CARYL CHURCHILL AND THEATRE OF SUBVERSION: A SOCIALIST- FEMINIST STUDY

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DECLARATION

I, ***Vanlalchami***, hereby declare that the subject of the thesis ***Caryl Churchill and Theatre of Subversion: A Socialist: Feminist Study***, is the record of work done by me, that the content of this thesis did not form the basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other university or institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the award of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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VANLALCHAMI

CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION

Caryl Churchill, who is one of the most respected modern British playwright was born in London on September 3, 1938. She graduated from Oxford in 1960 with a B.A in English. While studying English at Oxford she took an interest in theatre. After graduation, she began to write radio plays for the B.B.C. In 1961 she married David Harter a Barrister. In 1974 she started writing for the stage and became the first woman Resident Dramatist at the Royal Court Theatre[1]. During the 1970's and 1980's she collaborated with theatre companies such a Joint Stock[2] and Monstrous Regiment[3], both which utilized an extended workshop period in their development of new plays. In 1976, Churchill in contrast to writing plays on her own shed her 'solitary'[4] style of writing and collaborated with Joint Stock, which resulted in the production of Light Shining in Buckinghamshire. In the same year her collaboration with the Feminist theatre group Monstrous Regiment resulted in the production of *Vinegar Tom*.

The First of Churchill's plays to win commercial success was also a result of her collaboration with Joint Stock titled *Cloud Nine* (1979). Her highly acclaimed feminist play *Top Girls* was staged at the Royal court Theatre in 1982, followed by *Fen* (1983), *Softcops* (1984) and *A Mouthful of Birds* another Joint Stock production was staged in 1986, followed by *Serious Money* (1987) and a dance piece called *Fugue* in 1988. It was during the 70's that witnessed the production of most of her radio and television plays. *The Judge's Wife* and *Henry's past* were written in 1971 and *Not… Not… Not… Not… Enough oxygen* was broadcast. Between 1972-1975 Churchill wrote independent television plays which were broadcast in the BBC, like *Schreber's Nervous Illness* (1972), *Turkish Delight* (1974), *Save it for the Minister* (1975). In 1972 her stage play *Owners* was written and staged at Royal Court Theatre Upstairs. Subsequently in 1975 *Objections to Sex and Violence* and *Moving Clocks Go Slow* were performed at the Royal Court Theatre. In 1990 Churchill went to Romania and wrote Mad Forest, a play for Romania. A collaborative work *Lives of the Great Poisoners*

was performed in 1991 followed by *The Striker* in 1994. *The Striker* and *This is a Chair* were produced in 1997. *Far Away* opened at The Royal Court Theatre in 2000 followed by *A Number* in 2002. In 2006 *Drunk Enough to say I Love You* followed by *Seven Jewish Children*, a play for Gaza produced in 2009. Her latest play *Love and Information* was produced in 2012.

In taking to consideration Churchill's Feminism and Socialism, the thesis titled, *Caryl Churchill and Theatre of Subversion: A Socialist-Feminist Study*, is an attempt to situate Churchill's work within the Socialist- Feminist theoretical paradigm. The six plays selected which are, *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* 1976, *Vinegar Tom* 1976, *Cloud Nine* 1979, *Top Girls* 1982, *Fen* 1983, *Softcops* 1984, are representative of her socialist - feminist trajectory. These six plays are stage plays which voices Churchill's concerns of capitalism, class struggle and oppression.

In *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), Churchill constructs linkages between the English Civil War of the 1640's. Her text drawn from various sources attend to the unique conditions that shaped the conflicts through textual fragmentation and subjective commentary. Apart from this, Churchill represented the discipline of the poor women by a public flogging, and the internalized oppression of middle class women through fear and self-hatred. The staging of acts of violence on the bodies of woman was perceived as a form of social control.

In *Vinegar Tom* (1976), Churchill explored the seventeenth century witch craze which she explained as, "a play about witches with no witches in it" (Aston 26), witchcraft being the name given to women who chose an alternative lifestyle that defer from the ones accepted by the status quo. In this play she clearly demonstrates how the very element which oppresses one within a particular patriarchal set up could be used as a tool of subversion. It examines

gender, class and power relationships through the lens of 17th century witchcraft trials in England. Using the notion of historicizing the narrative, it places sexuality within the history of witches and witchcraft, problematizing the traditional interpretation of that history and pointing to the vestigial remainder of such thinking in contemporary life. In researching the play, Churchill recognized that received notions about witchcraft mystified concrete relations between outcast or marginal women (the old, the poor, the unconventional) and the religious and economic power structure. She writes, "One of the things that struck me in reading the detailed accounts of witch trials in Essex . . . Was how petty and everyday the witches' offences were. (Wandor 39)

Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* enacts the ease with which women who were felt to be a threat to society were accused to be witches. The central action of the play involves the scapegoating of poor women by the farmer Jack and his wife, who blame their bankruptcy as acts of witchcraft committed by their neighbours Joan and her daughter Alice. The church provides the institutional mechanism for burning such witches and traditional prime targets are single women, economically marginal, sexually deviant from the puritan code and women who works outside the sanctioned male establishment. Churchill keeps the community and its socio-economic-sexual systems at the centre of the play through Brechtian devices. The play unfolds in 21 scenes and 7 songs and specifies in concrete form the relationship between patriarchy and class society as they mutually support each other. Most oppressed are those who attempts to live outside the economic system.

Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1975), provided Churchill with a theoretical framework for her ideas on non-violent social control and, more specifically, the marginalization, containment and silencing of subversive elements. *Softcops* (1984) was written with an intention to show how "political and social institutes of

discipline like prisons, schools, hospitals - things whose existence in their present form taken for granted can have a crippling effect on people" (Thomas 162). She argues that the main aim of punishment should be the rehabilitation rather than maiming or execution of the offender.

Top Girls (1982), is set in a very specific decade and political context, Britain of the 1980's when Margaret Thatcher[5] was elected the prime minister. Thatcherism led to the celebration of bourgeois individualism and personal achievement, as women emulated the image of the capitalist superwoman. 'Churchill felt impelled to make a socialist correction" (Aston and Reinelt 180), in order to subvert the mistaken notion that anything is possible. "Churchill claimed that she quite deliberately left a hole in the play rather than giving people a model of what they could be like . . . it functions as an analysis of the operation of power through the techniques of individualization" (Thomas 163).

Churchill's *Fen* (1983), offered a critique of capitalism and its effect on the working class community of East Anglia's Fenlands. The women in the play are shown to be doubly oppressed, both as workers and as women, "foregrounding the working class woman's oppression as different to that of women from the upper and middle classes was also a feature of socialist feminist drama in the 1980's based on an identity politics of regionalism"(Aston 76).

