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MOTHERHOOD AND HISTORY
IN *CLOUD NINE* AND *TOP GIRLS*
BY CARYL CHURCHILL

SERAP BUZLUDERE

YÜKSEKLİSANS TEZİ

Danışman
Yrd. Doç.Dr. Gülbün ONUR

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IN *CLOUD NINE* AND *TOP GIRLS*
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Yukarıda adı geçen öğrenci tarafından hazırlanan MOTHERHOOD AND HISTORY IN CLOUD NINE AND TOP GIRLS BY CARYL CHURCHILL başlıklı bu çalışma 17/09/2012 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda oybirliği/oyçokluğu ile başarılı bulunarak, jürimiz tarafından yüksek lisans tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Preface

Morris Dickstein writes, “Setting things in context is always worth doing. It helps us enlarge the picture . . . historical interpretation is an indispensable way of shedding light on culture and weighing the theories and practices through which it has always tried to make sense of itself” (Dickenstein, 2003: B10). Because this dissertation is rooted in a similar belief, I would like to begin by establishing a context for the project itself.

I first read, in quick succession in 2011, all but two of the plays by Caryl Churchill discussed in this dissertation, almost 30 years after their original writing, production, and publication. At the time, representations of mothers and the practice of mothering in these works, as well as the playwright’s examination of the ways in which, historically, women’s biological capacity to reproduce has contributed to gender-based social stratification, leapt out at me quite forcefully (and still do). Because mothers in these plays do not figure as demons or angels, as the characters work against such types because the focus is not on the effects they have on their children but, instead, on the effects the job of mother has on them, I began to think about motherhood as a social issue in ways that I had not previously considered.

I believe that many people’s understanding of theory comes from literature, performance, and other media; without reading theoretical texts, people process theory through other means. As James H. Kavanagh writes, “Ideology is a social process that works on and through every social subject, that, like any other social process, everyone is ‘in,’ whether or not they ‘know’ or understand it” (Kavanagh, 1995: 311).

Because at the time I had read very little feminist theory, the plays themselves were a significant part of my introduction to it, particularly socialist feminist theory, and these works helped me begin to define my own feminist position. Specifically, the plays drew my attention to how motherhood is a feminist issue because they made me look more closely at how motherhood is (and has been) culturally defined

and how women negotiate those definitions, as well as how societies do or do not facilitate the practice of mothering.

Furthermore, these works inspired me to investigate the ways in which feminist theorists have (or have not) made room for mothers and mothering, and I found an extremely complicated and often contradictory range of views. As Patrice DiQuinzio suggests, “Mothering is . . . a very contentious issue in American feminism . . . [which] has never been characterized by a monolithic position on mothering” (DiQuinzio, 1999: 9). Similarly, Brid Featherstone, considering not only American but also British feminism, writes, “From very early on . . . there were considerable battles in relation to the meaning of family or motherhood” (Featherstone: 2004, 47). My own interests ultimately fell into two major categories: first, how, as Betty Friedan suggests, “The inequality of woman, her second-class status in society, was in historical reality linked to that biological state of motherhood” (Friedan, 1998: 77), regardless of whether women do or do not, can or cannot, produce children; and second, how women’s choices about balancing motherhood and work outside the home, engaging in private and public lives, are affected by the social, religious, and legal structures that shape definitions of women and motherhood.

My own experience, unquestionably, is informed by being a student working on English and American Cultural Studies; as a result, although Churchill is a British playwright, my readings of her plays, and my interest in her approach to motherhood, cannot be separated entirely from cultural conversations about motherhood in these two countries. As a result, my investigation of the cultural context out of which these plays grew includes a consideration of not only British but also American constructions of reproduction, mothers, and motherhood from a variety of sources. Popular images of mothers and motherhood cross cultural boundaries, as there is a regular exchange of ideas between these (and other) countries. As Sheila Rowbotham suggests, “national boundaries cannot contain the movement of feminist ideas” (Rowbotham, 1989: xiii) and American and British Feminist movements of the 1970s unquestionably shared an exchange of ideas, though their approach to

motherhood was different in some ways, a point I will investigate in subsequent chapters.

Additionally, the plays discussed have crossed national boundaries as both written and performed texts, and Churchill has been interviewed and profiled in U.S. magazines such as *Vogue*, *Variety*, and *Ms.* Lastly, I believe that the chapters show an increasing socio-political and cultural link between the U.S. and the UK from the early 1970s through the early 1980s, a link that is ultimately reflected in the content of the plays. The Thatcher/Reagan political/ideological front of the 1980s, for example, figures explicitly in Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982).

Most overviews of Churchill's work address her interest in the topic of motherhood; I believe, however, that her complex treatment of the subject deserves a more thorough investigation than it is usually afforded. Motherhood features in discussions of Churchill's work, her characters' complicated negotiations of motherhood figure quite significantly in several of her plays. *Feminist Views on the English Stage: Women Playwrights, 1990-2000* (2003), by Elaine Aston devotes significant attention to themes connected to motherhood and family in several of Churchill's later plays. In this dissertation, I aim to approach literature as an historical/cultural artifact that grew out of a specific time and place, "holding art and society together in the mind's eye . . . tracing the ways they inform and shape each other without in any simple sense being 'the same'" (Felski, 2003: 22). In looking at two plays that Churchill wrote between 1976 and 1984, the study will explore how these works represent the intersections of gender and power as they relate to constructions of motherhood, work, and feminism in the 1970s and 1980s.

I was personally experiencing an overwhelming predicament in coming to terms with my identity as a "woman" when I started reading Caryl Churchill's plays. I was astounded at her competence in proposing answers to the very questions I asked myself in resolving this predicament. In seeing her careful analysis of the patriarchal processes which render subject position unattainable to female subjects and economize their bodies, I eventually decided to study her plays in my thesis. In this context, I would like to thank Prof. Dr. Ayşegül Yüksel for introducing Caryl

Churchill to me, and would like to emphasize the fact that my strenuous efforts in writing this thesis would have remained futile without her adorable guidance, patience and understanding. I am grateful to Dr. Hasan İnal, whose experience as an academic has contributed a lot to the writing of this thesis. Finally, I owe a lot to my dear husband, Fatih Buzludere who has enlightened me with his brainstorming. I would like to thank him with all my heart. This thesis is dedicated to him, with love and respect.



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ÖZET

Bu tezde, Caryl Churchill tarafından yazılan *Cloud Nine* ve *Top Girls* adlı oyunlarda annelik ele alınmıştır. Bu inceleme oyunlardaki kadın karakterleri “anne” olarak yapılandıran ataerkil ideolojinin detaylı bir analizini içerir ve Churchill’in kadın karakterlerle doğurganlık potansiyelleri arasındaki ilişkiyi yöneten bu ataerkil yapıyı nasıl betimlediğini vurgular.

İncelemenin bu bağlamında, ataerkil ideoloji tarafından anneliğin sınırlarının yasal bir despotluk olarak tanımlandığı birim olan “aile” incelenmiş ve “aile”nin bireylerin psiko-sosyal düzenlemelerinin başlatıldığı bir alanı oluşturduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Psiko-sosyal düzenlemeden kasıt, aile içerisinde etki eden ataerkil süreçlerdir. Erkek veya kadın, bireyler bu ataerkil düşünce yapısına uygun olarak kurgular. Psiko-sosyal düzenleme bireyleri kurgulamayı amaçladığından, bu süreçte etkin olan değişkenler üzerinde çalışılmıştır.

Ataerkil temsiliyet düzlemlerinde kadınları ataerkil ideolojiye maruz bırakan unsurun, kuşatmacı dil olduğu görülmüş, ve bu dil vasıtasıyla kadınların hem bedenlerinin, hem de doğurganlık potansiyellerinin kontrol edildiği saptanmıştır. Bir kavram ve kurum olarak, anneliğin kadınların ataerkil düzenin tasarrufu altında

tutmak sürecindeki temel unsur olduđu anlaşılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, incelenen oyunlardaki kadın karakterlerin ataerkil söylemlerle kuşatılmaları ile ne bedenleri, ne de doğurganlık potansiyelleri üzerinde söz sahibi olabilmeleri arasındaki ilişki *Cloud Nine* ve *Top Girls* ile ilgili bölümlerde tartışılmıştır.

Diğer bölümlerde, Caryl Churchill’in anneliği “bireysel bir başarı ve kişisel irade ve öz disiplinin bir sınavı” olarak düşünen modern eğilimle nasıl mücadele ettiğini inceleyeceğim. Bunun nedeni, Churchill’in kadınların hem geçmişte hem de günümüzdeki deneyimleri üzerindeki araştırmalarının, anne olanlar ve olmayanlar için hem kişisel hem de siyasal ve sosyal konular hakkında soruları bir araya getirmesidir.



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SUMMARY

In this thesis, “motherhood” is analysed in the plays of Caryl Churchill, namely *Cloud Nine* (1978) and *Top Girls* (1980-82). This analysis involves a close examination of the discourses of patriarchal ideology that construct the female characters in the plays as “mothers”, and also assumes how Churchill depicts the patriarchal domains that govern these characters’ relationship to their productive potentials of their bodies.

In the context of this analysis, “family” - the unit in which the boundaries of “motherhood” is defined as a legal tyranny by patriarchal ideology, is examined, and it is observed that “family” constitutes a realm in which the psycho-social conditioning of individuals is initiated. What is understood by “psycho-social” conditioning is the patriarchal processes operating within the family as a result of which, individuals, be they female or male, are constructed in accord with patriarchal ideology. Because of the fact that psycho-social conditioning aims at constructing individuals, the dynamics that operate in this process are studied.

In patriarchal ideology’s realms of representation, it is found out that the language they are given to “speak” makes them unprotected to the patriarchal processes that control not only their bodies, but their productive potentials. It is argued that the establishment of motherhood as a concept provides female subjects’

controlling under the patriarchal authority. In this context, the link between female characters' enclosure within the patriarchal treatment and their inability to demand authority on their bodies and their productive potentials are highlighted in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*.

In the following chapters, I will explore the ways how Caryl Churchill challenges the contemporary tendency to "think about motherhood as an individual achievement and a test of individual will and self-discipline", as her examinations of women's experience in both the past and the present raise questions about social issues that are, for mothers and non-mothers, both personal and political.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Bilimsel Etik Sayfası	ii
Tez Kabul Formu	iii
Preface	iv
Özet	viii
Summary	x
Table of Contents	xii
Introduction	1
CHAPTER ONE- Motherhood & Labor: Cultural and Literary Reflections ..	33
CHAPTER TWO- 1977 – 1981: Motherhood and the Individual	52
2.1. <i>Cloud Nine</i>	61
2.2. <i>Cloud Nine</i> : Motherhood and the Emerging Individual.....	65
2.3. <i>Cloud Nine</i> : Mothers and Their Overwhelmed Bodies	81
CHAPTER THREE - 1980 – 1984: “Well, We’ve seen the result of all that”	
Feminism and Family in Mrs. Thatcher’s England	118
3.1. <i>Top Girls</i>	127
3.2. <i>Top Girls</i> : Motherhood and Success	130
3.3. <i>Top Girls</i> : Six Women and Their Denied Motherhood	146
CONCLUSION	174
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	178
Özgeçmiş	191

Introduction

In his review of Thea Sharrock's 2002 revival of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, 20 years after the play's premiere, Michael Billington writes that the "choice confronting Marlene between careerism and family responsibility now seems unduly stark" (Billington, 2002: 7). The play may, thus, seem dated; *Top Girls* is a period piece, without question, located firmly in the early 1980s. Nevertheless, the "stark" choice is no less so at the beginning of the 21st century. Articles such as Lisa Belkin's "The Opt-Out Revolution," published in *The New York Times Magazine* in October 2003, Lisa O'Kelly's "It Beats Working," published in the *Guardian Review* in June 2004, and Marie Brenner's "Not Their Mothers' Choices" published in *Newsweek* in August 2001, all suggest that many of today's "top girls" in both the United States and Great Britain are choosing to stay at home with their children rather than trying to balance motherhood and careers, and address the ways in which little has changed socially or legally to accommodate the balancing act. As Max Stafford-Clark, who directed the original 1982 production of the play, noted in 1991, "the dilemma that's posed in the final scene between Joyce and Marlene, of a woman who opts to have a career and the woman who raises the child, is as pertinent today as it was ten years ago. I imagine that dilemma won't go away" (Goodman, 1998: 78).

Today, eleven years after Stafford-Clark made that observation; the dilemma continues to exist for many women. Patrice Diquinzio writes, "The issue related to mothering that perhaps most widely engages U.S. political culture at the moment is the difficulty many women, and a small but growing number of men, face in caring for children while also working for pay to provide financially for them" (Diquinzio, 1999: 249). Cultural conversations about conflicts between work and motherhood abound in newspapers, magazines, film, and on television, and these conversations are not limited to the United States. Ultimately, though the tenor of such conversations has surely changed with the changing times, the continuing pervasiveness of the topic suggests that workable solutions to the problems have not yet fully emerged.

In the 1970s and 1980s, Churchill wrote several plays in which she encourages her audience to consider the status of women as it relates historically to their position as mothers, potential mothers, or non-mothers (by choice or not). In many of her works, Churchill challenges popular images of mothers and motherhood by focusing on the social, political, and economic effects of motherhood on women, rather than on the personal and psychological effects of mothers on their children; by constructing alternative histories both thematically and structurally in her plays; and by creating work that has been produced in both fringe and mainstream theatres and published as literary texts in both Britain and the United States.

In her introduction to *Literature After Feminism*, Rita Felski writes, “Unlike some of my colleagues, I see literary studies and cultural studies as related rather than opposed fields” (Felski, 2003: 20). I believe the study of literature is a study of culture. As Stephen Greenblatt writes,

“ ... [cultural] questions heighten our attention to the features of a literary work that we might not have noticed, and, above all, to connections among elements within the work. Eventually, a full cultural analysis will need to push beyond the boundaries of the text, to establish links between the text and values, institutions, and practices elsewhere in the culture. But these links cannot be a substitute for close reading. Cultural analysis has much to learn from scrupulous formal analysis of literary texts because those texts are not merely cultural by virtue of reference to the world beyond themselves; they are cultural by virtue of social values and contexts that they have themselves successfully absorbed.” (Greenblatt, 1995: 226-227).

By engaging in close readings of the scripts and examining how they reflect, produce, and reproduce the culture out of which they grew, I aim to achieve a balance between cultural analysis and formal analysis of the literary texts.

I also feel, quite strongly, that literary criticism is a valuable exercise for both practitioners and scholars of theatre, and my understanding of the field of theatre studies

includes readings of dramatic literature. I agree with Michelene Wandor's proposition that "no significant decisions about how to realise a play on stage can be made before the play is understood, and the source for that is the text, the cultural sources to which it refers, and then the text again" (Wandor, 2001: 6). That is not to say, of course, that there is only one way in which a script can be understood; rather, it is to say that the work of analyzing the written text is a critical step in the process of developing a performance product. Furthermore, because close readings of dramatic literature necessarily entail an understanding of performance, I read the plays with an eye toward how they would function in performance (ideally), though there is of course, no way to know.

Though I have chosen to limit my study to specific plays written between 1976 and 1984 because of the way the playwright situates representations of mothers and motherhood within historical frameworks in those plays, motherhood figures in several other plays by Churchill from this period as well. For example, Churchill's *Not Not Not Not Not Enough Oxygen* (1971), a radio play set in the future, the year 2010, presents a vision of an over-populated, over-polluted England in which couples must obtain licenses to have children, and unlicensed children are aborted according to government mandates. *Owners* (1972), in which a baby becomes a prop in a violent power struggle; *Traps* (1977), in which both real and imagined babies play a part in the construction of the literal and figurative traps in which the main characters find themselves caught; and *Fen* (1983), in which Val's conflict between her role as a mother and her desire to break free from her oppressive life is critical, all examine themes of responsibility and sacrifice (financial, psychological and physical) as they relate to parenthood.

In her book *Lives Together, Worlds Apart: Mothers and Daughters in Popular Culture*, Suzanna Danuta Walters claims that "popular images both reflect and construct; they both reproduce existing mainstream ideologies and help produce those very ideologies" (Walters, 1992 :11). In other words, cultural attitudes about mothers and motherhood have both defined and been defined by media representations because they continually (re)construct familiar images of the mother, such as mother as idealized nurturer and mother as destructive force. Because these constructions depend directly on

the children's relationship to their mothers, mothers in dramatic literature often function as supporting characters who act upon their protagonist children rather than as individuals who actively negotiate the challenges of motherhood.

Caryl Churchill's plays that I will examine here focus on mothers not just as individuals, but also often by showing the children on stage. Churchill's *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* show young children or adolescents as characters in relation to their mothers. It is important to note, however, that in both plays the "children" are played by adult actors, or represented by a doll, as Victoria is in Act One of *Cloud Nine*. *Cloud Nine* presents relationships of adult children to their mothers: Maud and Betty in act one and Betty and Edward and Vicky in act two of *Cloud Nine*.

The plays of Caryl Churchill offer provocative challenges to (and variations on) domestic realism and the aforementioned traditional representations of mothers as idealized nurturers or demonized destroyers. By avoiding these stereotypical and archetypal representations of mothers, or by deliberately manipulating and subverting those stereotypes, Churchill allows her audience to consider motherhood in various incarnations. Representations of mothers vary within her plays; it is not that a new type is created, but that several different types appear in juxtaposition with one another.

The characters in Churchill's *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* share both common ground and marked differences in their experiences with motherhood. As Catherine Itzin suggests in *Stages in the Revolution: Political Theatre in Britain Since 1968*, "British theatre of 1968-1978 was primarily a theatre of political change," and the politics were rooted not only in the provocative content of plays but also in the rejection of and experimentation with traditional theatrical conventions, as well as the development of a strong "fringe" theatre movement which established new models, such as collectives, for theatrical production (Itzin, 1980: 10-12). Churchill's experimentation with form in plays written between 1976 and 1984, such as creating episodic, non-linear narratives, using ensemble casts, and integrating song and dance into her plays, ultimately challenges established models of theatrical representation, effectively reinforcing the plays' implicit critique of social structures by virtue of

critiquing the very structure within which they are working. The presentation of history in non-naturalistic ways heightens the thematic connection between the past and the present while simultaneously challenging traditions, both in history and in theatre, that have left out women.

The plays that I examine in this thesis have as their subject matter historical events or figures, fact-based subjects from a time before the period in which the plays were written. The playwright does not present documentary accounts, and does not present work that purports to be a “realistic” account of events; there may be overt intermingling of the past with the present, as in the case of Churchill’s *Vinegar Tom* and *Top Girls*. In *20th Century English History Plays: From Shaw to Bond*, Niloufer Harben states that:

“Modern historical playwrights continually draw upon the present, which enables us to see history as knit into the fabric of our own time. The present is carried into the past as the past is sometimes carried into the future. Startling anachronisms are very much a part of the style of modern playwrights in their effort to drive home the connections between past and present . . . All we can know of the past is largely a subjective interpretation, and each observer rewrites history according to the bias of his own age.” (Harben, 1988: 255).

Churchill uses her historical subjects as starting points for an examination of her own time and place, and she has clear contemporary political and social concerns that are rooted in the history that she represents on stage. Ultimately, the historical context in which the plays were written and originally staged serves as a counterpoint for the historical subjects of the plays: women’s equality was a significant topic in Great Britain (and other countries) as second wave feminism developed strength in the early 1970s; and the strong re-emergence of conservatism throughout the 1980s, specifically in England and the United States, bears on both the form and content of this playwright’s plays.

The socialist feminist movement that was emerging in Great Britain during the 1970s informs Churchill's and her contemporary writers' plays. In an interview with Linda Fitzsimmons, Caryl Churchill states, "I've constantly said that I am both a socialist and a feminist" (Fitzsimmons, 1987: 19). The other writers, however, are less willing to be so labeled. There are numerous points of departure that are evident not only in the content of their plays, but also in the structure and developmental processes of the plays, which will be examined in the following chapters. Nevertheless, Churchill and other feminist writers both write from a socialist feminist perspective in a general sense of the term, and both have written plays that raise provocative questions about the cultural position of mothers and the concept of motherhood. The use of history is critical to the socialist feminist perspective that emerges in the works. In *Feminism and Theatre* Sue-Ellen Case writes,

"Rather than assuming that the experiences of women are induced by gender oppression from men or that liberation can be brought about by virtue of women's unique gender strengths, that patriarchy is everywhere and always the same and that all women are 'sisters,' the materialist position underscores the role of class and history in creating the oppression of women. From a materialist perspective, women's experiences cannot be understood outside of their specific historical context." (Case, 1988: 82).

By setting some of her plays in previous historical periods, Churchill allows connections between the past and the present to emerge; by treating the present as an historical moment in some of her plays, she encourages the audience to examine the immediate forces at work and their own role in the production of history. Furthermore, because many of the plays present tensions between the female characters, often in terms of sexual jealousy, these works disrupt notions of solidarity and universal sisterhood, emphasizing the complex intersections of feminist theories and women's realities.

In her book *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of Empowerment*, Amelia Howe Kritzer says that:

“Churchill’s history plays function structurally, as well as thematically, to stimulate re-examination of past and present from the viewpoint of women and other groups who have been marginal or invisible in traditional historical accounts.” (Kritzer, 1991: 85).

Yet Kritzer categorizes only *Vinegar Tom* (1976), *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), and *Softcops* (written 1978, produced 1983) as “history plays,” claiming that Churchill’s later works, such as *Cloud Nine* (written 1978, produced 1979) and *Top Girls* (written 1980-82, produced 1982) treat history as a “subordinate theme.” Other critics make similar arguments; for example, Richard H. Palmer states that although *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* are about history and/or use history, they are not history plays in “any accepted use of the term” (Palmer, 1998: 151). Yet my readings of *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, in chapters two and three, insist upon the centrality of history in these plays as well as in the two more conventionally historical plays from 1976.

Several of Churchill’s plays from 1976 to 1982 also use history as a means to explore contemporary society, often treating the present as an historical moment. Lizbeth Goodman writes that Churchill considers theatre to be an “art form in which political change can be effected directly, as in guerilla warfare” (Goodman, 1993: 221), and I believe her consistent examination of women’s place in history, particularly the ways in which social and political attitudes towards mothers and motherhood shape women’s lives, contributes to the political nature of her work.

A key element of these works is the juxtaposition of historical and contemporary settings and characters, though those juxtapositions vary structurally and thematically from playwright to playwright, and from play to play. The intersections of past and present, public and private, in Churchill’s plays make the questions they raise about identity inextricably linked to history. And though the definition of motherhood is not transcendent, the ways in which history functions in these works suggest that certain problems that women face in relation to mothering do survive across centuries. In *The Reproduction of Mothering* Nancy Chodorow writes,

“The sex-gender system is continually changing . . . yet it stays the same in fundamental ways. It does not help us to deny the social and psychological rootedness of women’s mothering nor the extent to which we participate, often in spite of our conscious intentions, in contemporary sex-gender arrangements.” (Chodorow, 1978: 215).

In my analyses of these plays, I do not intend to conflate the categories of “woman” and “mother,” but I do believe the two are often conflated in terms of the ways in which those categories are defined culturally, socially, and politically. That seems to be a central part of the argument in Churchill’s *Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, for example; women’s place in 17th century society was defined, in part, by their very ability to reproduce, connected to the Biblical story of Eve—the pain of labor as suffering for Eve’s sin and carnality. Whether a woman is a mother (wants to be, doesn’t want to be, etc.) does not matter; the (at least perceived) potential to reproduce marks women as different and woman/mother become conflated as a result. As Viola Klein writes in her 1957 study *Britain’s Married Women Workers*, “Women’s lives, today as much as ever, are dominated by their role—actual or expected—as wives and mothers” (Thane, 1994: 401).

According to Nancy Chodorow, “women’s mothering is a central and defining feature of the social organization of gender” (Chodorow, 1978: 9). Chodorow goes on to say that:

“because of their child-care responsibilities, women’s primary social location is domestic, [whereas] men find a primary social location in the public sphere . . . Men’s location in the public sphere, then, defines society itself as masculine. It gives men power to create and enforce institutions of social and political control, important among these to control marriage as an institution that both expresses men’s rights in women’s sexual and reproductive capacities and reinforces these rights.” (Chodorow, 1978: 9).

Chodorow's *The Reproduction of Mothering* was originally published in 1978, at the same time Churchill was exploring these very issues in her life and in her work; the investigations of motherhood in this writer's plays is undoubtedly informed to some extent by her personal experiences as a working mother. This woman has addressed, at various times, the challenges that come with balancing motherhood and a career. Though Churchill says that, based on her mother's choices, she "had the feeling, rather early on, that having a career was in no way incompatible with staying married and being happy" (Thurman, 1982: 54), the mother of three also admits that the juggling act raises "nagging questions . . . of what's really important. Are plays more important than raising kids?" (Keyssar, 1984: 80).

Caryl Churchill notes that she found the experience of staying at home to raise their children politicizing, particularly because they felt so isolated from the outside world. Churchill says:

"I didn't really feel a part of what was happening in the sixties. During that time I felt isolated. I had small children and was having miscarriages. It was an extremely solitary life. What politicised me was being discontent with my own way of life—of being a barrister's wife and just being at home with small children" (Itzin, 1980: 279).

For women in Britain in the 1970s, according to Helene Keyssar, "the framework of politics was class structure, and at least one obstacle in the women's movement was a clear understanding of the relationship between gender conflict and class conflict," differing from American women's experience because "it was and still is difficult for Americans to consider class conflict as central to politics and to their particular concerns as women" (Keyssar, 1984: 16). Laurie Stone's interview with Churchill in *The Village Voice* in 1983 reflects this difficulty to a certain extent. Stone writes that Churchill's "critique of feminism doesn't work for [her]" because Marlene feeds certain

stereotypes about “feminists as selfish exploiters,” in part because she is “discredited” by Joyce, whose socialism trumps Marlene’s capitalism in their debate in the final scene of the play (Stone, 1983: 81). Churchill responds, after “wincing slightly,” to Stone’s suggestion that there are no “real feminists” in the play by saying, “I quite deliberately left a hole in the play, rather than giving people a model of what they could be like. I meant the thing that is absent to have a presence in the play” (Ibid: 81). In the interview, and elsewhere, Churchill notes that *Top Girls* was,

“pushed on . . . by a visit to America about three years ago, where I met several women who were talking about how great it was that women were getting on so well now in American corporations . . . although that’s certainly a part of feminism, it’s not what I think is enough” (Ibid: 81).

Thus, though Stone’s definition of a “real feminist” is not clear, Churchill’s own definition of feminism suggests the need for an attention to community that the brand of feminism that focuses on “women succeeding on the sort of capitalist ladder” (Churchill, 1987: 78) often overlooks.

Churchill’s interest in motherhood has less to do with establishing a new gender hierarchy than with examining how women’s reproduction acts as an additional factor in their material oppression. As Maggie Humm states, socialist feminism “argues that men have a specific material interest in the domination of women and that men construct a variety of institutional arrangements to perpetuate this domination” (Humm, 1994: 213); by juxtaposing an historical past with the present in her plays, Churchill suggests that many “institutional arrangements” dictate the choices women have about motherhood, such as a lack of adequate day care options for working mothers, that either impede their ability to become workers in their society or forces them to relinquish the option of motherhood altogether. The difficulties in managing both

spheres contribute to the ways in which women are often constrained by their culture's institutions.

In *After Brecht: British Epic Theatre*, Janelle Reinelt writes that the “postwar situation in Britain was hospitable to, or compatible with, epic theater practices, accommodating a space for political opposition in theatrical representation that produced a hybrid British form of recognizably Brechtian theater” (Reinelt, 1994: 1). Churchill says that she was influenced by Brecht without knowing “either the plays or the theoretical writings in great detail” but, nevertheless, having “soaked up quite a lot about him over the years” (Ibid: 86). She notes the complications inherent in assessing the legacy of Brecht’s work, saying, “Despite what Brecht said (but didn’t do) we proceed by empathy. And it’s powerful” (Churchill, 1987: 77). Caryl Churchill suggests that Brecht’s theories did not always emerge in practice; it is difficult not to empathize with *Mother Courage*, for example. She goes on to say that “Brecht was a great entertainer... Politics, direct statements, belong on the platform not the stage” (Ibid: 78), addressing the fact that political theatre works through different means than what Churchill refers to as “polemic”; theatre is most efficacious politically when it is entertaining theatrically. Churchill expands on Brecht’s suggestion that “perhaps the incidents portrayed ... need to be familiar ones, in which case historical incidents would be the most immediately suitable” (Brecht, 1964: 56) by presenting histories that are both familiar and unfamiliar. For example, much of the history in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is one with which audiences may be unfamiliar, even today. As Churchill herself notes, her approach to the 17th century English Revolution is not limited to the standard Cavaliers/Roundheads struggle (Churchill, 1989: 3). Rather, she focuses on fringe groups who were also engaged in the revolution—the Diggers, Levellers, Ranters, Anabaptists—voices that had faded from history until a resurgence of interest in them emerged in the 1970s. Nevertheless, familiar characters, such as

Oliver Cromwell, appear in Churchill's play, and it may be argued that even if audiences are not familiar with the history of the Diggers, they know enough about Cromwell to identify the "winner" of the struggle before the play reaches its conclusion.

It is significant that this playwright combined Brecht's theories about historicization with feminist efforts in the 1970s to include women's voices in history and to "reclaim the history play from women's point of view" (Hanna, 1978: 10-11). Feminist approaches to Brechtian dramaturgy, according to Reinelt, "foreground the ideological implications of representation with respect to gender assumptions, demystifying their apparent inevitability and appropriateness" (Reinelt, 1994: 82). By experimenting with theatrical conventions; employing stereotypes to ultimately subvert them; and expanding the boundaries of the genre of the history plays, Churchill critiques the historical consistency with which the institution of motherhood has been manipulated as a means of controlling women. As a result, her art attempts to alter perceptions about mothers and motherhood that have been instituted and reinforced through law, social mores, and even art itself.

During the 1970s, a greater number of women were able to find and create opportunities to perform in, direct, write, and produce plays. Caryl Churchill and most women writers had been writing plays since the 1960s, but neither had any stage plays professionally produced until 1971. In an interview with Roland Rees, Churchill's contemporary Pam Gems states:

"It was an important time for women in theatre . . . When I think of what went before... we had the so-called 'Angry Young Men'— Wesker, Arden . . . But apart from Ann Jellicoe, Shelagh Delaney, where were the girls? As for the bourgeois theatre, there was Lillian Hellman in the States. Those years, we have been talking about [the late

1960s through the mid 1970s], were a window. People could do their own thing for a bit.” (Gems, 1992: 200).

In 1968, for example, Joan Plowright commissioned, with the backing of the National theatre, “four well-known female novelists to write one-act plays with entirely female casts” (Plowright, 1968: 8). Groups such as the Women’s Theatre Group and the Women’s Company both emerged in 1973 after “Ed Berman, who ran the Almost Free Theatre in London, [invited women] to put on a season of plays by women writers” (Wandor, 2000: 60). By 1981, the Women’s Playhouse Trust was established, according to Sue Dunderdale, to operate as “a theatre managed and financed by women ... because we believe that too many plays are still being staged from an exclusively male point of view” (Morley, 1981: 13).

In their “Editors’ Note” to “Part 3: The Question of the Canon” in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* (2000), Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt say that Caryl Churchill is a playwright who “would be widely considered canonical” (Aston and Reinelt, 2000: 152). They argue that this canonical status and “endorse[ment] by the theatre academy” stems from such things as “strong production and publication records,” noting that her plays are accessible in print, often anthologized (Aston and Reinelt, 2000: 152-154). I have come across similar statistics in my own research on the work of Churchill: her plays have been produced by prominent companies such as the RSC and the National Theatre; her work has enjoyed West End runs and Broadway and Off-Broadway transfers; her plays are included in collections such as the *Plays by Women* series published by Methuen; and she is named among the 7 females out of the 36 playwrights represented in *British Playwrights, 1956-1995: A Research and Production Sourcebook*, edited by William W. Demastes.

Yet the contemporary writers such as Pam Gems, Sarah Daniels are not as canonical as Caryl Churchill, despite their success in production and publishing, and many of their early plays remain unpublished, limiting access to their bodies of work. Although in the 1970s and 1980s these writers were regarded as prominent feminist playwrights, a review of the literature in the field shows that by the mid 1990s their once-canonical position shifted. And, as I argue in this dissertation, motherhood features significantly in Churchill's plays from the 1970s and 1980s.

Most of Churchill's scripts are easily obtained. Many of her plays are available in print individually in trade versions published by companies such as Nick Hern Books or TCG, or in acting editions published by Samuel French; they are also available in the Methuen World Dramatists Series as the collections *Plays: One*, *Plays: Two*, and *Plays: Three*. Furthermore, her plays *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls*, and *Vinegar Tom* are included in popular drama anthologies such as *The Harcourt Brace Anthology of Drama*, St. Martin's Press's *Stages of Drama*, and *The McGraw-Hill Book of Drama*.

For Churchill, only *Serious Money* has had a Broadway run (for 21 previews and 15 performances), but 13 of her plays have had Off-Broadway runs, some of them more than once. She has won three Obies for playwriting, 10 and in 2001 won an Obie for "Sustained Achievement." Churchill the playwright and her plays are more well-known to American audiences, perhaps because of the countless college productions and the fact that her plays are more available in print.

Aston and Reinelt note that both *Cloud Nine* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* enjoyed successful revivals in England in 1997. *Top Girls* seems to reemerge every 10 years, with major revivals in England in 1991 (Max Stafford-Clark directing again), and 2002 (directed by Thea Sharrock), as well as a BBC-Open

University video production directed by Stafford-Clark in 1991. There was an American revival of the play Off-Broadway in 1993 (10 years after its first Off- Broadway run).

Scholarly work dedicated to Churchill follows a similar pattern. According to the Dissertation Abstracts/Digital Dissertation Database, between 1974 and 2001 there were over forty dissertations or theses written about Caryl Churchill's work, about half of which are multi-playwright studies. There have been three full-length, single-author studies of Churchill's works published: Geraldine Cousin's *Churchill the Playwright* (1989), Amelia Howe Kritzer's *The Plays of Caryl Churchill* (1991), and Elaine Aston's *Caryl Churchill* (1997). Two essay collections dedicated to Churchill's work have also been published: *Caryl Churchill: A Casebook*, edited by Phyllis R. Randall (1988), and *Essays on Caryl Churchill: Contemporary Representations*, edited by Sheila Rabillard (1998). There is also a published sourcebook, the Methuen *File On Churchill* compiled by Linda Fitzsimmons (1989).

Several histories of 20th century British theatre include biographical and professional information about our playwright Churchill and help to establish her place in theatre history. Christopher Innes's *Modern British Drama: 1890-1990* (1992) and its revised edition, *Modern British Drama: The Twentieth Century* (2002), offer an interesting example of how other feminist writers' status has diminished while Churchill's has solidified. In the 1992 edition, chapter 7, "Present Tense—Feminist Theatre," provides two subsections, one on Pam Gems, the other on Churchill. They are the final chapters in the book. Thus, Innes helps construct what Aston and Reinelt argue is Churchill's canonical position by holding her out as Britain's the only prime example of feminist playwrights. As Aston notes in *An Introduction to Feminism & Theatre* (1995), "Innes's own emphasis is on the feminist playwrights (though he treats only one: Churchill), which reflects a traditional academic approach to theatre which

prioritizes the dramatic at the expense of the theatrical” (Aston, 1995: 57). Innes also prioritizes Churchill because several of her works were produced by mainstream theatres such as the RSC and the Royal Court.

Ten years later, however, her position has shifted within Innes’s text. His discussion of other feminist writers now appears in chapter 3, in a section called “The Feminist Alternative,” in which he continues to link them (Pam Gems and so on) and Churchill as the most representative British feminist playwrights of the 1970s and 1980s, saying “during the late 1970s there were just a few women-writers whose work became an important and influential part of the general repertoire.” (Innes, 2002: 236). Though motherhood does figure prominently in almost all of Churchill’s plays, there has been variation on that theme in works that span thirty years. In the following chapters, I contend that Churchill has adapted her approach, in terms of both form and content, to the subjects of motherhood, family, feminism, and socialism in relation to the prevailing cultural attitudes of the specific periods in which they were originally produced.

Innes examines Churchill’s work specifically in chapter 5, in a new section called “Poetic Drama,” followed by a subsection on Sarah Kane. He links Churchill’s increasing experimentation with form, the “open surrealism” of her later plays, such as *The Skriker*, with Kane’s “poetry of madness” (Innes, 2002: 529). He writes, “taken together these [plays by Kane and Churchill] mark a new development in feminist drama at the end of the millennium” (Ibid: 529). Thus, though he maintains the longstanding “Gems and Churchill” example of second wave feminist playwriting, he also allows Churchill and her plays to expand beyond that realm into a newer one. (Though he also establishes a new coupling of “representative” feminist playwrights in Churchill and Kane.)

Churchill surfaces in other histories of contemporary British drama as well. Dominic Shellard's *British Theatre Since the War* (1999) provides a wide-ranging overview of fifty years of British theatre. In the "Female Playwrights" subsection of his "1969-1979" chapter he writes, "Even the early and justifiable commercial success of playwrights like Caryl Churchill proved a double-edged sword in that it obscured for some the imperative of continually demanding that women receive the same encouragement and access to venues as men" (Shellard, 1999: 156). Because Churchill is one of the playwrights whose work Shellard discusses in the section, he ultimately reproduces the common coupling and positions her as canonical. Shellard includes four of Churchill's plays in the "Table of Significant Events" provided at the beginning of the book,¹ and three of her plays are discussed in the "1980-1997" section of the book as well.

Histories of British theatre that were written and published in the 1970s and 1980s inform both my readings of the plays and my investigation of the ways in which these playwrights have been constructed as representative (or not) of feminist and political dramatists. I am particularly interested in these histories because of their contemporaneousness; the ways in which the playwrights were critiqued in the period in which these plays were originally written and produced provides insight into how they have been received in subsequent periods.

