the daughters who experience child abuse. The audience cannot evaluate the degree of solidarity between Evelyn and her mother because her mother died before the period the play covers. The second relationship that can be examined in terms of mutual support between mother and daughter is Lil and Nicola's relationship. At first, there seems to be no real relationship between the mother and the daughter. Abused by her stepfather, Nicola left home and Lil did not believe that her husband had abused her daughter. They have not seen each other for years; Lil does not know where her daughter is or what she does. When they meet for the first time in St. Dymphna's, Nicola does not want to listen to her mother's excuses. However, later on, she decides to visit her mother and to confront her after she talks to Evelyn. Whether Lil believes Nicola or not is not revealed. Although Lil's act of closing the door behind her can be regarded as a positive sign designating her desire to unite with her daughter, they are never depicted as reacting against patriarchy.

Furthermore, it can be said that there is not any character around Evelyn that helps her except Nicola since Evelyn does not reveal her distress to anyone. Nicola and Evelyn meet for the first time at a meeting in St. Dymphna's. It seems that there is not a strong or a deep relationship between the two since they are newly introduced to each other. However, Evelyn probably feels close to Nicola after their discussion of child abuse because she has described her childhood experience to no one but Nicola. It is only after they meet and Evelyn reveals her experience to Nicola that they succeed in facing the facts. Evelyn confronts her father after she has met Nicola. Likewise, Nicola goes to see her mother and confronts her after she has met Evelyn. The meeting between Nicola and Evelyn can be considered to be a triggering

spark that provides them with some relief and courage to face their problems. They probably feel that they are not the only persons who have experienced child abuse and that they are not alone. Considering the whole play, it would not be wrong to say that there is no solidarity between women in the real sense in the play. They never take a collective action against patriarchy and its mean neither in the first scene, nor in the following parts of the play. In that sense, it can be said that there is no solidarity between the main female characters in the play.

To sum up, Daniels's *Ripen Our Darkness* (1981) and *Beside Herself* (1990) are two plays written in different periods of Daniels's writing career. In the light of a deep analysis of these two plays, it may be said that *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* can be categorized as examples of post-war British feminist drama since different feminist voices are active in them. In *Ripen Our Darkness*, the main problem for the women is the way men see women rather than these women's weakness. The primary focus in the play is on the power relations in family life. The main reason for Mary's suicide is not the fact that she is too busy. Her real problem is her husband's and her sons' stereotypical attitudes towards her. The psychiatrist's tendency to interpret Mary's every word as evidence of her madness is also a reflection of stereotypical male attitudes towards women. Rene's situation can be said to have the same cause. What leads her to face her problems and the reason for her pleasure in seeing her husband dead is the harsh treatment she received from her husband. He treated her as if she was a beast rather than a humanbeing who has the ability to think, speak and behave properly. According to Tara, she should use her potential as a woman to continue her life by exploiting Marshall. Her story, in that sense, activates the liberal voice of feminism in the play by referring to the liberal principle emphasizing women's individual potential to survive within the existing system. Likewise, in *Beside Herself*, focusing on a different subject, child abuse, Daniels challenges the patriarchal society in a similar way emphasizing the fact that the perpetrator of child abuse can survive and lead his life as if nothing has happened while the abused person has to carry the burden of somebody else's guilt on her shoulders. In this play, Daniels again shows the stereotypical views of men about women in patriarchal society and focuses on the misinterpretation of women's nature

as seductive leading men to sin with their allure, the origins of which can be traced back to the Original Sin.