Cloud Nine (1979), is influenced by Michel Foucault's *History of Sexuality, (1978) Volume I*, and "examines the ways in which human beings, and in particular woman, children, and homosexuals, have been constituted as subjects and objects of knowledge through the relatively modern discourse of sexuality" (Thomas 170). The play raises disturbing and unanswerable questions concerning the role of power in the constitution of the individual subject and the nature of possibility of resistance. Jane Thomas says that, "it is

possible to read the play as an analysis of the operation of a certain technique of power, sexuality and the rejection or refusal of available forms of sexual subjection. It also functions as a critique of sexual essentialism and of the notion of individual liberation through the articulation of repressed sexual desire (177-178).

The thesis studies and analyses in different chapters the various issues of Feminism and Socialism that are evident in Churchill's dramaturgy through which various forms of inequality perpetuated by power relations and hegemonic structures are brought to the forefront. The themes of power and class struggle, economic exploitation, and marginalization on various levels are central to the dramaturgy of Caryl Churchill, and these systems of oppression are expressed and dramatized in her plays in differing levels. Churchill, through theatre, brings about awareness of the possibilities of subverting certain oppressive and restrictive elements, which affect individuals or groups in the society. The study also demonstrates how her socialist- feminist theatre subverts some of the patriarchal and conservative assumptions implicit in traditional theatre and society at large, by which her theatre becomes a microcosm of the society. The study examines the various aspects of subversion in the socialist- feminist theatre of the playwright, through the incorporation of critical and theoretical perspectives relating to concepts of power, socialist- feminism and feminism. The thesis analyses the perpetuation of power hegemony, marginality, subjectivity, gender/class oppression, intra-sexual oppression and the dramatization of these elements in Churchill's dramaturgy. On account of the flourishing of radical/ liberal feminist theory and gender studies and due to the dominance of poststructuralism and postmodernism during the 1980s, "Marxist, socialist, and class-based frameworks were considered increasingly to be outdated and were relegated to marginal positions within the academy", and socialist approaches to Churchill's work have "tended to focus on ways in which Brechtian methods have been used for feminist ends" (Adishesiah 1-2). This approach did not consider notions

of class, capitalism and sex within the matrix of power oppression and struggle within capitalism. The tendency or trend to read and consider women writers differently have also affected Churchill in such a way her work is often studied only from the perspective of feminism. Her political agendas of Marxism, socialism and anti- capitalist stance are neglected. The study focuses on the way the playwright brings to the forefront both the negative and positive aspects of the policies which often victimizes individuals in which its victims are mostly women and at the same time focuses on the possibility of the subversion of these elements.

Caryl Churchill came into prominence with the development of the Second Wave Feminism in Britain. She began as a solitary writer before her collaboration with theatre groups in the writing of her plays and belatedly came to consider herself a 'woman' writer other than relating to gender neutrality that the word 'writer' seem to convey. She talked about her transition thus:

> For years and years I thought of myself as a writer before I thought of myself as a woman, but recently I've found that I would say I was a feminist writer as opposed to other people say I was. (qtd. in Aston 18)

As Churchill started her theatrical trajectory since the 1970s, she was influenced by the activism of the period, both political and social. As a result of the disillusionment of young writers with the social and political system during the 1960's, a particular theatre developed which is usually called as 'kitchen sink drama'[6] whose proponents included John Osborne and Arnold Wesker. Their drama paid attention to the criticism of society through its Social Realism[7]. Arnold Wesker, a predecessor and older contemporary of Caryl Churchill dramatizes the issues of Socialism whose plays shows "a perceptible loss of political purpose" (Innes 114) through the enactment of the conditions of the working-class. He uses

realism to bring out the political purpose of his dramas. The issues of socialism as enacted in Churchill's plays differs to Wesker's, as Churchill draws attention to the issue of women within the same political system under which Wesker's characters strive. In *Roots (1959),* Wesker documents the plight of Norfolk farm labourers who are "culturally and intellectually dispossessed" while at the same time engaging in "the most traditional of occupations (are) yet without roots" (115). This same issue of the working- class condition is taken up by Churchill in *Fen 1982,* in her documentation of the farm labourers of East Anglia which shows the analogy of her subject interest with Wesker. However, Churchill's political stance in her depiction of the working-class differs from Wesker as she pays acute attention to gender oppression and its subversion in the enactment of the women labourers who are doubly oppressed and marginalised by their gender and as labourers, whereas Wesker's depiction of the working-class condition is a more generalised criticism of the society as a whole.

Amongst Churchill's contemporaries within Feminist Theatre, playwright Pem Gems[8] is closest in style and theme to Churchill in her dramatization of gender and women's issues in her playwriting. As Feminist Theatre developed out of the need to create space of women's issues within and outside the traditional theatre, Elaine Aston in *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*, observes of its development that, "Contemporary feminist playwriting and performance has reshaped the modern dramatic/theatrical canon, and signalled its difference from mainstream (male) theatre" (Aston 57). This same issue is also recorded by Christopher Innes in a book on the survey of British drama, *Modern British Drama: 1890-1990,* 1992, that, "Troupes have sprung up performing for special interest groups, based on ethnic and sexual identities" out of which "the most highly developed being feminist drama. The feminist playwrights consciously reject conventional forms as inherently masculinist" (Innes

7). It is important to mention that in the representation of feminist playwriting, Christopher Innes included Caryl Churchill and Pam Gems in his study which may be considered as a mark of the establishment of a Feminist playwriting, and its recognition of it for the first time by a representative of the traditional theatre canon as different from conventional playwriting.

In the representation of feminist and gender issues, Pam Gems' two plays *Paif (1978)* and *Queen Christina (1977)* "established her central themes . . . (and) dramatizes the reality of women who have been transformed into cultural symbols" (Innes 453-454). Gems focuses on the life of historical women and dramatizes it as an enactment of women's plight under sexist oppression. Gems *Paif* is a musical dramatization of the life of Edith Paif [9], a French singer. In the dramatization of the singer as representative of women, Michelene Wandor observes that Gems' *Paif* is "so far the clearest expression of faith in women's basic resilience… Paif is a woman for whom independence and success lead to sexual freedom and personal autonomy- as if she were a man". (Wandor 163). In *Queen Christina* Pem Gems dramatizes the life of a seventeenth century Swedish Queen who is said to have been raised as a male. Wandor observes of the play thus:

> Christina is a kind of Renaissance woman, brought up as a boy in order to be groomed for the Swedish throne in the absence of a male heir. She hunts, fights, is bi-sexual and takes an active part in military and political decisions. her first crisis occurs when the court, again worrying about the succession, begins to put pressure on her to marry . . . From being brought up to 'behave like a man', she is suddenly being forced to 'behave like a woman'. She abdicates and travels round Europe, trying to find another way of life . . . She dies . . . having known political and sexual power as both a man and a

> woman but having left the choice of motherhood until it is too late.
>
> (Wandor 164- 165).