For example, Catherine Itzin's *Stages in the Revolution* (1980), a history that was written and published during the period that I examine in the dissertation, focuses specifically on "political theatre." Itzin devotes a subdivision to Churchill's work in the chapter "1976," where she notes that "if political commitment is measured by the adage of actions speaking louder than words, then Churchill rated high. Not just with the

¹ The four in the table are *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls*, and *Serious Money*.

content of her stage plays, but with the stances she took” (Itzin, 1980: 279-280). Itzin’s statement informs the common view of Churchill as a highly political playwright. Her claim that “*Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* marked Churchill’s departure from the expression of personal anger and pain to the expression of a public political perspective, which was itself the source of anger and pain” (Ibid: 285), leads me to wonder if Itzin is partially responsible for setting up Churchill as the political writer.

Keyssar, like Itzin, also emphasizes Churchill’s politics (the chapter is called “The Dramas of Caryl Churchill: The Politics of Possibility”) in her discussions of almost all of Churchill’s plays from 1973 through 1982. Such analyses have contributed to the construction of Churchill as a feminist-socialist playwright.

Michelene Wandor’s *Carry On, Understudies!* (1986), a self-described “critical history of the relationship between theatre, class and gender” (Wandor, 1986: XV), is a useful source for a general history of Churchill’s early career, as Wandor provides the titles of plays, along with dates and locations of original productions. Wandor also provides analyses of several plays by this playwright. Her readings of Churchill’s plays do not locate Churchill as neatly, as Wandor reads some of the plays as radical feminist, some as socialist feminist, and some as bourgeois feminist (*Top Girls*). Wandor’s study is among the earliest studies that treat the work of Churchill, and undoubtedly has exerted some influence on interpretations of her work, even if Lizbeth Goodman was calling the work “somewhat dated” (Goodman, 1993: 9) as early as 1993.

Sue-Ellen Case’s *Feminism and Theatre* (1988), a history/overview of feminist theory and feminist theatre, includes discussions of Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls*, and *Vinegar Tom*. Case provides useful definitions of the various strains of feminism, as

American feminist scholars perceived them in the late 1980s, which help me examine Churchill's work through a materialist feminist lens. My definitions of feminism are also informed by Jill Dolan's *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1988), Gayle Austin's *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism* (1990) and Maggie Humm's *The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* (1990).

In *Contemporary Feminist Theatres: To Each Her Own* (1993) Lizbeth Goodman argues that;

“...very little feminist theatre has entered the canon, except on a few reading lists in ‘gender and performance’ courses. Very few feminist plays have been produced in London’s West End or New York’s Broadway circuits, though there are a few notable exceptions. Neither academic nor commercial measures of value have judged feminist theatre to be ‘suitable’ for inclusion. The few Churchill plays which are occasionally embraced according to both commercial and academic values may be seen as the exceptions which prove the rule.” (Goodman, 1993: 27).

In *An Introduction to Feminism & Theatre* (1995) Elaine Aston's investigation of Churchill's work is limited to four plays: *Cloud Nine*, *Vinegar Tom*, *Fen*, and *Top Girls*. In some ways, Aston, then, reinforces these four plays as Churchill's canonical works. (As noted earlier, *Cloud Nine*, *Top Girls*, and *Vinegar Tom* are the plays by Churchill most often found in drama anthologies. And as they are two of the plays that I examine in this thesis, I'm doing it, too.)

Janelle Reinelt's essays “Beyond Brecht: Britain's New Feminist Drama” (1986) and “Caryl Churchill and the Politics of Style” (2000) offer important observations about Churchill's use of history (and the Brechtian influence). The earlier essay focuses

primarily on *Vinegar Tom*, while the latter provides an overview of Churchill's career. Similarly, her book *After Brecht* (1994) examines the influence of Brecht's theories and "dramaturgical concepts," specifically "gestus, epic structure, and historicization," on contemporary British drama (Reinelt, 1994: 9). She devotes a chapter to Churchill's work, providing in-depth readings of plays from the 1980s and 1990s (post-*Top Girls*). She notes that Pam Gems has "developed work within a socialist feminist framework, but [that] it is Caryl Churchill who most consistently and forcefully writes from this perspective" (Reinelt, 1994: 82). Though I agree with Reinelt's argument, and I am much influenced by her readings of Churchill's plays, I am also interested in how Brechtian theories inform her plays, and I attempt to explore those possibilities in the following chapters.

Ruby Cohn's *Retreats from Realism in Recent English Drama* (1991) also provides an overview of British playwrights' use of history, and she offers a specific reading of *Cloud Nine* that serve to inform my readings of the construction of Churchill as a playwright more than she does my readings of the plays themselves. Cohn says that "Churchill is not attracted to realism; she has attained fame with the imaginative leaps of *Cloud 9*, *Top Girls*, *Fen*, and *Serious Money* . . ." (Cohn, 1991: 12).

Michael Swanson's "Mother/Daughter Relationships in Three Plays by Caryl Churchill" (1986) provides one of the few discussions of *Cloud Nine*'s Maud, a character who is central to my reading of Churchill's representations of motherhood in this particular play. Swanson's analysis of both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* focuses on the mother-daughter relationships in the plays; in one of the following chapters, I focus on the effects of motherhood on the individual, the person whose choices and options (including those about motherhood) are defined by society's attitudes towards the

institution of motherhood, which in *Cloud Nine* are sometimes directly affected by daughter's attitudes towards their mothers.

Much of the scholarship dedicated to *Cloud Nine* focuses on the play's exploration of themes related to gender and sexuality. Essays such as Elin Diamond's "Refusing the Romanticism of Identity: Narrative Interventions in Churchill, Benmussa, Duras" (1985), Apollo Amoko's "Casting Aside Colonial Occupation: Intersections of Race, Sex, and Gender in *Cloud Nine* and *Cloud Nine* Criticism" (1999), and John M. Clum's "'The Work of Culture': *Cloud Nine* and Sex/Gender Theory" (1988), along with others, offer provocative readings of the play. My own analysis of the play is certainly informed by such sources, but my investigation of the mother identity of the characters, I hope, provides something new to contribute to the discussion. In one of the following chapters, I address the ways in which Maud, Victoria (act two), and Edward (in both acts) all wear motherhood differently. The juxtaposition of the various kinds of mothers, as well as Betty's growth as a person (who happens to be a mother), contributes to the play's attempts at exploding myths about socially defined gender roles, sometimes by presenting characters who embody those myths.

Susan Bennett's "Growing Up on *Cloud Nine*: Gender, Sexuality, and Farce" (1998) traces Bennett's personal engagement with the play over the course of fifteen years. Her assessment of the play within various contexts is especially important to me in its observations about the cross-cultural life of the play. For example, all of the productions I have seen of the play have been mounted by university theatres in the United States; accordingly, these productions have used the American acting edition of the script, which contains the key structural change of shifting the position of Betty's final monologue. Bennett notes that this change "is particularly interesting: the adoption of a discourse of American feminism (self-discovery/knowledge) realigned Churchill's

materialist critique to address a targeted audience in terms that would meet an American, rather than British, horizon of expectations” by making the play “Betty’s story” and offering the audience “a central character whom they might relate to” (Bennett, 1998: 32). My own reading of *Cloud Nine* is informed by this central placement of Betty, though my examination of the script does consider the various other print versions of the script as well. Furthermore, I think it is possible for an audience to come away with an understanding of the “materialist critique” inherent in the script by examining Betty in relation to the other mother characters, particularly Maud and Lin, in the script.

Much has been written about *Top Girls* as well. Essays such as Joseph Marohl’s “De-Realised Women: Performance and Identity in *Top Girls*” (1987) and Christiane Bimberg’s “Caryl Churchill’s *Top Girls* and Timberlake Wertenbaker’s *Our Country’s Good* as Contributions to a Definition of Culture” (1997-98) provide analyses of Marlene’s adoption of “male behaviour” in order to achieve her professional goals that relate to my reading of Marlene’s choices about her role as a mother and the consequences of those choices. Michael Evenden’s analysis of the reciprocity of *Top Girls*’ structure and content, in his essay “No Future Without Marx,” informs my own reading of Churchill’s use of the present as history in this play. Evenden suggests that in *Top Girls* Churchill creates a kind of “temporal stasis,” suggesting that the possibility of historical change has ended for the characters, creating an “historical deadlock” (Evenden, n.d.: 105). Conversely, in her essay “‘I won’t turn back for you or anyone’: Caryl Churchill’s Socialist-Feminist Theatre” (1987), Linda Fitzsimmons suggests that Churchill “advocates change and suggests a way forward” (Fitzsimmons, 1987: 19) in the play. While I agree that Churchill advocates change, I find the “way forward” is a little harder to pick out of the wreckage that exists at the end of the play. Fitzsimmons’

essay also offers crucial arguments about “the ideal of motherhood as a political issue” (Ibid: 19), and her reading informs my own reading of the text.

My thesis also draws on studies of the British history play. Niloufer Harben’s *Twentieth-Century English History Plays: From Shaw to Bond* (1988) provides useful definitions of history plays, though he offers no discussion of any works by Churchill. Nevertheless, his discussions have helped me define my arguments about Churchill’s use of history in her plays. D. Keith Peacock’s *Radical Stages: Alternative History in Modern British Drama* (1991) and Richard H. Palmer’s *The Contemporary British History Play* (1998) also attempt to define the term history play, and both discuss the works of Churchill. The emphasis is placed on Churchill as a writer of history plays, with brief discussions of *Light Shining* and *Vinegar Tom* in each work, and more thorough analyses of *Top Girls*. Both authors argue that history features only in the first scene of *Top Girls*. According to Palmer, “the second half of the play presents a conventionally structured domestic melodrama, set in the present and involving only the modern character from the symposium [Marlene]” (Palmer, 1998: 196). In another chapter I address several readings of *Top Girls* that make similar arguments about Churchill’s use of history in *Top Girls*, and I provide my own arguments for why *Top Girls* is a history play, rather than one that simply “uses” history.

Churchill’s history plays seem to be regarded as somehow more substantial because they focus on larger communities and events, and, therefore, a larger history. For example, Janelle Reinelt writes,

“At a time in the 1970s when many feminist explorations in theatre, literature, and life were preoccupied with personal experience, represented often in realistic terms, Churchill was resilient in developing a social, multivalenced approach to representing women’s

experiences. Using an epic dramaturgy many have linked to Brecht, Churchill placed her characters as social subjects at the intersection of economic, religious, and political forces which disciplined their sexuality and prescribed their gender.” (Reinelt, 2000: 175).

In an interview with Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Koenig, Churchill notes that her writing is influenced by “a tradition of looking at the larger context of groups of people. It doesn’t mean you don’t look at families or individuals within that, but you are also looking at bigger things” (Churchill, 1987: 78).

My thesis also draws on works that are not specifically about Churchill, or even theatre. For example, Antoinette Burton’s “‘History’ is Now: Feminist Theory and the Production of Historical Feminisms” (1992), an essay about feminist practitioners across various disciplines, raises interesting questions about the production of history. Her essay informs not only my inquiries into how Churchill uses history in her plays to challenge/revise history but also into how critics and historians who constructed histories of British theatre (socialist, feminist, etc.) in the same period in which Churchill’s works were originally produced (late 1970s/early 1980s) construct the writer’s place in theatre history.

I have focused on media representations of mothers, motherhood, and work in popular culture outside of the theatre (i.e., magazines, television, news) from the 1970s to the present, as these materials directly inform my analyses of Churchill’s plays from the 1970s and 1980s, and my own experience as a feminist in the present and a mother, in the future. Furthermore, the plays that I examine in the following chapters reflect awareness, and a critique, of such representations. Many of the issues the playwright explores relate explicitly to the ways in which feminism, work, and motherhood were represented in newspapers and magazines at the time.

Popular magazines such as *Ms.*, *Vogue*, *Redbook*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *People*, and *Harper's Bazaar* inform my discussions of media constructions of mothers and motherhood. Current events periodicals such as *Time*, *Newsweek*, and *Spare Rib*, as well as newspaper articles from *The Times*, *The Guardian*, and *The New York Times* provide useful information about not only social perceptions of mothers in both Great Britain and the United States but also articles about relevant legislation about such things as employment, daycare, and reproductive issues such as birth control and abortion. These sources also offer insight into the general socio-political climate of the periods I am investigating.

Rita Felski writes, "Literature is one of the cultural languages through which we make sense of the world; it helps to create our sense of reality rather than simply reflecting it. At the same time, it also draws on, echoes, modifies, and bounces off our other frameworks of sense-making. No text is an island" (Felski, 2003: 13). In many of her plays written between 1976 and 1982, Churchill deliberately refers to her own time and place by connecting it, implicitly or explicitly, to the historical periods represented in the plays; she even goes so far as to treat the present as an historical moment by the 1980s. As a result, reflection, representation, and construction intermingle. Clearly, in these works, history does not equal documentary or truth, even though the playwright occasionally uses documentary material, such as transcripts, pamphlets, and other sources to act as dialogue. In some ways, literary texts become history, perhaps most fully realized in Churchill's *Top Girls*, a play in which several characters are borrowed from literature and even paintings. In this way, the plays ultimately become the kinds of historical artifacts that Churchill uses in her works, producing a mise-en-abyme effect: literature is history as the plays themselves are examples of literature as history.

Michelene Wandor writes that motherhood "...is a role rather than a relationship for...Churchill and does not merit a passing inference like in plays by Gems's plays" (Wandor, 1987: 152). Churchill, particularly in her works from the 1970s and early 1980s, weaves provocative questions about motherhood into her broader examinations of the intersections of class, gender, power, and history. For example, in her plays *Vinegar Tom*, *Cloud Nine*, and *Top Girls*, the juxtaposition of the past and the present highlights the ways in which the roles of mothers and the institution of motherhood construct and are constructed by the cultures Churchill examines. Furthermore, one of her plays, such as Churchill's *Cloud Nine* imagines reconfigurations of the traditional family unit, often by suggesting that the practice of mothering need not be an exclusively female endeavor, nor need it be solely the province of women who have borne children.

In this thesis, "motherhood" as institution and experience is analysed in two plays by Caryl Churchill, namely *Cloud Nine* (1978) and *Top Girls* (1980-82). This analysis involves a close examination of the discourses of patriarchal ideology that construct the female characters in the plays as "mothers", and undertakes a foregrounding of how Churchill deconstructs the patriarchal realms of meaning that regulate these characters' original relationship to their procreative potentials of their bodies.

In the context of this analysis, "family", i.e., the unit in whose boundaries "motherhood" is defined as an institution by patriarchal ideology, is examined, and it is observed that "family" constitutes a realm in which the psycho-social conditioning of individuals is initiated. What is understood by "psycho-social" conditioning is the patriarchal processes operating within the family as a result of which, individuals, be they female or male, are constructed in accord with patriarchal ideology.

Because of the fact that psycho-social conditioning aims at “constructing” individuals, the dynamics that operate in this process are studied. Seeing that individuals’ culturalization within linguistic sign-systems, in whose context the subjective “I”, i.e., the linguistic equivalent of the entity “self”, can be uttered, is crucial, the web of meaning inherent in these sign-systems, which is conveyed by means of “I”s, is observed. This observation shows that the “truth” generated by patriarchal ideology constitutes the pivotal “meaning” in these systems, and the individuals’ adaptation to these systems determines their position as speaking subjects (Elaine, 1995: 36).

As a result of its role in the construction of individuals as speaking subjects, the “truth” generated by patriarchal ideology is examined, and it is seen that it is a specific kind of narrative, a text or discourse that functions in the establishment of order, law, authority, rationality and objective knowledge. Regulated by binary oppositions, such as self - other, subject - object, man - woman, white - black, good - evil, this narrative constitutes a realm in which individuals are situated. This realm, whose modes of representation are determined by the binary oppositions it prescribes, universalises the narrative it originates from and excludes any forces that might challenge its structuring.

Individuals’ representation within the boundaries of this realm is marked by gender categorization, which refers to ways of defining individuals based on sex difference (Lizbeth, 1996: vii). The man - woman binary opposition within this categorization constructs the female subject as “woman”, and defines her as the “other” of man. The “otherness” prescribed for the female subject foregrounds the analysis of the self - other binary opposition, and it is observed that the dynamics establishing this opposition is closely linked with language acquisition : The idea of the self is created in the Symbolic order. This order constitutes the center of language which credits meaning

depending on the consciousness, i.e., “I”. However, to attain this subject position, submission to the Law of the Father is obligatory. The economies of the Law of the Father, which are ultimately phallic, regulate the unfixed, floating, sliding and shifting signifiers in the unconscious, and posit phal “logo” centrism as norm². What is understood by “phal‘logo’centrism” is the ideology that sublimates the male sexual organ, and perpetuates this sublimation by constructing its own “set” of “words”³. Because the discourses constructing the female subject as “woman” posit her sexual organ as the embodiment of the lack of phallus, she is denied the subject position “I”, a position which is attainable to those who possess phallus (Whitford and Irigaray, 1991: 44). This is crucial in the sense that, the female subject, who denies subjectivity, also denies “speaking” and consequently the processes of generating meaning. As a result, the female subject constitutes the “object” of the subject - object binary opposition, and is burdened with the negative sides of the binary oppositions listed above. The object position the female subject is thus given within the Symbolic order is perpetuated by her encapsulation within its discourses, hence their omnipresence. By overwriting the Semiotic language of instinctual drives, i.e. the language of instinctual sounds and rhythms of the body that resist meaning, the Symbolic order not only ensures the female

² The Symbolic is the structure of language in which individuals’ culturalization is initiated. The Law of the Father, on the other hand, is the realm which posits patriarchal law, patrilineal identity and language as individuals’ inscription into patriarchy. For further discussion on the Symbolic and The Law of the Father, see Elizabeth Grosz, Jacques Lacan : A Feminist Introduction, London, Routledge, 1990, pp.50-80.

³ Cixous describes the “power” of the “word” as follows : “Everything turns on the Word : Everything is the Word and only the Word...we must take culture at its word, as it takes us unto its word, unto its tongue...No political reflection can dispense with reflection on language, with work on language. For as soon as we exist, we are born into language and language speaks us, dictates its law..., even at the moment of uttering a sentence...we are already seized by a certain kind of masculine desire.” (Rosalind, 1985: 85)

subject's objectification under the economy of patriarchal ideology, but censors the primary language the female subject "speaks" via her body.⁴

As a result of the objectification process the female subject undergoes, she becomes vulnerable to the patriarchal processes that claim authority on her body. By distorting her original relationship to her body and regulating her procreative potentials in the "family", patriarchal ideology constructs the institution, "motherhood", and consequently ensures that both her body and her procreative powers remain in its economy. This process is perpetuated by her strict encapsulation within the patriarchal discourses that legitimize her objectification, and emit the knowledge, i.e., "culture", that patriarchal ideology generates. Thus, in Kristeva's words, the female subject becomes "...destined to insure reproduction of the species...under the sway of the paternal function...more of a filter than anyone else – a thoroughfare, a threshold where 'nature' confronts 'culture'" (Kristeva, 1980: 138).

In her plays, Churchill orchestrates dramatic "confrontations" by positing crucial questions that analyse the ways in which patriarchal ideology exercises authority and control over the female subjects. Seeing that the "truth" produced by the discourses of patriarchal ideology governs the "others", she challenges the notion of truth itself. In the context of this challenge, she not only undermines the power relations that construct this notion, but its formative processes that have pervaded realms of representation.

⁴ It must be noted that the Semiotic is viable to overflow the boundaries determined by the Symbolic. Kristeva argues that maternity, which "speaks" in the Semiotic, reveals itself as a conceptual challenge to phal "logo"centrism, since it is "spoken" in an undercurrent employment of expressions, or in the absence of expressions that distort the overpowering reign of the phallogocentric agencies and break up in the linear progression of generating meaning celebrated in the context of patriarchal ideology. The threat the Semiotic poses on the dynamics of phallogocentrism explains the reason why patriarchal ideology constructs the female subject as an "object" that cannot "speak". This object position allows for the patriarchal processes that regulate the procreative potentials of the female subject and claim authority on her female body. For further discussion on this issue, see Julia Kristeva, "From One Identity To An Other" , *Desire In Language: A Semiotic Approach To Literature And Art* ,ed.Leon S. Roudiez, tr. Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine, New York, Columbia Press, 1980, pp. 124-147.

Consequently, her plays privilege and articulate the subversive “knowledge” of women, children, homosexuals, racial minorities, the working class, peasants, the insane and the criminal, i.e., those who have been silenced for establishing social control and normalization (Thomas, 1992: 162). In doing so, she deconstructs the conventional formulas of identity, which have been based on the Enlightenment discourses that universalised white, western, middle class, male experience (Hutcheon, 1988: 12). In other words, she contests the notions which resulted in this universalization, and pinpoints the subjects (mainly, the female subjects) that have become “others” in the context of this universalization.

On the level of dramatic representation, Churchill makes use of the Brechtian *gestus*⁵ which distorts the stated universalization, and contests the limitations of representing the body, especially the female body, as a site which has been the object of the male “gaze”.⁶ In this process, she deconstructs the linear progression of time, employs overlapping dialogues that fracture the language of the speaking subject by creating “ a sexual, permeable, tactile body, a ‘semiotic bundle of drives’” (Diamond,

⁵ The Brechtian *gestus* is a dramatic model that deconstructs the habitual performance codes and disables the gaze of the spectator, which had been traditionally built on the assumption that the spectator is complicit in the patriarchal ideological biases and that the spectacle is designed precisely for a male viewer to identify with and for his eyes voyeuristically to devour. As a result, when the gaze is disabled, the spectator cannot consume or reduce the object of his vision to a monolithic projection of the self. Further discussions on representation will be made on pages 66-67. For more information on Brechtian *gestus*, see Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, London, Routledge, 1997, pp. 43-82.

⁶ In her discussion on the voyeuristic drive and the male gaze, Elizabeth Grosz quotes from Lacan as follows : “...what [man] is trying to see, make no mistake, is the object as absence. What the voyeur is looking for and finds is merely a shadow, a shadow behind the curtain...What he is looking for is not...the phallus – but precisely its absence.” The absence emphasized in Lacan’s words corresponds to the patriarchal perception of the female subject, i.e., the very embodiment of the lack of phallus consequently meeting its equivalent through the objectification of the gaze. On the gaze, Laura Mulvey comments by stating that “...pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked at and displayed [as the passive object], with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness”. For further discussion on the voyeuristic drive and the male gaze, see Grosz, *ibid.*, pp.74-81, and Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure And Narrative Cinema”, *Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. Julia Rivkin, Michael Ryan, Oxford, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1998, pp.585-595.

1997: 84), and makes use of cross-dressing and doublings that distort the conventional illusion of identifying the character with the body it is represented by (Diamond, 1990: 97).

Churchill's graphic depiction of the female characters in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* reveals how the processes of "silencing" them, encapsulating them within the discourses of patriarchal ideology, and claiming authority on their bodies are interrelated.

In *Cloud Nine*, all the characters are burdened with the prescriptions of patriarchal ideology: Betty, Clive's wife, cannot "speak" her desire. As a result of her internalization of the patriarchal discourses, Maud, Betty's mother, perpetuates Betty's predicament in "speaking" her desire. Victoria, her daughter, is first represented by a dummy, and she cannot escape the "muteness" she experiences as a dummy even when she becomes animate in the Second Act. As a result of their homosexuality, Edward, Betty's son, Ellen, his governess, and Harry Bagley undergo the regulatory normalization processes of patriarchal ideology. Joshua, the colonized native, "speaks" the language of his colonizer. Garry, Edward's homosexual lover, is embedded by the discourses that objectify the body. In spite of his liberal discourses, Martin, Victoria's husband does not renounce the overbearing role he is given in the context of the patriarchal construct of the family.

In *Top Girls*, Marlene, the manager of the Top Girls Agency, has dispossessed her daughter Angie for the "better" prospects promised in the context of capitalism. The historical guests invited to her dinner party, namely Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Pope Joan, Dull Gret and Patient Griselda have experienced overwhelming traumas: Isabella Bird's attempts to escape the prescriptions of patriarchal structuring in her travels have resulted

in a severe mental breakdown. Lady Nijo, Japanese Emperor's courtesan, has internalized her objectification under the authority of the Emperor, and this internalization has bitterly separated her from her children. Pope Joan's attempts to assert her individuality in her pursuit for the ultimate truth has clad her in male attire, overwriting her female body and her procreative potentials. Dull Gret has become subject to the "gaze" in Brueghel's painting, and her being situated in the two-dimensional realm of the painting has rendered her mute. Patient Griselda has been depicted as the emblem of the ideal "woman" in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, and the verbal realm Chaucer situated her in has legitimized the discourses that entitle husbands to exercise authority and control on female subjects' bodies. Joyce, Marlene's sister, has failed to escape the boundaries of her paternal house. The two characters that symbolize the female subjects of the future, i.e., Angie, Marlene's dispossessed daughter, and Kit, cannot escape being enmeshed by the discourses that operate in constructing "women".

The common characteristics of the predicaments the female characters experience in the plays *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* show that the female characters' inability to reclaim authority on their bodies and their procreative potentials is closely linked with their encapsulation within the discourses of patriarchal ideology. For this reason, this thesis focuses on the patriarchal processes that dominate the female subjects, argues that the institutionalization of "motherhood" legitimizes patriarchal discourses' claim to control and regulate their female bodies, and examines the alternative realms of meaning Churchill constructs for those characters.

CHAPTER 1 - Motherhood & Labor: Cultural and Literary Reflections

One of the most pervasive cultural conversations about motherhood in Western societies today centers on the conflict between having children and having a career outside the home. For many, it is a foregone conclusion that these two worlds, domestic and public, are in direct, irreconcilable conflict. Of course, there are economic, legal, and ideological factors that are specific to various times and places, but the fundamental problem of the mother/worker challenge is not a new one, yet each generation seems to spin it as if it were unique to its own time. As Sarah Blaffer Hrdy writes, “though the world has undergone immense changes ... many of the basic outlines of the dilemmas mothers confront remain remarkably constant” (Hrdy, 2000: xiii), and dilemmas such as the imposition on “women painful choices no man need ever make: her aspirations versus her infant’s well-being; vocation or reproduction” (Ibid: 490). Often by reducing motherhood to a concept that takes on a symbolic function in the rhetoric of campaigns for and against women’s equality, politicians, reporters, theorists and activists, shift the focus away from the practical realities of reproduction and mothering and their effect on women’s material existence.

For example, though *The Boston Herald’s* conservative Op-Ed columnist Don Feder derides working mothers for putting their children into daycare in order to pursue their careers (Feder, 2001: 31), the very real fact is that many women, even those in two-income households, cannot afford to stay at home full-time with their children, even if they would like to do so. Conversely, many women who would like to work, and even those who need to work to support their families, “are prevented by high childcare costs or lack of appropriate provision” (Hrdy, 2000: xiii). Furthermore, claims such as those made by Feder, that children suffer from the “toxic” effects of daycare because they cannot form what he argues is “the most important attachment of [their lives]—

bonding with their mothers” (Feder, 2001: 31), have been challenged by studies that “have consistently demonstrated that a child’s social or academic competence does not depend on whether a mother is employed” (Gerson, 2003: n.p.).

In 2002 American (British-born) economist Sylvia Ann Hewlett published a book about the motherhood/career conflict that caused a minor stir, despite the fact that it did not sell “particularly well” and the book was characterized as a “miserable read for childless women, and irrelevant to everybody else” (Overington, 2002: 5). *Creating a Life: Professional Women and the Quest for Children*,⁷ focuses on the “creeping nonchoice” (Hewlett, 2002: 50) of childlessness that many American women face. In her review of Hewlett’s book, Jackie Ashley writes in the British newspaper *The Guardian*, “Research done in America, but thought to apply to Britain too, shows that 42% of high-salary women are childless, and the figure rises as you go up the income scale. But only 14% said they had definitely not wanted children. Babies have become the new frontline in feminist politics” (Ashley, 2002: n.p.).

Yet I would argue that babies have never been far from the frontline of feminist politics. Hewlett herself put babies on the frontline over fifteen years ago with a work that started from the same premise as her 2002 “shocker.” Her 1986 book *A Lesser Life: The Myth of Women’s Liberation in America* caused controversy in its day, raising the ire of feminists by arguing that “the chic liberal women of NOW have mostly failed to understand that millions of American women like being mothers and want to strengthen, not weaken, the traditional family structure” (Leo, 1986: 63). While it may be true that millions of women like being mothers, it does not necessarily follow that they want to strengthen the “traditional family structure,” and by equating the two, rather than

⁷ The European title of Hewlett’s book is *Baby Hunger*.

seeking new ways to imagine the family structure, such a definition of motherhood necessarily entails forgoing work outside of the home and reproduces gender inequality.

Furthermore, this debate has never been limited to second wave feminism. Even in the 19th century the mother/worker debate was a hot topic for feminists and anti-feminists alike, and people on both ends of the political spectrum used a constructed concept of motherhood to further their agendas. For example, the highly idealized definition of mothers as “the repository of all that was decent and good”(Thurer, 1994: 182) was manipulated to suggest that women should not aspire to move beyond their designated place, reinforcing ideas about “traditional” roles; in such cases, pro-mother becomes pro-family, and the emphasis is not on the individual women who are mothers but on their function as mothers in relation to children and husbands.

For example, in the *Lowell Offering* (1840-1845), a literary magazine that published writing by female mill workers in Lowell, Massachusetts, in the 19th century, a woman named Ella writes:

“that physical difference which, in one state of society, makes woman the slave of man, in another makes him her worshipper . . . Woman must be the mother . . . in that station where woman is most herself, where her predominating qualities have the fullest scope, there she is most influential, and most truly worthy of respect. But when she steps from her allotted path into that of the other sex, she betrays her inferiority.” (Dublin, 1979: 129-130).

In this case, the author is (ostensibly) a mill worker, and her intended audience is largely working class and female. By suggesting to an audience of mill workers, often young, single women, that working women “betray [their] inferiority” by stepping outside the home, the author’s goal seems to be to encourage these young women to

pursue a path that will lead to marriage and motherhood rather than to aspire to move beyond mill work into more profitable public careers.

The opposing side of this debate appeared in similar literary venues at the time, challenging the idea that women are not naturally inclined to engage in public activities, be it work or politics. Huldah Stone writes in “An Operative,” published in *The Voice of Industry* (1846/47),

“Woman is never thought to be out of her sphere, at home; in the nursery, in the kitchen, over a hot stove . . . But let her step out, plead the cause of right and humanity, plead the wrongs of her slave sister of the South or of the operative of the North, or even attempt to teach the science of Physiology, and a cry is raised against her, ‘out of her sphere.’” (Dublin, 1979: 127).

Stone also writes for a working class audience, but her goal is to inspire women to challenge the double standard that keeps them confined to the domestic sphere. Because her audience is largely mill workers, one can assume that the women she hopes to reach are ones who need to work to survive and who face particular challenges in balancing work outside the home and motherhood. Maxine Margolis writes, “That economic necessity was the primary factor leading married women to seek employment is illustrated by the fact that in 1890 more widows than wives were employed outside the home” (Margolis, 1984: 201). For many working-class women, for whom the combination of motherhood and work outside the home creates additional financial, physical, and emotional burdens, the popular construction of motherhood as a woman’s sacred calling was, and still is, an unattainable ideal. As Margolis notes, “Only middle and upper class families could hope to conform to the depiction of the mother role in the advice manuals” (Margolis, 1984: 45) of the time.

Such notions about “sacred motherhood” are called into question in *Maternity: Letters from Working Women*, a collection of letters written by British working-class women between 1913 and 1914 at the request of Margaret Llewelyn Davies, the General Secretary of the Women’s Co-operative Guild, an organization that was initially devised to “spread a knowledge of the advantages of Co-operation” (Gordon, 1978: vi-ix) but evolved into one that actively lobbied for women’s rights in areas such as divorce reform and maternity benefits. The collection was originally published in 1915, and it was re-published in 1978, when, according to Linda Gordon, “inherent in these letters are the bases of two campaigns still current in the women’s movement: the proposal that domestic labor should be paid . . . and demands that men should share domestic labor” (Ibid: xi). The resurfacing of such concerns suggests that despite advancements made for women in both periods, the challenge of restructuring the social conditions of work and family had not been solved.

Margolis notes, “Although arguments for and against women’s suffrage [at the turn of the century] were cloaked in terms of the maternal role, there was widespread agreement that the mother role was totally incompatible with paid employment” (Margolis, 1984: 41). Nevertheless, there were some feminists who rejected the notion that a woman’s choice to work outside the home was detrimental to her children and family. In an article called “Mother-Worship” published in *The Nation* in March 1927, reprinted in 2002, an anonymous woman writes:

“I grew up confidently expecting to have a profession and earn my own living, and also confidently expecting to be married and have children. It was fifty-fifty with me. I was just as passionately determined to have children as I was to have a career. And my mother was the triumphant answer to all doubts as to the success of this double role ... I have lived my life according to the plan. I have had

the ‘career’ and the children and ... I have earned my own living. I have even made a certain name for myself ... I have never wavered in my feminist faith.” (“Mother-worship, 2002: n.p.).

It is interesting that the same dilemma for women figured prominently in cultural conversations in the 1920s, an active period for feminism in the United States and Great Britain. The article’s details reveal that the writer is college-educated, a fact that also resounds with more recent conversations about the advantages and disadvantages working women face in relation to motherhood, in that class issues place an additional burden on working-class women and further limit their choices about work and motherhood.

In the late 20th century, arguments about women being “out of their sphere” have been packaged slightly differently, as has the debate over the mother/worker dilemma. In August of 2001, the American Infertility Association launched a public service advertising campaign aimed at removing the “false sense of security about what science can do” (Kalb and Springen, 2001: 40) for aging women who want to have children. The campaign featured billboards and posters that were to be placed on buses that show a baby bottle upside-down inside an hour glass, with text reminding women that the best time to conceive is in their twenties and early thirties. Kim Gandy, president of The National Organization for Women (NOW), when interviewed by *Newsweek*, said she regarded the campaign as promoting the “ludicrous proposition” (Kalb and Springen, 2001: 42) that women can choose at what age they will have children. Gandy notes that such a singular focus on age ignores factors such as a “stable relationship, financial stability, [and] life stability” (Kalb and Springen, 2001: 42) that many women seek before having children. The doctors running the campaign argue that they simply want to “warn women that science can’t always beat the biological clock” (Ibid: 45). Yet

their methods are a bit sensational, and the warnings go beyond simply educating women who are (allegedly) unaware of the “biological facts” about fertility.

The *Newsweek* article, “Should You Have Your Baby Now?” (2001), has a specific audience in mind: college-educated, career-oriented women.⁸ The interviewees include a university professor married to a sports agent, a single movie studio sales representative, and a married consultant with one child. The photos show that these women come from varied ethnic backgrounds: African-American, Caucasian, and Indian. The implication is that the “fertility crisis” knows no ethnic boundaries. (Of course, there is first the implication that there is, in fact, a crisis.) Because they target career-oriented women and use what some perceive as scare tactics to communicate their message, both the *Newsweek* article and the “Protect Your Fertility” campaign read as cautionary tales to feminists who think they can “have it all.” Motherhood takes on symbolic value: missing the opportunity to have children while pursuing a career is the great feminist sacrifice, a choice for which, according to Claudia Kalb, many women suffer “private anguish” (Ibid: 40).

Attention to the relationship between women’s age and reproduction in the mainstream media is not new, though it has been repackaged over time, particularly as technological interventions in the reproductive process have increased. In 1976 *Ms.* magazine sported a cover story titled “How Late Can You Wait to Have a Baby?” In the article, Barbara Seaman addresses the risks to mothers and infants throughout the course of the mother’s “reproductive life span,” (Seaman, 1976: 45) which she writes is from “15 to 44” years of age. She goes on to claim that “we have been oversold on the health advantages of starting our families early” (Ibid: 46), noting that only a special groups of

⁸ The term “career-oriented,” and the concept of “career” vs. “job,” produces difficult semantic resonance. The way people perceive “careers” often adds to the sense of alienation from feminism that some working class women feel because there is a certain snobbery implied in the distinction.

birth defects, “the chromosomal abnormalities,” (Ibid: 46) have been conclusively linked to the mother’s age. Seaman’s article is interesting because it aims to illuminate the complicated areas of genetics and reproductive technology, such as amniocentesis, now a common test, which was not used in early pregnancy to detect birth defects until the late 1960s (Ibid: 47).

Seaman’s article ultimately suggests that postponing pregnancy can sometimes be advantageous for both women and their children. She notes that a greater number of birth defects occur as a result of low birth weight,

“which in turn occurs most commonly in very young mothers, poorly nourished mothers, mothers whose pregnancies were spaced at less than- two-year intervals . . . [and] *iatrogenic* (doctor-caused) and associates with the injudicious administration of drugs to pregnant women, excessive limitations on weight gain during pregnancy . . . the confined birth position, and other kinds of mismanagement of labor and delivery.” (Ibid: 46).

Her point seems to be that women who are not adequately equipped financially or physically face greater risks than women who postpone having children in favor of their careers. Seaman’s emphasis is less on declining fertility than on health risks to mothers and infants, and her conclusions suggest that in some cases waiting may present fewer risks for both mothers and children. As a result, the article does not read as the same kind of warning that appears in more recent articles about postponing the decision to have children. Nevertheless, the dilemma about women’s choices at the heart of the discussion remains constant, and the ways in which medical science contributes to anxiety about these choices is evident.

In her 1988 article “Baby Pushing,” Cleo Kocol argues that “Society says that having a baby is the way to go. . . Movies add to the problem. . . The implication seems to be that everyone wants and needs a baby, including macho-looking men” (Kocol, 1998: 33). Kocol cites American television shows such as *Family Ties* and *The Cosby Show*, and movies such as *Baby Boom* and *Three Men and a Baby*, as popular culture reminders that the “biological time-clock is running out”(Ibid: 33). And though Kocol argues that the trend was more prevalent than ever in the late 1980s, at the beginning of the decade, in February 1982, *Time* magazine sported a cover story about the “Baby Bloom” among high-profile career moms over the age of 30, from actresses, such as cover model Jaclyn Smith, to news anchors. In the article, child psychologist Carlotta Miles says, “Women no longer think that in order to be equal they have to take something fundamental away from themselves. The something turned out to be having a family” (Reed, 1982: 52).