CONCLUSION

The term 'feminism' applies to any set of principles, any movement, any doctrine or any activity which aims at advocating equal rights for women. In its essence as a movement, feminism argues that society is characterized by male domination and female subordination. In all components of human life, in culture, in arts and in belief systems, women are represented as those who are inferior, subordinate to men and as 'the other' whose existence is defined and interpreted by the dominant male. Feminism also argues that the basic qualities that determine what is masculine and what is feminine are social constructs that have been constituted by the male-dominated culture. The most striking characteristic of feminism is the diversity of voices within the movement that has gradually emerged particularly since the beginning of the Second-Wave feminist movement. Among these voices, liberal, socialist and radical can be regarded as the three major voices within feminism. Liberal feminism, which is a combination of liberalism and feminism, is based on the assumption of equal worth of individuals, it rather minimizes the differences between sexes. The main problem for women is to possess the same opportunities with men and achieve parity with them. Therefore, liberal feminism encourages women to take responsibility for power. It emphasizes the requirement of women for taking charge of fields normally considered to be in men's domain. The liberal viewpoint defines the female as a responsible entity who determines her own life and development. Socialist feminism, which combines Marxist theory with feminism, includes elements from the form of class analysis developed by Karl Marx and from feminism. The purpose of socialist feminism is therefore to examine the interaction between power relations based on class and power relations based on gender. It includes a demand for change not only in the position of women in terms of gender biases but also in the basis of society in terms of class, production and political relations. Thus, like radical feminism, socialist feminism can be regarded as revolutionary. Finally, radical feminism claims that the root of women's oppression is men's power over women and this oppression predates capitalism, therefore, it is the most basic kind of oppression in society. Secondly, men's power over women is so firmly set in all social structures that it cannot be overcome unless society has undergone a general transformation. Thus, radical feminists think that the root cause

of women's oppression is not legal systems as the liberal feminists claim or class conflict as the socialist feminists claim but patriarchal gender relations. For this reason, radical feminists believe that the way to deal with patriarchy and oppression of all kinds is to attack the underlying causes of these problems and address the fundamental components of society that support them such as social systems and institutions which are used as means to maintain male power. According to radical feminists there are different kinds of oppression of women but they are not limited to race, class, perceived attractiveness, sexuality or ability.

The diversity of voices in this period had its implications on the drama in Britain as well, particularly after the abolition of censorship by an Act of Parliament in 1968. As the most suitable genre for the discussion of the debates within the feminist movement itself, feminist drama developed in parallel with the women's movement. The genre was suitable because it could reflect conflicts more clearly through dialogue. It also could reach masses easily and this would allow the consciousness-raising activities to be more useful too. This thesis is intended to explore the variety of voices within feminism as reflected in Pam Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women*, Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* and Sarah Daniels's *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself*. After the examination of the plays in detail it may be suggested that the six plays under discussion in this thesis are illustrative of a common pattern within feminist drama during that period: the diversity of voices operating in one play.

In the first chapter, Pam Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women* are examined and it may be claimed that in the first play various feminist voices appear and the play actually reflects several arguments over women's issues that continued their existence during the Second-Wave period. Gems deals with different problems of four women sharing a flat in her *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi*. The play includes various feminist voices. The first is the radical voice which reveals itself with the oppression of women by patriarchy. Even though there is not any male character in the play, the patriarchal ideology keeps oppressing the female characters. The problems of all female characters result from the patriarchal ideology and sexual politics. The second is the liberal voice which appears in the individual struggle of women to survive in the patriarchal society, which may be considered to be as a

reference to the human potential of women. All women save Fish, whose lover has left her for a woman conforming to the sexual roles determined by the patriarchal society, succeed in their struggle to escape from the male-oppression. Fish's feminism and her determination to establish an equitable relationship that will meet the needs of both sexes cause her to lose her long-standing lover and prevent her from having the child she wants. Besides her failure in reconciling her feminism with her personal life and needs, she also rejects other women's attempts to help her. As a consequence, as opposed to other characters in the play, she cannot succeed in surviving in the patriarchal system which leaves women in between their personal needs and their determination to know their potential by means of ideals such as feminism and fields that are considered to belong to men such as politics. The last feminist voice is the voice of socialist feminism operating in several scenes by means of a focus on class differences between the four women and in the lack of sisterhood between women.