The focus and criticism of socially constructed gender role is explicit in *Queen Christina*, in which "the historical figure provides a test- case for issues of gender definition, biological determinism and social programming" (Innes 455). As seen from the brief study of the two plays Pam Gems' theme is the dramatization of "the way individual women develop and sustain their tactics for survival" (Wandor 162).

The space that Feminist Theatre provides for issues concerning the multifarious facets of women and gender issues has been embraced by women playwrights through the decades. Amongst the practitioners within this theatre, Caryl Churchill's and Pam Gems' work have played an important part in its recognition, and the two contemporaries are equally respected and celebrated for their work in their milieu. However, the plays of Churchill have been chosen for the study, as the enactment of feminist and gender issues in her dramaturgy crosses the boundaries of social, political, historical and even religion. Churchill's enactment of women's oppression is intertwined with the criticism of the politics of power hegemony, be it class and sexual and gender oppression. With the necessity of the study of women and feminist issues without a negligence of its political roots, Churchill's dramaturgy is considered to herald the importance of the incorporation of Socialism with Feminism without which the subversion of oppressive power structures would not be possible. Hence, Churchill plays have been chosen for the present study amongst many women playwrights working within Feminist Theatre.

The development of the critique of capitalism by feminist critics, as perpetuating sexist and class oppression in its inherent relation to patriarchy has its roots in Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1883 in which he "attempts

to trace the origins of Patriarchy". Engels propounded that with the primitive society or tribe descent, inheritance was through the female line. With economic growth man began to acquire an important status in the family and the status of the mother was eventually overthrown. Engels writes that, "The overthrow of mother right was the world historical defeat of the female sex". With this private ownership grew rapidly in which the father right and monogamy gained ascendency and marriage became dependent on economic considerations. Women began to depend on men for economic sustenance in bourgeois society and in the modern family in which "the husband is the bourgeois and women the proletariat" (Habib 533).This pivotal Marxist statement has made feminist turn to Marxism for theorizing Feminism, hence called forth the development of Marxist Feminism. Engels suggested that the first step for the emancipation of women would be in their economic independence through their reintroduction into the public industry and means of production. Through this means of production would become common property which will lead to the disappearance of economic unit of society like family and monogamy and its institutions which preserved it through patriarchy and hegemony (533).

It is within this Marxists framework that "feminists sought in a variety of ways to extend, modify and reformulate Marxists ideas, giving rise to a series of debates on the relationship between capitalism and male domination, often referred to as the patriarchy debates" (Jackson 12). Michele Barrett writes of the object of Marxist Feminism thus:

> In the most general terms it must to identify the operation of gender relations as and where they may be distinct from, or connected with, the processes of production and understood by historical materialism . . . to explore the relations between the organization of sexuality, domestic production, the

> household . . . and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation.
>
> (Barrett 9).

In the British context Marxism had a much stronger influence on Feminism. Nevertheless, Marxist politics and academics neglected Feminism on account of Second Wave Feminism's preoccupation of Women's Liberation from Patriarchy through the notion of shared experience. Marxist and Socialist aligned, left-winged political and pressure groups also tend to neglect issues relating to sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity on the primary focus on class.

In response to the disregard of feminism by Marxist academics, works like Juliet Mitchell's 1966 book *Women: The Longest Revolution* responded to the complete silence on the subject of women in Raymond Williams' 1961 book *The Long Revolution* in which he argued that humanity had lived through three aspects of revolution, "the democratic revolution, the industrial revolution and the revolutionary expansion of communication technologies" (Gamble 38). Shiela Rowbatham in her book *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World, 1973* argues that "women have to struggle for control of both production and reproduction". This is reminiscent of the Marxist 'base' and 'superstructure' and suggests a "movement of working class women since their experience spans production and reproduction, class exploitation and sex oppression (Gamble 39). Feminists aligned to Marxist ideology, views sexual liberation as only increasing women's objectification and argues that "women's oppression takes place in specific historical circumstances . . . it is the product of four distinct but overlapping structures: those of production, reproduction, sexuality and socialisation of children" (Gamble 39). However, a wholly Marxist approach to feminism has been criticised of being blind towards the issues of patriarchy, and in its sole

concentration on class, it neglects the issues of sex, gender and racial inequalities within feminism. As Michele Barrett observes, "the argument leads to the conclusion that Marxist theory can specify the 'places' that needs to be filled, but that feminist theory must be invoked to explain who fills them" (Barrett 134). In the study of the relations of capitalist production, it is important to know that "relations of production does not only refer simply to class relations. It must comprise the divisions of gender, of race, definitions of different forms of labour" (99). With Marxist feminism's preoccupation with the issue of class oppression and inequality, the importance to include sex, gender and racial differences, while at the same time working within the historical and material structure of Marxism was felt within feminism. This may be the noted as the beginnings of the development of Socialist-Feminism. As Feminism is not only a struggle against patriarchy or achievement of sexual liberation, "socialist feminists must seek to transform 'the inner world' of bodily experience, psychological colonisation and cultural silencing, as well as the outer world of material social conditions" (Gamble 39).

Caryl Churchill has been claimed to be a representative of socialist- feminism, which in Elaine Aston's words:

> (Seeks) to locate oppression in terms of the complex matrix of gender, class, race, ideology . . . and identify the historical settings of such oppression in order to radically transform society. (Aston, *An Introduction* 73)

Socialist- Feminism gives importance to the analysis and understanding of power relations based on class and gender. It also recognises the importance of class struggle in which men and women are naturally involved and also recognises that women have differences among themselves based on class. This recognition is very valuable as in contemporary times women within the feminist movement have recognised their differences based on class, colour,

ethnicity and even sexual orientation which is a testament to the fact that feminism is indeed not homogenous in which numerous debates and theoretical praxis have emerged on the issue of 'feminisms'.

> (Socialist-feminism) . . . proposes changes both in the position of women as women, and in the power relations of the very basis of society itself- its industrial production and its political relations . . . only socialist feminism can offer an analysis which provides for genuine revolutionary change. (Wandor 136)

However, even socialist- feminism is not free of loopholes as its theoretical analysis is often difficult in its practice. In theatre studies, socialist-feminism proofs to be very useful in the analysis of the place of women in theatre in both the sexual division of labour within theatre and outside- in the world at large, dramatized in its plays. But, there have been a tendency to label any play about or by women as feminist plays. One should keep in mind that the consciousness of every woman is different with different aspects dominant in different women. Even in theatre or feminist theatre the subject matter of plays cannot be taken to be a homogeneous type. It is a host of different subject matters and reactionary projects which had resulted from different situational encounters and experiences. Plays by the same writer does not necessarily deal with the same issues be it a feminist issue or gender issue.