When discussing the 1991 revival of *Top Girls* in interviews with Lizbeth Goodman, director Max Stafford-Clark, and actresses Deborah Findlay and Lesley Manville all state that the representations of career women in the 1980s differed drastically from representations of career women in the 1990s. For example, Stafford-Clark says that in the 1980s, women’s magazines “portrayed opportunities for women” differently from representations at the beginning of the nineties when “there wasn’t an advertisement that didn’t feature both men and women holding babies—babies were the thing, whereas ten years previously, careers were the thing” (Goodman, 1998, 77). Yet the “Baby Bloom” article in *Time* shows pictures of several career women in advanced stages of pregnancy or holding their newly born infants, often in the workplace. At least in some venues, the emphasis on negotiating both worlds was apparent in the 1980s—careers *and* babies were “the thing.”

Findlay makes a claim that is similar to Stafford-Clark's, noting specifically the "completely different view of women" (Ibid: 77) presented in *Cosmopolitan* magazine in the two periods. And Manville says that the "women's glossy magazines" they looked at for research on the original production of *Top Girls* in 1982 were:

"all very American, all about just becoming 'new women,' and everything was about being hard and dressing male and not having babies . . . And looking at the same magazines nearly ten years later, it was just as startling because these same magazines were now telling us we had to be everything: we could be career women, and be in powerful positions, but we had to be mothers as well." (Ibid: 77).

Many women's magazines in the 1980s, however, also presented representations of women trying to balance work and motherhood that share a similar vocabulary with more recent representations. For example, the article "Success and Love: Do I Have To Choose?" in *McCall's* (1982) features a photograph that is a split image of a woman sitting at a desk. On one side she is dressed in a business suit, wearing glasses, and talking on the telephone; on the other side she is dressed casually, and instead of her adding machine, a baby is perched atop the desk. For me the most significant difference between this image and the April 15, 2002 cover of *Time*, in which a very cheerful baby has been superimposed onto an inordinately full and messy desktop inbox, is the noticeable absence of the mother from the picture. The cover for Hewlett's *Creating a Life* shows a decidedly less happy baby sitting inside what looks like a large doctor's bag; again, there is no mother in sight.

Where women in the 1980s faced "the superwoman squeeze, the constant pressure to juggle home, family, and job" (Langway, 1980: 72), women in the 21st century, according to Jill Kirby, are rejecting "the Eighties and Nineties work ethic . . . women

[are] more confident about valuing home and family life and deciding that they want to fit their work around it, rather than fit their home life around work” (O’Kelly, 1991: n.p.). In the aforementioned 2001 issue of *Newsweek*, Marie Brenner’s follow-up article, “Not Their Mothers’ Choices,” focuses on what she argues is a growing trend of women who are abandoning their careers for stay-at home- motherhood. Lisa Belkin’s “The Opt-Out Revolution,” published in the *New York Times Magazine* in October 2003, and Lisa O’Kelly’s article, “It Beats Working,” published in the *Guardian Review*, a British newspaper’s weekly magazine, in June 2004, both focus on the same trend among both American and British women that Brenner examines in her *Newsweek* piece: college-educated career women leaving the job force to stay at home with their children. O’Kelly’s piece poses the question: “Is the steady flow of mothers back to the home a rebuke to the memory of their feminist forbears who worked for equal power and equal pay in the workplace?” (Ibid: n.p.) Belkin’s piece suggests that the answer to this question is “no.” She writes, “this is not a failure of a revolution, but the start of a new one. It is about a door opened but a crack by women that could usher in a new environment at all” (Belkin, 2003: 11). A claim that seems a bit on the wishful thinking side, as Ilene H. Lang writes to the editors of the *New York Times* in response to Belkin’s article, “The work-life debate isn’t new, and neither are the comments in the article. But according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 72 percent of mothers in the United States with children under the age of 18 work — either by choice or necessity. Only the few can afford to ‘opt out’” (“Opt Out Rev.”, 2012: n.p.).

Like Belkin’s and O’Kelly’s, Brenner’s article ultimately focuses on women who can afford to make such choices financially. Furthermore, she suggests that these women’s working mothers, the generation against which the new stay-at-home moms are apparently rebelling, also worked from choice rather than necessity. By highlighting

those who “operated households from mobile phones or let nannies raise [their] children” (Brenner, 2001: 49), she narrows the field to working mothers who can afford such luxuries. Like the authors of the article’s companion piece, Brenner limits her focus to a very specific and narrow group of women. She, too, invokes motherhood as a symbol, though in this case feminism is sacrificed for it. The two articles reinforce the divide between “full-time mothers,” a description that embodies the belief that mothers who work outside the home are not completely committed to their mother role, and “working mothers,” a term still commonly used to describe mothers who are employed outside the home, even though some feminists avoid using because of its inherent dismissal of domestic labor as valuable work. (Dixon, 1991: 109).

Furthermore, in her *Newsweek* article, Brenner contributes to the debate over formula vs. breastfeeding, a personal choice that ultimately has financial implications as well as social ones, diverting attention from the more pressing public issue of accommodation. She writes, “we are told that the 21st century belongs to women as we ascend to leadership in every field, yet pediatricians and the breast-feeding lobby terrorize working mothers who prefer formula” (Brenner, 2001: 49). She indicates that formula is the preferred choice of women who want to go back to work soon after delivering a child, suggesting that if a mother chooses to breastfeed (or is “strong-armed” into doing so) she will be held back by that choice rather than impeded by a system that does not accommodate her choice to breastfeed. For example, according to the Maternity Alliance, a 21-year-old British national charity “working to improve rights and services for pregnant women, new parents, and their families” (*MaternityAlliance.org*), in October 2003, Helen Williams brought a sex discrimination case against her employers, the Ministry of Defense, because their “guidance on maternity arrangements stated that if she wanted to continue breastfeeding beyond her

maternity leave period she would have to take unpaid occupational maternity absence” (Williams, 2003: n.p.).

This particular debate—accommodating pregnant women and mothers in the workplace—marks an area where feminists have diverged for decades. In 1986, an article in *Time* reported that NOW was challenging a California law that would grant up to as much as four months of unpaid leave to women who are “disabled by pregnancy or childbirth” (Leo, 1986: 63). (Note the use of the term “disabled.”) According to the article, both NOW and the ACLU were joining the California Federal Savings and Loan Association in its suit against the state of California because “singling out women for special benefits is discriminatory and dangerous” (Ibid: 63); the plaintiffs, who were arguing that the California law allowing “special” leaves for pregnancy was forcing them to discriminate against men, were also supported by the Reagan administration and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce (Kamen, 1986: A6). Betty Friedan, considered a pioneer of Second Wave Feminism, opposed both NOW and the ACLU, saying, “There has to be a concept of equality that takes into account that women are the ones who have the babies” (Leo, 1986: 63). Many feminists attacked Friedan’s opinion, urging her to change her position on the subject, though it was a position she had been espousing publicly since at least the beginning of the decade, when her book *The Second Stage* was published.

Brenner’s article serves, ostensibly, as a feminist-informed response to the aforementioned article that precedes it in the August 2001 issue of *Newsweek*. It reads mainly as a lament for the apparent death of feminism that this emphasis on the domestic signals, as when Brenner notes that “in the 1970s twenty something Manhattan women gathered for consciousness-raising groups. Today, women of their age are flocking to, yes, cooking clubs” (Brenner, 2001: 49). Brenner undermines her

argument with such overt sarcasm because, by implying that women cannot attend cooking clubs and maintain a feminist identity, she alienates readers for whom the domestic is a part of their identity (feminist or not). Brenner's tone reflects what Nancy Rubin argues in her article "Women vs. Women: The New Cold War Between Housewives and Working Mothers" (1982): "the idea [in the 1970s] was that women should unite in order to reach common goals. In practice however, the events of the last decade may have done more to divide us than to bring us together" (Rubin, 1982: 94).

That some women feel alienated by positions such as Brenner's is evident in the published readers' responses to *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd's 2003 piece "Hot Zombie Love," in which she draws parallels between anxiety about gender issues in contemporary society and the thematic issues raised in the soon-to be-released remake of the 1975 film *The Stepford Wives*. Arguing that women "have turned themselves into Stepford wives" between 1975 and 2003, Dowd writes:

"There's even a retro trend among women toward deserting the fast track for a pleasant life of sitting around Starbucks gabbing with their girlfriends, baby strollers beside them, logging time at the gym to firm up for the he-man C.E.O. at home" (Dowd, 2012: n.p.).

One of the women writing in response to Dowd's column notes, "As a stay at-home mother and a feminist, I was horrified by Maureen Dowd's reference to [the aforementioned trend] . . . My life as a stay-at-home mom . . . leaves little time for Starbucks or the gym . . . I respect that many parents make other choices. Mine is right for me. And freedom of choice is what feminism is all about" (Janoski, 2012: n.p.).

Yet some would argue that those choices are not really choices at all because the options are so limited to begin with. In her introduction to the 1998 reprinting of *The*

Second Stage, Betty Friedan writes, “What women and men today need is not the right to have babies at sixty-three, but real choices about having children in their twenties, thirties, or even in their forties, without paying an inordinate price or facing impossible dilemmas in their careers. We need to restructure hours and conditions of work” (Friedan, 1998: xix). Friedan’s proposition is not new. For example, in 1980, Lady Howe, the former deputy chair of the Equal Opportunities Commission in the UK, proposed “more imaginative use[s] of part-time work . . . more nursery facilities . . . and more emphasis on training or re-training for those returning to work after their ‘family break’” (Howe, 1980: 6), sentiments that have been echoed in articles and books in both the U.S. and Great Britain from the 1970s to the present.⁹

Additionally, Dowd’s suggestion that such a leisurely form of social motherhood is “retro” seems to conflict with many women’s writings about work and motherhood from the 19th and 20th centuries. Rather than feeling free to chat at the coffee shop and burn calories at the gym, many stay-at-home mothers in the 1960s, for example, felt trapped in a maternal world that afforded them little time, money, or energy to engage in such activities. According to Hannah Gavron’s *The Captive Wife*, a study of middle and working-class British mothers conducted in the mid 1960s, published posthumously in 1966, a majority of the women interviewed longed to return to work outside the home not only because financial constraints demanded it, but also because they “feel curiously functionless when not working” (Gavron, 1966: 122). Furthermore, most of the women in the survey note that they feel cut off from the rest of the world; the loneliness that

⁹ Though this list is but a brief sampling, see for example, Margaret Talbot’s “Supermom Fictions” in the *New York Times Magazine* 27 Oct. 2002; Lynn Langway’s “The Superwoman Squeeze” in *Newsweek* 19 May 1980; Katha Pollitt’s “Happy Mother’s Day: Subject to Debate” in *The Nation* 28 May 2001; Kathleen Gerson’s “Work Without Worry” in the *New York Times* 11 May 2003; Frances Morrell’s “Wheels Within the Wheels of Democracy” in *The Guardian* 3 Sept. 1982; Sheila Rowbotham’s *The Past is Before Us* (1989); Mia Kellmer Pringle’s “New Thinking That Makes a Woman’s Traditional Role a More Attractive Prospect” in *The Times* 14 Jan. 1976; and Hugh Jolly’s “Try Taking the Baby to Work” in *The Times* 3 Nov. 1976.

comes from spending “all day in one room, trying to keep the children quiet because the landlady can’t bear noise” (Ibid: 122) bears little resemblance to Dowd’s description of today’s stay-at-home (and take the kids out on the town) mother. That is not to say that such women do not exist, but to suggest that those women represent not the majority, but a privileged minority in the realm of at-home mothers.

Other parallels exist between these recent conversations and ones that were happening in the 1970s and 1980s in both the United States and England. In 1986 *Newsweek* ran an article called “Feminism’s Identity Crisis” in which Eloise Salholz asserts that:

“because they have been criticized for throwing out the baby with the bath water, feminists have begun to make children a leading item on the movement’s new “personal” agenda . . . acknowledging the excesses of an earlier generation, whose emphasis on equality for women sometimes crossed the line into outright contempt for motherhood, a number of leaders believe the movement must openly embrace basic female values, longings and priorities.” (Salholz, 1986: 58).

The suggestion that motherhood is a “basic female value” is problematic, as it reproduces troublesome ideologies about women’s “natural” roles. Yet Salholz’s point that the priorities of mothers, be they working or stay-at-home, or the longings of women who would like someday to be mothers, should not be excluded from feminist agendas is critical.

According to Gretchen Ritter, in the past decade “women’s rights advocates have grown silent on the topic of motherhood [and] few dare to criticize the new stay-at-home mom movement” (Ritter, 2012: n.p.). In fact, according to an article in *London’s Telegraph*, “supporters of full-time motherhood say the concept has become sexy, the

‘new feminism,’ and the preference of most women with young children” (“Full-time”, 2012: n.p.). I think many women feel compelled at this point to note that they are currently a stay-at-home mother, and they find the job far from sexy. Nor do they feel like they are part of a “movement.” I am sure that many factors have contributed to their decisions to stay at home with their children, and as secret feminists, they often feel intensely conflicted about their choices. Mainly, however, they feel frustrated by the lack of practical options from which to choose, though they must also acknowledge that they enjoy certain privileges, such as advanced degrees and a partner who fully participates in sharing child-rearing and house-managing with them, privileges that not all mothers (or fathers) have.

There has been considerable debate in the pages of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* in recent years—from 2001-2004—concerning academics and the challenges of the work-life balance. From being pregnant on the job market to negotiating parenthood on the tenure track, the range of opinions differs wildly and reveals fundamental ideological differences that center primarily on notions of choice and responsibility. Patrice Diquinzio writes that many feminists have recognized that “mothering can divide women, creating misunderstanding, suspicion, and hostility among women whose opportunities, choices, or experiences with respect to mothering are different” (Diquinzio, 1999: X). When it comes to questions about balancing motherhood with teaching, research, and publishing, those divisions emerge most clearly in discussions of the “fairness” of standards as they apply to those with children and those without.

For example, in 2001, in response to the American Association of University Professors’ proposed policy for “granting extra time before tenure reviews to faculty members who care for newborns,” many respondents to the “Colloquy” section of *The*

Chronicle argued that such a policy discriminates against childless people. Jill Carroll, a lecturer at Rice University, writes,

“People should take responsibility for the life decisions they make . . . and not expect everyone else to make up the difference for them . . . people do what they want to do; the rest is just excuses . . . I, for one, am tired of children and breeders getting all the consideration all the time” (Carroll, 2001: n.p.).

Though Carroll’s position is extreme, many people who contributed to the discussion agree with her central argument about choice. Though I agree that people should be responsible for their choices and the subsequent consequences of those choices, I cannot agree with Carroll’s, and others’ belief that raising children is a “lifestyle choice” that merits no efforts to re-imagine the demands of the workplace, be it white or blue collar, or traditional configurations of the family. Sarah Blaffer Hrdy writes,

“Working mothers are not new . . . [the] combination of work and motherhood has always entailed tradeoffs . . . what is new for modern mothers, though, is the compartmentalization of their productive and reproductive lives . . . the economic reality of most people’s lives today is that families require more than one wage-earner . . . the physical (if not always the emotional) environment in which these compromises must be made is considerably different from the workplace of our ancestors. In some respects, omnipresent conflicts create even more tension today than in the past, because *the incentives to fix them strike mothers as optional* . . . Simply put, the pressures to change are less intense when children can (literally) live with the consequences.” (Hrdy, 2000: 109).

To suggest that becoming a mother is a choice that women should accept might simply be incompatible with their career choices, rather than to propose a reexamination of the structures that make such choices incompatible, ultimately reinforces traditional definitions of the family and gender roles within that structure.

Donna Landry and Gerald MacLean write, “Politically, the question is not whether texts reflect or change the world, but to what uses they are and have been put, and to what ends they are and can be used” (Landry and MacLean, 1993: 92). In the following chapters, I will explore the ways in which the plays of Caryl Churchill challenge the contemporary tendency to “think about motherhood as an individual achievement and a test of individual will and self-discipline” (Douglas, 2000: n.p.), as her examinations of women’s experience in both the past and the present raise questions about social issues that are, for mothers and non-mothers, both personal and political.

Chapter 2 - 1977-1981: Motherhood and the Individual

Despite the emergence of the rebellious punk rock scene around 1977 and the continuing efforts of political groups with progressive social agendas, a steady trend towards conservatism picked up steam throughout the late 1970s. In an interview with Robert Eddison in 1978, Margaret Thatcher, preparing for her campaign for the position of Prime Minister, described the philosophy of the Conservative Party, saying, “Ours is a positive creed; in its philosophical beliefs it is a very ancient creed. We seek to promote, not destroy, the uniqueness of the individual” (Eddison, 1978: 16). She suggested that the ruling Labour Party was following a socialist agenda designed to “crush” the individual by creating a society in which people are totally dependent on the state. The intense focus on the importance of the individual increasingly dominated the cultural landscape, and by the 1980s it became the prevailing ethos.

People’s mounting frustration with the economic crisis, unemployment, and the “seemingly unfettered power of organised labour” (Shellard, 1999: 169) that gripped Great Britain led to Thatcher’s election in May 1979. In 1978-1979, Britons endured what has been labeled the “Winter of Discontent” because of the “mass industrial unrest” (Ibid: xvii) caused by workers’ strikes in various industries, from railways workers to hospital workers to trash collectors. Even the *Times* newspaper staff was on strike from November 1978 to November 1979, and workers at the National Theatre went on strike in March 1979. As a result of the widespread labor crisis, the Labour government fell in the general election in May, and Margaret Thatcher moved from Opposition Leader to first (and to this point only) female Prime Minister in British history.

Yet despite the shift in power from Labour to Conservative, and Thatcher’s promises of egalitarianism, conditions did not get any better for workers, immigrants, the Irish, or women. As Catherine Itzin writes,

At the end of the sixties, there had been revolutionary fervour at all levels of society, the feeling that things were changing and could be changed. At the end of the

seventies, the forces were reactionary and showed signs of becoming positively repressive. The political climate was becoming increasingly unsympathetic to socialism and to socialist theatre. (Itzin, 1980: 337).

Capitalist ideology, nationalist sentiment, the culture of the individual, and a harkening back to Victorian values converged to create an atmosphere that paradoxically valorized the individual while simultaneously demanding conformity to prescribed ideals of good citizenship. Mrs. Thatcher's rallying cry, "We have got to get every person a capitalist . . . so that they can start with nothing and end up with something" (Emery, 1978: 2), and her claim that Conservatism is "rooted in 'our religion,' which teaches 'that every human being is unique and must play his part in working out his own salvation'" (Willmer, 1977: 14) hint at the ways in which the Conservatives' emphasis on individuality "legitimized the idea of selfishness" (*Maggie*) by linking self-sufficiency to profit, both financial and spiritual.

When the General Election approached at the end of the decade, Prime Minister Callaghan ran a campaign that insisted Labour was overcoming the growing unemployment crisis; he also suggested that a primary focus for his administration would be providing working mothers with "better nursery and childcare facilities and an effort to persuade employers to widen the range of jobs available" (Conyers, 1979: 12). The Conservatives approached the topic by putting up posters showing a seemingly endless line of people at the unemployment office, featuring their clever pun of a campaign slogan: "Labour Isn't Working." It turned out that Conservatives worked even less, as by 1980 "unemployment [rose] above two million for [the] first time since 1938" (Johnson, 1994: 502).

The Conservatives' campaign also played upon existing racial tensions at the end of the decade, promoting "a British nation with British characteristics" (Young, 1978: 32). In January 1978 Margaret Thatcher said on a television program that British people were "really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people with a different culture" (Kushner, 1994: 422), a sentiment she repeated almost verbatim on a radio call-in show in 1979 (Conyers, 1979: 12). Newspaper articles and editorials at the time

criticized Thatcher's use of the "politics of fear" to gain support for the Conservatives' desire to institute stricter immigration policies (Heffer, 1978: 18), a central part of their election campaign, which would be successfully put into law in the 1980s.

Such assertions of national identity affected not only immigrants coming from outside the United Kingdom, but also the Irish and the Scottish, countries which at the same time were growing increasingly nationalist in their anti-Englishness. The ongoing conflict in Northern Ireland was put, to some extent, in the background during the election period despite the significant increase in violence in the area. In April 1979 Prime Minister Callaghan said:

"British policy is to enable [the population of Northern Ireland to live in peace], to keep them together in one community as far as possible, to get agreement among the politicians there about the extent of the powers that can be devolved to Northern Ireland in such a way that neither community is threatened. When the election is over we will resume that task." (Comfort, 1979: 12).

Yet in December 1979, while visiting President Carter at the White House, the newly elected Prime Minister Thatcher "pleaded for 3,000 handguns for the Royal Ulster Constabulary," (Fairweather, 1979: 19) which Carter declined to provide because he was "unwilling to antagonise ethnic minorities [in his own country] in an election year" (Brandon, 1979: 5); Thatcher's request suggests that the problems in Northern Ireland were no longer on the back burner and that the solution involved a certain level of increasing aggression. Violence connected to the troubles in Northern Ireland, enacted by both pro-British and pro-Irish groups, against both civilians and soldiers, Protestant and Catholic, grew with alarming intensity at the end of the 1970s and continued into the 1980s.

In her January 1979 article "Don't You Know There's a War Going On?" Eileen Fairweather explores the particular difficulties faced by women in Northern Ireland as the result of the armed presence of the British Army and the RUC. She reports:

“After years of systematic discrimination, the bad housing and overcrowding [in the Catholic ghettos] are phenomenal, and the unemployment in some areas is as high as 40%. Childcare facilities are next to non-existent—there’s not one state nursery in the whole of Northern Ireland. Wages are far lower than in Britain, yet prices far higher: nearly 50% of women who go out to work earn less than £40 a week, while electricity, for example, costs 25% more.” (Fairweather, 1979: 20).

Furthermore, Irish Catholic women were regularly subjected to sexual intimidation, invasive body searches, and beatings while in custody, often being detained with no clear proof of any wrongdoing under the protection of the Special Powers Act,¹⁰ “emergency legislation applying in Northern Ireland [which] gives the army, police and government almost unlimited powers” (Ibid: 21).

Such special conditions for the legal handling of specific kinds of prisoners makes Margaret Thatcher’s 1981 statement “crime is crime is crime, it is not political” seem somewhat specious, convenient in its allowance for the denial of “special treatment” for IRA prisoners who demanded prisoner of war status (Melaugh, 2012: n.p.). Furthermore, that the “the deaths of several prisoners under interrogation in Northern Ireland have received only cursory and unquestioning mention” in the British press suggests an imbalance in the ways in which the conflict was represented at the time. (Fairweather, 1979: 22).

An example of such censorship on the subject of Northern Ireland is Caryl Churchill’s experience with the BBC’s airing of her documentary *The Legion Hall Bombing* in 1978. Churchill says:

“The only documentary play I’ve done was a television play about Northern Ireland, about a trial in the Diplock

¹⁰ This act eliminated, for instance, the right to a jury trial. “Evidence is heard by one judge alone . . . [trials] sometimes last[ing] no more than 25 minutes. And there have been numerous cases of prisoners appearing in court undefended, because they have not been allowed to see a solicitor” (Fairweather, 1979: 22).

courts . . . there's no jury and only one judge. I had the transcript of a trial of a boy who was given sixteen years. A bomb had been planted in a British Legion Hall . . . and a boy walked in, put the thing down, and said "Clear the hall" and they all went out . . . nobody was hurt. The trial was extraordinary because there was no evidence to say the boy who was accused did it, except the police saying he'd confessed . . . There was no positive identification at all. We put a voice-over at the beginning and the end of the programme that explained the Diplock courts, and the BBC took it off because they said it was political comment, and put one of their own in different words, which they said was objective." (Churchill, 1987: 81).

Furthermore, "the BBC had first accepted the idea of a discussion to follow the play, giving both sides the right to air the issues, but had later refused", (Gosling, 1978: 2) and the father of the boy who was the subject of the documentary was "held under the Prevention of Terrorism Act when he arrived at Fleetwood, Lancashire, on Saturday night" (Ibid: 2) when he arrived in Britain to see a preview of the play. Though Churchill sought legal advice to help stop the BBC from airing the altered version of the play (Ferriman, 1978: 2), she was unsuccessful. The piece was aired with the BBC's revisions, but both Churchill and the director, Roland Joffe, succeeded in having their names removed from the credits, and the Defence of Literature and the Arts Society called for writers and directors to "withdraw their services from the BBC until a system is provided for appealing to an impartial adjudicator over censorship decisions" (Gosling, 1978: 2).

Though Catherine Itzin writes that "Churchill was diffident about the function of political theatre and her function as a political playwright" (Itzin, 1980: 281), Churchill's belief that the BBC had distorted the meaning of *The Legion Hall Bombing* by revising it suggests that she did have specific goals in mind with this play (Fitzsimmons, 1989: 40). Furthermore, her research into the project seems to have had lingering effects. Discussing the development of *Cloud Nine*, Churchill says:

“We did discuss the parallel between colonialism and the oppression of women . . . in our reading of Genet, in relation to Ireland. The way people think of the Irish is rather the way men tend to think of women—as charming, irresponsible, poetic creatures.” (Thurman, 1982: 57).

Besides linking colonialism and the oppression of women in *Cloud Nine*, Churchill calls attention to the troubles in Northern Ireland in the second act of the play; Lin’s brother Bill is killed while serving in the army in Belfast, and his ghost appears in scene three. In *Cloud Nine* Churchill suggests that colonialism is oppressive not only to the Irish but also to the British soldiers who are assigned to enforce it and to their families.

In addition to the growing rifts between people in terms of class, religion, and ethnicity, tensions surrounding gender identification also increased. Prevailing attitudes about feminism were no less disquieting than they were at the beginning of the decade, and several articles in the mainstream press at the time focused specifically on women’s rejection of the women’s movement.¹¹ For example, Diana Geddes’s 1979 *Times* article “The Feminist with a Yearning for Scholarship” presents a profile of Mary Moore, a woman who was going to take on the role of principal at St. Hilda’s, one of the four remaining single-sex colleges at Oxford. When asked about co-education, Moore says:

“I am not a women’s libber, but I am a feminist. A feminist is a woman who wants to succeed in a man’s world, but who is definitely not antiman. The long-lasting relationship between a man and a woman is, for me, the

¹¹ For other examples, see Mary Rosemary Atkins’s 1978 article “The 21 Women Who Broke the Sex Barrier,” discussed in detail in chapter 4; “Pro-Feminine Group to Fight ‘Lib Perversion’” *Daily Telegraph* 2 Feb. 1979: 3; or Mary Kenny’s “‘Women’s Lib’ Loses Its Way . . . So I’m a Drop-out” *Daily Telegraph* 10 Dec. 1978: 12.

Kenny’s column presents a particularly narrow, and hostile, characterization of feminism. Lamenting what she perceives to be the movement’s growing distance from “the cultural expansion of the characteristics most deeply associated with women: peace . . . spirituality . . . [and] imagination,” she writes that “Women’s Lib [is] about the rights of prostitutes, the automatic support of ‘gay’ liberation, the unfeeling use of abortion as a ‘right’ to which only the woman has access . . . ‘Feminism,’ in its current manifestation, is now Marxist inclined and partly pornographic”.

most rewarding thing in my life. My family will continue to be the centre of my life.” (Geddes, 1979: 10).

Moore’s affirmation of the traditional family structure privileges her domestic role over her public one, as her vow to keep her family at the center of her life indicates, as well as heterosexuality. The distinction she draws between “women’s libbers” and “feminists” perpetuates stereotypes about women who seek “liberation” as manhaters. Furthermore, her desire to “succeed in a man’s world” suggests accepting the terms of that world rather than aspiring to change them. Similarly, Margaret Thatcher’s admission that “her husband hands out the housekeeping money each week although she is the family breadwinner [because, she says,] ‘that is simply the way he was brought up. He would feel wrong if he didn’t’” reinforces a desire to maintain “natural” roles, even when women have moved beyond those roles.

Though an opinion poll conducted by the *Times* in 1977 showed that approximately 77% of the men and women polled believed that “women’s organisations and movements have helped to get women equality over the last five years” (Walters, 1977: 13), statistics published in 1979 showed that “the proportion of women unemployed nearly doubled in the six years up to 1978, from 16 percent of the total unemployed to 29 percent” (Ibid: 2). Furthermore, Lady Howe, deputy chairman of the EOC, noted that “women had not only stopped making progress towards equal pay but were actually losing ground “ as their “gross hourly income rose from 63.1 percent of men’s in 1970 to 75.1 percent in 1976 . . . and have now dropped to 73.9 percent in 1978” (Walters, 1977: 17).

Working mothers continued to face discrimination in the workplace as well. Advancements that had been made in the early 1970s in securing maternity benefits for working mothers were deemed to have been working unsatisfactorily, prompting proposals in 1979 to amend the existing laws in ways that would make it more difficult for working mothers to be reinstated in their jobs after taking their leave. By 1980, an Employment Bill would be put into law that succeeded in instituting these changes.

By the end of the 1970s, the increased polarization of people based on their race, class, religion, and gender affected feminist thinking. Susan Bassnett writes that “universal sisterhood, the utopian ideal of women in the late 1960s and early 1970s gave way under the pressure of difference . . . what was happening was the reassertion of cultural difference, together with differences of class, race, and gender” (Bassnett, 2000: 75). The social process of identity construction, how a person perceives her/himself and is perceived by others, became a central theme in Churchill’s work during this period. Whereas the plays from 1976 focused largely on communities, the plays from 1977-1979 focus more directly on individuals who struggle to define themselves in relation to their societies.

Though Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* retains a sense of ensemble, in this play Churchill manipulates cross-casting and the ensemble cast in ways that draw attention to the individual rather than suggest anonymity as these devices did in the those works. The previous plays used the ensemble to evoke a sense of specific groups of people in an historical situation that affected them as individuals but they ultimately represent something larger than themselves. In *Cloud Nine*, the audience gets a much deeper sense of the characters as individuals. Churchill says that in *Cloud Nine*, “For the first time I brought together two preoccupations of mine—people’s internal states of being and the external political structures which affect them, which make them insane” (Itzin, 1980: 287).

The plays discussed in this thesis focus to some extent on the relationship between those internal states of being and the external structures that shape them. Each focuses on an individual’s, or several individuals’, negotiation of her or his environment, and though each suggests that the road to self-discovery is long and hard, a sense of optimism emerges as a result of the characters’ ability to reclaim their identities by the end of each play. In *Cloud Nine*, there is a sense that because the characters will proceed with their new self-awareness they will be better able to negotiate the societal terrain, though the play also inserts reminders that there will still be hurdles along the way.

In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill moves further away from the style of a conventional history play by splitting the action of the play between two different centuries. She uses no historical source material, as she did in her two plays from 1976, and the style is less naturalistic than *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* or *Vinegar Tom*. Nevertheless, the play functions as a history play because in addition to the historical setting of act one, the second act is so firmly rooted in its own time and place that it is historical as well; furthermore the mingling of the 19th and 20th centuries at the end of the play “enables us to see history as knit into the fabric of our own time” (Harben, 1988: 255).

As a result of this shift of focus, these plays present a different approach to mothers and motherhood as well. In *Cloud Nine* there is an attempt to show the relationships between mothers and daughters that did not feature in the earlier works. Daughters struggle to be different from their mothers in various ways, and the sense of oneself as an individual is connected to this struggle. In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill explodes stereotypes about mothers by employing them in ways that appear at first to reinforce them, but eventually subvert them, allowing other characters, and the audience, to reach a recognition of challenges these women have faced, in part because of their roles as mothers.

Additionally, the plays from this period focus more directly on the practice of mothering—how characters can or cannot, do or do not, perform the job of mother according to their culture’s definition of the role. Furthermore, the ways in which men experience fatherhood and motherhood emerges in relation to questions about the construction of gender identities in these plays as well. *Cloud Nine*, in particular, hints at the desire to imagine new configurations of the family, providing the possibility for an expansion of the definition of mother.

2.1. *Cloud Nine*

Cloud Nine, which was produced in 1979, was the result of Churchill's collaboration with the Joint Stock Company and her cooperation with the director Max Stafford-Clark. Her collaboration with the company composes a three-week workshop. The homosexual and heterosexual participants of both sexes discussed their sexual experience in the context of societal structures. (Kritzer, n.d.: 112). This process eventually provided a close examination of gender, sexuality and power, and their role in the establishment of patriarchal ideology. Churchill defined that sexual identities are not "natural" but constructed and institutionalized by the sexual politics of patriarchal ideology (Ibid: 112) and she centered sexual politics as one of the main concerns of this play. The similarity between the sexual attitudes of contemporary England and those of the Victorian era underlined the gender definitions of patriarchal ideology functioning in both periods. Churchill discusses this similarity in the following quotation:

"When we discussed our backgrounds it occurred to us it was as if everyone felt they had been born almost in the Victorian age. Everyone had grown up with quite conventional and old-fashioned expectations about sex and marriage and felt that they themselves had had to make enormous break-aways and leaps to change their lives from that..." (Aston, 1997: 35).

Churchill's thinks that individuals - female or male - deny subjectivity and therefore the representation of their submitting to the patriarchal ideology gave way to her analysis of the representation of the colonized. As a result of this analysis, Churchill concluded that there existed "...[a parallelism] between colonial and sexual oppression, which [is] 'the colonial or feminine mentality of internalised repression'." (Churchill, 1985: 245).

Churchill's attempt to prove the influence of the patriarchal dynamics in establishing and regulating forms of representation made her set the First Act of the play against the Victorian historical scenery of an African country colonized by the

British. The First Act of the play reflects the height of the Victorian era throughout which the Victorian individual was constructed according to the predominating patriarchal ideology that constituted its own attitudes of power, gender, and sexuality. The Second Act, on the other hand, is set in the London of 1979. According to Churchill, it created an atmosphere of "...the changing sexuality of our time" (Churchill, 1985: 246). However, Churchill criticizes the liberty originated by this atmosphere. In order to define the dominance of patriarchal ideology within this atmosphere, she employs double casting in between the acts. By doing so, she forces the audience to understand the cultural and historical construction processes that the characters have experienced in the context of the two different acts, and shows them that in both acts, the central ideology that builds these processes is patriarchy.

By double casting, Churchill employs a deconstruction which challenges the theatrical mechanism that requires the unifying representation of the individual (Diamond, n.d.: 96). This is accompanied by the time compression between the acts. This time compression - by which the historical time leaps a hundred years while the members of the Victorian family has aged twenty-five years - ruins the linearity of historical time and erases its influence off of the female bodies that are represented (Aston, n.d.: 32). This is a challenge against the sexual politics that erase the female body, and the theatrical convention that character time will be attached to the time frame of the text (Diamond, n.d.: 97).

The First Act takes place in a British colony in Africa and concerns the colonial and patriarchal authority performed by Clive. Clive's wife, Betty, is a frustrated female character who is accompanied by Maud - her mother, and Ellen - the governess. Betty's frustration relatively pauses as she finds a chance to restart her love affair with Harry Bagley, an explorer who visits the colony. However, as a result of this visit, Harry's past homosexual relationship with Betty's nine-year-old son, Edward, is also restarted.

Harry's visit coincides with a native revolt. In order not to alarm the female characters, Clive and Harry make attempts to take control of the situation by employing

Joshua, their native servant, as their guardian. Caroline Saunders, their neighbor, arrives at Clive's house to take refuge from the natives, and becomes the object of Clive's sexual desire. She is an independent widow and she yields to a sexual intercourse with Clive only once, but it is later tricked into it against her will.

Meanwhile, Betty makes an effort to "speak" her desire for Harry, who, in fact, has casual sex with Joshua and continues a guilt-ridden relationship with Edward. Betty's relationship with Harry is closely watched by her mother, Maud, who gives her unwanted advice about being a "lady".

Edward is also another character who is continuously lectured about being a "man". He secretly plays with Victoria's doll and he is constantly caught. He is warned by Clive, Betty, Maud and Ellen, and the doll he plays with is ripped open by Joshua.

Joshua informs Clive of the relationship between Betty and Harry. As Clive confronts them on the subject, Betty confesses it, and Harry reveals his homosexuality. Clive suggests that Harry should redeem himself through marriage, and Harry proposes first to Caroline Saunders, but is rejected. He later proposes to Ellen, who accepts his proposal despite her love for Betty.

The uprising of the natives, as a result of which Clive gets his stable boys flogged, further results in Joshua's parents' death. Joshua's hidden anger marks the end of the First Act, as he aims a gun at Clive at the wedding ceremony.

The Second Act takes place in the England of 1980s, and opens in a park in which Lin and Victoria chat while Cathy - Lin's daughter and Tommy - Victoria's son, play. Lin and Victoria initiate a lesbian relationship in the park that goes beyond their conflicting perspectives and separate backgrounds of education. Victoria's brother, Edward, is a gardener who fears that his homosexuality might cost him his job. Their mother, Betty, has just divorced Clive and tries to establish a future for herself.

As the Second Act progresses, the characters make attempts to discover alternative options in their lives, concerning sexuality, relationships, and professions: Edward's lover, Gerry, abandons Edward for alternative experiences outside their relationship. Edward throws off the burden of this abandonment by his involvement in the relationship between Victoria and Lin. Martin, Victoria's husband, tries to convince her not to take the job she is offered, but finally agrees to take care of Tommy and Cathy to support her. He also accepts Victoria's sexual experience with Lin, and joins the orgy that Victoria, Lin and Edward have. Betty, on the other hand, finds it hard to come to terms with the independence she has gained. As her anxiety caused by this new experience fades away, she discovers her own sexuality and comes to terms with the sexual choices of her children.

2.2. *Cloud Nine*: Motherhood and The Emerging Individual

After the production of two plays in 1976, Churchill contributed a piece to the collaboratively written *Floorshow*, Monstrous Regiment's first cabaret production, in 1977. Also in 1977, her play *Traps* was produced at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. She then had two television pieces produced—*The After Dinner Joke* (written 1977, televised 1978) and *The Legion Hall Bombing* (written and televised in 1978). *Cloud Nine*, first performed at the Dartington College of Arts in February 1979 by the Joint Stock Theatre Group, marks the return of Churchill's history plays to the stage. The London run of the play began at the Royal Court Theatre in March 1979; a revival subsequently opened at the Royal Court Theatre in September 1980, with a different cast. The American premiere of the play in 1981, with slight revisions, was directed by Tommy Tune. Major revivals of the play have been mounted in 1986 and 2001.