It is then argued that *Loving Women*, like *Dusa*, *Fish*, *Stas* and *Vi*, consists of different feminist voices. Radical voice is claimed to operate via the emphasis on negative effects of the patriarchal system on the characters and the collapse of patriarchal values as reflected in Crystal's and Frank's marriage and on the radical settlement that is reached by two women in the end. In *Loving Women*, the male character Frank prefers physical attractiveness and domestic comfort to a female character who is interested in feminist politics. Susannah and Frank, who are depicted as lovers at the beginning of the play, end their relationship due to Frank's choice of a girl who is physically more attractive. The patriarchy and sexual politics are emphasized all through the play. However, by the end, all three realize that patriarchal system does not meet their needs. The sexual roles determined by patriarchal ideology turn upside down in Frank's and Crystal's marriage and Susannah also reaches a conclusion that involvement in politics deprives her of achieving happiness in personal life. The agreement reached at the end of the play offers a new order or a new way of life which will provide the three characters with better circumstances even though it cannot be regarded as a solution that will remove the negative effects of patriarchy upon them. Liberal voice is existent in the lack of sisterhood – even though it turns out to be a cooperative effort between two women in the end – and the individual efforts of women to struggle for their identity in the

patriarchal system. Although the relationship between Crystal and Susannah never turns into one which includes hatred, it would not be possible to argue that there is a collective struggle against the patriarchal system as a whole. Their efforts and their struggle are rather aimed at solving their personal problems and the solution found does not provide a progress in women's condition in the patriarchal society as a whole. Finally, the socialist voice operates in class differences reflected in several parts of the play.

In the second chapter, it is argued that Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls*, like Gems's plays can be considered to present a diversity of feminist voices. After an analysis of the said plays it may be claimed that different feminist voices are active in both *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls*. With regard to *Vinegar Tom*, it is found that different feminist voices appear both in dramatic narrative and the songs which are about superstition, fear of female sexuality and ignorance in the play. In most but not all parts of the dramatic narrative, witch hunt is not depicted as something which merely men are accused of. In that part, there is rather an emphasis on class distinction and patriarchy. The female characters in this play suffer doubly because of both their gender and their poverty. All the female characters who are accused of witchcraft are poor and sexually unconventional in some way. The existence of Betty the landowner's daughter as the only female character who is not accused of performing witchcraft demonstrates that it is always the poor who are oppressed and mistreated in patriarchal society. Referring to the existence of a female character Goody, who functions as an accomplice to witch hunts for financial reasons, it is claimed that the lack of collective struggle of women in this play is related to class differences and material reasons, and therefore the socialist feminist voice is active in terms of lack of collectivity among women. There are also radical messages that all men are responsible for the suffering of women who are accused of witchcraft since they consider women merely as sex objects both in the narrative and the songs of the play.

During the analysis of *Top Girls*, it is found that a diversity of feminist voices operates in several parts of the play. The radical voice reveals itself in the first scene – which is seemingly liberal because of the recounted achievements of historical female figures – through the subversive positions these women and Marlene take

against patriarchal oppression with the exception of Griselda. All historical female figures save Griselda, in the first scene, were oppressed by patriarchy and each assumed a masculine standpoint which was regarded as unconventional according to the social norms of her time either to fight with patriarchy or to assert their own identity. Isabelle's travelling, Lady Nijo's love affairs and the punishment of the Emperor by her, Dull Gret's fight against the Hell, which can be regarded men's pursuits adopted by these women, are all examples of their subversiveness and they are all punished because of their subversive acts. The other women's annoyance after the arrival of Griselda, who is a stereotypical wife, and their toasting to their courage and determination shows the collectivity between these women which is a radical element as well. The rest of the play, is unfolded in the same line with the first scene, depicting Marlene's and her co-workers' ambitious and subversive nature, the results of Marlene's ambition and individualism, and the cost of her success which can be regarded as a criticism of the extreme individualism and radicalism in the end.

In the last chapter, it is claimed that Daniels's two plays can be considered to include a variety of feminist voices. After an analysis of the plays in feminist terms, it is argued that in *Ripen Our Darkness*, the radical and liberal feminist voices may be claimed to exist at the same time. The radical feminist voice is claimed to reveal itself in the direct challenge to patriarchy and the institutions serving it and their depiction as the root causes of women's problem. It is men's point of view about women and patriarchy that cause almost everything bad or problematic in women's lives in the play. Secondly, in this play, it is demonstrated that problems concerning women are all-pervasive and they are not limited to one particular class or culture. All through the play, patriarchy and the heterosexual relationship, which is imposed on women as *normal* human tendency, remain as demolishing forces in the lives of almost all the married female characters. It is not only the patriarchal system but also men's view of women that suppress women. Thirdly, the play deals with such taboo subjects as sexual abuse and homosexuality that could not be performed on stage before. Through the lesbian relationship between Mary's daughter and Rene's daughter, Daniels offers an alternative way of life to the heterosexual life style imposed by patriarchal ideology. In addition to all these qualities, the liberal feminist voice reveals itself in Tara's view of her relationship with her husband Marshall.