In an interview by Laurie Stone for *The Village Voice, 1st March, 1983* Caryl Churchill was asked about, "women becoming coca-cola executives", and Churchill answered, "well, that's not what I mean by feminism" (Jacobus 1079). In an interview with Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Keonig, Feb 1984, Churchill voiced her views on feminism and contests the constructed distance avidly maintained between socialism and feminism, and said:

> When I was in the States in ’79 I talked to some women who were saying how well things were going for women in America now with far more top executives being women, and I was struck by the difference between that and the feminism I was used to in England, which was far more connected to socialism. Of course, socialism and feminism aren’t synonymous, but I feel strongly about both and wouldn’t be interested in a form of one that didn’t include the other. (Jacobus 1079)

From the above statement it may be rightly drawn that for Churchill, Socialism and Feminism go hand in hand. The First wave feminism fought for and gained the right to vote with The Universal Adult Franchise of 1928 in Great Britain and in the United States of America through the passing of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1929.

> The fact is that to women born after 1920, feminism was dead history. It ended as a vital movement in America with the winning of the final right: the vote. (Gamble 29)

In the wake of the Liberation Movement of the 1960s and 70s, the representation of the past and the questioning of why women had been hidden from history impacted literary criticism. This motivated feminist scholars to recover the lost female ancestors from the man-made history. This subsequently resulted in the need to find the tradition of women’s writing. After women were granted the right to vote on the same terms as men in 1928[10], it was assumed that women’s needs and interest had finally been met through the ballot. But the truth was that it was only a step in the process of self- determination. With the revolution of industrial and commercial production, the family wage was replaced by the man’s wage who assumed the role of the breadwinner and men were excluded gradually from the practical share of running the household, while women acquired the responsibility of looking after the home

and working outside the home to make a living with lesser pay than the men. In the twentieth century, the two World Wars produced job opportunities, education and welfare for women, but ironically these opportunities were withdrawn after the wars were over and women were once again shunted into homes to liberate jobs for men and resume the task of home making and regeneration. Friedrick Engels have pointed out in his preface to *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and State*, 1884 thus:

> The determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this is of two-fold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. (Wandor 4)

This, vital two- fold necessity of human material and biological productions have been neglected with the rise of mass factory production and the centre of personal and emotional subsistence, the family have been neglected which shifted the balance of relationships, and opportunities for both the sexes. However, the British Government passed the Education Act[11] in 1944, which consolidated and advanced opportunities for higher education for both sexes and with the establishment of the welfare state, the class conflicts were thought to be solved. This improvement of material means of production seemed to be annulling the cause of Socialism which had its roots in the decades of the working-class movement and the struggle to end hunger, destitution and class conflicts. Nevertheless, national monetary growth and social benefits may have brought affluence and improved quality of life for some of the population but an oppressive social and sexual division of labour still existed. The upsurge of the 1960s youth activism, "drew attention to the passivity of the consumer alongside the exploitation of the worker, insisting that the day to day lives of the ordinary

people could be 'politicised' and changed" (Wandor 9). With the climate of the new cultural lifestyles of the youth, Theatre was equally affected and had to struggle for its own liberation, and theatre censorship was an anomaly among the arts. Manuscripts of plays have to be submitted to the Lord Chamberlain which could not be produced without his approval and he was empowered to make changes in the text. Kenneth Tynan writes of this:

> Since he is appointed directly by the sovereign, he is not responsible to the House of Commons. He inhabits a limbo aloof from democracy, answerable to his own hunches. The rules by which he judges plays are nowhere defined by law. (Wandor 9)

However, community based plays developed which turned their attention to the lives of the ordinary and working class people as the subject of drama. An interest in the work of European Dramatists like Bertolt Brecht[12] opened the opportunity for exploring and experimenting with new forms and approaches. This new liberation pervaded equally within the theatre and the Women's Liberation Movement, but as women tried to make use of this freedom they found that the double standard which had bound them is still operational. Within Theatre sexism was still operational, not only in the contents of the text but also in its production system.

The Women's Liberation Movement by 1972 had started to set up its own communications network with the publication of journals like *Spare Rib* and *Red Rag*[13] which was put out by women of Communist Party and Socialist Feminists which paved the way for the development in British Feminism for an approach based on class analysis and beginnings of Socialist- Feminism which in the words of Michelene Wandor, who in her 1981 book titled, *Carry On Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* writes:

> Socialist Feminism attempts to relate a class analysis to an analysis of sexism, and to decide on the best organisational and strategic way to change both economic exploitation based on class and oppression based on gender. (Wandor 15)

A series of socialist –feminist conferences was held during the 1970s in which attempts were made to redress the unequal distribution of power between the sexes. These issues needed to be voiced and art served as a means of representation and activism other than constitutional amendments. Theatre served as a medium of representation for women in the same way that fictional writings voiced sexist and feminist issues.

In the 1960's which witnessed an upsurge of left activism throughout the western world , for the first time since the women's right to vote was won, feminism again resurfaced as an important political force. Feminist work of this period was inspired by grassroot activism and was based on the need to understand the causes of women's oppression in order to overturn the male dominated social order. Betty Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique* 1963 ,which has been seen as heralding Second Wave Feminism took up the challenge of naming and defining women's oppression, which she analyzed as "the problem that has no name" which she tried to explain as, "the problem lay buried, unspoken, for many years in the minds of American women. It was a strange stirring, a sense of dissatisfaction, a yearning that women suffered... each suburban wife struggled with it alone ... she was afraid to ask even herself the silent question- "Is this all?""(Friedan 57)

In 1970 Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* popularized the phrase 'sexual politics' and broadened the term 'patriarchy' beyond its original definition as the rule of a dominant male within a kinship structure to the institutionalized oppression of all women by men.

"Patriarchy" argues Millet, is a political structure, and sex a 'status' category with political implications (36).She writes:

> One is forced to conclude that sexual politics, while connected to economics and other tangibles of social organizations, is like racism, or certain aspects of caste primarily an ideology, a way of life. It has created a psychic structure deeply embedded in our past, capable of intensification or attenuation, but one which, as yet, no people have succeeded in eliminating. (qtd.in Gamble 36)

Kate Millet argues that it is not women's complicity which contributes to their oppression but patriarchal ideology which victimises women through false political representations of women. The foundations of these seminal works and the theoretical work of the 1970's was laid by "Simone de Beauvior's account of the cultural construction of women as 'Other', in 'The Second Sex', which had been published in 1949" (34). Gamble reiterates thus:

> The category of the 'Other', she argues, is fundamental in the formation of all human subjectivity, since our sense of Self can be produced only in opposition to something which is not self. But men have claimed the category of Self or Subject exclusively for themselves and relegated women to the status of eternal Other. De Beauvior''s conclusion is that economic self interest has led men to give partial social and economic emancipation to women. Women must seize this opportunity to achieve complete economic and social equality. This done an inner metamorphosis will follow and women will exist for herself, she will be a subject as man is subject, an Other for him only so far as he is for her. (34)

Churchill wrote of her experience of 'the problem that has no name' thus:

> What politicized me was being discontent with my own life of being a barrister's wife and being just at home . . . it seemed claustrophobic . . . By the mid-60s, I had this gloomy feeling that when the revolution came I would be swept away. (Aston and Diamond 19)

The revolution did sweeps her away, and she recollects its activism:

> I've found that as I go out more into the world and get into situations which involve women what I feel is quite strongly a feminist position and that inevitably comes into what I write. (Aston18)

In the British context Marxism had a much stronger influence on Feminism. Nevertheless, Marxist politics and academics had neglected Feminism on account of Second Wave Feminism's preoccupation with Women's Liberation from Patriarchy through the notion of shared experience and their neglect of class and economic issues. Marxist and socialist aligned, left-winged political and pressure groups also tend to neglect issues relating to sexuality, gender, race and ethnicity on the primary focus on class. Shiela Rowbatham in *Beyond the Fragments: Feminism and the Making of Socialism*, 1979, writes of the negligence of Socialism on the part leftist revolutionary parties thus:

> There is no conscious commitment to struggling against the forms relationship which are created by the division of labour under capitalism as part of the effort to make socialism... it is assumed that the existence of a revolutionary party itself can transcend the particular interests of sections within the working class. (Rowbotham et al. 96)

Shiela Rowbatham in her book *Woman's Consciousness, Man's World, 1973* argues that "women have to struggle for control of both production and reproduction". This is

reminiscent of the Marxist 'base' and 'superstructure' and suggests a "movement of working class women since their experience spans production and reproduction, class exploitation and sex oppression" (qtd. in Gamble 39). Feminists aligned to Marxist ideology, views sexual liberation as only increasing women's objectification and argues that "women's oppression takes place in specific historical circumstances ... it is the product of four distinct but overlapping structures: those of production, reproduction, sexuality and socialisation of children" As Feminism is not only a struggle against patriarchy or achievement of sexual liberation "socialist feminists must seek to transform 'the inner world' of bodily experience, psychological colonisation and cultural silencing, as well as the outer world of material social conditions" (39).

In her dramaturgy Churchill deals with exploitation, misuse of power, oppression, and inequality within the capitalist mode of production, in which the victims are mostly women. Her social realism can be said to be related, but not identical to the social realist techniques of her contemporaries like Arnold Wesker and John Osborne. Her realism does not aim to mimic life on the stage but interrogates the status of women in contemporary society, and her theatre offers a mixture of realist scene with surreal exchanges between mythical, even fantastic, characters. Churchill's dramaturgy incorporates historical and cultural dynamics, but her characters, though sometimes represented from history have contemporary relevance, as they usually serve the purpose of the critique of contemporary society. This may also be perceived from Amelia Howe Kritzer, as she observes:

> Churchill produces plays that instead of imitating life, challenge audiences to reshape reality using their moral vision and their example of daring experiment and creative play. (Rabey 137)

The Churchill texts gain in political significance, and especially with the subversive aspects and effects since they deal with oppression, the struggle for power, the ways in which power is being exercised, and a corresponding concern with the operations of power and its marginalizing techniques, all of which recalls orthodox Marxist and materialist premises. Jane Thomas in *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Essays in Refusal* has also sensitively brought out some of these characteristic features in her study of Churchill's work. She observes that Churchill's texts disturb our cultural homogenization with providing no answers "but with asking questions". More importantly, "her plays challenge the notion of truth itself, and the power-relations which construct it in the modern age". She does so articulately by privileging "deviant or subversive knowledge which have been silenced or disqualified in the interests of social control and normalization, knowledge which belong to women, children, homosexuals, racial minorities, the working class, peasants, the insane and the criminal: the outcast and the disempowered" (Page 162).

Churchill's play evidences and voices the anxieties, problems and concerns of the contemporary moment. "Hers is an oppositional, political theatre voice for contemporary times" (Aston and Diamond 1). Her capacity for dramaturgical innovation and invention of form in performance and theatre tactics as evident in the plays which will be discussed in the chapters of the thesis have been considered unsurpassed, which are a means of subversion of the marginalising tendencies of both the theatre and contemporary politics. "For Churchill, dramatizing the political is not just a question of content, but also of form. With the renewal of form comes the renewal of the political: new forms and new socially and politically relevant questions" (2). When asked whether a playwright has the obligation to take a moral and political stance, Churchill talked of the political inclination of her plays in her interview with Betsko and Koenig[14]:

> It's almost impossible not to take one, whether you intend to or not. Most plays can be looked at from a political perspective and have said something even if it isn't what you set out to say... Whatever you do your point of view is going to show somewhere. It usually only gets noticed and called "political" if it's against the status quo . . . But either way, the issues you feel strongly about are going to come through, and they're going to be a moral and political stance in some form. Sometimes more explicitly, sometimes less. (Jacobus 1080)

The above statement shows Churchill's views of the political and even didactic nature of feminist theatre. A Churchillian play does not moralise but often asks previously unasked questions relating to sexist ideologies within theatre and patriarchal ideologies which permeate all political, historical, social and economic agendas of the state. Her plays often delve into the ways the status quo of economic, political and gender oppressions can be subverted for which her plays often have historical and theoretical groundings based on instances like the English Revolution, Imperialism and even the theoretical aspects of power based on Foucauldian concepts.

> Churchill's theatre has repeatedly argued 'against the status quo' by exploring social worlds scarred by the inability to democratize and to revolutionize both nationally and internationally. (Aston and Diamond 1)

The victims marginalized by the status quo are often women and people of the lower hierarchy within the social class system especially in a capitalist state. Churchill voices the sufferings of those who have been silenced of their oppression or even the part that they have played in the making of history. She represents issues related to women and gender and argues for a historiography which places them at the centre of representation of a socialist history. Throughout her trajectory Churchill has strived to represent issues relating to women

especially related to gender, economic and political under capitalism and asks questions relating to the possibilities of resistance. Her plays are influenced by her readings of seminal feminist text like Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and Foucault's concepts of power and resistance. Foucault's argument in *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1* that "where there is power there is resistance... These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network" (Foucault 95) finds voice in the plays of Churchill.