Cloud Nine was developed in workshops with Churchill, director Max Stafford-Clark, the company of actors who would perform the play, and additional participants, including historian Sheila Rowbotham, an "older woman" who ran the canteen at the rehearsal space, and the mother of one of the company members (Thurman, 1982: 57). The workshops centered primarily on issues related to what Churchill labels "sexual politics" (Simon, 1983: 126), and the actors in the original cast were "chosen on the basis of sexual experience and preference, as well as... their professional experience" (Thurman, 1982: 54). As a result, the material generated by the workshop participants creates an interesting convergence of identities between the actors, the other workshop attendees, and the characters that can never be fully reproduced in subsequent productions. For example, the original American cast expressed confusion and apprehension when rehearsals began in 1981, and Nicolas Surovy (Harry Bagley/Martin) said, "Many actors I know read for the play, but just couldn't handle its sexual aspects" (Dunning, 1981: C4), whereas Jim Hooper (Betty/Edward) from the 1979 Joint Stock cast said, "[I have] never felt so close to a play. It is like a second skin" (Wandor, 1979: 16).

Mothers and motherhood featured in the workshops for *Cloud Nine* in both theoretical and practical terms. When discussing the process of identity construction, “everyone in the company talked about ‘childhoods and parents, and about the way we got to be who we are’” (Thurman, 1982: 54). In a more tangible intervention of motherhood into the development process, the mother of original cast member Julie Covington participated in the workshops, and, according to Churchill, many of her comments were incorporated into the character of 20th century Betty (Ibid: 57). Thus, Covington, in playing act two Betty, was, in some respects, embodying her own mother, who, according to Churchill, “disapproved of us all very much” (Ibid: 57). Considering the intricate weaving of the characters’ enactment of and responses to maternal approbation and censure throughout the play, it is interesting to note that the American actors who played the roles of Betty in the Tommy Tune-directed version, E. Katherine Kerr (Ellen/Mrs. Saunders/Betty) and Zeljko Ivanek (Betty/Gerry), remarked jointly at the time, “‘I bet there’s something in every role—’ ‘—that you don’t want your mother to see you doing!’” (Dunning, 1981: C4).

As conservatism gained strength politically and socially throughout the end of the 1970s, Churchill’s plays reflect a mounting resistance to conservatism in terms of both the content of her plays and the increasingly experimental dramatic structures she employed. For example, Churchill’s approach to history in *Cloud Nine* differs from the two earlier history plays in that the action of the play is divided between two distinct time periods: Africa in 1880 and London in 1980.¹² Though *Vinegar Tom* has intrusions from the present in the form of songs, the primary action of the play remains rooted in the 17th century; *Cloud Nine* creates a different historical juxtaposition, using an historical setting for act one, and a contemporary setting for Act Two. The two periods remain distinct from one another until the very end of the play, when several characters from the 19th century join the 20th century Betty on stage, culminating in Betty embracing her 19th century self, the final image of the play. Yet even when the two

¹² The designation of 1880 for the first act and 1980 for the second act of the play is from the American acting edition (Samuel French, 1981) of the play. In the original published script (Pluto Press/Joint Stock, 1979) and in the Revised American Edition (Methuen, 1984), the first act is set in “Victorian times” and the second act in “the present.” In *Churchill: Plays One* (Methuen, 1985), the setting of Act One is again “Victorian times,” but Act Two is designated specifically as 1979.

worlds do merge, they do so in a more self-contained fashion than they do in *Vinegar Tom*; the temporal disruptions in *Cloud Nine* are not framed as self-referential commentary but exist within the world of the play itself.

Churchill says that she originally intended to set *Cloud Nine* entirely in the present, but the idea to investigate colonialism emerged after the workshops, in which the topic had been touched up on briefly. Amelia Howe Kritzer writes, *Cloud Nine* shows Churchill in a different relationship to historical material than in the history plays. The farcical misery and sometimes bizarre fictions of the first act make for a deliberately artificial construction of the past . . . the entire first act serves as a reference point within the second, rather than an episode preceding it. (Kritzer, 1991: 128-129).

Yet in its use of cross-casting, the lapse of only twenty-five years, and the appearance of ghosts from both the present and the past, the present day of act two is shown to be an equally artificial construction. The structure insists on the inseparable relationship between the two, particularly when the 19th century characters reemerge bodily in the 20th century, and the present is also constructed as an historical moment as a result.

The characters' struggle with their lifestyles in the second act suggests the continuation of social constriction across centuries. Though Michelene Wandor argues that act one of *Cloud Nine* is socialist-feminist but act two is bourgeoisfeminist because it "merely 'shows' us men and women living as they wish, based on individual choice" (Wandor, 2000: 65), claiming that the 20th century characters act on what they desire rather than what they are forced to choose, the trading of hidden desires for open ones brings freedom only on one level, and it is this contradiction that emphasizes the historical persistence of oppressive structures.

As Amelia Howe Kritzer suggests, "while sexual patterns show themselves somewhat resistant to change, patterns of societal power are yet more resistant, proving the adaptability of the prevailing power structure in the process of maintaining itself"

(Kritzer, 1991: 125). For example, Edward fears losing his job if his homosexuality is exposed, and Lin risks losing custody of her child as a result of her open identification as a lesbian. They may live more open lifestyles than their Victorian predecessors, but their acknowledgment of those desires still presents significant obstacles and governs their choices. Harry Bagley and Ellen enjoy certain freedoms in the 19th century of act one specifically because they hide their true identities. In either case, the characters must negotiate their desires within the confines of their societies' laws and mores.

In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill undermines stereotypes by employing them in a way that exposes them as social constructions. She plays with a variety of stereotypes, including various mother types: Maud as domineering mother/mother-in-law, 20th century Victoria as distant mother, Lin as slightly violent working-class mother, 19th century Betty as disaffected mother, and 20th century Betty as, at first, a replication of Maud's domineering mother/mother-in-law. Edward also adopts motherly roles in both acts, though he does not embody any particular stereotype about motherhood. There are no idealized mothers in the play, but in becoming a "real" person by the end of the play, Betty also becomes a "real" mother rather than a mother type, who recognizes that her lives and her children's, though forever entwined, are actually separate existences.

Edward is inclined to be a nurturer in both acts, and his "maternal instinct" seems stronger than his sister's, raising questions about the relationship between gender and mothering. In act one, Edward's interest in mothering is seen as unacceptable behavior by the adults in his society, from his parents to the family's servant, Joshua. The first time Edward is caught playing with the doll in the play, he explains to Clive and Betty that he is "minding" Vicky's doll for her, rather than "playing" with her, since he has been reprimanded for playing with the doll in the past. In this scene, both Betty and the children's nanny, Ellen, defend Edward, assuring Clive that Edward is not playing with the doll. Edward relents, and his relieved father notes that Edward is being "manly" by taking care of his younger sister. (Churchill, 1985: 257).

The next time he is caught with the doll, however, Edward protests giving her up, saying, “She’s not Victoria’s doll, she’s my doll. She doesn’t love Victoria and Victoria doesn’t love her. Victoria never even plays with her” (Churchill, 1987: 275). His mother reacts more violently in this scene, slapping him as she forcibly removes the doll from his grasp. In this instance, neither Clive nor Ellen is on stage, though Betty’s mother, Maud, is present and offering her critique of not only Edward’s but also Betty’s behavior, suggesting that Betty is failing in her duties as a mother primarily because she has allowed the governess to leave Edward unattended.

Betty’s markedly different handling of her son in this context reflects her own conflicts in both the desire and ability to perform her role according to cultural standards. When Clive is present, Betty does not act as disciplinarian, but as moderator between father and child. When her mother is observing her, however, Betty becomes more aggressive in exerting control over her child, perhaps a reflection of her own mother’s methods. For once the doll has been retrieved from Edward, Maud reprimands the doll, saying, “Where did Vicky’s naughty baby go? Shall we smack her? Just a little smack? There, now she’s a good baby” (Ibid: 275).

Of course, Victoria is a very young baby, and is herself represented by a doll, but her disinterest in playing with dolls/babies emerges in contrast to Edward’s maternal instincts in discussions that illustrate the ways in which gender roles are culturally prescribed; the discussions are themselves enactments of such constructions. For example, after Edward’s declaration that Vicky never plays with her doll, Maud remarks, “Victoria will learn to play with her” (Ibid: 275), suggesting that Victoria will have little choice in the matter, much like Edward cannot choose to play with dolls because it disrupts the accepted order, raising questions about choice as it relates to mothering as a practice. As Chodorow suggests, “Being a mother ... is not only bearing a child—it is being a person who socializes and nurtures” (Chodorow, 1978: 11).

Yet in act two it seems that Victoria has not developed an interest in playing the role of mother, even though she now has a child of her own. Her son never appears on

stage, and the lack of Tommy's physical presence on stage indicates a disconnect between mother and child. For example, in scene two, Tommy goes off on his own, and no one knows where he is:

LIN. Where's Tommy?

VIC. What? Didn't he go with Martin?

LIN. Did he?

VIC. God oh God.

LIN. Cathy! Cathy!

VIC. I haven't thought about him. How could I not think about him? Tommy. (Churchill, 1985: 304).

Lin's daughter Cathy eventually finds Tommy hiding in the bushes and solves the problem. Earlier in the scene, Victoria and her husband Martin discuss her job opportunity in Manchester; Martin tells her to "follow it through . . . leave me and Tommy alone for a bit, we can manage perfectly well without you" (Ibid: 301). In trying to find her own identity, Victoria needs to distance herself from her husband and her son. She's as distant from her child as Betty was from hers, but for different reasons.

Victoria's distance from a traditional maternal role is further heightened by Edward's assumption of the duties of homemaker after he moves in to live with Lin and Victoria and their respective children. Edward is the person who gives Martin instructions for the evening when Martin is taking the two children to spend the night at his house, making the children seem to be his primary responsibility. When Edward tells his former lover, Gerry, about the new living arrangements he notes, "I'm on the dole. I am working, though. I do housework. . . They [Lin and Vic] go out to work and I look after the kids" (Ibid: 315). Thus, in act two, Edward's desire to nurture is liberating for both him and Victoria, as both are freed from their socially defined roles through their adoption of a reimagined notion of family.

Churchill also explores the possibility of alternatives to the traditional family unit through Lin, the lesbian single mother. Lin comes from a working-class background, and she serves as a contrast to the theoretically informed Victoria, particularly in her

relationship with her daughter, Cathy. Whereas Victoria is markedly separate from her child, Lin is often besieged by Cathy. She tells Victoria,

[Cathy's] frightened I'm going to leave her. It's the baby minder didn't work out when she was two, she still remembers. You can't get them used to other people if you're by yourself. It's no good blaming me. She clings round my knees every morning up the nursery and they don't say anything but they make you feel you're making her do it. But I'm desperate for her to go to school. I did cry when I left her the first day. You wouldn't you're too fucking sensible. (Churchill, 1985: 290).

As a single parent, Lin has little room to get away from her child because she bears the sole responsibility for her, a point that is reinforced by Cathy's rather boisterous stage presence. In her review of an American production of *Cloud Nine* in 1983 Wendy Lesser claims that "children who spout obscenities, scream at the slightest opposition, and refuse to go to bed on time are touted as delightful companions in this play. Apparently the well-behaved child is another aspect of British oppression which feminism has succeeded in rooting out" (Lesser, 1983: 27). Yet both Edward's (act one) and Cathy's (act two) behavior raises questions about control and identity, as do their mothers' various responses to their outbursts, which range from attempts at reasoning with the children to ending debates with a slap. Cathy is rarely "delightful," even if she is a comic character. Her presence makes Lin's job seem that much more challenging, particularly as the audience watches Lin struggle to find a balance between allowing Cathy to make choices for herself and needing to supervise, and sometimes deny, those choices.

Lin's confusion over the "right" way to raise her child touches on the idea that shaping a child's identity, particularly as it relates to traditional gender roles, is a mother's responsibility. Lin tells Victoria, "I give Cathy guns, my mum didn't give me guns. I dress her in jeans, she wants to wear dresses. I don't know. I can't work it out, I don't want to" (Churchill, 1985: 303). Similarly, 20th century Betty reflects on her

perceived successes and failures as a mother based on how her children have “turned out.”

For example, when she meets Gerry at the end of the play and acknowledges openly for the first time that her son is gay, Betty says, “Well people always say it’s the mother’s fault but I don’t intend to start blaming myself. He seems perfectly happy” (Churchill, 1985: 320). Because both Edward’s and Cathy’s behavior indicates that children will ultimately find a way to become themselves, and that the children’s search for their identity is affected by forces beyond their relationships with their mothers, the play presents the hopeful suggestion that women might be able to break free from the impossible, culturally invented, notion that mothers “have unlimited power in the shaping of [their] offspring” (Thurer, 1994: 300).

The burden of single parenthood is compounded by Lin’s open identification as a lesbian. She and her child face significant challenges because of it, both socially and legally:

LIN. I left [my husband] two years ago. He let me keep
Cathy and I’m grateful for that.

VIC. You shouldn’t be grateful.

LIN. I’m a lesbian.

VIC. You still shouldn’t be grateful. (Churchill, 1985:
291).

The fact is, however, that lesbian mothers in England in the 1970s faced a very real danger of having their children taken away from them. In 1976, *Spare Rib* reported that When a woman who is a lesbian is unlucky enough to have to go to court to fight for custody she has at the moment no chance of winning. The judge always awards custody to the father. The most she can hope for is “access”—the right to visit the children who have lived with her from birth. . . One judge. . . went to some lengths to explain that while he did not blame the mother for her lesbianism. . . it was vital that the court distinguish between understanding and approval. To approve of homosexuality, he said, would mean the decay of society as we know it and could only corrupt others.

(p.6) The threat that Lin's lesbian identity poses to her role as a mother reminds the audience that the freedom the 20th century characters seem to have over their choices about sexuality and identity is somewhat superficial.

Furthermore, when compared to Ellen, the Victorian governess, who hides her lesbian identity, Lin's situation seems equally oppressive, albeit in a different way. Ellen earns a living caring for other people's children, even though she has no interest in mothering, a point that emerges when she tries to express her love for Betty near the end of act one:

ELLEN. I don't want children, I don't like children. I just want to be alone with you, Betty, and sing for you and kiss you because I love you, Betty.

BETTY. I love you, too, Ellen. But women have their duty as soldiers have. You must be a mother if you can.
(Churchill, 1985: 281).

Betty doesn't acknowledge Ellen's lesbian desires, reflecting what Yvonne Knibiehler argues was a lack of either "the concept [or] the word" for lesbianism in 19th century culture (Knibiehler, 1993: 356). Ultimately, no one perceives Ellen as a threat because she does not openly challenge societal norms. Yet because Lin openly challenges those norms, she may be deemed unfit to care for her own child, despite her obvious commitment to her daughter's well-being and her interest in mothering. Lin's active role as a mother also contrasts with 19th century Betty's performance of her role of mother, further questioning the standards of acceptable behavior and the definition of motherhood.

As a mother in the 19th century, Betty does not do much mothering. She doesn't seem particularly interested in spending time with her children, pawing them off on Ellen or her mother, to control. Children are a part of her societal role, but not a part of her life. When she introduces herself in the opening scene of the play, she says,

I live for Clive, the whole aim of my life

Is to be what he looks for in a wife,
 And what men want is what I want to be. (Churchill, 1985:
 251).

The description shows Betty's need to fit in and fulfill her duty as prescribed by her culture. She spends her days reading, playing the piano, and letting the nanny care for the children, a life she finds monotonous.

Throughout the first act, characters are defined by their roles, rather than as individuals. The isolation that comes from Betty's dedicated performance of her duty results in antipathy for other women, failing to see them as anything but their functions; when she notes that she looks forward to Harry Bagley's arrival because he will "break the monotony," Clive says, "You have your mother. You have Ellen," to which Betty replies, "Ellen is a governess. My mother is my mother" (Ibid: 253-254).

Her role also means a rejection of her own desires. For example, the dashing explorer, Harry Bagley, in an attempt to thwart Betty's sexual advances tells her, "You are a mother. And a daughter. And a wife" (Ibid: 268). Her various roles dictate her choices, and none of them gives her room to be what she wants to be. Maud challenges Betty's amorous interest in Harry Bagley, saying, "I don't like what I see. Clive wouldn't like it Betty. I am your mother" (Ibid: 268). Maud's reprimand reinforces not only Betty's duty to obey her husband, and her mother, but also establishes her own role as a guardian of appropriate behavior.

In act one, Maud fits the stereotype of controlling mother by attempting to control the domestic environment. She is displaced in a way because she lives in her adult daughter's home, and has to relinquish some of her authority as a result. Nevertheless, she constantly chides Betty for what she sees as inappropriate behavior. Discussing Betty's treatment of the children's nanny, Ellen, Maud says, "You let that girl forget her place, Betty."

BETTY. Mother, she is governess to my son. I know what her place is. I think my friendship does her good. She is not very happy.

MAUD. Young women are never happy.

BETTY. Mother, what a thing to say.

MAUD. When they're older they look back and see that comparatively speaking they were ecstatic.

BETTY. I'm perfectly happy.

MAUD. You are looking very pretty tonight. You were such a success as a young girl. You have made a most fortunate marriage. . .

BETTY. What a long time they're taking. I always seem to be waiting for the men.

MAUD. Betty you have to learn to be patient. I am patient. My mama was very patient. (Churchill, 1985: 258).

Maud's philosophy implies an emphasis on the historical tradition of maintaining the status quo; the pride she takes in accepting her designated role in emulation of her mother, to whom she refers as "an angel" (Ibid: 275), reinforces the continuity of such social structures.

This cycle is also evident earlier in the scene, as Betty and Maud reproduce one another's behavior. Betty warns Ellen to make sure that the children are warm enough because "the night air is deceptive" (Ibid: 256). When Maud enters, she wants to make sure Betty is warm enough, cautioning her daughter that "the night air is deceptive" (Ibid: 256). Betty is annoyed by what she sees as her mother's interference, but the exchange reveals that both mothers inevitably treat their children in the same way, though the adult daughter resists being mothered. Furthermore, the scene suggests that Betty mothers Ellen in a way, as she mediates the nanny's control of her children.

Later in the act, Betty plays with Ellen, further suggesting their surrogate mother-daughter relationship. Yet the scene also demonstrates that the women are like children in the men's eyes, reinforcing the chain of command.

(BETTY takes a ball from the hamper and plays catch with ELLEN. Murmurs of surprise and congratulations from the men whenever they catch the ball.)

EDWARD. Mama, don't play. You know you can't catch a ball.

BETTY. He's perfectly right. I can't throw either.
(BETTY sits down. ELLEN has the ball.)

EDWARD. Ellen, don't you play either. You're no good. You spoil it.

(EDWARD takes VICTORIA from HARRY and gives HER to ELLEN. HE takes the ball and throws it to HARRY. HARRY, CLIVE and EDWARD play ball.)

BETTY. Ellen come and sit with me. We'll be spectators.
(EDWARD misses the ball) (Chuchhill, 1985: 265).

By playing ball, the women violate the accepted order. The fact that Edward, a child, demands that they stop, and Betty's admission that she's no good at it, though she was throwing and catching quite well, reveals that, as a male, Edward actually has more agency than his mother or his nanny in situations that are considered to be a male domain. Yet Edward cannot comfortably fit into the male scheme of things, reminding the audience of the struggle most of the characters in this environment face in trying to fit into the established order.

20th century Betty has a slightly different relationship to her children, as her role becomes one of more direct intervention in their lives. True to the groundwork laid in act one, Betty reproduces her own mother's behavior in her efforts to control her children's lives. For example, in her first appearance in act two, she tells Lin, "I think Victoria's very pretty but she doesn't make the most of herself, do you darling. . . I like your skirt dear but your shoes won't do at all" (Ibid: 294). Later she tries to control her son-in-law Martin's care of Tommy:

BETTY. And poor little Tommy, I hear he doesn't sleep properly and he's had a cough.

MARTIN. No, he's fine, Betty, thank you . . .

BETTY. Well Tommy has got a nasty cough, Martin,
whatever you say.

EDWARD. He's over that. He's got some medicine.

MARTIN. He takes it in Ribena.

BETTY. Well I'm glad to hear it. (Churchill, 1985: 314).

Thus at the beginning of the act, Betty continues to conform to her designated role, performing what reads as almost a parody of her own mother.

Betty's individuality is something she discovers over the course of act two. Her first step towards breaking out of this role is her decision to leave her husband, news that shocks her children, in part because of the way it affects their own roles, as Edward bemoans, "They're going to want so much attention" (Ibid: 295). Near the end of the play, Betty suggests getting a house in which she could live with Victoria, Edward, Lin, and the children, expressing a desire to be a part of their newly configured family; although she still seems resistant to accepting the true nature of the sexual relationships within that family, she has to admit, "You do seem to have such fun all of you" (Ibid: 317). Her evident longing to have some fun herself suggests that she is moving closer to making decisions for herself based on what she would like, rather than what she is required, to do.

It is clear, however, that breaking out of her role depends not only on her willingness, or ability, to see herself differently, but also on the ability of others to see her as something other than her role. Victoria, who has expressed dislike for her mother throughout act two, wondering at one point, "Does everybody hate their mothers?" (Ibid: 296), resists the change.

VIC. I don't want to live with my mother.

LIN. Don't think of her as your mother, think of her as
Betty.

VIC. But she thinks of herself as my mother.

BETTY. But I am your mother.

VIC. But Mummy we don't even like each other.

BETTY. We might begin to. (Churchill, 2985, 317).

Though it is clearly difficult for Victoria to imagine Betty as anything but her mother, she does try. Later in the scene, she asks, “Betty, would you like an ice cream?” (Ibid: 318); Victoria’s willingness to acknowledge her mother as “Betty” gives Betty the freedom to move forward with her shifting identity, and contributes to changes in Victoria’s identity as well.

Throughout the final scene, Betty engages with the characters from both the present and the past, sorting out her new identity in relation to them; as Kritzer suggests, “Betty’s recognition of her value as a ‘separate person’ leads to a new plane of activity, in which she tries new patterns of relating”. (Kritzer, 1991: 126). Her exchange with Gerry is particularly important because he is, for the most part, stranger, though she recognizes him as Edward’s former “flatmate.” Nevertheless, Betty takes a risk; she is, in fact, trying to pick up Gerry, unaware that he is gay, and her boldness signifies her newfound ability to pursue her desires.

The encounter between these two characters occurs in different locations in the British and American versions of the play, and many critics have suggested that the change of the scene’s placement affects the overall thematic implications of the play. The crucial difference is that the placement of Betty’s monologue, in which she explicitly states her self-discovery, recognizing that she is an individual, separate from her mother and her husband, comes before the aforementioned conversations with Victoria in Gerry in the British version, but after those encounters in the U.S. acting version. In her introduction to the revised American edition of *Cloud Nine* (Methuen 1984), Churchill writes:

There is a lot that is attractive about the New York ending, and it provides more of an emotional climax. . . but on the whole I prefer the play not to end with Betty’s self-discovery but with her moving beyond that to a first attempt to make a new relationship with someone else. (Churchill, 1984: ix)

Susan Bennett argues that as a result of the repositioning, Betty becomes a “central character,” someone to whom the audience might relate; she writes, “The change in ending is particularly interesting: the adoption of a discourse of American feminism (self-discovery/knowledge) realigned Churchill's materialist critique to address a targeted audience in terms that would meet an American, rather than British, horizon of expectations” (Bennett, 1998: 32).

Elin Diamond, on the other hand, suggests that the “actual position of the monologue. . . [does not make] much difference” because the final visual image of the play, in which 20th century Betty embraces 19th century Betty, ultimately conveys the same message (Diamond, 1985: 279). I agree with Diamond's reading in regard to the monologue's placement, though I do not think, as she suggests, that the ending (the embracing Bettys) turns Churchill's “historicist critique” into an “ahistorical romance” (Ibid: 279). Rather, Betty's reconciliation of her two identities suggests the possibility for a change in the historical trends of gender oppression that have emerged throughout the play. Betty does not reject her Victorian identity but reclaims it. Her emerging sense of individuality includes a recognition of her previous self; Betty is not disclaiming her roles as mother and daughter, though she does abandon her role as a wife, but she accepts them as a part of her identity rather than *as* her identity. Discussing this moment in performance, E. Katherine Kerr says, “It's the greatest gift in the world to be able to turn back to my past every night and embrace it” (Dunning, 1981: C4).

Though the communities presented in *Cloud Nine* seem more fragmented than those in Churchill's earlier history plays, because of the ways in which the characters either close themselves off from each other by submerging their desires (act one), or try to extract themselves from each other in their individual pursuits of free expression (act two), the play ultimately suggests that the value of discovering, and being allowed to develop, one's true identity is that it will create a stronger, more vibrant community, and, perhaps, even effect changes in the ways in which communities are defined and constructed. Churchill says, “This is not in any apparent way related to the experience of *Cloud 9*. But it is chronologically related. . . so it is *obviously* related. My

relationship with my mother has become so much better in the course of this whole period. Not apparently *because* of the play, but because I became myself” (Thurman, 1982: 57).

The growing emphasis on the individual in the cultural landscape of the late 1970s is reflected in the structures and themes of Churchill’s plays at the end of the decade. Efforts to define oneself in relation to one’s culture become a central part of the playwrights’ examinations of the past and present in plays. *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* explore characters’ expectations of themselves and others and the ways in which those characters meet those expectations or shatter them, consciously or unconsciously. Furthermore, by working against the audience’s expectations through their choices in regard to structure and casting, Churchill reinforces the characters’ need to define themselves rather than be defined by the culture, as the plays, and thus the characters in them, resist being defined by traditional dramatic structures or conventional representations of history.

The characters in *Cloud Nine* live relatively comfortable lives; they are not the same kind of outsiders as those in the earlier plays. In fact, most of the characters in *Cloud Nine* are not as obviously outside the norms of their society because they expend so much energy trying to blend in. By hiding their true identities more successfully, they manage to get by, even though they feel constricted. The threats are not as dire in an immediate sense, though the consequences of the characters’ conformity are shown to be equally dire. There is still a call to action, pointing at the need to change the social structures that define people’s roles within their societies, but the change must come from the individual’s ability to see the problems and his or her willingness to change them, as Betty recognizes she only needs to accept herself to be herself. The characters in *Cloud Nine* seek, and discover, new ways of expressing themselves despite cultural constrictions. By the 1980s, Churchill’s plays would reflect a sense of the loss of the spirit of revolution, though they would attempt to inspire audience’s to reflect on that loss and thus act as calls to change.

2.3. *Cloud Nine*: Mothers and Their Overwhelmed Bodies

The play opens in “Low bright sun. Verandah. Flagpole with Union Jack.” (Churchill, 1985: 251). In examining this contemplated stage setting, it is observed that even in the first moment of the play, the spectators are presented an atmosphere placed with crucial images and they reflect the dominance of the patriarchal ideology. Bright sun, which is the first image that will be analysed in this context, exists and dominates in this patriarchal realm and it constitutes the key element in its interpretation. Its reference to the concept of heliocentric universe and to the processes that identified it as the center of cosmos that refers to the replacement of moon-worship with sun-worship. As a result of this replacement, the significance of pre-patriarchal belief systems, which posited lunar deities as related to the Virgin-Mother-Goddess and recognized the authority of the female presence in every part of cosmos (Rich, n.d.: 107), were erased. The female presence, which was coded in recurrent aspects of nature, (i.e., that birth is followed by death, death by reincarnation, that tides ebb and flow, winter follows summer, the full moon follows the dark of the moon, etc (Ibid: 113)) was overwritten with the occurrence of sun-worship. It determined sun as the ultimate source of life and suggested a disconnection from the plurality suggested by the cyclic aspects of nature. The following quotation by Rich, in which she analyses the origins of sun-worship in Egypt, explains the dynamics that resulted in this change of belief-systems:

“The fourteenth century B.C. pharaoh Akhenaton revolutionised Egyptian cosmology in setting up the Aten, or sun-disk, as the sole embodiment of a new religion, the seat of the Aten at Tell-el-Amarna, he encouraged an art which over and over, in the sun disk with its spreading rays, asserts the message of a monotheistic, heliocentric, and patriarchal universe...Amarnan art, in fact, reiterates images of woman and of the family which do not seem very different from contemporary stereotypes. In these incised or carved images, Akhenaton is already both patriarch and deity...[Above the representation of the royal family] the Aten holds forth its rays, and it is the real

center and keystone of the composition...In establishing the worship of the Athen, Akhenaton not only ordered the destruction of many images of earlier gods, and removed their names from monuments, but prohibited the plural form of the word 'god'" (Rich, n.d.: 114).

Rich continues her analysis by examining the Hellenic sun-god Apollo, who assimilated the attractive aspects of the Great Mother, and became the spokesman of father-right (Rich, n.d.: 124-125). This assimilation, which means controlling the natural forces symbolized by Great Mother, also suggests a "division" in her holistic nature. As a consequence of this division, the significance of the worship of the moon, which involved respect for natural law in its approval of the female presence, was erased. Therefore, sun-worship became the central belief-system that reveal its authority and control on female subjects, whose potentials of their female bodies were celebrated in the context of pre-patriarchal belief-systems. As a consequence of the displacement of moon-worship with sun-worship, patriarchy appeared as an ideology, constructing its own knowledge by supporting the processes that dismissed the female body, and exposed it to its authority and control.

The depictions of control and authority are also present in the next image that will be analysed, the verandah. The dominance of bright sun, whose patriarchal meanings have been discussed above, is symbolically continued by the verandah. Although the verandah implies openness opposite to closure, and the domination of the feminine by the masculine within the enclosed space of the patriarchal house can be negated in this medium, it is nevertheless a reflection of the patriarchal house existing in the background. In other words, the relatively liberating atmosphere symbolized by the verandah is restricted by the dominant patriarchal ideology symbolized by the "father's house" because no verandah can be defined as a verandah unless it is attached to a house. The deficiency of the openness the verandah becomes clearer as the parallelism between sun and the patriarchal house is analysed in a detailed way. In order to concrete the institutionalized familial domain - the patriarchal house, the associations of the patriarchal authority and control are accompanied by stability, singularity and unity. On

the other hand, sun brightens the verandah and makes the characters visible. It metaphorically reveals its managing influence on them and also supports the connotations of singularity, stability and unity, hence the above analysis on the influence of sun-worship. This parallelism explains the reason why Churchill has chosen to start the First Act in the daylight in order to explain patriarchal ideology's obsession with authority and order.

The flagpole with Union Jack, which is the third image that will be analysed, also symbolizes singularity and unity as opposed to plurality. According to the analysis of the images made so far, the figure that represents the unity implied by the flag is a male figure, Jack. So, in this atmosphere impressed by the metaphors of the dominant ideology, i.e., patriarchy, the characters creating the "family", namely Clive, Betty, Edward, Victoria, Maud, Ellen and Joshua, sing the following song "all together":

"Come gather, *sons* of England, come gather in your pride.
Now meet the world united, now face it side by side;
Ye who the earth's wide concerns, from veld to prairie,
roam.
 From bush and jungle muster all who call old England
 'home'.
 Then gather around for England,
 Rally to the flag,
 From North and South and East and West
 Come one and all for England!" (Churchill, 1985: 319).

In this song, which suggests the imperial interests of the British and submits unity as norm, sun is again the central metaphor, because what is being depicted here is, according to the popular phrase, "the Empire on which the sun never sets". This justifies the previous discussions about the images of sun, verandah and the flagpole with Union Jack. The fact that it is "men" that are addressed to also suggests that the dynamics of patriarchal authority which perform in establishing and legitimizing its own set of sexual and societal norms are at play here in this scene. In this atmosphere where unity

symbolised by sun dominates, the characters are introduced to the spectators. However, this introduction critically confuses the institutions of “unity” itself, because Betty, Clive’s wife, is played by a man, Edward, Clive’s son, is played by a female character, and Joshua, the black servant representing colonized Africa, is played by a white. The cross-gender and cross-race representations of these characters imply that the dynamics which represent these figures as a wife, a son, and a servant in the context of their relation with Clive in fact deny the unity of their sexual and cultural identities and describe them as non-representable. Churchill employs two ways of deconstruction. She makes the spectators see a man playing the role of a woman, a female subject playing the role of a man and a white playing the role of a black, and shows them how the politics that require unity work. Thus, Churchill not only deforms the spectator’s relation to the codes of “seeing” gender, but threatens the unity of representation which is described by patriarchal structuring¹³. As a result of this deconstruction, Churchill

¹³ Aristotle’s views on representation have permeated Western culture since its inception. Aristotle stated that mimesis was natural to “man” kind and initiated the process of learning. In his view, theatre was an art form that celebrated the notion of change, flux and process. What constituted the essence of this art form was the imitation of nature and the actions of “men”, which - like nature - were not stationary, single events but activities taking place over time. This Aristotelian model, in which art was judged by the “truth” it posited about its original model (i.e., the notion of art as holding up a mirror to nature), proposed “unity” and “sameness” as ultimate principles. On this model of representation, Diamond comments as follows “...tangled in iconicity, then, in the visual resemblance between an originary model and its representation, mimesis patterns difference into sameness...[but] same as what?...truth and sameness that supports [mimesis] cannot be understood as a neutral, omnipotent, changeless essence, embedded in eternal Nature, revealed by mimesis. Rather Truth is inseparable from gender-based and biased epistemologies. The model of imitation may be the Platonic Ideal or Aristotle’s universal type, Truth may be conceived as model-copy adequation, or, conversely, as an unveiling (that which shows itself or appears), but in all cases the epistemological, morphological, universal standard for determining (continued) the true is the masculine, a metaphoric stand-in for God the Father. ‘Phallogocentrism’ ...further embeds this hierarchy; in the logos, the language of universal reason, the phallic signifier organizes the production of meaning.” As this commentary suggests, this model renders the female subject unrepresentable, hence she is denied the processes of producing meaning. The canonized modes of this mimetic model cooperates with phallogocentrism by constructing the spectator as a subject within that ideology, and in doing so, poses an apparently “objective” or distanced viewpoint from which both the narrator on the stage and the spectator can assess the action and the “ultimate meaning” of the text. This so-called “ultimate meaning” proposes to offer truthful portrayals of human experience (i.e., those of men), and universalizes this experience. In this context, the “meaning” of the experiences of the “other”, i.e., female subjects, homosexuals, minorities and blacks, are negated. However, when the modes of dramatic representation are appropriated to deconstruct the major tenet of mimesis, i.e., unity, not only the very dynamics of the mimetic model, but the phallogocentric pattern, which constructs “man” as the ultimate model of imitation, are undermined. For further discussion on this issue, see Plato, *The Republic*, Aristotle, *Poetics*, Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis : Essays On Feminism And Theatre*, London & New York, Routledge, 1997, pp.ii-xvi., Lesley Ferris, “Introduction To Part Five : Cross-Dressing And Women’s Theatre”, *The Routledge Reader In Gender And Performance*, ed., Lizbeth Goodmann, Jane de Gay, London & New York, Routledge, 1998, pp.165-169.

emphasizes the fact that, in the realms of patriarchal ideology, only those who submit to being managed by its dynamics can be represented.

As the play develops, the first character who speaks by himself is Clive, the patriarch who owns both his family and the natives in the colonized African country. The fact that the first individual speech is made by him shows that, by virtue of his title as a patriarch and a colonizer, he establishes not only the boundaries of expression, but those of representation as well. The italicised expressions in the following quotation clearly show this:

*“This is my family. Though far from home
We serve the Queen wherever we may roam
I am a father to the natives here,
And father to my family so dear”* (Churchill, 1985: 319).

After Clive (re)presents his family and underlines the fact that his title as a patriarch enables him to “father” the natives as well, he goes on with the following:

*[He presents Betty. She is played by a man]
My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be,
And everything she is she owes to me.”* (Ibid: 319).

In this quotation, the reason why Betty is played by a man can be seen. Because patriarchal ideology, which has described Betty as Clive’s wife and his children’s mother, makes representation accessible only to men, the only representation Betty can have in the context of patriarchal structuring is that of a man - the reflection of a male body. Betty confirms this as she says the following:

*“I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life
Is to be what he looks for in a wife.
I am a man’s creation as you see,
And what men want is what I want to be.”* (Churchill, 1985: 319).

What can be seen in Betty is the underlying - the “cannot-be-seen” implications of sexual politics (Diamond, n.d.: 88-89) actually what cannot be seen is her female body. The same invisibility is valid for Joshua, who is played by a white:

“My skin is black by oh my soul is white.
I hate my tribe. *My master is my light.*
I only live for him. As you can see,
What white men want is what I want to be” (Churchill, 1985: 252).

Again, what can be seen in Joshua is the implications of colonial politics which ignore not only his culture, but his color as well. Portrayed non-representable by the principles of imperialism, the real existence of Joshua is unnoticed. What is seen under the light of his master is the color of his skin violated by imperialism. In other words, only under the light of the master (which implies sun and leads to imperialism) Joshua can be visible, and what becomes represented as a result of this process is the white, Western, male ideal of patriarchy.

The next character presented by Clive is Edward, his son. He is played by a female subject both to depict his homosexual tendencies, as a result of which he will face submission that the female subjects experience, and to remark that gender roles are not natural but dictated by patriarchal ideology. The italicised expressions in the following speech by Clive clearly show that gender roles are structured, and in securing the patriarchal norm “unity” - the normalization of the subversive other is crucial:

“My son is young. *I’m doing all I can*
To teach him to grow up like a man.” (Ibid: 252).

In reply to his father’s introduction of himself as such, Edward says the following:

“What father wants I’d really like to be.
I find it hard as you can see.” (Ibid: 252)

Here, again what can be seen is the embodiment of what has been portrayed indefinable in the realms constructed by patriarchy (the female body), making Edward and his homosexuality equally indefinable. However, as this ceremonial introduction continues, what the spectators see in all is crucial: A man is married to another man, their son is a female character in the process of being taught how to become a man, and their daughter is a silenced, lifeless figure. This nuclear family is governed by the unity of patriarchal ideology and its depiction is in fact a marriage of men, or a homosexual collection of men whose descendants are a man-to-be and a puppet. By depicting the institutionalized family as such, Churchill deconstructs the family itself and defines the fact that it is a man-made construct serving the interests of men.