Tara prefers to live a comfortable life benefiting from the advantages of being married to Marshall. According to her, the way ahead is to exploit her husband and to lead a comfortable life in that way. Tara's point of view can be regarded as the closest attitude to the ideal of liberal feminism on the grounds that she accepts the existing system claiming that men and women are different and the only possible way for a woman to survive is to try hard and use her ability and sexual attractiveness to exploit men. Thus, she should use her individual potential and lead a comfortable life. The second quality that demonstrates the existence of the liberal voice in the play is the lack of collectivity among women. There are scenes in which a kind of mutual support between mothers and daughters are emphasized, however, this support between mothers and daughters cannot be an effective means to solve women's problems when they are surrounded by men, whose attitudes to women are stereotypically male attitudes, that is, who regard women as inferior, passive beings. In fact, this support cannot be regarded as a collective struggle since they cooperate merely to solve their personal problems rather than take a collective action against patriarchy. Because there is no reference to class differences in terms of collectivity – which is a characteristic of socialist feminism - it may be finally claimed that liberal feminist voice is existent in terms of lack of collectivity between women.

As to *Beside Herself*, it is claimed that *Beside Herself* is similar to *Ripen Our Darkness* in terms of the feminist voices active in the play even though there are slight differences between the two plays. As in *Ripen Our Darkness*, in *Beside Herself*, Daniels challenges the patriarchal society but she focuses on a different subject, child abuse. She criticizes the patriarchal society for putting the blame of child abuse on the abused female. She emphasizes that in this way, the perpetrator of child abuse leads his life as if nothing has happened while the abused child has to struggle with the depression abuse creates. In this play, Daniels again shows the stereotypical views of men about women in a patriarchal society and focuses on the misinterpretation of women's nature as seductive, leading men to sin with their allure the origins of which can be traced back to the Original Sin. Along with a radical feminist voice which is found in the criticism of patriarchy in the play, there is also a liberal feminist voice which exists concurrently with radical feminist voice because Evelyn's struggle is an individual one, in other words, what she fights in the play is not patriarchy but her "self" who cannot accept her abused childhood and face her

father. In other words, her struggle is more of an individual effort to cope with her depression. Only in the end, by facing her father on her own by returning the blame of sexual abuse to her father, she comes to terms with her past by means of her individual struggle with her 'self'. Lack of collectivity can also be regarded as a sign of the existence of liberal voice in the play. Although there are scenes which emphasize the friendship and support between women in the play, their friendship never turns into a collective fight against patriarchy.

In the light of the findings obtained in the main body of this thesis, it may be finally concluded that all six plays, which are examined in this thesis - Pam Gems's *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women*, Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* and Sarah Daniels's *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* – can be regarded as reflective of the multi-vocal nature of post-war British feminist drama because all of them include various feminist voices and conflicts within the feminist movement in that era. After the examination of the plays in detail, it can be claimed that both *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* and *Loving Women* by Gems include liberal, socialist and radical voices at the same time, Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls* both include socialist and radical feminist voices, and finally both *Ripen Our Darkness* and *Beside Herself* include liberal and radical voices at the same time.