Theatre history has recorded an astounding absence of woman's voices from the Greek's onwards. The re- reading of male- made images of women began in theatre studies with the development of feminist approaches to the 'classic' period of western theatre history which excluded women. Two 'classic' periods which have been the object of feminist deconstructive activity are: the Greek and Renaissance theatre. Finding a female tradition has been important to a feminist history of the theatre. It began with the challenging of the 'canon' in theatre which was, "seen as part of the patriarchal value-system governing society and its cultural production" (Aston *An Introduction,* 16). Working in tandem with this approach of deconstructing canonical texts is the recovery of female authored dramatic plays and theatrical contexts. Theatre groups were formed for this purpose in which one example is Mrs Worthington's Daughter's in 1978 which was formed specifically for the recovery of lost drama on and by women of the past. In the recovery of the traditions of female playwriting, the period of suffrage drama had been brought into critical study as parallels could be drawn between the Suffrage Movement of the early twentieth century and the Women's Liberation Movement of the 1970s. Traditional literary studies of drama tend to focus on only male writers but "feminist intervention of this period of British theatre has recovered a number of women playwrights who contributed in mainstream and 'alternative' theatre contexts to the Edwardian debate on suffrage and the Woman Question" (27). With this, the historic-

theatrical map had been re- drawn which included women playwrights such as Elizabeth Baker, Elizabeth Robins, Cicely Hamilton and Githa Sowerby. This feminist re-charting of historical canon of plays by women had been useful in challenging the male bias of the canon. The feminist intervention of reading and interpreting theatre as a sign-system have been ground breaking and had made it possible for the analysis of the female performer as the site of subversion of male tradition. It proposes the feminist insistence that the premise of theatre is multi-authored rather than circumscribing it to a conservative principle of a single controlling author or manager who maintains the status quo. Thus, a female performer or even playwright becomes a "creator of alternative text to the male-authored stage picture in which she is framed" (33).

In the seminal book on Feminist Theatre and sexual politics, *Carry On, Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*, 1981, Michelene Wandor has divided the development and period of Feminist Theatre into four phases:

> (I)A further development of feminist agitprop, emerging from early street theatre. (2) From within the professional theatre. (3) From Theatre-in – Education. (4) From the impact of feminism on socialist companies.
>
> (Wandor 37)

The development of the Feminist Theatre witnessed the development of The Women's Theatre Group whose obvious allegiance to feminism was declared by them that their work:

> (was) directed towards exploration of the female situation from a feminist viewpoint. It aims also at increasing understanding of the political and social context in which women operate . . . Apart from the difficulties of functioning without any subsidy whatsoever, one of our most acute problems has been

> attempting to combine politics and polemic with aesthetics and entertainment. (Wandor 51)

The Women's Theatre Group had a Socialist touring network which worked to their advantage as their work was more propagandists in nature

The Women's Theatre Group and Gay Sweatshop had been firmly established by 1976 as touring groups but neither of them received grants from the Arts Council. Their propagandist approach in dealing with sexual politics became a catalyst for other arts theatre and alternative theatre to react to the women's theatre movement. On the Women's theatre festival in 1975 politically linked plays by playwrights like Pam Gems, Caryl Churchill were showed followed by discussions and music. With the diffusion of feminist and gay consciousness a new group was formed named Monstrous Regiment, its name "taken from the title of the [misogynist], sixteenth century pamphlet by John Knox entitled 'The first blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women'" (Keyssar 91).

One of their early press releases defined their aim as,

> The company . . . ensures that women form the majority and take decisive roles, and also commissions work by women writers dealing with themes throwing light on the position of society. . . . (Wandor 58)

Another press release declares,

> We see ourselves as part of the growing and lively movement to improve the status of women. Our work explores experience of women past and present, and we want to place that experience in the centre of the stage instead of the wings. (58)

The first play commissioned by Monstrous Regiment was a play by husband and wife C.G Bond and Claire Luckham called *Scum:Death, Destruction and Dirty Washing*, performed in 1976.

> It is important to mention the formation of Monstrous Regiment as it was the theatre group to have first commissioned Caryl Churchill's play *Vinegar Tom,* in 1976 and the playwright continued to collaborate with the group in the later years. The play is set in the seventeenth century dramatizing men, women and witchcraft. The play showed how "women's sexuality was feared and hated and blamed for all kinds of social ills". (Wandor 59).

Writing of plays after research, workshops, group discussions, sharing of real experiences and group improvisation was the policy of the women's group as it was a way of subverting the dominating role of a male writer, director and producer who had the upper hand in all production of a play as usually practiced in traditional theatre. At the same time Monstrous Regiment developed and explored entertainment forms of performance which often included songs and music-hall presentations. They were also interested in the cabaret style of performance which often represented female sexuality. Michelene Wandor explains this:

> Cabaret and stand up comedy between them point up one way women are objectified: women as glamorous performers exude a high-society come-on which is then contained by a male dominated humour in which there is often a collusive relationship between the male comic and the men in his audience at the expense of women . . . which is a symbol of dangerous (but tameable) female sexuality. (Wandor72)

Through this the women performers could deconstruct the traditional way they were presented on the stage. But it was also argued that this kind of representation of female sexuality was a only a reinforcement of an already accepted convention and "the fact that at one level the performances reinforced the very image they were hoping to undermine reflected the strength of the dominant imagery and the failure of the material to provide content strong enough to rupture the form" (72). This resulted often in conveying the message of a strong persona who is radical in a sense that male dominance was replaced by female dominance which becomes a feminism which reinforces the same subordination by the same sex as opposed to socialist- feminist class and gender equality. Nevertheless, this experimentation was crucial in the development of representing the nuances of women's sexuality on the stage from a women's perspective. Monstrous Regiment's first production in 1977 was called *Floorshow*, with songs and sketches contributed by Caryl Churchill and her contemporaries like David Bradford, Byrony Lavery and Michelene Wandor. It dramatized reverse domestic roles with a comic element, coloured costumes were used which made it difficult to distinguish between male and female performers. This kind of stage improvisations were introduced in order to subvert the traditional norms of performance regarding varied topics on the theatre. The women's theatre groups had managed to bring women's experiences and sexual politics in the forefront of theatrical representations. Michelene Wandor comments:

> (that) they have foregrounded the importance of women and gay experience as a subject matter of drama, and by the very nature of their groupings, have made visible and challenged the assumptions that real and important theatre has to be seen to be dominated by the conventionally acceptable

> (heterosexual) white male. All their productions have in some way been marked by a sense of opposition to the dominant culture. . . . (Wandor 76)

The Women's Theatre Group managed to, "produce theatrical work which does not fight shy of conflicts between women- whether of a class or a cultural nature" (77). They managed to put feminist issues first followed by a political issue and moved toward a more artistic kind of representation. But one may be reminded that there cannot be one right of representing women's experiences and also the right feminism for theatre.