Clive introduces the above mentioned characters that act as embodiments of the patriarchal ideology and then he presents his daughter Victoria, who is a mute, Maud, who is Betty's mother, and Ellen, who is Edward's lesbian governess. It can be said that these characters' introduction is easily declined by Clive's words "No need for any speeches by the rest" (Churchill, 1985: 252) so they find their embodiment in the character Victoria, who is inanimate and therefore mute. The association between the name "Victoria" and the Victorian period indicates that the ideology underlying this powerful stage of the British Empire has also an effect on the child character Victoria. By reducing her into a dummy, it has denied her future enunciation and representation. Similarly, Maud, who is an aged female subject that can no longer breed and Ellen, who is simply a governess whose lesbianism is not represented in the context of patriarchy, are also denied enunciation. The only individual who is allowed to remark clearly is Clive, the sole master of truth who controls and organizes the realms of patriarchal ideology.

As the "Family" with a capital F sings the following song, they complete the circular "unity" of the introduction:

"O'er countless numbers she, our Queen,
Victoria reigns supreme;
O'er Afric's sunny plains; and o'er

Canadian frozen stream;
 The forge of war shall weld the chains of brotherhood secure;
 So to all time in ev'ry clime our Empire shall endure.
 Then gather round for England,
 Rally to the flag,
 From North and South and East and West
 Come one and all for England." (Churchill, 1985: 252).

After Clive's ceremonial introduction of the family members, all the characters except Betty leave the stage. Clive's sudden reappearance on the stage can be interpreted as his exercise of the patriarchal authority that allows him to control and regulate what he owns. It is followed by the first line that Betty utters is "Clive?" (Ibid: 252) with a question mark. The question mark implies the onset of constituting knowledge. Therefore it can be said that by making use of this question mark, Betty is struggling to remark openly. However, because the factors that have modeled Betty as a dutiful and obedient wife employ Clive as the ultimate determiner of truth, Betty has no other choice either than reflecting her objection to knowledge on Clive, who answers back with the certainty and entirety of a full stop: "Betty. Joshua!" (Ibid: 252). In doing so, he not only defines her as Betty and supports his former line "...everything she is she owes to me" (Ibid: 251), but by speaking to Joshua with the imperative tone of an exclamation mark and by defining him with a Christian name, he emphasizes Joshua's submission to his patriarchal and imperial authority.

However, Clive's lines "I must get some new boots sent from home. These ones have never been right. I have a blister" (Ibid: 252) claim that the authority Clive exercises, by reason of which he can "walk" on the exploited land, Africa, is metaphorically being resisted by the discomfort on his foot. This "resisting" also indicates the end of the First Act, which is marked by Joshua's shooting at Clive.

Betty's concern about Clive's foot is followed by Clive's expression of the reason why they are there: "We are not in this country to enjoy ourselves. Must have ridden fifty miles. Spoke to *three different headmen who would all gladly chop off each other's*

heads and wear them round the neck” (Churchill, 1985: 253), says Clive, both glorifying the imperial interests and justifying the necessity of unity owing to the chaos caused by plurality.

The above expression by Clive is also significant in the sense that Betty repeats the same words only a few minutes later: “It’s just that I miss you when you’re away. We’re not in this country to enjoy ourselves. If I lack society that’s my form of service” (Ibid: 254), says Betty. The fact that Betty uses the same patriarchal speech that Clive “the patriarch” implies that Betty’s submission to the patriarchal processes that arrange her as a wife and a mother, provides her with the language that establishes these processes, the Law of the Father. Another example of her adoption of this language is evident in her line “...Sometimes sunset is so terrifying that I can’t bear to look” (Ibid: 256). The disappearance of the sun under the horizon means the absence of unity and order it symbolizes in the context of patriarchal ideology. The reason why Betty finds sunset terrifying is that she has been enclosed by the patriarchal discourses which have identified the sun with the connotations of unity and order, and moon with the implications of plurality and chaos. Thus, the patriarchal discourses she employs as such include her in the symbolic order, but at the cost of her own subjective voice.

Nonetheless, this inclusion is a difficult process for Betty. Because the patriarchal processes have objectified her by reducing her subjectivity into Clive’s “squemish...delicate and sensitive...little dove” (Ibid: 253), and because the only condition she can be represented, (i.e., seen) is when she is in her “white dress” (Ibid: 255), Betty suffers exceedingly. Clive’s lines: “That’s a brave girl. So today has been all right? No fainting? No hysteria?” (Ibid: 254) mean that Betty is already experiencing a nervous breakdown. The character who reminds Betty of the dynamics underlying this nervous breakdown is Joshua and Betty regards his word as contempt. By telling Betty that she has got legs under her dress (Ibid: 255), and “...more than legs” (Ibid: 278), Joshua utters his refusal to serve the authority that has made him a slave and suggests that the dress Betty wears, which symbolizes the patriarchal processes of Victorian decorum, is the appearance that makes her inactive and her desire “unspeakable”.

After Betty complains about Joshua's arrogance to Clive, Clive informs Betty that Harry Bagley will be visiting them. This visit is highly appreciated by Betty whereas her mother Maud, who has been invited to the colony by Clive with the intention that she would be company to Betty (Churchill, 1985: 254), reviews Betty's enthusiasm by saying: "We can't [expect Harry to stay at home with us.] The men have their duties and we have ours" (Ibid: 257). This reply implies that the main reason why she has been invited to the colony is to attend in the regulatory patriarchal processes which demand that the female subjects should stay within the boundaries of the familial domain - the patriarchal house. The italicised expressions in the following lines by Maud:

"Young women are never happy...Then when they're older they look back and see that comparatively speaking they were ecstatic...[To Betty] *You are looking very pretty tonight. You were such a success as a young girl. You have made a most fortunate marriage.* I'm sure you will be an excellent hostess to Mr Bagley." (Ibid: 258).

suggest that the processes of patriarchal ideology, which involve the female subjects in the patriarchal unit "the family" and claim authority over the potential powers of their bodies and their children, have functioned on Maud, resulting in her submission of her construction as a "mother" and in her resolution that the only realm in which the female subjects can realize their individuality is the family. The rupture of the original bond between Maud and Betty, which is evident in Maud's submission to the patriarchal processes that manage and reduce the female subjects' relation to the original powers of their bodies, is also present between Betty and her children. The following lines:

"Ellen: Shall I bring the children?
Betty: Shall Ellen: Bring the children?
Clive: Delightful." (Ibid: 256).

imply that in Betty's relation with her children, Clive's presence and governance is the norm. In the following conversation between Betty, Clive and Edward:

“Clive: There’s my sweet little Vicky. What have we done today?

Betty: *She wore Ellen’s hat.*

Clive: Did she wear Ellen’s big hat like a lady?

...

Betty: Edward, say good evening to papa.

Clive: Edward my boy. Have you done your lessons well?

Edward: Yes papa.

Clive: Did you go riding?

Edward: Yes papa.

Clive: What’s that you’re holding? 172 173

Betty: *It’s Victoria’s doll. What are you doing with it?*

Edward: Minding her.

Betty: *Well I should give it to Ellen quickly. You don’t want papa to see you with a doll.*” (Churchill, 1985: 256)

Betty’s implicit approval of the hat Victoria wears (which metaphorically introduces her construction as a “lady”) and her reaction towards Edward’s interest in Victoria’s doll (which implies a diversion in his process of being constructed as a “man”) suggest that Betty has fully submitted to the patriarchal processes that construct gender categories and restrict female subjects’ bodies. Even though her complaint “I always seem to be waiting for the men” (Ibid: 258) suggests the difficulty she is experiencing as a result of having experienced these processes, in the context of the dominating patriarchal ideology, there is nothing she can do except complying with what her mother says: “Betty you have to be patient. I am patient. My mother was very patient.” (Ibid: 258).

On the other hand, Caroline Saunders, who is named as “Mrs. Saunders” mostly throughout the First Act to emphasize that her individuality can only be represented in relation to her late husband’s surname, is the character who makes an important attempt to shatter the orders of patriarchal structuring. Even though she first reveals herself on the stage to take refuge in Clive’s patriarchal authority, the italicised expressions in Clive’s line below imply that, contrary to Betty, she is highly mobile:

“It is a pleasure. It is an honour. It is positively your duty to seek my help. I would be hurt, I would be insulted by any show of independence. Your husband would have been one of my dearest friends if he had lived. Betty, look who has come, Mrs Saunders. *She has ridden here all alone, amazing spirit....*” (Churchill, 1985: 258)

Regarding Caroline’s mobility as a threat settled on his patriarchal authority, Clive immediately takes the necessary precautions to convert it into prostration and says: “Let her lie down, she is overcome” (Ibid: 258). This process is maintained as he continues by the following: “Not unnaturally Mrs. Saunders would like the company of white women. The piano. Poetry.” (Ibid: 259). Keeping in mind that both playing the piano and reading poetry are activities which have been considered proper to conceal Betty’s nervous breakdown and to “normalize” her (Ibid: 253), the above suggestion by Clive means that the same factors will be employed in the normalization of Caroline, who is defined by Clive as “amazing spirit”. However, Clive’s attempts to normalize Caroline remain ineffective, as she “rides off” (Ibid: 262) from Clive’s house and consequently remains outside the control mechanisms influencing this patriarchal unit. Clive’s reaction to her separation from his house is significant:

“Why ride off now? Sweet, you would sweat if you were in love with somebody as disgustingly capricious as you are. You will be shot with poisoned arrows...My God, what women put us through. Cruel, cruel. I think you are the sort of woman who would enjoy whipping somebody. I’ve never met one before...Since you came to the house I have had an erection twenty-four hours a day except for ten minutes after the time we had intercourse...You are causing me appalling physical suffering. Is this the way to treat a benefactor?” (Ibid: 262).

In the above quotation, the engaging of the connotations of lust with those of violence metaphorically form Clive’s implicit threat settled on Caroline, especially on her independent sexual behaviour by which she metaphorically speaks her desire. By

placing his status as her protector and consequently his patriarchal authority as the main object of her desire, Clive declines Caroline's line "I answered yes once. Sometimes I want to say no." (Churchill, 1985: 263) and disappears under her skirt after saying the following:

"Caroline, if you were shot with poisoned arrows do you know what I'd do? I'd fuck your dead body and poison myself...You are dark like this continent. Mysterious. Treacherous. When you rode to me through the night. When you fainted in my arms. When I came to you in your bed, when I lifted the mosquito netting, when I said let me in, let me in. Oh don't shut me out, Caroline, let me in." (Ibid: 263).

Clive has linked Caroline with the colonized Africa and filled her with its connotations. This fact suggests that, in his attempt to start a sexual intercourse with Caroline, the ideology underlying colonization is active. Clive's disappearance under Caroline's Victorian dress both attracts attention to the historical link between Victorian era and colonization, and depicts the double standard of Victorian sexual morality.

At the end of this sexual intercourse, which is marked by Clive's lines "The Christmas picnic. I came...I'm all sticky" (Ibid: 264), Caroline takes no sexual pleasure. Her sexual desire, which she states in:

"...I wish I didn't enjoy the sensation because I don't like you, Clive...But I don't like you. But I do like the sensation. Well I'll have it then. I'll have it, I'll have it - ...Don't stop. Don't stop." (Ibid: 263-264).

is not satisfied, and her line "What about me? Wait." (Ibid: 264) is followed by Clive's conclusion, "Caroline, you are so voracious. Do let go. Tidy yourself." (Ibid: 264). Clive's misinterprets Caroline's sexual disappointment. As sexual appetite implies that the dynamics of patriarchal ideology have denied female subjects and the processes of

generating knowledge about their sexual desire therefore they have replaced their own desire and sexuality with that of the male.

The same dynamics of patriarchal ideology work on Betty, too. In her encounter with Harry Bagley, with whom she had a love affair in the past, she utters the following: “When I’m near you it’s like going out into the jungle. It’s like going up the river on a raft. It’s like going out in the dark.” (Churchill, 1985: 261). In analysing the metaphors of jungle, river and darkness in her speech, it can be said that she is experiencing a division from the patriarchal ideology which place the patriarchal house (which implies culture, unity and stability) against jungle, river and darkness (which implies nature, change and chaos respectively). However, the expression ruling the sentences in which she speaks her desire is absolutely patriarchal: “Do you think of me sometimes then? ... Please like me...Please want me.” (Ibid: 261). By asking Harry the above question and by uttering sentences which lack subjects, Betty not only assumes Harry as the producer of knowledge, but implies that her desire can only be spoken in that of Harry’s.

The interaction between colonial and sexual politics, which was evident in the speech Clive made in speaking his desire for Caroline, is again revealed here. After Betty provokes Harry’s desire in an attempt to speak her desire, Harry immediately goes to Joshua, and says “Shall we go in a barn and fuck?” (Ibid: 262). Although this line depicts Harry’s homosexuality, to a great extent, it also implies the effeminization of the colonized and confirms the link between colonial and sexual politics. Rich discusses this effeminization as follows:

“Each colonized people is defined by its conqueror as weak, feminine, incapable of self-government, ignorant, uncultured, effete, irrational, in need of civilizing. On the other hand, it may also be savored as mystical, physical, in deep contact with the earth – all attributes of the primordial Mother” (Rich, n.d.: 65)

This analysis enables one with important material to evaluate Joshua's reaction to his parents' being killed by the white: He puts "earth" on his head (Churchill, 1985: 284). This reaction also shows that Joshua's disconnection from his own culture, which includes his conversion into Christianity (Ibid: 260) and his being assigned as the "observer" that watches over not only the female subjects, but his native people (Ibid: 266-67), is not unchangeable. In the following quotation, in which Joshua tells Edward his own culture's myth of creation, the earth metaphor is significant:

"First there was nothing and then there was the great goddess. She was very large and she had golden eyes and she made the stars and the sun and the earth. But soon she was miserable and lonely and she cried like a great waterfall and her tears made all the rivers in the world. So the great spirit sent a terrible monster, a tree with hundreds of eyes and a long green tongue, and it came chasing after her and she jumped into a lake and the tree jumped in after her, and she jumped right up into the sky. And the tree couldn't follow; he was stuck in the mud. So he picked up a handful of mud and he threw it at her, up among the stars, and it hit her on the head. And she fell down onto the earth into his arms and the ball of mud is the moon in the sky. And then they had their children which is all of us." (Ibid: 279).

Even though the myth above accepts and glorifies the potentials of the female body in the embodiment of the great goddess - the origin of life and the mother of every living thing - it also regards the patriarchal processes as a result of which the "great goddess" has been subordinated. The male figure of creation is described as "a terrible monster, a tree with hundreds of eyes and a long green tongue" and provided with important means because of which "he" becomes an observer – (i.e., employs its commanding looks on the "great goddess") – and gains the opportunity to speak. Furthermore, this monster is a perfect phallic figure. However, opposite to the Christian mythology which condemns Eve as the source of evil in Joshua's lines: "God made man

white like him and gave him the bad woman who liked the snake and gave us all this trouble” (Churchill, 1985: 280), the myth above condemns the male figure of creation by defining him as “a terrible monster” and makes him stuck in mud. Here, the inactivity of the monster and its dependence on mud is important: The etymological analysis of the words - mud (earth, slime, the matter of which the planet is composed, the dust or clay of which man is built) and “mother” shows that they are very close in many languages (i.e., *mutter*, *madre*, *mater*, *materia*, *moeder*, *modder*) (Rich, n.d.: 108). This closeness suggests that, in the context of this myth, the monster’s dependence on “mud” is in fact a dependence on the “mother”.

In the myth above, the dependence of the monster on mud is contrasted to the mobility of the great goddess, which is apparent in her “jumping up in the sky”, putting herself among the stars and metaphorically speaking, becoming a star herself. This mobility is reduced to immobility as the monster “throws mud” at her and hits her “on the head”, as a result of which she falls “down”. There is a perfect summary of the processes as a result of which the female subjects are neglected and forbidden to speak, however, not without an implicit condemning tone. Therefore, this myth perfectly features the dynamics of patriarchal ideology but it still assumes the potentials of the female body embodied in the great goddess as the center of its narration and praises them.

However, Joshua has already been converted into Christianity. This shows that, the colonization process that Joshua and his native culture has experienced has not only erased the myth in which female potentials are central and replaced it with Christian mythology, but also disconnected Joshua from the great goddess - his ‘mother’ in the context of the above myth. This means that the ethics of colonial politics and institutionalized motherhood are similar. As in controlling the original relationship between female subjects and their children; the first and foremost principle is that children should be disconnected from their mothers.

This similarity is also depicted by Clive, who, after realizing the love affair between Betty and Harry, he warns Betty against the dangers of her body and connects the powers of her body with those of the colonized land, Africa:

“You can tame a wild animal only so far. They revert to their nature and savage your hand. Sometimes I feel the natives are the enemy. I know that is wrong. I know I have a responsibility towards them, to care for them and to bring them all to be like Joshua. *But there’s something dangerous. Implacable. This whole continent is my enemy.* I am pitching my whole mind and will and reason and spirit against it to tame it, and sometimes *I feel it will break over me and swallow me up...* You’re thoughtless, Betty, that’s all. *Women can be treacherous and evil. They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that,* you protect me from that...You must resist [your desire], Betty, or it will destroy us. We must fight against it. *We must resist this dark female lust, Betty, or it will swallow us up.*” (Churchill, 1985: 277).

Clive connects Betty’s desire with the exploited land - Africa and worries that they will both ‘swallow’ him up. Therefore, Clive accepts that the power of the great goddess (the ‘mother’ of the natives) takes its source from the powers of the female body, and he states his fear of being castrated by the big mouth - vagina. Only when the potentials of the female body are managed, and female desire is suppressed, the fear of castration is overcome.

The monster figure which is narrated as “...a tree with hundreds of eyes and a long green tongue” (Ibid: 279) by Joshua in the myth, is repeated by Harry who, in reply to Clive’s line “Joshua will keep an eye [on my territory]” (Ibid: 266), says: “Well I must give them a hundred” (Ibid: 266) and continues to “speak” with the unnecessary of the “long tongue” (Ibid: 266). Only a few minutes later, in his conversation with Betty, Harry says the following:

“Betty, you are a star in my sky. Without you I would have no sense of direction. I need you, and I need you where you are. I need you to be Clive’s wife. I need to go up rivers and know you are sitting here thinking of me...You are a mother. And a daughter. And a wife.” (Churchill, 1985: 268)

The image ‘star’ was used in the myth to portray the great goddess and to describe Betty in this context. This means that Betty cannot escape the patriarchal processes that the great goddess was exposed to. These processes consequently make her stable, as a result of which she is modeled as a mother, a daughter and a wife and just like the goddess who was hit on the ‘head’, reject her speaking.

However, Harry’s homosexuality shatters the gender roles imposed by patriarchal ideology. It is a crucial threat for the patriarchal processes that give him the power of the “terrible monster”. In the following conversation between him and Clive, Harry misreads Clive’s speech because Clive emphasizes a perfect example of homosexual exchange of power:

“Clive: ...I know the friendship between us, Harry, is not something that could be spoiled by the weaker sex. Friendship between men is a fine thing. It is the noblest form of relationship.

Harry: I agree with you.

Clive: *There is the necessity of reproduction. The family is all important.* And there is the pleasure. But what we put ourselves through to get that pleasure, Harry. When I heard about our fine fellows last night fighting those savages to protect us I thought yes, that is what I aspire to. I tell you Harry, in confidence, *I suddenly got out of Mrs. Saunder’s bed and came out here on the verandah and looked at the stars.*

Harry: I couldn’t sleep last night either.

Clive: *There's something dark about women, that threatens what is best in us. Between men that light burns brightly.*

Harry: I didn't know you felt like that.

Clive: *Women are irrational, demanding, inconsistent, treacherous, lustful, and they smell different from us.*

Harry: Clive –

Clive: Think of the comradeship of men, Harry, sharing adventures, sharing danger, risking their lives together.

[Harry takes hold of Clive.] (Churchill, 1985: 282)

Ironically, the element that is the real reason of this exchange is the binary opposition man – woman. It is shaped as a consequence of the managing processes that establish the patriarchal unit - the family. The knowledge that works in the patriarchal construct of this unit not only opposes the female desire by defining it as “dark, senseless, challenging, uncertain, disloyal and lustful”, but assumes male desire as the desire itself. Therefore, although Harry's homosexuality is explainable in the context of this knowledge, it is not acceptable, because his homosexuality is defined as “The most revolting perversion [that destroyed the Roman Empire]...a disease more dangerous than diphtheria” (Ibid: 283) and is similar to “contagious effeminacy” in Clive's words (Ibid: 283). It presents the corruption in the system that categorizes gender. The only reform to this corruption is Harry's joining in the unity proposed by the family - the patriarchal house, the only way of representation, not the “jungle” (Ibid: 283), and its patriarchal connotations of chaos make representation impossible.

Another character who suffers from the gender roles imposed by patriarchal ideology is Edward. The prohibition of his playing with Victoria's doll, which was mentioned before, is an attempt to separate him from the activities more proper for female subjects and to discipline him as a man. This separation is further depicted as the spectators see him playing a ball game controlled by Clive, the patriarch. The italicised expressions in the following lines are significant and they are uttered as Edward misses the ball:

“Clive: Butterfingers.
 Edward: I’m not.
 Harry: Throw *straight* now.
 Edward: I did, I did.
 Clive: *Keep your eye on the ball.*
 Edward: You can’t throw.
 Clive: Don’t be a baby.
 Edward: I’m not, throw a hard one, throw a hard one –
 ...
 [Edward throws the ball wildly in the direction of Joshua]
 Clive: *Now you’ve lost the ball. He’s lost the ball.*
 ...
 Edward: Yes, please play. *I’ll find the ball. Please play.*”
 (Churchill, 1985: 265)

The double meaning on the word ‘ball’, which implies testicle, means that this atmosphere is managed by images of manhood, and again a homosexual exchange of power is being depicted in the context of the ball game. The connotations of throwing the ball straight and having an eye on it suggest an imitating of the male sexual activity and the male gaze respectively and demonstrate the dynamics of patriarchal ideology as a result of which manhood is created and continued. When Edward misses the ball and metaphorically fails possessing the power - which he is qualified to by his definition as a man - the whole ball game comes to an end. Therefore, Edward is teased and warned against what will happen if he fails to act like a man.

Another character who focuses the significance of balls in Edward’s process of being constructed as a man is Betty.

“You must never let the boys at school know you like dolls. Never, never. *No one will talk to you, you won’t be on the cricket team, you won’t grow up to be a man like your papa.*” (Churchill, 1985: 275).

In the above lines by her what is suggested as an alternative to his interest in dolls is another “ball” game - cricket, which again implies the homosexual exchange of power.

This means that one must submit to being constructed by the patriarchal ideology in order to be represented in the realms constructed by the unity of men.

The First Act is ended by the extreme standardisation of the characters whose sexual desire is defined as “rebellious” by the patriarchy. Ellen, whose lesbianism is not stated in the patriarchal realms and whose love for Betty is rejected by Clive (Churchill, 1985: 284), marries Harry, whose homosexuality is again not represented in the same context. However, this is a difficult process for both Ellen and Harry: What waits Ellen in the matrimonial realm of “the family” is, in Betty’s words “keeping still” (Ibid: 286). On the other hand, Harry’s trauma is clear in the fragmented speech that he gives as he marries:

“My dear friends – what can I say – the empire – the family – the married state to which I have always aspired – your shining example of domestic bliss – my great good fortune in winning Ellen’s love – happiest day of my life.” (Ibid: 287).

The incomplete sentences above without subjects mean that, in the institutionalized realm of marriage, it is not only the sexual desire that is removed, but the individual voice that can speak this desire.

Betty’s process of normalizing is also practiced in the same realm, marriage. Maud’s speech “...*one* flesh, you see” (Ibid: 287), which is expressive of Betty’s recovery of her marriage, means the disruption of Betty’s flesh - her body, in the context of the family. The only character who continues to reject the processes that Betty has experienced is Caroline Saunders. In response to Harry Bagley’s proposal, she says, “Mr. Bagley, I could never be a wife again. There is only one thing about marriage that I like” (Ibid: 284), and the future she prescribes for herself, is certainly outside the borders of the familial unit: “I shall go to England and buy a farm there. I shall introduce threshing machines” (Ibid: 286).

The First Act of the play ends as Joshua aims his gun at Clive to shoot. By making Joshua kill Clive, Churchill symbolically attacks the ideology that Clive symbolizes, and allies with the non-representable - other, Edward, who does nothing to warn the others and only puts his hands over his ears.

As the First Act of the play follows the Second, the characters who had lived in the British colony of the 1880s, move into the rather liberated atmosphere of the England of the 1980s. The Second Act opens with the following stage directions:

“Winter afternoon. Inside the hut of a one o’clock club, *a children’s playcentre in a park*, Victoria and Lin, *mothers*. Cathy, Lin’s daughter, age 4, *played by a man, clinging to Lin*.” (Churchill, 1985: 289).

The italicised expressions in this quotation, i.e., playcentre, park, mothers and a man clinging to Lin, indicate the fact that what waits the female characters in the context of the Second Act is a comparatively liberated atmosphere: The verandah of the patriarchal house that appeared in the opening of the First Act, which symbolized the dominant authority of patriarchal ideology and embodied the female characters within its symbolic limitations, is replaced by the park, which offers them a potential mobility. The probable outcomes of this mobility are attended by the implications of the playcentre, which indicate different possibilities of commitment in the processes of self-realization and socialization. In this atmosphere of mobility and liberty, one sees that the female characters’ names, Lin and Victoria are pursued by the title “mothers”. The emphasis on this title means that the female characters’ process of acknowledging their experience within the realms constructed by patriarchal ideology, will also involves a wrecking of the processes that construct them as “mothers”. To initiate this wrecking, Churchill makes an adult man, playing the part of a four-year-old child; cling to her mother, Lin. By doing so, Churchill not only deconstructs the patriarchal ideology’s principle that converts the female subjects dependent on men, but also subverts the processes of institutionalized motherhood as a result of which their children are both disconnected from them and are captured in the context of patriarchal structuring. This

double-deconstruction that Churchill employs acts in both disturbing the spectators' culturally-constructed attitudes of seeing the signs of gender and age, and dismissing motherhood as an institution.

This atmosphere suggests a notable disconnection from the processes of patriarchal structuring. The first character that speaks and consequently establishes the boundaries of statement is Cathy. Here are the first lines that she utters:

“Yum yum bubblegum
Stick it up your mother’s bum.
When it’s brown
Pull it down.
Yum yum bubblegum.” (Churchill, 1985: 289)

When one considers the fact that the actor who played the part of Clive, the power- governing patriarch and colonizer, now plays the part of a child, the above quotation becomes very important. The concept of unity which influenced Clive’s patriarchal utterance and underlined his position as the ultimate master of truth is no longer valid. The knowledge that he produced by means of these commitments is now replaced by the knowledge constructed by the slang of London street talk, enhanced with the tone of vulgarity. The displacement of the diction of the “center” with that of the “other” (i.e., the statement that inhabits in the streets of London, not within the boundaries of the patriarchal house) presents Churchill’s powerful deconstruction of the patriarchal discourses that place the patriarchal unit, family, as the center.

This deconstruction of the “center” is continued by another deconstruction that is apparent in Cathy’s lines below:

“*Jack* be nimble, *Jack* be quick,
Jack jump over the candlestick.
Silly *Jack*, he should jump higher,
Goodness gracious, great balls of fire.” (Ibid: 289).

In these lines, Union Jack of the First Act, which symbolized the patriarchal norm - unity in the matter of a male figure, reappears, however, with a separation in his name, (i.e., he is only “Jack” now) and with his balls on fire. By erasing the word - Union from the phrase ‘Union Jack’, and by setting the balls on fire, Churchill dissects both the patriarchal ideal unity, and the patriarchal statements which place possessing balls as the central aspect in constructing this unity.

In this realm, in which the division of patriarchal discourses is continued with a denial of the patriarchal knowledge that names the possessor of balls as the ultimate master of truth, the characters speak. The first conversation is between Cathy and her mother, Lin:

“Lin: Cathy, do stop. Do a painting.

Cathy: You do a painting.

Lin: You do a painting.

Cathy: What shall I paint?

Lin: Paint a house.

Cathy: No.

Lin: Princess.

Cathy: No.

Lin: Pirates.

Cathy: Already done that.

Lin: Spacemen.

Cathy: I never paint spacemen. You know I never.

Lin: Paint a car-crash and blood everywhere.

Cathy: No, don’t tell me. I know what to paint.” (Churchill, 1985: 289).

In the conversation, Cathy’s unwillingness to paint a house and a princess, which imply the patriarchal house and the idealized female figure within the house of the ultimate ruler (the king) respectively, is expressive of her denial of the roles that patriarchal ideology imposes on female subjects in their construction as women. Against the experiences that those roles offer, she has set the experience of pirates, whose looting is a threat against the financial order of the patriarchal system, but considerably, the whole dynamics of patriarchy that perform in establishing that system. This threat becomes even more emphasised as the mobility and independence

experienced by pirates are taken into account. Therefore, even in the very beginning of the play, it is suggested that Cathy's future formation as a "woman" is likely to be a vain process.

Lin, her mother, is another character who rejects being instructed by the prescriptions of patriarchal ideology: Being a lesbian and freely speaking her desire for Victoria in: "I really fancy you." (Churchill, 1985: 290), "[to Edward] I really fancy your sister. I thought you'd understand. You do but you can go on pretending you don't, I don't mind." (Ibid: 292), "[to Victoria] Will you have sex with me?...You'd enjoy it" (Ibid: 296), Lin definitely subverts the patriarchal system whose definite opposition 'man-woman' places heterosexuality as the norm. The subversion Lin creates in her representation also becomes apparent as the spectators see that the actress who played the roles of Catherine Saunders and Ellen of the First Act now plays the role of Lin. This planned doubling Churchill has operated on these characters refers that the otherness Catherine Saunders and Ellen suggested by their sexual desire will be intended on Lin as well. However, Lin's otherness is a less difficult process than those of Catherine and Ellen. Lin functions as the single body that allows for Catherine and Ellen to meet in its totality, and, on a metaphorical level, threatens the objectification processes of patriarchy that shattered the integrity of the female body (Diamond, n.d.: 97). Therefore Lin symbolizes the possibility of returning the long lost unity of the female subjects.

Victoria also symbolizes the possibility of change in her representation: The insensate doll of the First Act has now been converted into a real, significant person who has expanded an ability to speak. This transformation has been joined by a heroic awareness for the feminist causes. This awareness is the result of her continual reading and appears throughout her dialogue with Lin as in the following: "Well, psychologists do differ in their opinions as to whether or not aggression is innate" (Churchill, 1985: 291), "You have to look at [why you hate men] in a historical perspective in terms of learnt behaviour since the industrial behaviour" (Ibid: 292) she says, presenting the theoretical background she has instituted in her process of examining patriarchal ideology. This is also clear in: "I'm afraid I do let Tommy play with guns and just hope

he'll get out of his system and not end up in the army" (Churchill, 1985: 291). Her description of the system suggests that her theoretical analysis about patriarchal ideology has been useful in showing the fundamental dynamics of the system.

Nonetheless, the expressions she uses in transmitting the knowledge constructed by the theoretical arguments do not establish a context within which Lin can really understand her. To the lines quoted above, Lin either replies in "Yeh?" (Ibid: 291) or in "I just hate the bastards [i.e., men.]" (Ibid: 292). Here, what Churchill defines is not only Lin's ignorance, but the complex expressions of theoretical arguments in the field of feminist studies. In other words, Churchill warns the spectators against the academic discourses within the field that may not be able to avoid using the patriarchal elements of constructing knowledge¹⁴. Here is a question that may be asked: "Does the theoretical knowledge Victoria has gained access to help her in realizing her individuality as a female subject and as a mother?" In order to answer this question, Victoria's relationship with Tommy - her son and with Martin - her husband, must be researched.

It is observed that he does not even appear on the stage in analysing Victoria's relationship with Tommy. The absence of her son defines the absence of the original connection between her and her son which cannot possibly be replaced. The impossibility to reconstruct this relationship is underlined in Scene Two: Tommy gets lost in the park, and the first person that notices his absence is Lin, not Victoria.

The uselessness of the theoretical knowledge Victoria has is also depicted in her relationship with her husband, Martin. She has a conversation with Lin in the First Scene of the First Act, Lin asks her the following question: "And your husband? How

¹⁴ The studies on academic discourses have shown that they are one of the primary functions of a culture-specific discourse formation to mediate the construction of "identity" for "self" and "others". Academic discourse primarily mediates the construction of the identities of middle-class, early to late middle-aged, (97- continued) eurocultural, heterosexual, masculinized males, both historically and contemporarily. This construction is based on accepting the mastery of "reason", and involves: Relative status superiority, formality, distancing, and rhetorical solidarity, and authoritative voice, extremal evaluations for certainty, importance, normativity and semantic closure. These aspects originate from linear modes of generating knowledge, which are inherent in patriarchal ideology and operate in the legitimization of the domination of the feminine by the masculine. For further discussion on this issue, see J.L. Lemke, "Masculinity And Academic Discourse", 2000, (Internet) <http://academic.brooklyn.cuny.edu/education/jlemke/webs/gender/index2.htm>., January 28 th, 2012.

do you get on with him?” (Churchill, 1985: 291). Victoria’s answer is important: “Oh, fine. Up and down. You know. Very well. He helps with the washing up and everything.” (Ibid: 291) The potent wordiness ruling the theoretical statement she employs ends when Martin and consequently marriage, become the matter of the conversation. This implies that Victoria remain incapable producing knowledge and cannot benefit from the knowledge that the theoretical arguments present in the context of marriage.

Victoria’s failure to produce knowledge in the context of marriage becomes apparent as her conversations with Martin are examined. In Scene Two, in which Martin and Victoria meet each other on the stage for the first time, Martin gives a detailed speech throughout which he comments about Victoria, their marriage and the job offer she has received. The importance of this encounter is that Victoria does not respond to any of his comments, and remains mute. The reasons of her muteness are evident in Martin’s words below:

“You take the job, you go to Manchester. You turn it down, you stay in London. People are making decisions like this everyday of the week. It needn’t be for more than a year. Our relationship might well stand the strain of that, and if it doesn’t we’re better out of it. I don’t want to put any pressure on you. I’d just like to know so we can sell the house. I think we’re moving into an entirely different way of life if you go to Manchester because it won’t end there. We could keep the house as security for Tommy but he might as well get used to the fact that life nowadays is insecure. You should ask your mother what she thinks and then do the opposite. I could just take the room in Barbara’s house, and then we could babysit for each other. You think that means I want to fuck Barbara. I don’t. Well, I do, but I won’t. And even if I did, what’s a fuck between friends? What are we meant to do it with; strangers? Whatever you want to do, I’ll be delighted. If you could just let me know what it is I’m to be delighted

about. Don't cry again, Vicky, I'm not the sort of man who makes women cry." (Churchill, 1985: 299).

Martin represents a world view that approves change and alternative experiences of self-realization, including sexual liberty. However, the implicit tone of his speech is surely prohibitive. In the beginning of his speech, Martin has already defined the possible experiences Victoria may have as she makes her choice between leaving London and moving to Manchester, and has presumed all the details of the consequences of her choice. Martin's liberty can be interpreted as having the priority to provide knowledge for Victoria and about her own experience. It results from the authority he receives from the patriarchal structuring that allows men to define the borders of discourse. Thus, Martin's statement that he does not want to put pressure on Victoria should be considered as the very pressure itself; because Martin is subjecting Victoria to the dynamics of patriarchal ideology that he applies in an implicit way by managing Victoria to choose between what he has prescribed.

Martin's confidential alliance with patriarchal ideology can also be seen in his plans to sell the house. Although his intention to sell the house can be taken as a rejection of the patriarchal authority that is related to the patriarch within the house, he suggests that their son Tommy will undergo the feeling of insecurity when the house is sold. It means that he has not disconnected himself from the patriarchal dynamics that describe house as a realm that keeps its inhabitants safe and places the patriarch as the sole master of that security.

In his alleged free-thinking manner that acclaims the diversity of possibilities, he presents another possibility, moving to Barbara's house. The fact that he associates moving to Barbara's house to having the liberty to have sexual intercourse with her is important. The patriarchal expressions portray the house as a realm in which the male figure has a right to manage the female subjects within its boundaries. Acting according to these expressions, Martin can easily imagine himself as the dominant male figure in Barbara's house, and considers Barbara as a submissive female subject who will unavoidably submit to his desire. This prediction is paralleled with the concept of

security that exists within the borders of the house, because what is kept safe in the final analysis is Martin's authority to control Barbara's female body. Despite Victoria's silence to his comments, he goes on saying the following:

"Do you think you're well enough to do this job?...No one's going to think any the less of you if you stay here with me. There's no point in being so liberated you make yourself cry all the time...What it is about sex, when we talk while it's happening it's like a driving lesson. Left, right, a little faster, carry on, slow down...So I lost my erection last night not because I'm not prepared to talk, it's just that taking in technical information [during sex] is a different part of the brain and also I don't like to feel that you do it better to yourself... My one aim is to give you pleasure. My one aim is to give you rolling orgasms like I do other women. So why the hell won't you have them?...You find me too overwhelming. So follow it through, go away, leave me and Tommy alone for a bit, we can manage perfectly well without you. I'm not putting any pressure on you but I don't think you're being a whole person. God knows I do everything I can to make you stand on your own two feet. Just be yourself. You don't seem to realize how insulting it is to me that you can't get yourself together." (Churchill, 1985: 301).

There are significant elements in these lines such as Martin's dominant verbality and its managing effect on Victoria's choice and the way he relates Victoria's mobility in her profession to her speaking of mobility in bed (he describes their sexual experience as 'driving lessons'), and to his impotence. These three aspects in Martin's speech represent the way the patriarchal dynamics perform: Man's ability to speak and to recognize his desire supports the processes which control female subjects by restricting them within the patriarchal house and depicting them mute. This confidential knowledge in Martin's speech removes female desire and therefore places him as one who gives rolling orgasms to women, describing him the only symbol of "desire" itself.