APPENDIX I

Pam Gems

Pam Gems was born in 1925 and was the daughter of working-class parents and was brought up by a widowed mother under harsh circumstances. She left school when she was fifteen and held a variety of jobs. She served in the armed forces during World War II, and, then, studied psychology at the University of Manchester. Like many women in 1950s, Gems gave up her work as a researcher in BBC and was kept busy raising her four children. When the family moved back to London from Isle of Wight in 1970, when she was in her late forties, she was able to begin writing for the theatre since this brought her into contact with the Women's Movement and with the fringe theatre. She wrote nearly two dozen plays most of which were produced at the fringe theatres such as the *Cockpit*, and *Almost Free*. Three of these plays were *Betty's Wonderful Christmas* (1972), *My Warren* (1973), *The Amiable Courtship of Miz Venus and Wild Bill* (1973). Her work also includes adaptations; such as, Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* (1979), *The Cherry Orchard* (1984) and *The Seagull* (1994), Ibsen's *A Doll's House* (1980) and *Ghosts* (1993), Lorca's *Yerma* (1993) and a historical play; *Queen Christina* (1977). Gems can be regarded as a feminist writer due to her concern with the essential and complex problems of women; such as, the maternal interest, women in politics, and the struggle of women to survive in male-dominated society. Her early work for the feminist theatre included an autobiographical piece, and two monologues about female isolation and abortion (1973) and a satiric pantomime (1975). Her major plays can be listed chronologically as; *Dusa, Fish, Stas and Vi* (1976), *Queen Christina* (1977), *Piaf* (1978), *Camile* (1984), *The Blue Angel* (1991), *Marlene* (1996) and *Stanley* (1996).

APPENDIX II

Caryl Churchill

Caryl Churchill was born in London, in 1938. She started her education in Canada during World War II and after that she returned to England. She studied at Oxford University and took a bachelor's degree in 1960. She wrote her first play *Downstairs* while she was at Oxford University. This play was staged in London in 1959. In the following year, she wrote *Having a Wonderful Time*. *Death* was produced at Oxford in 1962. During the late 1960s and 1970s, she wrote radio plays including *Lovesick* (1967), *Identical Twins* (1968), *Abortive* (1971), *Schreber's Nervous Illness* (1972) and *Perfect Happiness* (1973). In 1972, she collaborated with Royal Court Theatre. Royal Court Theatre produced approximately ten plays of Churchill including her plays *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982). Then, she began to collaborate with Monstrous Regiment and during her collaboration with Monstrous Regiment, she wrote *Vinegar Tom* in 1976. Following her collaboration with Monstrous Regiment, she started to work with Joint Stock and during this period she wrote *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls* and *Fen* (1983). She also wrote *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986) in collaboration with David Lan and *Lives of the Great Prisoners* (1991) in collaboration with Orlando Gough and Ian Spink. Her more recent works include *Mad Forest* (1990) and *The Skriker* (1994). During her career as a playwright, Churchill won Obie Award for *Top Girls* in 1982-1983 and Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *Fen* in 1984. In 1987, she won Susan Smith Blackburn Prize for *Serious Money* and she won an Olivier Award for the best play of 1987 season and a London Evening Standard Award for the best comedy with this play.

APPENDIX III

Sarah Daniels

Sarah Daniels was born in 1957 and started her playwriting career at the Royal Court Theatre in London. She had responded to a call from the London listings magazine, *Time Out*, for readers to send in plays, but the play that she sent in was rejected. However, she was given some encouragement and she wrote a second play, *Ripen Our Darkness* which was produced by the Royal Court in 1981. She has also had plays performed at the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, at the Manchester Royal Exchange Theatre, and the Albany Theatre in South London. She was the first woman to have a lesbian play, *Neaptide*, which was staged at the Royal National Theatre (1986).

With regard to Daniels's plays, she can be said to be the most controversial and radical of the women playwrights, as she deals with taboo topics such as pornography, sexual child abuse, incest, mental disease, and gay lives. Her major plays can be listed chronologically as follows: *Ripen Our Darkness* (1981), which is about the patriarchal power in the family; *The Devil 's Gateway* (1983), which is about family; *Masterpieces* (Manchester 1983, Royal Court 1984), which is about the negative effects of pornography on women; *Neaptide* (1986), a lesbian play; *Byrthrite* (1986); *The Gut Girls* (1988); *Beside Herself* (1990); *Head-Rot Holiday* (1992); *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994); and, *Blow Your House Down* (1995). (Griffiths, p. 60) She also won several awards; the "George Devine Award" for *Neaptide* in 1982, the "London Theatre Critics' Award for Most Promising Playwright" in 1983, and the "Drama Magazine Award for Most Promising Playwright" in 1983 as well. She also wrote for radio and television.

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