Because of the fact that during the 1970s or the developing years of the women's theatre, with the scarcity of women playwrights and plays with women's issues, the tendency to label such plays or playwrights into clichés like plays for women or feminist theatre were used with the tendency to club together such plays or playwrights as advocating one and the same feminist or women's issues. However, one must keep in mind that Feminism even within theatre is not a homogenous identity. Arguments between, Radical Feminists, Bourgeois Feminist and Socialist Feminist within Feminism is an element of continuous debate. As Michelene Wandor writes, these feminist tendencies share important features:

> (I)All three tendencies seek to bring about some sort of change in the position of women. (2) All three tendencies challenge both the idea and the fact of male dominance. (3) All three tendencies assert the importance of self-determination in women. (131)

Churchill's gender and feminist identification "was raised through personal experience, specifically a growing discontent with the isolated conditions of her domestic life" (Aston and Diamond 3). The Feminist climate of the 1970s also contributed to her growth as a woman writer. With the revolution promised by Second Wave Feminism, the

'woman writer' started having more opportunities than before as the prerogative of the feminist stance was the historiography of women's history from women's experiences. In British Theatre of the 1970s opened opportunities for fringe theatre[15] groups which were mostly feminist groups that represented women's experiences, "identifying the social and sexual inequalities of women's lives and seeking ways to change them" (3). Churchill sought ways of voicing these issues in her plays and also as a means of resisting sexist ideology prevalent in theatre, she turned to experimentation of form and content. For this she shed her solitary nature of writing which had always been thought to be right for a playwright and collaborated with feminist theatre groups like Monstrous Regiment of which she produced her play *Vinegar Tom* and Joint Stock of which she produced *Light Shining in Buchinghamshire.* This brought her into feminist theatre community. Her experience of working with these theatre companies had an important and enduring impact on Churchill's dramaturgy. Of women's place in theatre in light of feminism, Churchill argues, "one of the things the Women's movement has done is to show the way the traps work" (Aston 17). The 'traps' being her reference to the male bias in theatre, the silence of women's history and voice in theatre and the gender inequality which makes it difficult to combine motherhood and playwriting. Churchill also admits to her replication of the dominant male tradition in her earlier writings she felt that "as a 'woman writer' she had to show that she too 'could do it' but realised that it was not to challenge the maleness of the tradition "but of thinking through "the maleness" of the traditional structure of plays, with conflict and building in a certain way to a climax" (Aston18). Churchill focused on highlighting the experiences of women in a society driven by the capitalist ethos of profit and greed of which patriarchy holds the reins of power; instead of critiquing representations of women in theatre Churchill took up the challenge of finding ways of resisting the status quo of Capitalism whose victims are mostly women.

With regard to her political stance, Churchill had said that "feminism and socialism aren't synonymous" (Aston and Diamond 4) and wouldn't be interested in one that didn't include the other, she dramatizes the economic and social conditions of women throughout history. The 1970s feminist and leftist politics, with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister under the Conservative Government in 1979 greatly influenced the feminist thinking of the time. Being relegated as the 'super woman' in terms of her success, women emulated her and often describe her as the epitome of what feminism is. Her economic policy favoured capitalism which led to mass privatisation of public sectors which led to 'a Britain divided by wealth and class, promoted private ownership of nationalized industries, and reduced public subsidy-especially for the arts... Thatcher's Britain shored up the economic divide of the rich and poor" (5). Thatcher's policies or Thatcherism ironically effected women indirectly through economic and political factors as capitalism perpetuated by patriarchy is blind towards gender and sexual oppression in its race towards profit mobilisation. This drive towards profit led to the individualistic style of feminism also known as 'bourgeois feminism' which set the trend of women competing ruthlessly like or against their male counterparts for economic gains. This led to a society divided by class and inter-class oppression. Churchill voices her views on the effect of Thatcherite politics on women in her interview with Betsko and Keonig *Interview with Contemporary Playwrights*:

> Thatcher had just become Prime Minister; there was talk about whether it was an advance to have a woman prime minister if it was someone with policies like hers. She may be a woman but she isn't a sister, she may be a sister but she isn't a comrade. And in fact things have gotten much worse for woman under Thatcher. . . . (Fitzsimmons 62)

Churchill maybe identified with the middle class, college educated woman having the privilege of being able to choose between a carrier and raising a family, which is the point of contention and debate within feminism between white women and women of colour who argues with Liberal or radical Feminism on the issue of racism and double oppression of race and sex, nevertheless her plays voices the plight of the oppressed class and puts gender, class and economic oppression; sexism and experiences of the underprivileged at the centre of a socialist society. For her, feminism and socialism cannot be separated. A socialist analysis may not give importance to gender in its critique of society but a socialist- feminist critique recognizes gender, race, class, history and labour hierarchies as determinants of the analysis of not only women's oppression but also the web of oppression perpetuated by capitalism and patriarchal ideologies.

Churchill through her theatre has embark on the agenda of the possibilities of subverting the constricting and oppressive forces within capitalism. Through her theatre she often demonstrates how the status quo can be challenged not by force but through asking unasked questions as "her use of historical texts and political critique suggests a deep interest in intervening in the historical record, not through dogma or preaching but by engaging the imagination and curiosity of her audience" (Aston and Diamond 7). Churchill's political concerns and vision for society which she often expressed through her theatre is:

> (A) decentralized, non- authoritarian, communist, non-sexist-a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings, and in control of their lives. (Aston and Diamond 2)

She clearly realises the nature of women's oppression under capitalism is doubled by class and gender. The themes of economic and class exploitation; gender and sexual oppression are central to the dramaturgy of Churchill. She not only highlights these issues in her art but

shows and conveys how they can be resisted and subverted in order to bring forth change within the societal set up. Her plays makes audible the voices of those who had been erased from history not only of women but also from the working class who are very much a part of the making of history.

Churchill being one of England's leading modern playwrights has for more than thirty years committed to theatrical experimentation. Her dramaturgy is the staging of desire, and more particularly the desires of those members of society who are not in the position to realise them. They are desires which social and political structures are unwilling to accommodate - the desires of the oppressed, and most often, of women. Feminist critics from areas as diverse as socialist feminism, material feminism, and cultural feminism have claimed Churchill as a representative. Her plays have furthered feminist performance theory and broadened traditional views of gender roles. The thesis thus studies and analyses the nuances of Socialist- Feminism intertwined with the politics of subversion in Churchill's dramaturgy through different chapters.

END NOTES

[1]The Royal Court Theatre is Britain's leading national company dedicated to new work by innovative writers from the UK and around the world. It receives and considers an extraordinary quantity of new work and each year presents an ambitious programme in its two venues at Sloane Square in London. One may refer to, www.royaltheatre.com.

[2]Joint Stock was a Theatre Company founded in 1974 by David Hare, Max Strafford- Clarke and David Aukin. They developed and practiced a distinct style of writing plays through researching materials, group discussions and sharing of experiences with writers. This style of writing plays is often called The Joint Stock Method. Refer to, http://www.litencyc.com/php/stopics.php?rec=true&UID=1655>

[3]Monstrous Regiment, a women's theatre group, was founded in 1975 after The Women's Theatre Festival held at Haymarket Theatre at Leicester, by Gillian Hanna and Mary McCusker. The group aimed to provide women's opportunities in all areas of theatre and included men in the group. Refer to, Wandor, Michelene. *Carry On Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul. 1986. p. 57-59. Print.

[4]Churchill defined her style of writing as a solitary one in her introduction to *Vinegar Tom* in *Plays: One*, until she started to collaborate with theatre companies and groups like Monstrous regiment and Joint Stock. One may see Caryl Churchill. "Vinegar Tom", *Plays: One*. London: Methuen Drama. P.129. 1996. Print.