In the end of his speech, Martin suggests that Victoria won't be able to "get herself together" if she leaves London. This implies that Martin sees no possibility for Victoria to experience a unity of her individuality unless she remains within the borders of the family - the patriarchal unit that implies unity and stability. However, Martin's suggestion is immediately opposed as Victoria starts to speak on Martin's exit and makes this conversation with Lin:

"Victoria: Why the hell can't he just be a wife and come with me? Why does Martin make me tie myself in knots? No wonder we can't have a simple fuck. No, not Martin, why do I make myself tie in knots. It's got to stop, Lin. I'm not like that with you. Would you love me if I went to Manchester?"

Lin: Yes.

Victoria: Would you love me if I went on a climbing expedition in the Andes Mountains?

Lin: Yes.

Victoria: Would you love me if my teeth fell out?

Lin: Yes.

Victoria: Would you love me if I loved ten other people?

Lin: And me?

Victoria: Yes.

Lin: Yes." (Churchill, 1985: 302).

In this conversation, Victoria thinks all the possible experiences that construct her own unity. Considering the experiences she has mentioned are accomplished outside the house, it can be said that what in fact makes female subjects unable to recover themselves is the ideology that surrounds them within the borders of the patriarchal house.

In the context of the Second Act, the character who is in the process of 'recovering herself' is Betty. Played by the actress who played the role of Edward in the First Act, Betty now finds representation in a female body, implying her discovery of her body and its desire. The doubling applied in this context also parallels Betty of the Second

Act with Edward of the First Act: As Betty first appears in Scene One, she utters that she is going to divorce Clive. This attempt subverts the patriarchal unit - family, and rejects the authority that Clive is given to employ within the unit. It can be thought as a symbolic murder of the father, because Clive “fathered” Betty by designing her in his own image. Edward of the First Act, on the other hand, also attended in a similar murder by not warning the others that Joshua was about to shoot Clive. Therefore, as the spectators see Betty on stage, their memory of the scene in which Clive is shot is revived, relating Betty to Clive’s symbolic death.

Betty’s desire to act outside the borders of the patriarchal unit is also seen as she views the picture Cathy has drawn: “Oh Cathy what a lovely painting. What is it? Well I think it is a house on fire. I think all that red is a fire. Is that right? Or do I see legs, is it a horse?” (Churchill, 1985: 293) says Betty. This quotation enables two different interpretations: Because of the expressions “I think...Is that right?”, she might be employing her own imagination on the painting and finally picturing the house and its patriarchal connotations ‘on fire’; or, by saying “...what a lovely painting”, she might be appreciating of Cathy’s imagination which becomes active as the patriarchal house is destroyed. In both cases, Betty’s need to escape from the patriarchal structuring can be seen. This escape is depicted by the legs she sees, with which she defines her mobility.

Betty’s planning of the escape is a difficult process: Her fear of “falling”, which she mentions in an implicit tone in: “[Tommy] will fall in” (Ibid: 298), is together with her inability to walk: “I’ll never be able to manage. If I can’t even walk down the street by myself. Everything looks so fierce...It’s since I left your father...But I’m so frightened” (Ibid: 298). These lines imply the difficulty Betty has in separating herself from the patriarchal statements whose dynamics have made her immobile by restricting her within the borders of the patriarchal unit, and have defined elsewhere as ‘insecure’.

Another reason why Betty finds it difficult to walk is that the white dress of Act One, which embodied her and made her forget that “she had legs under it”, symbolically exists in Act Two in the form of Vogue magazine (Churchill, 1985: 293), earrings (Ibid: 294), beads (Ibid: 294) and hats (Ibid: 296). Betty’s interest in clothes that give signs of

gender means that she has accepted the patriarchal dynamics which set gender categories, place them within the category of women, and objectify them by subjecting them to the male gaze. Having yielded to the knowledge that has defined her as a woman, Betty can only speak that knowledge and she loses her subjective voice. The following lines by Betty, in which she defines women, depict her enclosure within the dynamics that produce this knowledge:

“Women don’t have such interesting conversations as men. There has never been a woman composer of genius. They don’t have a sense of humour. They spoil things for themselves with their emotions. I can’t say I do like women very much, no.” (Churchill, 1985: 302).

The interaction between the objectification processes of patriarchal ideology and the loss of subjective voice is best seen in the following quotation by Betty throughout which she speaks about her masturbations. When Betty masturbates, she both discovers her female body and its desire and rejects the patriarchal dynamics that dismiss the female body by the knowledge they produce:

“I used to think Clive was the one who liked sex. But the I found I missed it. I used to touch myself when I was very little, I thought I’d invented something wonderful. I used to do it to go to sleep or to cheer myself up, and one day it was raining and I was under the kitchen table, and my mother saw me with my hand under my dress rubbing away, and she dragged me out so quickly I hit my head and it bled and I was sick, and nothing was said, and I never did it again till this year. I thought if Clive wasn’t looking at me there wasn’t a person there. And one night in bed in my flat I was so frightened I started touching myself. I thought my hand might go through space. I touched my face, it was there, my arm, my breast, and my hand went down where I thought I shouldn’t and I thought well there is somebody there. It felt very sweet, it was a feeling from very long ago, it was very soft, just barely

touching, and I felt myself gathering together more and more and I felt angry with Clive and angry with my mother and I went on and on defying them, and there was this vast feeling growing in me and all round me and they couldn't stop me and no one could stop me and I was there and coming and coming. Afterwards I thought I'd betrayed Clive. My mother would kill me. But I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them. And I cried because I didn't want to be. But I don't cry any more. Sometimes I do it three times in one night and it really is great fun." (Churchill, 1985: 316).

In the quotation above, the language Betty uses as she describes how she recovered herself depicts the very process of "gathering": The repetition of the word "and" separates Betty from the linear syntactical structure, deforming language. In other words, her single, but loaded sentence crosses the linguistic boundaries of the conscious. The cyclical rhythm created by "and"s equals to the cyclic nature of female autoeroticism and to *jouissance*¹⁵. Hence, Betty constructs her own unity of thought which follows a non-linear pattern and allows her to defeat the idea that Clive and her mother had impressed on her. This defiance is introduced as she analyses her impression process by recollecting the result of her first masturbation experience. It is - on a metaphorical level - an individual denial of the history that overwrote her own female body and her desire as it was written. Her emphasis on the fact that she hit her head as she was dragged out of the "darkness" provided by the table is also important, depicting the interaction between dismissing the female desire and rendering them as "objects" that cannot speak.

¹⁵ *Jouissance* is the consummate and spiritual enjoyment of the female subject that cannot be expressed in the linguistic systems constructed by the Symbolic. For further information on *Jouissance*, see Kristeva, op.cit., pp.240-243. On the cyclic nature of female autoeroticism, on the other hand, Irigaray comments as follows: "...woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's. He needs an instrument in order to touch himself: his hand, woman's genitals, language...But a woman touches herself by and within herself directly, without mediation, and before any distinction between activity and passivity is possible. A woman "touches herself" constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually [in a cyclic manner]". (Irigaray, 1997: 324)

Betty's objectification under the male gaze is important in her line "I thought if Clive wasn't looking at me there wasn't a person there...I thought my hand might go through space" (Churchill, 1985: 316), referring to the fact that the realms of patriarchal ideology allow representation for female subjects only when they are objectified. Because of the denied subjectivity, female subjects become exposed to the separation of the unity of the self, reducing its totality to "faces, arms, breasts and vaginas" in Betty's words.

Betty's discovery of the original unity of her body is marked by her line "There is somebody there" (Ibid: 316). It is followed by her recovery of it, a process of gathering more and more. This gathering also presents a resistance of the patriarchal norms, which are embodied by Clive and her mother. Betty's fear of being punished is caused by her awareness of the fact that the dynamics of patriarchal ideology immediately exercise in punishing the threats placed on it, dismiss the cyclic tone of her narration, and generate the following insensitive sentences: "Afterwards I thought I'd betrayed Clive. My mother would kill me." (Ibid: 316). Nevertheless, Betty utters these sentences after she has the symbolic orgasm placed in her lines, and states her triumph resulting from the fun her body makes from her experience.

The orgy that Victoria, Lin and Edward indulge in parallels to Betty's masturbations in the sense that they both focus on similar reclamation processes. The following dialogue between Victoria and Lin, which takes place in the beginning of the orgy, underlines this correlation:

"Victoria: Goddess of many names, oldest of the old, who walked in chaos and created life, hear us calling you back through time, before Jehovah, before Christ, before men drew out and burnt your temples, hear us, Lady, give us back what we were, give us the history we haven't had, make us women we can't be.

Lin: Come back, goddess...Goddess of breasts.

Victoria: Goddess of cunts.

Lin: Goddess of fat bellies and babies. And blood blood blood.” (Churchill, 1985: 308).

The recollection of the Great Mother¹⁶ in the above lines, whose potential powers of her female body were dismissed by the dynamics that placed unity, centrality and stability as norms, is in fact a refusal of the history that dismiss the mobility and “plurality-in-unity” of the female subject. This denial is followed by a celebration of the reproductive powers of the Great Mother, stressed in “Goddess of breasts, cunts, fat bellies, babies, and blood”. However, it must be noted that, contrary to the patriarchal discourses that distort the integrity of the female body, the expression employed in this context collects the procreative features of the female body in the representation of the Great Mother, constructing the restoration of the original unity.

The reason why Edward is also included in this scene is important: The homosexual relationship he has with Gerry cannot avoid from the dynamics of patriarchal ideology, and the role “wife” (Churchill, 1985: 306) he has assumed in the context of this relationship expose him to the similar objectification processes that work on female subjects. As a result of his habitual cooking and cleaning, Edward stays in the house most of the time and the mobility that he has in the park is restricted within the borders of the park while Gerry has the liberty to travel.

“Two years I’ve been with Edward. You have to get away sometimes or you lose sight of yourself. *The train from Victoria to Clapham still has those compartments without a corridor.* As soon as I got on the platform I saw who I wanted. *Slim hips, tense shoulders, trying not to look at anyone...*” (Ibid: 297).

The travel Gerry makes from Victoria to Clapham means the process throughout which he undergoes his sexuality when it is taken metaphorically. However, the pun on the word ‘Victoria’, which implies Victorian era, suggests that this experience is

¹⁶ Gynocentric, prepatriarchal societies celebrated the procreative powers of the female subjects in the embodiment of the Great Mother. Spiritualized into a divine being, she created “woman”, “man” and continuing existence, and thus became the source of vegetation, fruition, fertility of every kind. For further information on the Great Mother, see Rich, op.cit., pp. 84-109.

destroyed with the influence of the patriarchal ideology that defined the Victorian attitudes of sexuality and gender, as it is the first station he starts his travel from. In the train he travels, there are no corridors, the clear-cut divisions between the rows that the passengers are located. When the lack of corridors is rendered as the absence of gender definitions, it becomes explicable why Gerry finds it easier to take pleasure in homosexual intercourse in this train. However, because of the patriarchal dynamics, Gerry cannot avoid from seeing his partner with the male gaze, and objectifies him in “slim hips, tense shoulders”.

The discussion above, which has depicted Gerry’s attitude in the context of sexual experience, approves the reason why Edward looks for a restoration of his shattered, objectified body in the orgy. His lines “I’m sick of men...I think I’m a lesbian” (Churchill, 1985: 307) clearly confine gender definitions for his objectification, and underline the superficiality of the labels which are given to individuals in this context.

The orgy provided Victoria, Lin and Edward with the opportunity to rescue their original unity. However, it is interrupted by the ghost of Lin’s brother, Bill. By his appearance on the stage, Bill metaphorically puts the influence of the patriarchal and colonial authority conducted by Clive to the scene. The reasons for this are numerous: To start with, he is played by the actor who played the role of Clive in the First Act. Furthermore, Cathy, whose habitual playing with guns symbolically focuses the fact that killing is the final form of objectification, is also played by the same actor. Lastly, the ground Bill fought on is Northern Ireland, the country which Churchill defines as located within a male - female relationship with England. Churchill suggests that this relationship comes from the traditional view of the Irish, which defines them as “...charming, irresponsible, close to nature, all the things that [are attributed to] women.” (Diamond, n.d.: 35). The blend of these aspects creates an atmosphere which dismisses the reclamation process, and warns the characters about the omnipresence of patriarchal ideology.

In spite of this interruption, the characters involved in the orgy recover themselves in the long run: Victoria decides to go to Manchester (Churchill, 1985: 317), Lin

establishes a better relationship with Victoria (Ibid: 314-318), Edward comes to terms with his relation with Gerry, and consequently they reunite (Ibid: 319). Betty, whose process of reclaiming her unity was also prevented by the ghosts of Maud and Clive, finally accepts Victoria's and Edward's homosexuality. Betty's success in discovering her body and her sexual desire is rewarded by Churchill at the end of the play as she reconstructs her unity by embracing the Betty of the First Act.

All in all, the close analysis of the characters in the play *Cloud Nine* evidences that not only the female subjects, but minorities, homosexuals and blacks are overwhelmed by the dynamics of patriarchal ideology. Consequently, these characters are identified as others, and their subjectivities are ignored. In the process of their subjectivities' being ignored, both their bodies and their sexual desire are negated, and, especially in the case of the female characters, this further results in the difficulty of retrieving authority and control over their reproductive potentials. Notwithstanding, Churchill makes her statement by the "blissful" ending of the play, which threatens the dynamics of patriarchal ideology and promises change.

Chapter 3 - 1980-1984: “Well, we’ve seen the result of all that”:

Feminism & Family in Mrs. Thatcher’s England

As the Tory government led by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s continued its drive to institute new policies for a stronger economy and greater national security, infused by its professed “respect for and devotion to the rights of the individual” (Hamilton, 1977: 4), the spirit of revolution that had flourished in the 1960s and 1970s faded away under the strain of it all. Michelene Wandor writes that “from 1979 onwards . . . with Thatcherism and a long period of Conservative government, individualism has become deeply entrenched in our social ideology” (Wandor, 2000: 63).

In the first half of the decade, Churchill wrote plays that directly interrogate this intensely self-centered society. Whereas this playwright explores the process of self-discovery in *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* she suggests that individualism obscures self-reflection because it leads to a denial of the larger community; no one wants to look too closely at themselves or the world around them. Denying identity becomes key, as Marlene (*Top Girls*) actively tries to distance herself from her working class backgrounds once she is successful financially.

By 1981, cuts in services, rising unemployment, and increases in sales tax all contributed to burdens placed squarely on the working class in Great Britain and often resulted in riots in different parts of the nation. In 1980, the “Education Act remove[d] obligation on local education authorities to provide school milk and meals” (Johnson, 1994: 502). By 1982 unemployment in Great Britain rose “above three million for [the] first time since 1933” (Ibid: 502), up by one million in the span of just two years. According to Leslie Hannah:

The worsening educational plight of the underprivileged was paralleled by a deterioration in their relative economic status, as inequality increased in the 1980s. While this was a worldwide phenomenon . . . the tax and benefit policies of the Thatcher years meant that British trend to greater inequality were extreme. The poorest 20 percent of

households hardly shared in the general prosperity of these years and, relatively, they became significantly worse off. (Hannah, 1994: 348).

Mrs. Thatcher's insistence that "what ultimately matters to most people is the effect on their lives of the corrosive and persistent loss in the value of money" (Butt, 1975: 14) led to the institution of policies that ultimately contributed to the growing divide between classes.

Though in 1979 Thatcher "insisted . . . that the Conservatives' proposals for trade union reform were 'modest'" (Comfort, 1979: 1), by 1981, the "Employment Act outlaw[ing of] secondary picketing of industrial disputes" and other restrictions on unions that made challenging management more difficult (Johnson, 1994: 502), led to riots in the northern part of the country. Characterizations of the trade unions in 1984 as "the enemy within," socialist-inclined organizations that posed a "great . . . threat to democracy" (Aitken, 1984, n.p.), contributed to the weakening status of unions and subsequent difficulties for working men and women throughout the United Kingdom for the remainder of the decade.

The "success" of the invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 marked a critical turning point, as Thatcher's popularity increased dramatically in the polls and her "iron lady" persona was reinvigorated. The battle cry "we won't back down" carried on throughout the decade, as seen in her bloody solution to the miners' strike in northern England in 1984-1985. Furthermore, her renewed popularity allowed her to go forward with the drive to privatize national industries, such as British Telecom (1984) and British Gas (1986). Leslie Hannah writes, "The privatization programme was one which was distinctively Thatcherite, though it was not wholeheartedly adopted until after her second election victory [1983], when both its feasibility and popularity were evident" (Hannah, 1994: 351). Though these changes often resulted in increased productivity, they also "resulted in real price increases for small consumers" (Ibid: 352).

Churchill's *Three More Sleepless Nights* was staged at the SoHo Poly in 1980 and a television script, *Crimes*, aired in 1981. Both plays received lukewarm reviews, with

several critics praising Churchill's skillful dialogue but criticizing her structural choices. (Fitzsimmons, n.d.: 54-56) In 1982 *Top Girls* was produced at the Royal Court, and it was generally praised for both its content and its ingenious structure, though the most positive responses came in reviews of its 1983 revival; Max Stafford-Clark notes, "It was not an immediate box office hit. We then took it to America . . . where it was billed as a huge London success . . . We then returned to the Royal Court with it, where it was billed as a huge American success, and the play was very successful" (Goodman, 1998: 76). About the 1983 revival at the Royal Court Michael Billington writes, "this is the best British play ever from a woman dramatist" (Fitzsimmons, 1989: 59).

Top Girls addresses the legacy of second wave feminism and the struggle to find new ways to flourish in a culture that was becoming increasingly hostile to socialist solutions to the problems. As Antoinette Burton writes in her 1992 essay "'History is Now,'" "the women's movement of the 1960s to the 1980s is (already) in the process of being 'historicized.'" (Burton, 1992: 52). This play is an example of such historicizing because it both treats the present as an historical moment by creating structures that locate the action very specifically in its own place and in relation to previous times and places, and the characters' attitudes about feminism and women's roles in society are central to the themes in it.

Rosemary Atkins's 1978 article "The 21 Women Who Broke the Sex Barrier," published in the *Sunday Times*, illustrates the ways in which feminism and the women's movement were being historicized even at the end of the 1970s. In the article, Atkins interviews twenty-one women, each of whom was the first woman to "enter various male preserves such as driving London buses or becoming president of the [British Medical Association]" ("Ten Years", 1978: 27). In the introduction to the article, the editors note that among the women interviewed:

"...there was unanimous support for equality of education,
job opportunities and pay . . . Only two described

themselves openly as “feminists,” while 10 said they definitely weren’t and three didn’t know what the word meant . . . Nearly all thought it has become progressively easier for women to work in their jobs, but several had strong male barriers to break through before becoming Britain’s “first lady” in their chosen field.” (Atkins, 1978: 31)

Several of the actual responses of the interviewees reveal rather caustic attitudes towards feminism, while others are simply dismissive of the role of the women’s movement in achieving (or at least making progress towards achieving) equality opportunities in employment.

For example, Jill Viner says that feminists “want everything and are not prepared to give for it” (Ibid: 31); Margery Hurst claims that feminists “make rules for women that women don’t want themselves” (Ibid: 31); and Meriel Tufnell goes so far as to state, “I’m anti-women’s lib. I don’t know what women are standing up for. Nothing in my life has been geared to beating men—I’m honoured to have been allowed to do what men have been doing for so long” (Ibid: 33). Others, such as Joy Langdon, simply believe that “everything comes in time without women’s lib” (Ibid: 31).

The predominant theme of the piece, however, seems to be that of the power of the individual to get wherever she wants if she works hard enough. Hurst and Tufnell both make comments that sound very much like Marlene in Churchill’s *Top Girls*. Hurst believes “if you have the brains and the wherewithal you can get on” (Ibid: 31); Tufnell, who refuses to hire females to run her stables because they are not “as capable” as males, feels that “women can get anywhere they want if they have the character” (Ibid: 33). Of course, Mrs. Thatcher also dismissed feminism as “too strident” in 1978, noting that “You don’t say: ‘I must get on because I’m a woman.’ You should say you must get on because you have the right talents for the job. The moment you exaggerate you defeat your case” (Eddison, 1978: 16).

The idea that some women seeking equality in the workplace were actually seeking preferential treatment contributed to conflicts surrounding maternity rights for

working women in both Great Britain and the United States. In the May 19, 1980 issue of *Newsweek*, in an article entitled “The Superwoman Squeeze,” Betty Friedan notes that “We [the U.S.] are one of the few developed nations in the world that does not have serious child-care programs. We force women to make agonizing choices” (Langway, 1980: 73). Friedan, whose book *The Second Stage* was published in 1982, believed that many women were “merely shifting their focus from home and family to job or career, exchanging one half-life for another” as a result of their “extreme reaction against almost every aspect of the housewife-mother service role” (Perrick, 1982: 8). The same year, *London Times* reporter Penny Perrick wrote that Friedan had fallen out of favor with the American “hardcore feminist movement” because of her choice “to affirm that women are ‘different’ and ‘special’” (Ibid: 8).

On the other hand, British feminists throughout the 1970s and early 1980s were, in general, more aligned with Friedan’s position: equal does not mean identical. For example, in 1976 Helene Hayman, the first MP in Parliament to have a baby while in office, caused a stir by bringing her baby to work with her and breastfeeding him in the Lady Members’ Room. According to an article in *Punch* magazine, “a crusty Tory lady ordered Labour’s Helene Hayman out for breastfeeding her new-born baby boy. The child was, the Tory explained, technically a ‘stranger’ and therefore not allowed in the room” (n.p.). In this same article the author notes that “‘women’s issues’ . . . generally means things like creches, family income supplement and abortion”—all issues directly connected to motherhood and women’s reproductive rights. The implication is that for some British feminists, accommodations for working mothers were central to the movement’s equal rights agenda, whereas, according to Nora Ephron, describing Betty Friedan in 1973, “in the [American] women’s movement, to be called the mother of anything is rarely a compliment” (Ibid: 8).

Yet British society was not necessarily any more tolerant or willing to accommodate working mothers than American society. In 1979, the *Daily Telegraph* reported on several cases in which women were fired from their jobs because they had gotten pregnant. Often the women noted that when they interviewed for jobs they had to promise their prospective employers that they either had no interest in having children

or would put off having children for a few years in order to gain employment. In some cases the tribunals found in favor of the women who had been dismissed from their jobs, agreeing that they had been treated unfairly.¹⁷ In the case of an air stewardess, however:

the tribunal rejected her claim because the airline was able to show the pregnancy made her incapable of doing the work for which she was employed and there was not a suitable alternative job available. As she had not been employed by the firm for the statutory two-year period [she] was unable to claim under the employment protection legislation for maternity leave and pay and the right to return to her job after the birth of her child. (“No Baby”, 1979: 8).

By 1982, once the Employment Bill of 1980 had been put into effect, working mothers found negotiating maternity laws even more difficult due to the stricter regulations about the qualifications for acquiring such leave and the increased amount of paperwork that pregnant women were required to file in order to obtain leave and apply for reinstatement after said leave. In her article “Sack Her: She’s Pregnant,” Johanna Fawkes writes that:

many of the tribunals’ findings reinforc[ed] the idea that pregnant women are ‘natural’ for redundancy . . . In one case the tribunal actually ruled that the employer had been acting in the interest of the applicant’s family by not taking her back into employment. The tribunal had decided that this was reasonable ‘having regard to her personal obligations at home’! It is hardly likely that such

¹⁷ For examples, see: “£1,220 Award for Sack After Pregnancy.” *Daily Telegraph* 4 May 1979: 2; “Broken Baby Pledge Cost Mother’s Job.” *Daily Telegraph* 21 Apr. 1979: 19; “No-Pregnancy Pledge to Boss Broken.” *Daily Telegraph* 12 Jan. 1979: 3; and “No-Baby Pledge Woman Sacked Unfairly.” *Daily Telegraph* 2 Feb. 1979: 8.

. . . remarks could have been made to a new father.
(Fawkes, 1982: 8).

Clearly the challenges for women to balance work outside the home and motherhood were still significant, not only legally, but also in terms of cultural perceptions about those choices.

In 1991, Churchill said that in looking back at *Top Girls* she considered it “in a sense ... a history play now, since it is so specifically set at the beginning of the eighties” (O’Kelly, 1991: n.p.). I would argue that it was a history play even at the time of its original production. Though Meenakshi Ponnuswami writes that “after writing *Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* in 1976, Churchill seems to have moved away from both social history and realism” (Ponnuswami, 1998: 41), *Top Girls* presents a social history of Churchill’s own time and place, and it evokes the past through the characters present in the dinner sequence at the beginning of the play. The merging of the various histories is played realistically, despite the fact that such a meeting would be impossible in reality. As a result, the present also becomes an historical period that is presented for examination.

The play works with the conventions of realism in a way that Churchill had not previously worked. Churchill manipulates the structure of the well-made play to produce a critical distance between the audience and the present, as the final scene upends their perceptions of the heroine, Marlene. In forcing the audience to reconsider their assessment of Marlene, Churchill also forces them to look more critically at the society of which Marlene is a product; the audience must thus confront the ways in which such attitudes are being produced in the very moment they see the play, for their responses have, essentially, been a product of the very same environment.

Churchill -in *Top Girls*- allows the audience to engage in a comfortable relationship with the play until the final scene. By springing the structural disruption on them in this way, she distances them from the action; the present thus becomes a specific historical moment on the stage, seen in direct relation to the recent past. It suggests that by the 1980s “early successes [within the feminist movement] had led to

later perceptions that the struggle for equality was over” (Aston and Reinelt, 2000: 14). The ways in which motherhood fits into this struggle become a central part of the examination of second-wave feminism’s legacy in this play. The play also suggests that the definition of a mother has become increasingly difficult to pin down. Several of the characters in *Top Girls* are simultaneously mothers and not mothers; some have borne children but have not had the experience of raising those children, while others have raised other women’s children as their own. The characters’ struggles in the world of this play to balance the demands of their public and private lives connects specifically to issues of power, class, and gender identity and the ways in which not only women’s but also men’s roles are traditionally configured.

Additionally Churchill’s play is adventurous structurally. Though Churchill employed a similar technique in *Cloud Nine*, establishing the present as history, *Top Girls* is different because the style of this play is primarily naturalistic despite the temporal disruptions; there is no farcical treatment of the past in the play, making the use of history more seamless. Churchill’s treatment of the historical characters from previous centuries in *Top Girls*, though again clear types, in some cases because they are already literary or artistic symbols, behave differently from those in *Cloud Nine*. They do not call attention to themselves as characters; they do not comment on themselves, and the ways in which they are cross-cast does not function in the same way.

Caryl Churchill paints a bleaker picture in *Top Girls*, exploding the notion of coming together, as the literal sisters Joyce and Marlene cannot find a space that accommodates them both. Their differences seem irreconcilable, particularly with Joyce’s rejection of Marlene in the final scene:

MARLENE. But we’re friends anyway.

JOYCE. I don’t think so, no. (Churchill, 1982: 98).

There is no comic ending in *Top Girls*, nor is there any prescription for solving the deep rift between the characters or the members of society that they represent. The final

image, Angie's disoriented entrance and her assessment of the "frightening" reality to which she has awoken, offers the audience a challenge.

In the 1980s, British culture continued to valorize the individual to the point of self absorption. Churchill's plays at the beginning of the decade examine this shift and critique the resulting loss of the sense of community that had flourished at the beginning of the 1970s. By setting her plays very firmly in the time and place of their original production, Churchill creates striking histories that challenge audiences to look more closely at her own role in the production of history.

As the culture became more conventional, Churchill's plays became more conventional on the surface, but simultaneously more radical. The dramatic and thematic effectiveness is in making the plays appear to be one thing and then showing them to be something else. By toying with the conventions of realism, the playwrights achieve a Brechtian alienation that "consists in turning the object of which one is to be made aware, to which one's attention is to be drawn, from something ordinary, familiar, immediately accessible, into something peculiar, striking and unexpected" (Brecht, 1964: 143). In doing so, both plays rupture traditional, conservative structures, which inextricably links them to the time and place of their production. In this way, Churchill encourages the audience to look beneath the surface of their own comfortable, conservative, 1980s society.

3.1. *Top Girls*

Top Girls, which was staged in 1982, is another product of Caryl Churchill's collaboration with The Joint Stock Company and The Royal Court Theatre (Kritzer, n.d.: 138). Churchill's growing concerns for the socio-economic effects of policies that were established since Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister of England constituted the main dynamics of the play. Foregrounding the fact that ambitious action, which was encouraged in the capitalist atmosphere of the period, caused a corruption in the ethic of caring, Churchill analysed the nature of the opportunities the female subjects are offered in capitalist systems. She concluded that the power relationships inherent in such systems always rejected the female subjects, hence their establishment on gender-based division of labour (Ibid: 141). In the following quotation,

“It was also that Thatcher had just become prime minister; and also I had been to America for a student production of *Vinegar Tom* and had been talking to women there who were saying things were going very well: they were getting far more women executives, women vice-presidents and so on. And that was such a different attitude from anything I'd ever met here, where feminism tends to be much more connected with socialism and not so much to do with women succeeding on that sort of capitalist ladder. All of those ideas fed into *Top Girls*.” (Aston, 1995: 38).

Churchill warns against the hypocrisy of these systems, and implies that the female subjects' attempts to show their significance under varnished titles, such as executives, vice-presidents, etc., maintain their subservience to the power-emposing processes of patriarchal ideology.

Top Girls is the consequence of such concerns, reflecting Churchill's challenge against the structuring of the female subjects within these power-emposing processes. She realizes this challenge by destroying the progression of producing meaning in her overlapping dialogues, by deforming the linear progression of time in the time shift between the acts, and by employing doublings that challenge the theatrical norm which

dictates unitary representation of the individual. (Diamond, 1990: 96-97). Consequently, Churchill deconstructs the patriarchal modes of generating “truth”, challenges the formulations of subject construction based on it, and upsets the patriarchal structuring which objectifies the female subjects according to these formulations.

The play opens with a dinner party hosted by Marlene, who has been recently promoted as the manager director of the Top Girls Employment Agency. The guests to the dinner party are Isabella Bird, a nineteenth century Scottish traveller, Lady Nijo, a thirteenth century Japanese courtesan who later became a Buddhist nun, Pope Joan, who, disguised as a man, was the leader of the Church between the years 854-856, Dull Gret, the main figure in Brueghel’s painting *Mad Meg*, and Patient Griselda, the obedient wife in the stories by Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer. Throughout the party, they talk about their extraordinary lives and remember the moments that marked their experiences as female subjects. Their sentences overlap, surrounding them with cacophony. However, the festive mood continued by the cacophony in this atmosphere gradually loses its effect: In talking about what they have lost in their struggle to survive, they release the pain and anger they have long suppressed. Nijo sobs, Joan vomits in a corner, and Marlene drinks heavily.

The following acts of the play take place in the present time, shifting from the supernatural atmosphere of the First Act into the England of the 1980s. Act Two opens in Marlene’s employment agency, portraying two of her co-workers who chat about their weekend and discuss Howard’s bad situation resulting from Marlene’s being promoted on him. Angie, whose world revolves around Joyce and Kitty, arrives at Marlene’s office unannounced, and complicates Marlene’s daily Schedule. Despite the fact that she is Angie’s biological mother, Marlene dismisses her and indulges in her daily office work. Throughout the day, Marlene deflates a young woman’s hope to find a job with better prospects and sends her to a secretarial job, dismisses Howard’s distressed wife, and dispossesses Angie by calling her “...a bit thick... a bit funny”. (Churchill, 1990: 120).

The Third Act shifts a year backward in time, and depicts Marlene's visit to Joyce's house. This visit revokes the tension between the sisters and foregrounds the diversity of the decisions they made as they chose to live the way they do: Dispossessing Angie and thus gaining the opportunity to go to London and to seek better prospects in profession is Marlene's resolution, whereas Joyce's resolution is relatively compulsory. Deciding to look after Angie and to mother her, Joyce has restricted the variety of experiences she could have had, and has ended up as a cleaning woman married to a foul husband. As a result, Marlene has prospered and has chosen to remain outside the materiality of marriage, whereas Joyce has been burdened with the responsibility of looking after Angie by herself, hence her separation from her husband. A recollection of these resolutions intensifies the already existing tension between the two and concludes in a bitter quarrel. Identifying with her working class background, Joyce calls Marlene "Ms Hitler" (Ibid: 138). as a reaction to Marlene's admiration of Margaret Thatcher, and dispossesses Marlene. Angie, who has woken up in the meantime, marks the end of the play by her line "Frightening" (Ibid: 141) .

3.2. *Top Girls*: Motherhood and Success

In *Top Girls*, originally produced at the Royal Court Theatre in August 1982, directed by Max Stafford-Clark,¹⁸ Churchill continues to re-imagine the ways in which history can be represented on stage. The play is set solely in the period in which it was written and originally produced. Yet, *Top Girls* is a history play by virtue of its physical inclusion of several characters, real and fictional, from history, literature, and art: Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Brueghel's Dull Gret, Pope Joan, and Chaucer's Patient Griselda. The play begins with a scene in which these women gather to celebrate the protagonist Marlene's recent promotion. The opening scene of *Top Girls*, by introducing historical characters, positions Marlene in an historical moment in relation to various other historical moments. The focus on history at the opening of the play combines with Marlene's predictions about the "stupendous" 1980s to come in the final scene of the play to reinforce, structurally and thematically, the primacy of history in this play.

Unlike Churchill's earlier history plays, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Vinegar Tom*, there is not any concern for naturalistic representations of history; women from a variety of times and places are brought together in England in the 1980s, removed from their own historical contexts while simultaneously presenting a juxtaposition of their collective histories. *Top Girls*, then, is a history play that, as Harben suggests, carries many pieces of the past into the future, "in [an] effort to drive home the connections between past and present" (Harben, 1988: 255).

¹⁸ Though directed by Stafford-Clark, *Top Girls* was not a Joint Stock production. The play was not workshopped, like *Light Shining . . .* and *Cloud Nine*, but there is still a collective model influence evident in the original production choices (typically observed in subsequent productions). Churchill notes that she "wasn't thinking in terms of doubling at all . . . when it came to doing it, partly because it was being directed by Max Stafford-Clark who . . . likes working in that way, partly financial considerations . . . and partly because it is obviously much more enjoyable for the actors" (qtd. in Truss 9-10). The play is regularly double-cast, and although Churchill does not specify which roles a given actor should perform, there seems to be a penchant for the Dull Gret/Angie and the Isabella Bird/Joyce combinations, perhaps for their inherent symbolic and thematic value. Revivals of the play in 1991, 1997, and 2000 all use this doubling. The 1991 revival was again directed by Max Stafford-Clark, for both stage and television. Original cast members Lesley Manville and Deborah Findlay returned for the production, with Findlay reprising her roles of Mrs. Kidd, Isabella Bird, and Joyce.

Yet there are several readings of *Top Girls* that treat the historical scene as if it were tangential to the rest of the play. For example, Michelene Wandor explains it:

“The fantasy element in the play, as well as the sleight-of-time manifested in the placing of the final scene, are formally interesting, but they do not alter the fundamental dynamic, which would be there still *even if the first scene was cut*, and the final scene put into its ‘correct’ time order” (Wandor, 1986: 173).

Wandor argues that the “fundamental dynamic” of the play is “the bourgeois feminist dynamic” (Ibid: 173), which she defines as an ideology that “accepts the world as it is,” and “asserts that women, if they really want to, and try hard enough, can make it to the top” (Ibid: 134). Her argument for this interpretation rests primarily on her claims that both the historical and the contemporary characters accept “entire existential responsibility for what [they] have done” (Ibid: 134). Though such a reading of the characters’ attitudes about their individual choices is defensible, I believe that Churchill encourages an examination of these very attitudes through the formal structure of the play; the juxtaposition of the past and the present forces the audience to consider the prevailing cultural attitudes that shape the women’s beliefs about themselves.

Furthermore, a chronological structure would not lead audiences to the same conclusions about Marlene, or themselves. As the final scene returns the characters, and the audience, to the past, albeit a recent one, the first scene works in parallel to it, contrasting Marlene’s imagined sisterhood with the historical characters to her actual sisterhood with Joyce in what is also an historical moment in Marlene’s immediate past. The opening scene in which Marlene communes with her figurative sisters over an elaborate dinner in a chic restaurant stands in sharp contrast to the final scene, which dramatizes the lack of communion between Marlene and her actual sister in Joyce’s shabby working-class kitchen, where there is no food and the only alcohol to be had is a bottle of whiskey that Marlene has brought with her.

Finally, both scenes represent a reliving of the past through conversation, as the women in each scene share stories of their lives and reflect the choices that they made, or on ones that were made for them, raising questions about culture and history. The final scene is the earliest scene chronologically, and it directly connects to the opening celebration, which Churchill says must show that Marlene “is happy and confident about what she is doing, and the dinner party a year later would confirm to her that her predictions of success were right” (Churchill, 1989: 64). The original construction of the play allows these two scenes to act as bookends thematically, but it also works structurally to make *Top Girls* a history play as past, present, and future converge.

Jane de Gay claims that the Open University/BBC video production of *Top Girls*, by switching the order of the first and second scenes from the stage version, “affects our perception of the play [because] the first scene helps to establish the themes of the play as a whole. The interview scene foregrounds issues of personal presentation, money and career aspirations, especially as they affect women” (Goodman, 1998: 103). De Gay’s reading of the play’s themes differs from mine; nevertheless, the original first scene—the dinner party—can also establish the thematic issues that de Gay explores. Yet the displacement of it de-emphasizes history, and weakens the thematic points about history as well as the structural emphasis on the past and the future that is established by the original order of scenes.

The scene immediately following Marlene’s promotion party provides a look at Marlene’s professional persona, revealing an absence of the sisterly solidarity that pervades the prologue. Act one, scene two takes place at the Top Girls Employment Agency on Marlene’s first day in her new position. The scene is very brief, as Marlene conducts an interview with a young woman named Jeanine. Many critics have touched upon Marlene’s callous treatment of the women she interviews, noting that she has little respect for other women. For example, Amelia Howe Kritzer writes, “Marlene defends the power base she has acquired by patronizing, intimidating, and further narrowing the options of women who come seeking opportunity” (Kritzer, 1996: 145).

When Jeanine tells Marlene that she wants to make more money because she is saving to get married, the conversation takes a turn that reveals Marlene's bias against this type of woman. Marlene is very concerned that Jeanine not mention her marriage plans because prospective employers will likely not hire a young woman who is planning to marry, ultimately because that means she will want to take time off to have children.

MARLENE. Does that mean you don't want a long-term job, Jeanine?

JEANINE. I might do.

MARLENE. Because where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?

JEANINE. Oh no, not kids, not yet.

MARLENE. So you won't tell them you're getting married?

JEANINE. Had I better not?

MARLENE. It would probably help. (Churchill, 1982: 43)

Marlene's concern seems to be her own reputation when she reveals that of the prospective employers is a client to whom Marlene had sent someone before, who then left to have a baby. She warns Jeanine that she "won't want to mention marriage there" (Ibid: 43). Although Marlene's comments indicate that she is complicit in perpetuating such inequities, the larger context should not be overlooked. As previously noted, many women faced this kind of discrimination in the workplace throughout the 1970s; that it has continued into the 1980s suggests that the struggle for equality is far from over, even if women like Marlene have ascended in the ranks.

The structure of *Top Girls* is inseparable from its content, and the use of history by presenting characters from the past is key not only to the themes but also to the audience's understanding of the *present* as its own historical moment. Anthony Jenkins claims that "although its concluding scene occurs first, chronologically, events unravel for the most part in linear ways from public restaurant, Marlene's workplace, Joyce's back garden to the enclosed intimacy of a late-night kitchen" (Jenkins, 1998: 16).

There may be a line from public to private spaces that is heightened by the structure of the play, but the chronology is not linear, and the “unraveling” of events is disrupted by both the physical and temporal shifts between domestic and public spaces. Furthermore, it is precisely because Marlene’s personal history remains hidden until the final scene that Churchill manages to construct the present as history because Marlene’s public persona is finally shown as a construct that emerged from a specific set of material conditions, and the audience must suddenly confront not only Marlene’s but also their own place in history.

The overall structure of the play is more complex than the structure of Churchill’s other history plays, including *Cloud Nine*. First, there is the dinner scene at the beginning of the play, which is played realistically despite the “impossibility” of such a gathering. In an interview with Renate Klett in 1984, Churchill said:

“If you want to bring characters from the past onto the stage then you can do it, without having to find a realistic justification, such as presenting it as Marlene’s dream. On stage it is possible for these women to meet and have dinner. In the Theatre anything’s possible” (Churchill, 1989: 62).

The stage directions in the script describe the setting:

*“Restaurant. Saturday night. There is a table with a white cloth set for dinner with six places.
The lights come up on MARLENE and the waitress”*
(Churchill, 1982: 11).

As the scene progresses, and the characters enter the space one by one, marked by their costumes as being from different times and places, the audience must negotiate the merging of the various worlds that is occurring on stage.

The remainder of the play is set in a realistic representation of the present, though the structure does not get less complicated. *Top Girls* does not present its story chronologically; rather both acts consist of two scenes (not counting the prologue in Act

One), of which the second is chronologically set before the first. Act one, scene two and act two, scene one take place on the same Monday Morning at the Top Girls Employment Agency; act one, scene three happens on the previous Sunday; and act two, scene two takes place on a different Sunday from one year earlier.

The manipulation of time, shifting between the past and the present, even in the contemporary scenes, reinforces the connection between the historical women and the women of the present. The flashback device is used for dramatic effect, as the final scene reveals the secret that Marlene is a mother whose desire to move beyond her working-class existence motivated her to give up her child. Marlene's sister Joyce has been raising the child, Angie, as her daughter for fifteen years. In the final scene, Joyce criticizes Marlene's choice, saying, "I don't know how you could leave your own child" (Churchill, 1982: 90). Yet, Churchill's criticism in *Top Girls* is not about Marlene's "failure" as a woman because she gave up her role as a mother, but a criticism of a society that forces women to make such choices.

Marlene attempts to persuade Joyce that a woman can have both a successful career and a fulfilling experience of a mother, but Joyce undermines Marlene's claims:

JOYCE. Turned out all right for you by the look of you.

You'd be getting a few thousand less a year.

MARLENE. Not necessarily.

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

MARLENE. I could have taken her with me. . . I know a managing director who's got two children, she breast feeds in the board room, she pays a hundred pounds a week on domestic help alone and she can afford that because she's an extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money.

JOYCE. So what's that got to do with you at the age of seventeen? (Ibid: 90).

Joyce's point is striking; a seventeen-year-old single mother does not have many options when it comes to juggling motherhood and a career. Churchill returns to a consideration of history in this final scene by evoking the past of the teenaged Marlene

faced with the dilemma of becoming a single mother. As Joyce and Marlene's argument continues, the story of Marlene's past illustrates the point that when Marlene had the child at the end of the 1960s, she would not have had the same options as the "high-powered lady" in the 1980s that she uses as an example of progress:

JOYCE. You . . . said you weren't keeping it. You shouldn't have had it/if you wasn't

MARLENE. Here we go.

JOYCE. going to keep it. You was the most stupid, / for someone so clever you was the most stupid, get yourself pregnant, not go to the doctor, not tell.

MARLENE. You wanted it, you said you were glad, I remember the day, you said I'm glad you never got rid of it, I'll look after it, you said that down by the river.
(Churchill, 1982: 91).

That the two women discussed Angie's fate "down by the river" hints at the possibility that Marlene was considering a radical solution to her problem, and suggests a desperation that contradicts her confident attitude in the present world of the play.

This revelation of the details of Marlene's past acts as a reflection of the opening scene in which the historical characters share their life stories. The audience gets no such look at Marlene's life until the final scene with her sister. In fact, upon seeing Angie asleep in the office earlier in act two, Marlene's co-worker Nell, surprised to learn that Marlene has a niece, remarks, "What's she got, brother, sister? She never talks about her family" (Ibid: 76). In some ways, Marlene's existence for most of the play is ahistorical; although the audience has viewed her in the historical context provided by the histories of other women from various times and places, they have not been able to locate Marlene in any moment except the present. The conversation between Marlene and Joyce at the end allows the historical context of the present moment to emerge, and it throws the more recent past into relief against the more distant histories of the women in the opening scene.

The conversation continues to raise questions about women's choices regarding reproduction and mothering, again returning to themes that emerge in the opening segment of the play, as Marlene and Joyce recount their options, decisions, and the repercussions of those decisions. For example, Marlene reveals that she has taken advantage of options that have afforded her greater control over her choices about reproduction, but that may have also curtailed those choices. When Joyce suggests that Marlene could have a child now that she is financially secure, Marlene says, "I might do ... I've been on the pill so long I'm probably sterile" (Churchill, 1982: 91). The potential for significant side-effects from the Pill and other forms of contraception concerned feminists in the 1970s and 1980s (Rowbotham, 1989: 62-63). Though such methods surely provide "more reliable ... means of controlling reproduction" (Ibid: 63), they also raise questions about the politics of choice as it relates to access and safety.

Additionally, when Joyce reveals that she miscarried when Angie was still an infant, "because I was so tired looking after your fucking baby" (Churchill, 1982: 92), Marlene counters by saying, "I've had two abortions, are you interested? Shall I tell you about them? Well, I won't, it's boring, it wasn't a problem" (Ibid: 92). The exchange highlights the complexity of women's relationship to motherhood on various levels: Joyce wants children but cannot carry them to term; she has willingly adopted her sister's daughter as her own, but her description of Angie as "your child" belies an immutable distance from her daughter that informs her engagement in the practice of mothering; Marlene has taken steps to avoid bearing more children, and though she says it wasn't a problem, both her tone and her desire to change the topic suggest that none of the choices she has made, whether giving up Angie or having two abortions, has been easy or without compromise. Ultimately, both women's experiences represent a complex network of social, economic, and biological factors, reflecting the need for what Rowbotham argues is a "quest to dissolve the boundaries [between social constructions and nature] and to approach maternity as a continuing interaction between physical growth and mental perception" (Rowbotham, 1989: 104).

In an interview with Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Koenig, Churchill says that "a lot of people have latched on to Marlene leaving her child, which interestingly was

something that came very late,” noting that, “of course women are pressured to make choices between working and having children in a way that men aren’t, so it *is* relevant, but it isn’t the main point of it” (Churchill, 1987: 77). Though it may not be the “main point” of *Top Girls*, motherhood features prominently from the beginning of the play, as the worlds of careers and motherhood are immediately juxtaposed. Pope Joan introduces the subject of motherhood, recounting the tale of how she bore a child during a procession and was stoned to death as a result of her crime—her crime being that she was female, and women are not allowed to be Pope. Thus, as *Top Girls* begins, there seems to be a special significance placed on the inherent conflict that social institutions create for women who choose to be both workers outside the home and mothers.

It is, in fact, Joan’s role as a mother that betrays her secret and leads to her demise. Joan’s quip that “Women, children and lunatics can’t be Pope” (Churchill, 1982: 26), by consigning women to the same camp as those who are too young to be in charge and those who are mentally incompetent, suggests that women are not supposed to hold positions of power. In “The Imagined Woman,” Chiara Frugoni writes,

What is interesting in the story of Joan (originally a legend, but the way in which legend was manipulated makes it real history) is the persistence of a twin obsession: first, the fear that a woman might dare to exert male prerogatives—Joan was condemned for sacrilege; second, the fear of a woman’s body as a vehicle for perverse seduction—Joan was unmasked by the fruit of her sin. (Frugoni, 1992: 375).

Churchill’s presentation of Joan and her story, then, works on two levels. First, she presents a woman who allegedly became Pope in 855 (and was subsequently murdered for it), introducing history into the play as a means of examining the present. Second, she emphasizes an idea that she originally explored in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Vinegar Tom*: by connecting women’s reproductive abilities to Eve’s sin of bringing sex into the world, social institutions have used motherhood as a means of control by keeping women out of positions of authority because they are regarded as inherently morally inferior.

Ironically, this opening scene is Marlene's fantasy celebration of her own rise to a position of authority. When asked about her recent promotion, Marlene says, "Well it's not Pope but it is managing director," which prompts Lady Nijo to respond with admiration, "Over all the women you work with. And the men" (Churchill, 1982: 24). The audience, however, ultimately learns that Marlene has paid a significant price for her status. According to Helene Keyssar, "Marlene is a woman we must take seriously but she is also a woman who accepts male models of success as exemplary and is thus not someone we are meant simply to admire" (Keyssar, 1984: 98). Marlene's quest for power and success leads her to the choice to relinquish the role of mother in order to fit into a specific social role. Thus, while the audience may admire Marlene's successful career, they are forced to contemplate the sacrifice she made to achieve it, as well as the ways in which her subsequent choices, including the active distance she maintains from her working-class mother, sister, and daughter/niece, actually reproduce and reinforce certain attitudes about women.

At the celebration, Marlene offers a toast "To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements" (Churchill, 1982: 24), focusing on the women's professional strides before the topic of motherhood is introduced into the conversation. Churchill then proceeds to disabuse the audience of the notion of the great advancement of women over the centuries. The women represent a wide variety of cultures, classes and eras, and almost every one of them has a horrifying story about motherhood. Of all the women present, Isabella is the only character who does not have children. The silent waitress may or may not be a mother, but her life is not revealed in any way through dialogue, so the audience has no way of knowing. Marlene is the only character (besides the silent waitress) who refrains from comment; she never mentions she has had a child, nor does she lie.

The stories the characters share are not positive accounts of motherhood. Men exert control over the women and children; often, both mother and child suffer humiliation, subordination, and even death. Some of the characters are mothers only in the sense of having delivered children, never experiencing the day-to-day practice of mothering because their children were taken away from them shortly after being born.

For example, Lady Nijo recounts the tale of how she was forced to give up her daughter because the Emperor, her husband, was not the baby's father; she goes on to note that the two sons she later bore to the priest Ariake were also taken away from her. Patient Griselda's story (as well as her identity) centers on her willingness to give up her children at her husband's request; testing her obedience, Walter, the marquis, sends their daughter away when she is just six weeks old, and their son when he is two years old. Griselda believes the children are going to be murdered because her husband tells her that "the people" were rebelling because the children were nothing more than peasants themselves because of Griselda's previous status as a commoner. Twelve years after her son was taken away, Griselda is reunited with her children, and she is rewarded for her unconditional obedience; upon the revelation of this "happy" ending to Griselda's tale of woe, Nijo weeps, "Nobody gave me back my children" (Churchill, 1982: 37). Thus, although these women had the power to bring a life into the world through childbirth, they did not have control over their own lives or the lives of her children, no matter what their status—Pope, marquise, or emperor's concubine.

Though she may not admit it to herself, Marlene, too, is a victim of similar oppression. Though no one literally forced Marlene to give up her child, as both Lady Nijo and Patient Griselda were forced to give up theirs, the audience can sense that the same forces are still at work in Marlene's society; in order to achieve her current position in the business world, Marlene had to abandon her role as mother because it would be virtually impossible for her to negotiate the two worlds as a single parent in London in the 1970s and 1980s. Lisa Merrill suggests that "by attempting to equate Marlene's promotion at work with the extreme circumstances overcome by the other five guests, Churchill renders Marlene's achievement petty and ludicrous" (Merrill, 1988: 83). I do not think Churchill is suggesting that Marlene's achievements are petty or ludicrous. Rather, the fact remains that Marlene has had to make sacrifices for those achievements; she has not been able to overcome all of the obstacles, none of the women has.

By merging the past and the present, Churchill suggests that women haven't come as far as Marlene would like to believe. Janelle Reinelt writes:

“Top Girls is concerned to show how progressive social movements such as feminism can be diluted and accommodated by capitalism . . . the play shows the prices that women throughout history have had to pay for being unique and successful and suggests that contemporary women are also paying a price that may not be desirable. (Reinelt, 1994: 88-89).

It is significant that at the time the play was written and produced, seven years after the Sex Discrimination Act was passed, women in England were still struggling to successfully balance careers and motherhood.

For example, in her discussion in the London newspaper the *Times* about an American study that showed “among working women, the incidence of coronary heart disease rose as the number of children increased” though that among housewives the group “showed a slight decrease with an increasing number of children,” Cary Cooper notes that similar problems existed in Britain at the time because “most working women are expected... to fulfill the roles of both homemaker and career person simultaneously” (Cooper, 1980: 17). Similarly, E. Ann Kaplan writes in her article “Sex, Work and Motherhood: The Impossible Triangle” (1990):

Even when they are in heterosexual marriages, women have difficulties linking these three aspects [sex, work, and motherhood] of their lives. But those who are single or recently divorced mothers. . . find even greater odds stacked against them. It has been clear that women’s difficulties owe to the lack of facilitating institutions. . . we still do not have adequate, available and inexpensive child care, and flexible and accommodating work schedules. (Kaplan, 1990: 409).

As a counterpoint to highlight this struggle, Churchill presents Marlene’s sister Joyce, a single mother who struggles to support herself and her daughter by working four different cleaning jobs. Joyce is a casualty of the same society in which Marlene is a success. When she took Marlene’s child, she was married; however, by the time Angie

was twelve, Joyce was on her own. She keeps the child despite the various hardships that she faces as a single parent in a society that offers little accommodation in terms of flexible work or affordable childcare.

Churchill's critique of the present is explicit in *Top Girls*. The connection made to historical women at the beginning of the play crystallizes in the final scene. In a heated argument with Joyce, Marlene says:

This country needs to stop whining. / Monetarism is not ,.
 . . stupid.
 It takes time, determination. No more slop. / And
 JOYCE. Well I think they're filthy bastards.
 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 . . .
 MARLENE. Bosses still walking on the worker's faces?
 Still dad-da's little parrot? Haven't you learned to think for
 yourself? I believe in the individual. Look at me.
 JOYCE. I am looking at you. (Churchill, 1982: 95).

It is ironic that Marlene believes in the power of the individual when she has had to shed a part of her own identity in order to succeed. Her veneration of Thatcher as a role model for women is disturbing, especially in Joyce's opinion. Thatcher, like Marlene, represents a woman who has gained her position in society only by downplaying her femininity, as is indicated by her "Iron Lady" persona. If Thatcher is one of the historical figures who represent how far women have come, *Top Girls* seems to suggest, the notion of equal opportunity is a fraud; the only way women can move up in the system is to become more like men, and that is not truly equality.

Furthermore, despite the physical absence of men, *Top Girls* is the only one of Churchill's plays in which there are no male characters on stage, their presence looms powerfully, as most of the women's choices and attitudes have clearly been defined in

relation to men. The women's stories in the opening scene, for example, often center on the choices that were made for them by men, particularly fathers and husbands. Additionally, that two of the characters at dinner are literally male creations, characters in works by Chaucer¹⁹ and Breughel, suggests that women have historically lacked control over the representation of themselves in art and literature. That they are being re-imagined in a work by a female writer allows them to take on a new life as they reflect on their stories from a new, female, perspective.

Throughout the play absent men, such as Marlene and Joyce's father; Angie's unnamed, unmentioned biological father, as well as her adopted father, Joyce's exhusband; and Marlene's colleague Howard Kidd exert influence over the women's lives, sometimes specifically because of that very absence. Most of the women in the play are shown fending for themselves in a society that does not grant them the same freedom or authority it grants men.

When women do rise to positions of power, they are criticized for moving beyond their sphere and usurping the authority of men. In act two, Mrs. Kidd comes to visit Marlene to request that she let her husband Howard have the promotion that was granted to Marlene because, she says, without a touch of irony, "he's got a family to support. He's got three children. It's only fair" (Churchill, 1982, 69). When Marlene dismisses Mrs. Kidd's request, Mrs. Kidd says, "You're one of those ballbreakers,/that's what you are. You'll end up miserable and lonely. You're not natural" (Ibid: 70). The audience, ostensibly, aligns themselves with Marlene, put off by Mrs. Kidd's all-too-familiar, bogus, anti-feminist argument. Marlene seems to be, in this moment, a victim of skewed perceptions of both equal opportunities and feminism.

Yet when Marlene's choices, and her fiercely self-centered worldview, are revealed at the end of the play, her own views on those subjects become equally suspect. In several different interviews, Churchill mentions the specific connection between *Top Girls* and a visit to the United States in which she found some women's

¹⁹ The story of Patient Griselda also appears in Boccaccio's *The Decameron* and Petrarch's translation of Boccaccio's work into Latin. When Marlene introduces Griselda to the other guests she says, "Griselda's in Boccaccio and Petrarch and Chaucer because of her extraordinary marriage"

attitudes about feminism disturbing because they believed “women were getting on well. . . because there are a lot of women in executive positions” (Simon, 1983: 126), and that “was such a different attitude from anything I’d ever met here [in England], where feminism tends to be much more connected with socialism and not so much to do with women succeeding on the sort of capitalist ladder” (Churchill, 1982: 8). *Top Girls* implicates American culture directly in its historical portrait, suggesting a strong socio-political link between the United States and Great Britain. The cross-cultural Exchange emerges in conversations about Marlene’s trip to America; Angie’s fascination with Marlene’s adventures in the U.S. and her declaration, “I want to be an American” (Ibid: 86); the mention of the “American-style field” of computers as a place where women will have to compete with “slick fellas” for jobs (Ibid: 72); and Win’s comment that “Americans know how to live” (Ibid: 76). In relation to feminist concerns about equal opportunities and motherhood, the American view in the 1980s was already driving toward a “having it all” ethos, and the focus on women who could afford, financially, to make such choices presents a glamorized representation of the possibility of doing so.

Though Churchill also writes that the argument between Joyce and Marlene in the final scene is “exaggerated and oversimplified on both sides,” (Fitzsimmons, 1989: 64), the implications about Angie’s future, which Marlene has pronounced in act two, scene one, force the audience to consider the ways in which Marlene’s brand of feminism reproduces existing power structures rather than challenging them. At the end of act two, scene one, Marlene dismisses Angie, saying, “She’s not going to make it” (Churchill, 1982: 77). This line is, chronologically speaking, the final statement of the action of the play. When Marlene says it, the audience is not aware of the truth about her relationship to Angie, but it is distressing nevertheless. Angie has shown intense affection for Marlene; in act one she shares her fantasy with Kit that “I think I’m my aunt’s child. I think my mother’s really my aunt” (Ibid: 52). In act two, Angie has traveled to London by herself, specifically to see Marlene, saying, “It’s where I most want to be in the world” (Ibid: 70). Thus, whether the audience recognizes Angie as Marlene’s daughter or her niece, Marlene’s rejection of her seems harsh, and Marlene’s commitment to other women becomes suspect.

The final scene reveals that Joyce is not any more confident about Angie's chances of making it, but her reasons for feeling this way are different from Marlene's. Her attitude about Angie's grim future is also different:

MARLENE. If they're stupid or lazy or frightened, I'm not going to help them get a job, why should I?

JOYCE. What about Angie?

MARLENE. What about Angie?

JOYCE. She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her?

MARLENE. You run her down too much. She'll be fine.

JOYCE. I don't expect so, no. I expect her children will say what a wasted life she had. If she has children. Because nothing's changed and won't with them in.
(Churchill, 1982: 97).

Joyce wants to find a way to increase Angie's chances, but, even though in this scene Marlene suggests Angie will find a way to make it, in the end she simply writes off her niece/daughter like an under-qualified applicant at her agency.

Churchill's critique in *Top Girls* works on many levels, including pointing out flaws in the capitalist, consumer-driven society that reveres individuality over community, and social institutions that profess to espouse equal rights but ultimately fail to accommodate women with children. By introducing characters from various times and places, Churchill shows that women have been subject to such restrictive structures throughout history. By treating the present as history, she encourages the audience to consider how these structures continue to be produced and suggests that feminism still has a way to go on the road to change.

3.3. *Top Girls*: Six Women and Their Denied Motherhood

The play opens with the word “Excellent” and ends with “Frightening!”. These first and last words that the spectators hear in the beginning and at the end of the play are critical to the theme: This is a play throughout which the spectators witness how and why “the excellent” dissolves into “the frightening”.

In the play, the First Act takes place in a restaurant, not in a house or in a familial domain. Analysing its complex implications, it is seen that this deliberate setting is of high importance : A restaurant is a unit situated in the capitalist economy, i.e., it is a medium that foregrounds a union of hierarchical relationships in the sense that it has a manager, and subservient workers who serve both the customers and the financial ends of its owner. On the other hand, a restaurant allows for bodily activities, i.e., eating and drinking, metaphorically enabling the customers to open a conversation with their bodies. Moreover, a restaurant is a “public space” opposite to the patriarchal house which, under the guise of “domestic space”, acts as a medium of the domination of the feminine by the masculine.

By making use of such a setting whose connotations have been given above, Caryl Churchill implies that, despite the supernatural aspects of the setting (i.e., a restaurant set in a time which is beyond the borders of “his”tory’s linear pattern (Goodman, 1996: 233)) and the relatively independent atmosphere they constitute, it is extremely difficult to create an ambiance where female subjects can realize their own experiences as evaluating individuals : Even though a restaurant is not a paternal domain in which the female subjects are objectified by being turned into agents of paternal abuse, and even though it is a medium where, by means of eating and drinking, the characters can activate the language and the potential of their female bodies suppressed by patriarchy, it is still dominated by a capitalist atmosphere whose first and foremost principle, objectification, is also valid for patriarchal processes that preserve patriarchy’s dominance on the female subjects. For this reason, the female characters’ experiences within this medium will be highly influenced by the complexities of the metaphors of the setting, and, on a symbolical level, the arrangement of the setting is a foreshadowing

of how the female characters' process of self-realization is influenced and interrupted by capitalism.

In the First Act of the play, the spectators witness an unusual dinner party hosted by Marlene, a recently promoted managing director of "Top Girls" Employment Agency. The guests for the dinner party are Isabella Bird, who travelled extensively between the ages of 40 and 70, Lady Nijo, an Emperor's courtesan and later a Buddhist nun who travelled on foot through Japan, Pope Joan, who, disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope between 854-856; and fictitious characters like Dull Gret, who is the subject of the Brueghel painting *Mad Meg*, and Patient Griselda, the obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in "The Clerk's Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales*.

These characters that Marlene has brought together to celebrate her promotion are significant in the sense that they have become important figures within the context of patriarchal "his"tory. In other words, their *raison d'être***** has depended on their deeds that were worth being recorded in the stated narrative: Isabella Bird, the nineteenth-century Scottish traveller, adjusts to the role of a dutiful daughter and travels to various parts of the world, imitating "the colonizer" in another manner. Lady Nijo, the Japanese courtesan, is first the Emperor's concubine and later simulates itinerant Buddhist priests for the sake of fulfilling her father's wishes. Joan advances to the position of the Pope and thus becomes "proper" for the records of history. Her giving birth to an illegitimate child under the disguise of a man and consequently raising a scandal also culminate in her "recordability". Dull Gret is Brueghel's creation, and her only role in history is to add to Brueghel's reputation as an artist and to reflect the heroic mother image in Brueghel's mind. Parallely, Patient Griselda reflects the image of a dutiful daughter – obedient wife image, a role model proper to all female subjects, and can only realize herself as Chaucer allows her to.

These characters' representation in patriarchal history as such gives us reason why they are in that restaurant : Having chosen them as symbols of female subjects who suffer from their experience as "women" and wish both to disrupt the "proper" familial roles that have been cast on them by patriarchy and to depict their frustration resulting

from being trapped within phallogocentric structures, Churchill offers them a medium that is not dominated by a patriarch and thus seeks to offer these characters an escape, an alternative representation. However, as it has been stated before, because of the complexity of the connotations of the restaurant, the characters' search for a full disconnect from patriarchal patterns is not likely to result in a successful way, hence the omnipresence of patriarchal ideology and its partnership with capitalism.

As the play opens, the first character to speak is Marlene, "ordering" drinks for the guests. In this example, an image of Marlene is foreshadowed : A strong, demanding Thatcherite business woman who "knows" how to "deal with" hierarchal relationships. However, as she starts a dialogue with Isabella, her patronising voice, i.e., the mask disguising her desire to escape patriarchal structures, disappears:

"I haven't time for a holiday. *I'd like to get away to somewhere exotic* like you but I can't get away... I'd like to lie in the sun forever, except of course I *can't bear sitting still.*" (Churchill, 1990: 55).

Marlene's desire to escape is resounded in Isabella's words : " ...But I couldn't stay in Scotland. I loathed the constant murk." (Ibid: 56)

The next character to enter the stage is Nijo, and the first words she says as she is given a glass of wine display the reasons why she is there, in the restaurant:

"It was always the men who used to get so drunk. [If I didn't escape] I'd be one of the maidens, passing the sake"
(Ibid: 56).

In other words, it is only at this dinner party that instead of passing the sake, she is served the wine.

Dull Gret is the next guest to arrive, and she remains speechless most of the play. However, even her presence in the dinner party is a kind of escape – an escape from the two – dimensional image on Brueghel's canvas that does not provide her with a language she can speak. For this reason, the language she speaks in the play – not by

words, but by her muteness and her shattered sentences – marks the desire to escape, and indicates the construction of an identity that Brueghel hadn't allowed her to have.

Pope Joan, who arrives much later than Dull Gret, is also a character who has made a real effort to escape the paternal domain, but her experience is quite complex: "I dressed as a boy when I left home" (Churchill, 1990: 62) she says, but this escape from the paternal domain is realised for the sake of a "knowledge" that female subjects cannot be the possessors of: "Pope Leo died and I was chosen. All right then. I would know God. I would know everything" (Ibid: 66). When one considers Plato's and Aristotle's influence on Christian theology, and the access they have given only to men in attaining reason²⁰, i.e., the ultimate mediator of Truth in which God finds its manifestation, it can be seen that her escape has not been accomplished. Only at the end of the First Act she can rid herself off of this knowledge, the "dead" language Latin which her "body" denies – she gets sick in a corner after a cacophony of Latin words:

"something something something mortisque timores

Tom vacuum pectus – damn

Quod si ridicula –

Something something on and on and on and something

Splendorem purpureai." (Churchill, 1990: 82).

Patient Griselda is the last to arrive at the dinner party, and her entrance is unnoticed by the other guests. Griselda's escape is both an escape from Chaucer's narrative and from her experiences that were prescribed by the dominance of patriarchy.

²⁰ Plato, in *The Republic*, conceived of nature as being permeated with Mind. In his view, knowledge of nature was analogous to the communion of men who were equals – a communion that eschewed the maternal and the physical. Such a communion, by definition, excluded women; therefore, the actions of the mind and knowing became the province of the masculine and the female subject could not participate in the process of enunciation. On the other hand, Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, started from the premiss that the soul had two parts, the rational and irrational. To eliminate a probable conflict between the two, a hierarchy that celebrated the rational was necessary. Paralelly, if women were by nature less rational beings, it was therefore natural that they should be governed by men. These misogynist prescriptions of Plato and Aristotle eventually denied women the processes of generating knowledge, and rendered them nonrepresentable. For further discussion on this issue, see Plato, *The Republic*, Aristotle, *Poetics*, Helen Haste, *The Sexual Metaphor*, London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993, pp. 74-75; Lesley Ferris, "Introduction To Part Five: Cross Dressing and Women's Theatre", *The Routledge Reader In Gender And Performance*, ed. Lizabeth Goodman, Jane De Gay, London: Routledge, 1998, pp. 165-167, and Sue Ellen Case, *Feminism And Theatre*, London: The Macmillan Press, 1988, pp. 10-18.

Similar to Dull Gret, she is in search of a medium where she can become a important individual and realize herself as a declarative person who can say : “I *do think* – I do wonder – it would have been nicer if Walter hadn’t had to” (Churchill, 1990: 81).

Lastly, the waitress in the First Act who does not say a word and has no individual significance apart from obeying the orders of the guests, should be mentioned. She is the only character for whom there is no escape, even within the context of a feminist playwright’s imagination – since that imagination writes back from within the same patriarchal structure, which is under the omnipresent influence of phallogocentrism. Her presence in the restaurant as a character who only obeys what she is told shows that the negative associations of the restaurant evoke. This highlights the setting’s deficiency in offering an alternative medium where characters can speak clearly. For this reason, the First Act does not end in an idealization of the escape that has been sought in order to enunciate: Isabella’s last words, on a metaphorical level, reflect this aspect: “...I knew my return of vigour was only temporary, but how marvellous while it lasted.” (Ibid: 83).

In examining the characters’ experience of motherhood, it is observed that, in defining it, they alternate between the two meanings of motherhood, one superimposed on the other: 1. The potential relationship of any female subject to her powers of reproduction and to her children. 2. The institution which constitutes motherhood as the primary identification of any female subject, and aims at conforming that the reproductive potential of female subjects shall remain under the male control (Rich, n.d.: 13-30). The latter description also suggests that, all the female subjects within the category “women” should participate in realizing the demands of institutionalized motherhood, regardless of their procreative capabilities. Because the young female subjects who haven’t reached puberty and the elderly female subjects past their menopausal stage are within this category, they are also subject to being classified by the same institution. For this reason, this institution, which equates femininity to motherhood, makes it difficult for the characters to come to terms with both their femininity and their procreative capability.

In Isabella's case, this difficulty is quite explicit. The initial information she gives us about herself is:

"I sent for my sister Hennie to come and join me. I said, Hennie we'll live here forever and help the natives. You can buy two sirloins of beef for what a pound of chops costs in Edinburgh. And Hennie wrote back, the dear, that yes, she would come to Hawaii if I wished, but I said she had far better stay where she was. Hennie was suited to life in Tobermory." (Churchill, 1990: 55).

Isabella's first lines echo a revelation of escape from the paternal house and of having chosen between two different ways of living: Either travelling around the world and rejecting the domesticated mother role; or staying in the paternal house and acting as the "mother" managed in the patriarchal domain by being subject to the demands of the patriarch, such as "...Cooking, washing, mending..." (Ibid: 58). It is obvious that Isabella has considered this second role more proper for her sister Hennie, and for her, Hennie becomes the metaphor of the "(m)other", her "otherness" that she has denied. In her lines:

"I knew it would be terrible when she died but I didn't know how terrible. *I felt half of myself had gone. How could I go on my travels without that sweet soul waiting at home for my letters?*" (Ibid: 65).

This role division, which converts Isabella to an unsettled traveller and Hennie the domesticated mother – figure, can be seen. However, this is a bitter and complex resolution. Since motherhood as "the female subject's potential relationship to her children" is difficult to experience without further experiencing the institutionalized motherhood that founds itself on that potential, even in the very instance of leaving the institutionalized role as the mother, Isabella loses the possibility to discover her own bodily potentials. Even though her lines:

“I never had any children. I was very fond of *horses*... But *my father was the mainspring of my life* and when he died I was so grieved... I tried to be a clergyman’s daughter...I studied the metaphysical poets and hymnology. I thought I enjoyed intellectual pursuits.” (Churchill, 1990: 57-72).

imply that her role – model has been her father, not her mother, her rebellion against the role of motherhood as a woman is still very debatable, because her line: “I *always travelled as a lady* and I *repudiated* strongly any suggestion in the press *that I was other than feminine*” (Ibid: 62) suggests that her desire to rebel against motherhood as a role simultaneously clashes with her desire to fit in the description of the female subject made by patriarchy. Thus, the concurring denial and acceptance of submission to patriarchy results in an escape that takes her nowhere:

“Oh I was pitiful. I was sent on a cruise for my health and I felt even worse. Pains in my bones, pins and needles in my hand, swelling behind the ears, and – oh, stupidity. I shook all over, an indefinable terror. And Australia seemed to me a hideous country, the acacias stank like drains... I longed to go home, but home to what? Houses are so perfectly dismal... my hair had fallen out and my clothes were crooked, I looked completely insane and suicidal” (Ibid: 61)

In her own experience, Australia, which she had originally chosen as a refuge in her escape from the obligations of patriarchy, shows its hideous face and becomes equally unhappy as the paternal home. By and large, Australia is a colonised land whose resources are exploited and whose natives are “culturalized” by the phallogocentric, effeminising colonizer. Because the omnipresent patriarchy conducts its own “knowledge” by means of language, and because Isabella’s experience as a female subject has been filled with that very knowledge, she suffers bitterly. Her incapability to escape from this “knowledge” reveals itself in her suicidal state, a mental breakdown that she can hardly recover from.

However, although Isabella's painful struggle to resolve between the denial and acceptance of the roles superimposed on the category "women" is continuously at work, she insistently desires to remain mobile and tries to escape the domestic image that has been constructed by patriarchy. This is clearly seen in her relationship with men. Here are her lines describing her relationship with her lover:

"Rocky Mountain Jim, Mr. Nugent, showed me no disrespect. He found it interesting, I think, that I could make scones and lasso cattle. Indeed he declared his love for me, which was most *distressing*." (Churchill, 1990: 63)

The reason why Isabella finds this declaration distressing is that she does not yield to the domestication of her capabilities through "marriage", i.e., an immobility which is a combination of "making scones" and "lassoing cattle". However, as she marries Doctor Bishop, the immobility she has been trying to avoid becomes inevitable:

"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 with carbuncles on my spine and nervous *prostration*." (Ibid: 65).

The "prostration" she suffers from in the familial domain is followed by a bitter frustration, which brings about a demanding resistance that is objectified in the form of an escape. This escape is conveniently realised as her husband dies. Following her husband's death, Isabella sets off again, justifying her symbolic escape in: "...I always *felt dull when I was stationary*. That's why I could never stay anywhere [and could not bear to obey the domestic roles I was assigned]." (Ibid: 67).

Isabella's words at the end of the First Act clearly suggest that she has not yet resolved her bad situation:

"I just went to Morocco. The sea was so wild *I had to be landed by ship's crane in a coal bucket*. My horse was a terror to me a powerful black charger. So off I went to visit the Berber sheikhs in full blue trousers and great

brass spurs. *I was the only European woman ever to have seen the Emperor of Morocco.* I was seventy years old. *What lengths to go to for a last chance of joy.* I knew my return of vigour was only temporary, but how marvellous while it lasted.” (Churchill, 1990: 83).

In the above quotation, it is observed that the lengths she has gone to escape have placed her in the coal bucket like an object, have made her horse hostile to her, have clad her in male clothing, and have taken her yet to another patriarch, the Emperor, by conversing with whom she becomes his “equal”. This implies that, as a consequence of the omnipresent dynamics of patriarchal discourses, the female subjects who try to subvert the “womanly” roles prescribed by patriarchy end up either fully entrapped by these discourses and thus grow masculinized, or fail to escape being objectified.

Nijo, the second guest to arrive, is another character whose experience as a mother has been extremely debatable. This is how she introduces herself:

“One night my father proposed three rounds of three cups, which was normal, and then the Emperor should have said *three rounds for three cups*, but he said *three rounds of nine cups*, so you can imagine. Then the Emperor *passed his sake cup to my father* and said, ‘let the *wild goose* come to me this spring.’ ... Well I was only fourteen and I knew he meant something but *I didn’t know what.*” (Ibid: 56-57).

The Law of the Father dominating the scene reported above first constructs its own “knowledge” and (i.e., the difference between three cups and nine cups), passes this knowledge from one “father” to another (i.e., from the Emperor to Nijo’s father), and in this process, objectifies Nijo and manages her powers of reproduction (i.e., the wild goose which needs to be tamed). The chain reaction evident in this quotation is followed by a further objectification, which Nijo expresses as follows:

“*He sent me an eight-layered gown* and I sent it back. So when the time came I did nothing but cry. *My thin gowns were badly ripped.* But even that morning when he left –

he'd a green robe with a scarlet lining and very heavily embroidered trousers, I already felt different about him... I belonged to him, it was what I was brought up for from a baby. " (Churchill, 1990: 56-57).

The deflowering, which is suggested by the ripping of the thin gowns, identifies Nijo's femininity with clothes, and this later on becomes internalized by Nijo as she says,

"I can't say I enjoyed my life. What I enjoyed most was *being the Emperor's favourite and wearing thin silk... I adored my clothes.* When I was chosen to give sake to his Majesty's brother, the Emperor Kameyana, on his first formal visit, *I wore raw silk pleated trousers and a seven-layered gown in shades of red, and two outer garments, yellow lined with green and a light green jacket.*" (Ibid: 58-62).

As a result of Nijo's having accepted the objectification of her femininity, her experience as a mother cannot escape being shaped by institutionalized motherhood, the mechanism which claims authority on female subjects' procreative potential through objectification. This is how she "speaks" about her children:

"I too was often in *embarrassing situations*, there's no need for a scandal. *My first child was His Majesty's*, which unfortunately died, but my second was Akebono's... Now His Majesty hadn't been near me for two months so he thought I was four months pregnant when I was really six, so when I reached the ninth month I announced I was seriously ill, and Akebono announced he had gone on a religious retreat...[Akebono] *cut the cord... wrapped the baby in white and took it away. It was only a girl* but I was sorry to lose it." (Ibid: 70)

These lines clearly show that the children Nijo gave birth to were delivered to the dominion or ruling of patriarchy, in other words, they were their fathers'. Furthermore, in case the child was outside the managing power of patriarchy, i.e., illegitimate, it was

to be taken away to avoid any disobedience to the same power. As a result of her fear to distort the stated power, Nijo cannot celebrate the births of her other children:

“I never saw my third child after he was born, the son of Ariake the priest.... My fourth child was Ariake’s too...It was a boy again, my third son. But oddly enough I felt nothing for him.” (Churchill, 1990: 72).

However, Nijo makes efforts to express her crisis. Her difficulty in yielding to the demands of patriarchal economy becomes verbalized in “Nobody gave me back my children.” (Ibid: 79) and in her hostile reaction to the Emperor who “...beat[s his] women across the loins so they’ll have sons and not daughters.” (Ibid: 80). Another consequential reaction is her desire to escape from the court – i.e., her seeking movability and freedom by means of “walking” as a Buddhist nun. However, her desire to escape and her fear of distorting the regulatory patriarchal system almost always coexist, and this fear is deepened as she receives a warning from her father, who tells her to ““ Serve His majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favour enter the holy orders ”” (Ibid: 57). Ironically, escaping from the Emperor, i.e., the patriarch, results in yielding the holy orders, which means, in a vicious circle, being come and go between two patriarchal domains. Her trouble resulting from being entrapped within these two realms can be observed in the following lines:

“How else could I have left the court if I wasn’t a nun?
When my father died I had only His Majesty. So when I
fell out of favour I had *nothing*. *Religion is a kind of*
nothing, and I dedicated what was left of me to *nothing*...
There was *nothing* in my life, *nothing*, without the
Emperor’s favour.” (Ibid: 61-66).

The “nothingness” dominating her sentences symbolizes her powerlessness, and as powerlessness leads to lassitude, self-negation and guilt (Rich, n.d.: 65), she blames herself for the death of her lover the priest (Churchill, 1990: 65). The only refuge she takes in “walking” is only partially helpful:

“...New sights. The shrine by the beach, the moon shining on the sea. The goddess had woved to save all living things. She would even save the fishes. I was *full of hope*.”
(Churchill, 1990: 67)

Being charged with hope and desiring to merge with the mother – goddess is a desire to escape the boundaries that have been cast on her body by patriarchy. However, Nijo does not narrate whether her hopes have been fulfilled. This unfulfillment is expressed in her crisis in the end of the First Act: She beats up the Emperor in her imagination: “Take that, take that” (Ibid: 80), and by separating herself from the Law of the Father, she “speaks” by her body as she laughs and cries at the same time.

The next character to join the dinner party is Dull Gret, and her experience both as a mother and as a two – dimensional figure created by Brueghel necessitates a careful examination.

During the whole act, Dull Gret mostly remains speechless. However, her final speech, in which she gives a description of hell, is dramatic:

“We come into hell through *a big mouth*. Hell’s black and red. It’s like the village where I come from. There’s a river and a *bridge* and *houses*. There’s places on fire like when the soldiers come. There’s *a big devil sat on a roof* with a big hole in his arse and *he’s scooping stuff out of it with a big ladle* and it’s falling down on us, and it’s money, so a lot of women stop and get some. But most of us is fighting the devils. There’s lots of little devils, our size, and we get them down all right and give them a beating. There’s lots of funny creatures round your feet, you don’t like to look, like rats and lizards, and nasty things, *a bum with a face*, and *fish with legs*, and *faces that don’t have faces on*. But they don’t hurt, you just keep going. Well we’ve had worse, you see, we’d had the Spanish. We’ve had all my family killed. *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 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, and we push down the street and *the ground opens up* and and we go through a big mouth into a street just like ours but in hell. I've got a sword in my hand from somewhere and I fill a basket with gold cups they drink out of down there. *You just keep running on and fighting you didn't stop for nothing.* Oh we gave them such a beating" (Churchill, 1990: 81-82).

Because of its likeness to the village where Gret comes from, this hell metaphorically stands for institutionalized realms of patriarchy in which Gret and all female subjects exist as "women". The "big mouth" situated in the realm in this context metaphorically stands for the vagina, and at the first moment of birth, the children it delivers are passed on to the dominion of patriarchy²¹. The river, on the other hand, which is painted in red in the original painting, stands for the menstrual blood that flows from the vagina, and its "dangers" are symbolically "overcome" by the bridge over it²². This bridge leads to houses, which metaphorically stand for the institutionalized paternal domain, and to the "big roof" on which the big devil, i.e., the patriarch, sits. This phallogocentric realm, which embodies the vagina as such, is the site of struggle for Gret and her friends in which they have arrived to punish the devils that caused their children's death. In other words, it "disconnected" them from their mothers. For this reason, their struggle metaphorically stands for a regaining of their femininity and their original relation to their reproductive powers.

In between the lines, Gret warns against "women" who stop and get the money that the big devil is defecating, implying that the desire to participate in the power

²¹ This interpretation is based on a close examination of Brueghel's painting, Dull Griet, which has been included in the Appendix. Dull Griet: Mad Meg. Jan Brueghel, Dull Griet: Mad Meg, n.d., (internet) <http://www.ibiblio.org/win/paint/auth/brueghel/mad-meg.jpg>, January 23rd, 2012.

²² About menstrual blood, Rich states the following: "[It] is the male imposed taboo which protects men from the "uncleanliness" felt to emanate women, a formulation that places the spermal fluid, the source of life, opposite to the menstrual blood, the source of death which violates sexual intercourse". See Rich, op.cit., p. 107.

distribution by means of using money distorts female subjects' struggle against patriarchy, makes them immobile (i.e., "...they *stop* and get some.") and thus objectifies them like "...[inactive] funny creatures...[that] *don't hurt*", whose "original" form has been "distorted" by the devil, i.e., the patriarch.

Gret's struggle in hell is explicable, since in her own experience, this hell is the origin of evil which symbolizes the Spanish exercise***. However, what makes Brueghel choose to depict hell as such is of greater importance: The female reproductive organ, from which, symbolically, a passage opens to the underground world in this context, is "...a hole-envelope, a sheath which surrounds and rubs the penis during coition, a nonsex organ or a masculine sex organ turned inside out..." (Irigaray, 1997: 323), in other words, an organ that is either disclaimed, or defined in terms of male sexual organ, if it should be defined at all. In his painting, Brueghel confirms this by making it the symbol of a world possessed and dominated by phallogocentric structures. On the other hand, "women", whose managed procreative powers are symbolised by the big mouth in his painting, are objects of men's desire and control, and as a result, they must do what their "role" demands them to. However, if they rebel, then it "is" hell. In other words, the female subject who reclaims her female body and her procreative potentials is the embodiment of hell herself, a nightmare, the biggest threat for phallogocentrism and its patriarchal dynamics. For this reason, depicting Gret as the prominent figure on the painting is, metaphorically, punishing her by rendering her vulnerable to the managing gaze of the male onlooker. The same gaze is depicted by Gret within the painting itself, represented by the figures that resemble eyes. As a result, Gret is looked at, controlled, both by Brueghel's figures and by the male gaze, and is further trapped in this two – dimensional realm that does not provide her with a language she can speak.

Yet, the minute she escapes this realm where the Law of the Father is spoken not only in words but in gazes, Gret speaks a language of her own. Her involvement in the conversations with other female characters in the dinner party is realised by short sentences without the first singular pronoun, "I" : "Pig." (Churchill, 1990: 58), "Can we have some more bread?" (Ibid: 59), "Sad" (Ibid: 61), "Walking is good" (Ibid: 66), "Big

cock” (Churchill, 1990: 68), “In a field, yah” (Ibid: 71), “Balls!” (Ibid: 73), “Cake” (Ibid: 74), “Bastard” (Ibid: 77), “Coal bucket, good” (Ibid: 83).

These statements imply a closeness to the Semiotic, where the preoedipal connection with the mother allows for a “we”. This Semiotic is also present in her final speech, in which not a linear but a cyclical reference to time and events is evident. These aspects in Gret’s narrative makes her a character that has the innate power to struggle, and even though she cannot get her children back, the activity of fighting in demand of her children is heroic.

Pope Joan is another character whose experience as a mother has been problematic and unconscious as a result of the dominating powers of patriarchy: In her entrance, her first lines “Because angels are without matter they are not individuals. Every angel is a species.” (Churchill, 1990: 58), are the absolute negations of her own self, because firstly, she is not, and can never be the subject in this sentence (i.e., this sentence does not say anything about her and cannot introduce her to us), and secondly, this is the discourse of Christian theology which condemns the female subject and her body as the site of evil.

The disruption of Joan’s relation to her body is initiated as she accepts the binary opposition penis – vagina. As it has been stated before, having a penis and thus possessing its phallic power implies possessing the key agent of reason, which provides one with access to “truth” and everything created by it, whereas having a vagina means having “nothing”. Joan, consequently, in her desire to assert and to acquire knowledge, embraces the one and only knowledge that dominates: the knowledge of “God” which not only negates the knowledge of her body but demands her to disconnect herself from it. As a result, she first refuses to wear clothes that express signs of femininity, dresses as a boy when she leaves home (Ibid: 62), and finally “becomes” a boy : “They noticed *I was a clever boy*” (Ibid: 63). This can be interpreted as her attempt to replace the nothingness she was originally taught to have with the knowledge of God : “There was *nothing* in my life except my studies. I was obsessed with the pursuit of truth.” (Ibid: 66). However, in the process of positing “truth” as the very essence of her existence, she

disregards a very important “truth” of the Christian theology : “Women, children and lunatics cannot be Pope” (Churchill, 1990: 66). For this reason, even though the following lines refer to her alienation from her female body :

“I never knew which month it was...I wasn’t used to having a woman’s body... I didn’t know that it was near the time...I had felt a slight pain earlier, *I thought it was something I’d eaten*, then it came back, and came back more often...Great waves of pressure were going through my body, I heard sounds like a cow lowing, *they came out of my mouth.*” (Ibid: 70-71)

and even though she claims to have made her own interpretation of reality in : “I realized I did know the truth. Because whatever the Pope says, that’s true” (Ibid: 68), the omnipresent “...[God] knew [she] was a woman.” (Ibid: 68) Consequently, because the female subjects in the category “women” are not allowed to participate in the processes of producing meaning, the power Joan gains by “knowing” the truth dissolves, and the truth of her body, i.e., her child, becomes the cause of her death. It is not surprising that the baby was thought to be “the Antichrist” (Ibid: 71), the principle antagonist of Christ in Christian mythology that threatens to destroy the systems of testimony constructed by the ultimate patriarch, God.

Another death for Pope Joan is the Latin language she is supposed to speak. This “dead” language, which is the means of access to realms of representation and diction constructed by the “truth” of phallogocentrism, maintains Joan’s alienation from her body. Its linear development of sentence structure, which imitates male sexual activity during sexual intercourse, is overwritten upon her female body that can only write itself in *jouissance*. For this reason, the female subject’s difficulty in using language reveals itself at the end of the First Act, in which Joan totally gets lost in her Latin speech and goes on by saying “something something” (Ibid: 83). The “truth” of her female body rids itself of this language as she collapses “sick” in a corner, initiating the semiotic response in a physical “negation” (i.e., her vomiting) of the Symbolic.

Acting as the antithesis of Gret in the play in the sense that she represents the feminine ideal of obedience, passivity, “womanly” virtue and submission whereas Gret represents violent rebellion and chaos, Griselda is another invention of patriarchy’s imagination. This imagination, which constructs the category “women” and further constructs them as deviant and chaotic objects that should be analysed and “known”, is at play in Chaucer’s work, *The Canterbury Tales*. Chaucer, who borrows Griselda’s story from Francis Petrarch and narrates it in “The Oxford Scholar’s Tale” in his work, constitutes the following “knowledge” about “women” by claiming that female subjects, be they rebellious or obedient, are the proper objects of managing processes of patriarchy:

“You high-born wives, so famous for prudence,
Should you permit humility to nail
Your tongues, or give the scholars evidence
For an even more unimaginable tale
Than Griselda’s, so patient and so kind,
 Beware lest Clichevache devour you all!
Take after Echo; she keeps no silence,
Her disposition is antiphonal;
 Don’t be made fools of by your innocence,
 Be on your toes instead, and take control,
And fix this lesson firmly in your mind;
The general good of all shall then prevail.
Superwives, stand up in your own defence!
 Each is as *huge and strong as a camel.*
 Then why permit a man to give you offence?
 You *smaller wives*, though feeble in a battle,
 Be fiercer than *a tiger or a fiend,*
 Clack on and on like windmills, I counsel.

...

*If you be fair, when others are present,
 Show off your beauty and your apparel!
 If you be ugly, use extravagance,
 For this will win you friends so you prevail.
 Be light and gay as a leaf in the wind,
 Leave him to weep and worry, whine and wail!"* (Chaucer, 1985: 312).

The italicised lines in the first stanza suggest that the “truth” about “women” as a category is constructed as “their tongues are nailed”, i.e., their truth becomes the embodiment of their silence, and they should act according to this “truth” in order to be “analysed” conveniently and give way to more extraordinary “observable” cases that can provide the scholars with the evidence of that “truth”. By silencing female subjects and disconnecting them from the process of speech, the truth the phallogocentric enunciation “speaks about” is transformed into the truth of “women”. In order to universalize this truth, all the aspects of “difference” within the category should be organized and controlled. Thus the actions of “superwives”, “smaller wives”, “beautiful wives” or “ugly wives”, can be estimated in such a way that they no longer disrupt the stability of the regime in the phallogocentric system. The leaf metaphor which stands for the objectification of female subjects in the process, acts as an important aspect for “the general good of all [men]” to dominate, and consequently, it is not “the sound of the leaf”, but “the sound of the wind” that echoes in the realms of representation.

The process of silencing female subjects is parallel to silencing their bodies and their potential relationship to their procreative powers. Walter the Marquise, Griselda’s husband in the tale, “silences” the female body as follows:

“For children are, as God knows, like as not
 To differ from their elders gone before;
 All goodness comes from God, *not from the stock*
From which they were begotten, that’s for sure...” (Ibid: 282).

The italicised lines in Walter's speech reflect the patriarchal image of a female subject's potential powers of reproduction: No goodness can come from the womb, it is merely a passway through which God's (i.e., the ultimate patriarch) phallic power can be conveyed into His realm (i.e., patriarchy). For this reason, it is not surprising that marriage becomes the very domain of that realm in which the patriarch of the family dominates, and their subjects (wives) serve:

“O bow your neck beneath that happy yoke,
Which is *dominion*, but not *servitude*
That men call matrimony or *wedlock*...” (Chaucer, 1985: 281).

Not surprisingly, Griselda can only speak of Walter's “word” in this matrimonial realm:

“But *of course* a wife must obey her husband. And *of course* I must obey the Marquis...*Of course* [the Marquis] was *normal*, he was very kind...*Of course* I loved [my children]...I'd rather *obey* the Marquis than a boy from the village” (Churchill, 1990: 75-79).

Griselda's lines above imply binary oppositions: normal – abnormal, superior – inferior, and as Chaucer suggests, Griselda (the abnormal and the inferior) must obey her husband (the normal and the superior), adapt herself to being situated in the binary oppositions above, and become an ideal wife. As opposed to Brueghel's hell, this is Chaucer's heaven, and Griselda is its mediator.

The only moment Griselda can overcome her passive and obedient disposition formed by Chaucer is when she hesitantly utters the following : “I do *think* – I do wonder – it would have been nicer if Walted hadn't had to [torture me like that]” (Ibid: 81). This verbal challenge becomes a symbol of her suppressed ability to speech, hence the emphasis on “think”.

The First Act ends in an example of how superficial Marlene's claim: “We've all come a long way. [Toasting] To our courage and the way we changed our lives and our extraordinary achievements” (Ibid: 67) is. The stage directions indicate that Nijo laughs

and cries at the same time, Joan vomits in a corner and Marlene, being displaced and drunk she is, drinks Isabella's brandy (Ibid: 83). Even though this chaotic atmosphere implies the emergence of the language of their bodies, i.e., a language that is underlined in sighs, laughs and cries, it nevertheless offers them an extremely painful experience.

All in all, the guests at the dinner party are in a quest for self expression and a realization of their identity, but cannot completely achieve this as a consequence of the patriarchal structures that model them as "women". This modelling, which is structured to defend patriarchal order, constructs them as "good wives" and "good mothers" who must not enter into men's territory. However, acting according to these prescribed roles is extremely problematic. The recalling of their personal "herstories" by expressing their real experience in the context of patriarchal structures finally ends up in vomiting, tears and misery, therefore the difficulty in dismissing the omnipresent patriarchal ideology that negates their "stories", their own knowledge.

As a result of her predominance in the play, Marlene, the host of the dinner party, will be examined separately. As a consequence of her encapsulation within the complicity of capitalist and patriarchal discourses, by virtue of which she gains the title "a successful business woman", her omnipresence in the play corresponds to the omnipresence of these discourses. Another sign of these discourses is the dinner party itself: The reason why the dinner party is organized is that Marlene has been promoted, and this "capitalist" success is celebrated in an atmosphere that associates with the Last Supper. The arrangement of this scene can be interpreted as another manifestation of capitalist discourses with those of religion, which are ultimately patriarchal again. In this context, Marlene acts as the representative of the realms Churchill is highly critical of, and it is not only these realms, but Marlene's attitude that she condemns. This attitude - which is based on the ineffective suggestion that she will allow and confront the roles patriarchy instructs for female subjects if she manages to become a successful business woman - merely defeminizes her and makes it even more difficult for her to discover any alternative experience outside the domain of patriarchal structures. Her

line: “Oh God, why are we all so miserable” (Churchill, 1990: 72), which is one of the few utterances of her difficulty in doing so, indicates that Marlene suffers bitterly.

The defeminization Marlene experiences is metaphorically initiated as she decides to dispossess Angie, her daughter, for the sake of better financial prospects. In other words, her encapsulation within the conspiracy of capitalist and patriarchal discourses is a consequence of her identification of motherhood with burden and potential failure. Her determination that mothering is an obstacle in professional life is evident in her conversation with Jeanine:

“Marlene: So you want a job with *better prospects*?

Jeanine: I want a change.

Marlene: So you’ll take anything comparable?

Jeanine: No, I do want prospects. I want more money...*I’m saving to get married.*

Marlene: Does that mean you don’t want a long-term job, Jeanine?

Jeanine: I might do.

Marlene: *Because where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?*

Jeanine: Oh no, not kids, not yet.

Marlene: *So you won’t tell them you’re getting married?*

Jeanine: Had I better not?

Marlene: *It would probably help.*

...

Marlene: Marketing is near enough advertising. Secretary to the marketing manager, he’s thirty-five, married, I’ve sent him a girl before and she was happy, *left to have a baby...*” (Ibid: 86).

As the italicised expressions suggest, Marlene cunningly hints that “the girl” has not only taken a maternity leave, but has had to quit, and tells Jeanine not to become pregnant. Jeanine, who is played by the same actress that played Griselda in the First Act, fails to question the reason why she should not, and just like Griselda, fails determining her own resolution.

The relationship between Marlene and her sister Joyce is also problematic, because it is not only Angie that she has dispossessed, but her sister, as well. In Act One, Marlene’s line in answer to the question “Do you have a sister?” (Ibid: 55) is a single statement without a subject or a verb: “Yes *in fact*.” (Ibid: 56). In analysing this short statement, it is observed that Marlene’s reluctance in mentioning Joyce, which corresponds to her having dispossessed her sister, is evident. Moreover, this statement metaphorically emphasizes “the fact” about their relationship, i.e., that there exists no communication between the sisters, hence the absence of subjects and verbs. So, even though Marlene and Joyce are the sharers of the same womb, the discourses Marlene employs makes it difficult for them to “share” a language of their own. On some rare occasions, Marlene manages to suppress these discourses, and the following lines: “I was afraid of this. I only came because I thought you wanted...I *just want*...[Marlene cries]...[To Joyce] *Love you*” (Ibid: 135-136), which she utters after a quarrel with Joyce, reveal the emergence of another language, since the unfinished sentences deform the systematical modes of generating meaning in patriarchal discourses. However, this emergence is temporary, and the italicised expressions in the following quotation suggest that Marlene is capable of generating meaning only via that of capitalism, which, just like patriarchy, is founded on the principles of objectification and domination of the inferior by the superior:

“...I think the eighties are going to be stupendous...And for the country, come to that. *Get the economy back on its feet and whoosh. She’s a tough lady, Maggie*...This country needs to stop whining. *Monetarism is not stupid. It takes time, determination. No more slop. And who’s got to drive it on? First woman prime minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on*...[Margaret Thatcher] certainly gets my

vote [because] *I believe in the individual* ” (Churchill, 1990: 137-138).

Marlene’s besetment within the capitalist discourses is also evident in the distant relationship she has with her daughter, Angie. She “communicates” with Angie by sending her gifts, especially dresses. This “communication” is similar to the communication the Japanese Emperor had initiated with Nijo, i.e., sending her “eight-layered gowns” and thus identifying her with clothes. As a consequence of this similarity, Angie is also identified with clothes on a metaphorical level, and experiences the objectification Nijo had experienced. For this reason, it is not surprising that Marlene does not hesitate to dismiss Angie’s potentials by suggesting that she is “...a bit *thick*...a bit *funny*...[and] is not going to make it” (Ibid: 120). The italicized words in the quotation suggest that Marlene cannot escape approving of the patriarchal principle that denies the views and utterances of female subjects and consequently objectifies them. In other words, even though Marlene believes that capitalist enterprise is her own mode of rebellion against the roles prescribed for female subjects, her alliance with capitalism eventually results in an approval of the objectification processes inherent in the construction of these roles.

However, it is not only Marlene that is incapable of realizing her own self through language. The speech Joyce gives in the following quotation:

“You there Angie? You there Kitty? Want a cup of tea? I’ve got some chocolate biscuits. Come on now I’ll put the kettle on. Want a choccy biccy, Angie? [They all listen and wait] *Fucking rotten little cunt*. You can *stay there and die*. I’ll lock the back door.” (Ibid: 91).

implies that she has internalized the patriarchal “knowledge” that negates the knowledge of the female body and renders her sexual organ “rotten”. This internalization is further continued by her incapability to leave the patriarchal house, as a result of which she has narrowed the possibilities of generating meaning outside the domains of patriarchy, and has yielded to the roles instructed for her: The wife, the mother.

The fact that Joyce is played by the same actress that played Isabella in the First Act becomes significant here. In the previous pages, it has been argued that Isabella resisted these roles, and considered them more proper for Hennie, who was the embodiment of the “otherness” that she fought to avoid. Therefore, it is observed that Joyce’s experience as a “woman” corresponds to that of Hennie’s, and Joyce acts as the “site” where Isabella “meets” Hennie. Nevertheless, this is not an integrating unification, as Joyce herself experiences separation as a consequence of her encapsulation by patriarchal discourses. Thus, Joyce becomes the very embodiment of the female subjects’ difficulty in ruining the prescribed “otherness”: It is always there.

The difficulty Joyce experiences in rejecting the patriarchal knowledge and its prescriptions has been discussed in the above paragraph. The internalization taking place in this difficulty also troubles her relationship with Angie, rendering the communication between them recognizably weak: In the opening of the Second Act, the spectators view the first encounter of Joyce and Angie. The physical distance in the scene (i.e., Joyce is in the house whereas Angie is in the back yard) is significant, and this is followed by the verbalization of the emotional distance between them: The first sentence Angie utters is “Wish [Joyce] was dead” (Churchill, 1990: 86). Nevertheless, Joyce does not depreciate Angie’s potentials as Marlene does, and despite the patriarchal discourses she has been entrapped by, which are revealed in the following quotation:

“It wouldn’t make no difference to Angie. She’s not going to get a job when jobs are hard to get. I’d be sorry for anyone in charge of her. She’d better get married. I don’t know who’d have her, mind. She’s one of those girls might never leave home.” (Ibid: 97).

she accepts that Angie “...is clever in her own way” (Ibid: 97).

Angie’s “own way”, on the other hand, experiences a process of construction in the context of the play. Angie functions as another central character in the play. In the embodiment of her experience as a “young woman”, the dynamics of patriarchal order

can be observed: In the Second Act, the spectators view Angie and Kit squashed in "...a shelter made of junk" (Churchill, 1990: 87) which they have made by themselves. Sitting on one another's legs and arms, they resemble fetuses sharing the same womb. Because this shelter is the product of their own imagination, it can be said that they are struggling to reestablish their original relationship to their mothers and to protect themselves from the external world dominated by patriarchal order. In this process, Angie is both advantageous and disadvantageous : Advantageous, because she is in a quest for the knowledge of her potentials, i.e., her vampire phantasies, realized by tasting Kit's menstrual blood, is an attempt to "know" the female body; imagining that she can make pictures on the wall move and claiming to hear dead cats are escapes from the realm of her imaginary; having a secret society with a "code" is an attempt to establish a realm which is not damaged by the "knowledge" constructed by patriarchal structuring. Disadvantageous, because Joyce is not her biological mother and there have never existed a physical bond between them. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to predict that, in the final analysis, Angie is doomed to fail, because the omnipresent patriarchal ideology, whose regulatory structures are based on authority, order, control and objective reality, do not credit the "knowledge" she may produce via her imagination. In this context, it is understandable why she is played by the same actress that played Dull Gret: What awaits her as she gets out of the "shelter" is similar to what awaited Dull Gret as she "went down the big mouth". Just like Dull Gret, who was rendered stable within the two-dimensional painting by Brueghel, was subject to the male gaze, and acted the "ideal mother", Angie will not be able to escape the regulatory processes of patriarchal ideology and will probably end up as a "mother" at best.

Kit, on the other hand, who shares the same womb with Angie, is also a very significant character in the sense that, by analysing her own construction process in the phallogocentric order, many references to Angie can be made : Opposite to Angie, whose imagination is rich, Kit acts as the representative of reason. Her sentences are clear, proper, logical and they mostly serve to scold Angie, especially when Angie's imagination is at play. Her repetitive questions "Why?...How do you know?...What's so special?" (Ibid: 90-95) are followed by Angie's unsatisfactory answers whereas when

Angie asks such questions, Kit's answers are based on substantial facts. Her relationship with her mother seems to have been based on the same mutual interchange of facts. However, the difference in the "language" Kit and Angie speak, which separates the metaphorical sisters, is fought back by Angie. Her motherly attitude towards Kit, which is an attempt to establish a bond between them, is revealed in the society she has started with Kit, and in the following lines she utters to her : "Put [the perfume] on. Do I smell? Put it on Auntie too. Let's all smell...*Now we all smell the same.*" (Churchill, 1990: 122).

The fact that Kit is played by the actress who played the waitress in the First Act is also significant. On a metaphorical level, Kit is as mute as the waitress, because what she actually "says" is composed by reason and order. Patriarchal ideology's modes of producing knowledge, which is based on linear development of thinking, has already constructed her strain of thought, and therefore, her subjective voice does not exist in the play.

Other characters whose subjective voices cannot be heard in the context of the play are Nell and Win. The very first statements they utter as they appear in the Second Act are: "Coffee coffee coffee coffee coffee" (Ibid: 99) by Nell and "The roses were smashing. Mermaid. Iceberg. He taught me all their names" (Ibid: 99) by Win. The fact that Nell's line does not have a subject, and the subject in Win's lines are "the roses" and "he" indicates their difficulty in asserting their own subjectivity. This difficulty is further intensified by the irresistible capitalist discourse in the whole act: Throughout their conversations, the information they exchange is either about how to "make it" and thus become another Marlene, who has "...got far more balls than Howard" (Ibid: 100), or about their relationship with men. This explains the reason why Nell is played by the actress who played Griselda, and Win is played by the actress who played Lady Nijo in the First Act, because, just like Griselda and Lady Nijo, both Nell and Win define their individuality in terms of their relationship with men. The similarity between their experiences as "women" are clearly seen when analysed individually: Parallel to Lady Nijo, who is the "concubine" of the Emperor, Win flirts with married men, and is not legitimately "defined" as a "wife". Moreover, Win "inherits" Lady Nijo's need for

mobility, and wishes to travel long distances, such as Australia (Churchill, 1990: 100). Nell, on the other hand, is as immobile as Griselda, and spends her weekend “...watching the telly.” (Ibid: 102). However, the capitalist discourses that did not exist in the cases of Griselda and Lady Nijo are superimposed on patriarchal discourses in this context, and this makes it even more difficult for them to “speak”. Win, in an interview by Louise, tells her not to “...talk too much at an interview” (Ibid: 107) and acting as the spokesperson of patriarchal discourses, dismisses Louise’s story. On the other hand, Nell, at the end of the interview with Shona, discredits her efforts to get the job in question by saying : “Christ what a waste of time...Not a word of [the information on the application form] is *true* is it?” (Ibid: 117). This quotation implies that Nell has also become obsessed with the truth of the recorded “knowledge”, and for this reason, she censors Shona’s “story”.

The complications of capitalist treatments on Nell and Win’s attitude towards Louise and Shona are observed in the relationship between Marlene and Joyce, too. Having developed an awareness for the restrictions caused by socio-economical structures, and having actually experienced enormous hardships, Joyce identifies herself with the working class. She utters the following lines in a quarrel with Marlene, which takes place during Marlene’s unexpected visit to her house : “[My mother] had a *rotten* life because she had *nothing*. She went hungry...Their lives were *rubbish*. They were treated like *rubbish*.” (Ibid: 139). These lines imply that, just like the female subjects who are constructed as “others” and whose “rotten” sexual organs are “negated” by the patriarchal order, the working class is also a category of individuals who lead “rotten” lives of “others”, in other words, individuals whose significance within the socio-economic structures corresponds to “nothingness”. On the other hand, Marlene eagerly expresses her admiration for Thatcher, whose capitalist policies sustain the predicament the working class experiences. In her anger, Joyce cannot help calling Marlene as “Hitlerina” (Ibid: 138), and this marks the main separation of the sharers of the same womb:

“Marlene: Them, them. Us and them?”

Joyce: And you’re one of them.

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

Joyce: Yes, that's right, and you're them.

Marlene: Come on, Joyce, what a night. You've got what it takes.

Joyce: I know I have.

Marlene: I didn't really mean that.

Joyce: I did.

Marlene: But we're friends anyway.

Joyce: I don't think so, no." (Churchill, 1990: 141).

The play ends with Angie's dramatic line, "Frightening" (Ibid: 141). This utterance is crucial to the play because it not only expresses Angie's fear of what she is yet to experience in the future, but metaphorically summarizes Churchill's comprehensive critique of the complicity between capitalist and patriarchal discourses, as well.

Consequently, the close examination of the characters in *Top Girls* indicates that their attempts to challenge the patriarchal ideology remain ineffective and insufficient because of its omnipresent dynamics that state patriarchal knowledge and convey it by means of patriarchal discourses. The rare moments of demanding efforts made to abandon these discourses are almost always followed by severe traumas. Even though these traumas initiate and revive the language of their bodies; resurrecting their bodies, reclaiming their authority on their objectified bodies and reproductive potentials, is very difficult. This difficulty is maintained by the overlapping of the capitalist and patriarchal discourses which conveniently systematize and legalize the processes of objectification. When the female subjects are restrained by capitalist discourses for the sake of rejecting the roles ruled for them by patriarchy, they completely lose their unity and purity.

CONCLUSION

The close readings of *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* feature the fact that the female characters, who are captured by the treatments of patriarchal ideology, fail to achieve a complete break from the structuring defined in its context. As a result of their inability to reject the language they are given, the female characters can not escape the object position they have been reduced to. This further inflicts their relationship to their bodies, and consequently, to their powers of reproduction. As a result of this infliction, their bodies are violated and their fertile potentials are given to the authority employed by patriarchal ideology.

Female characters' attempts to escape the dominance of the fathers by virtue of rejecting the language they are given to speak almost remain ineffective. The exceptional moments of "speaking" the language of their own always cause severe punishment – i.e., the processes that challenge the threat revealed by "others".

In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill subverts the traditional modes of representation, and throughout this process, constitutes an atmosphere in which the dictated norms of the body are reinterpreted. By employing cross-gender casting and by deforming the linear development of time in the play, Churchill presents not only the female, but the homosexual and the black characters with the dynamics to distort the modes of representation that depict them as others: Betty, Joshua, Victoria, Caroline Saunders, Harry, Edward and Ellen of the First Act, who live through extreme difficulties in discovering their bodies and expressing their desire, experience different bodies in the Second Act, and in this process, they make important efforts in regaining the control of their bodies.

The female characters in *Top Girls* benefit from Churchill's reinterpretation of the traditional modes of representation, as well. By employing cross-casting and by deforming the linear development of time, Churchill subverts the dynamics of patriarchal knowledge which trusts unity of representation. As a consequence, she rewrites another knowledge, in whose realm even the dead and the "already-written" can be represented. The metaphor "already-written" conforms not only the characters that

have already been constructed by patriarchal ideology, but to history, as well. Consequently, Churchill structures herstories and allows the female characters to narrate them.

Churchill communicates with her plays and her characters who, in return, communicate with their bodies, their overwritten desire and their reproductive potentials.

Historically, political and social attitudes towards mothers and motherhood have been fraught with contradictions. In her 1994 book *The Myths of Motherhood: How Culture Reinvents the Good Mother*, Shari L. Thurer provides an overview of cultural constructions of motherhood in Western societies spanning several centuries, with sections ranging from “Cavemother: Old Stone Age Mom” to “Reinventing the Myth: 1980-1990s.” In the introduction to her book Thurer notes that:

just as the practice of mothering has veered widely within the mores of different epochs, so has the status of mothers . . . as men realized their contribution to procreation and seized control, organizing much of what we know as mainstream history, the mother has been dehumanized, that is, either wildly idealized (with mothers becoming prisoners of their own symbolic inflation) or degraded ... (Thurer, 1994: xxvi)

Such “dehumanization” contributes to constructions of a concept of motherhood that is symbolic in that “motherhood” represents a set of ideals that exists outside of many women’s actual experience.

In her plays written between 1976 and 1984, Churchill challenges such stereotypes by rehumanizing mothers in a variety of historical contexts, sometimes even challenging the symbolic representations of mothers in mythology and art directly, as in her *Top Girls*. Churchill says, “Playwrights don’t give answers, they ask questions. We need to find new questions, which may help us answer the old ones or make them unimportant, and this means new subjects and new form” (Fitzsimmons, 1989: 85). The

questions that her plays, raised, thematically and structurally, about motherhood and history in the 1970s and 1980s, and the ways in which those questions changed over the course of the decade, are important steps in the evolution of the history play.

In his 1978 essay “The Playwright as Historian,” David Hare says, “if you write about now, just today and nothing else, then you seem to be confronting only stasis; but if you begin to describe the movement of history, if you write plays that cover passages of time, then you begin to find a sense of movement, of social change, if you like ...” (Hare, 1978: 45). In her plays from the 1970s and the early 1980s, Caryl Churchill describes the movement of various histories in various ways. By connecting the past to the present, whether implicitly or overtly, she exposes the production and reproduction of history, and challenges her audience to examine her own role in that process. In this way, Churchill’s plays not only suggest a need for social change, but also act as agents of that change. As she suggested: “Drama is not ... in the business of offering solutions... Drama influences. Not frontally, but subtly, through the stratagems of entertainment, through popular engagement” (Churchill, 1989: 62).

Churchill has continued to expand her examinations of family, motherhood, and history in her plays from 1985 to the present. Churchill’s plays from the mid 1980s to the present have become increasingly experimental structurally in terms of plot, characterization, and language. As a result, her examinations of motherhood and family have become increasingly complex in plays such as *Blue Kettle* and *Heart’s Desire* (1997), published jointly as *Blue Heart*, in which temporal and linguistic disruptions interfere with the characters’ ability to connect with one another, as parents who have been separated from their children struggle to reconstruct a cohesive family unit to no avail. Family is also at the center of *A Number* (2002), a play featuring only two actors, playing a man and his series of cloned sons that raise questions about desire, control, and technology. The wife/mother’s conspicuous absence in the world of the play—stories about the circumstances of her death change throughout—suggests that women still occupy a space that is outside of existing power structures, as the mother quite literally has no control over the reproduction of her offspring.

According to Austin E. Quigley, Caryl Churchill's "theatrical imagination is committed more to exploring than to recommending alternatives" (Quigley, 1989: 33). Whether she has proposed change directly or indirectly, she has made significant contributions to feminist drama, in terms of both content and form, that have changed, if nothing else, the face of British drama through their provocative expansions of the history play and the ways in which these plays situate motherhood, mothering, and reproduction within their broader examinations of history, gender, class, and power.

By emphasizing the predicament the female characters experience in reclaiming their original relationship to their bodies and to their reproductive powers, Churchill questions patriarchal ideology. She emphasizes that female subjects' entrapment within its restrictions is the very origin of their embodiment, and by the theatrical techniques she employs, institutes an alternative domain of meaning. This domain challenges patriarchal ideology's modes of producing "truth", and their regulations of subject construction. Consequently, Churchill makes it possible for the female characters to reach subject position in this domain, which provides them with room to speak in their own language.

In this context, the female characters can not escape the infinite influence of institutionalized "motherhood", a powerful mechanism confirming that they remain under the dominance of patriarchal ideology. Managing every female character, i.e., those who have already given birth to children or those who are yet to experience it, this mechanism entitles them as "mothers" or "mothers-to-be", legalizes the discourses that demand the controlling of both mothers and their children in the authority of the fathers.

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