[5]Margaret Thatcher was the leader of The Conservative party from 1975 to 1990. Thatcherism has been used to describe the ideology and political culture of the British government while Thatcher was Prime Minister between May 1979 and November 1990. Thatcherism claims to promote low inflation, the small state and free markets through tight

control of the money supply, privatisation and constraints on the labour movement. It may also be associated with the economic theory of monetarism. One may refer to, Churchill Caryl. "Commentary", *Top Girls*. London: Methuen Drama. 1991. p. xxxviii. Print.

[6]In the later 1950s, a term applied (often disparagingly) to the new wave of plays that dealt realistically with the domestic lives of working or lower middle class characters. The use of humdrum or seedy settings in such plays as Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* (1958), and Wesker's *Roots* (1959), represented a decisive break with the elegant drawing-room comedies of (for instance) Noël Coward or Terence Rattigan. *Roots* actually begins with a character standing at a kitchen sink. In the UK, the term "kitchen sink" derived from an expressionist painting by John Bratby, which contained an image of a kitchen sink. The critic David Sylvester wrote an article in 1954 about trends in recent English art, calling his article "The Kitchen Sink" in reference to Bratby's picture. Refer to, http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/kitchen-sink-drama-iid-21415>

[7]Social Realism is a movement in the arts which draws attention to and depicts the conditions of the poor and the reality of the working class other than a romanticised depiction. Social Realism is critical of the social structures which maintain these conditions. The achievement of realism in the theatre was to direct attention to the social and psychological problems of ordinary life. In its dramas, people emerge as victims of forces larger than themselves, as individuals confronted with a rapidly accelerating world. Playwrights present their characters as ordinary, impotent, and unable to arrive at answers to their predicaments. Refer to, *Drama and Theatre Arts*. R.A Banks and P. Marson, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998. Print.

[8]The English playwright Pam Gems, a contemporary of Caryl Churchill was born in 1925. Equally respected for her innovative and experimental plays which deals with women and their survival under a sexist environment. She is best known for her musical play *Paif.* She

died at the age of 85 in 2011. Refer to, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/theatre-obituaries/8517453/Pam-Gems.html>

[9]Edith Piaf, also known as "The Little Sparrow," was a French singer who became an icon of France during World War II. Piaf was born in Paris on December 19, 1915, and rose to international stardom in the 1940s as a symbol of French passion and tenacity. She died in France in 1963. Refer to, http://www.biography.com/people/edith-piaf-9439893

[10]The Equal Franchise Act of 1928 granted equal voting rights to women and men. As a result, both men and women could vote at the age of 21. Refer to, http://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/electionsvoting/womenvote/overview/thevote/>

[11]The Education Act of 1944 made secondary education free for all. It opened secondary school for girls and the working class. At the same time, the Act had been said to have brought about awareness of class division between working and middle class. One may refer to, www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/.../school/.../educationact1944/

[12]Bertolt Brecht is the German playwright whose Epic Theatre proposed that a play should not cause the spectator to identify emotionally with the characters or action before him or her, but should instead provoke rational self-reflection and a critical view of the action on stage. Instead, he wanted his audiences to adopt a critical perspective in order to recognise social injustice and exploitation and to be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect the world outside theatre. One of Brecht's most important principles was what he called the *Verfremdungseffekt* translated as 'defamiliarization'. This involved stripping the event of its self-evident, familiar, obvious quality and creating a sense of astonishment and curiosity

about them. One may refer to White, John. J. *Bertolt Brecht's Dramatic Theory*. USA: Camden House. 2010. Print.

[13]In 1972, with the progress of the Women's Liberation Movement, four journals were started out of which *Spare Rib*, published monthly was started by women who worked for the underground press. The journal *Red Rag*, was started by women of the Communist party and unaligned socialist feminists. Refer to, www.grassrootsfeminism.net.

[14]Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Keonig, editors of *Interviews with Contemporary Women Playwrights* interviewed her in 1987. One may refer to, Betsko, Kathleen, Rachel Koenig and Emily Mann. "Interview with Caryl Churchill". Comp. Lee. A. Jacobus. *Introduction to Drama: A Bedford Book*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1078-1081. 1989. Print.

[15]Fringe Theatre is the theatre practice that does not conform to mainstream theatre in which unofficial theatre groups perform. They usually perform during official theatre festivals one example being The Edinburg Festival Fringe which was held as a counter during Edinburgh International Festival (1948). It is also a name for small scale theatre. Smaller theatres, including many pub theatres are called Fringe. Refer to, http://londontheatre.co.uk/londontheatre/othervenues/index.htm>

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CHAPTER - II

CHURCHILL AND FEMINIST THEATRE

Plays about women have been written and performed since the times of Greek Theatre and Elizabethan Theatre. But it was not until recent times that playwrights, readers and critics became self-conscious or conscious about the presence or absence of women in plays and their representation either through playtexts and theatrical performance. To look back at the ancient tradition of theatre, one comes across Aristotle who gave us the definition of drama (tragedy) as an imitation of serious action. But this imitation however does not primarily work to subvert the sense of goodness, beauty, truth and reality. During the Elizabethan period, women characters were performed by men, the fact of which clearly establishes the dominant patriarchal order of the society. Restoration comedy was an attempt to imitate and question the manners and morals of the degenerated society; nevertheless, for the first time it introduced a change in bringing professional actresses to play women characters. Within the theatrical culture of an experimental twentieth century, there was a widespread challenge to long established rules surrounding theatrical representation, which contained certain germs of radicalism and subversion in the theatre of Naturalism and Realism. However, in the twenty first century, developments in areas like gender theory and postmodern philosophy effected explicitly meta-theatrical performances which were meant to confront the audience's habitual perceptions and assumptions, and which strongly challenged and questioned their gender and classist prejudices.

Feminism has been instrumental in challenging the male bias within theatre studies and had impacted it to the scale that " Feminist drama emerged as a distinct theatrical drama in the 1960s in both Britain and America" (Keyssar 1), whose roots can be traced to the Women's Liberation Movement and Feminist Movements, particularly the Second Wave Feminist Movements of the 1960s. The study of theatre and theatre studies as a discipline emerged out of the English studies as late as 1947 which sought to reframe drama as the

study of theatre in its historical, theoretical and practical contexts. As the study of theatre developed, the study of its history was given more importance rather than its criticism. Feminism and feminist study penetrated into the study of drama and theatre which focuses on:

> Understanding the cultural and material conditions of theatre past (and present) . . . a feminist reframing of theatre history, which has its own questions to ask about how and why women's work has been 'hidden' or marginalized. (Aston, *An Introduction* 2)

In the first British Academic Women's Theatre conference held at Warwick University in 1985, a feminist thinking or re-thinking of theatre history was evident in which different periods of history from the Renaissance to the nineteenth were examined. The need of re-examination and application of feminist thinking by historians to construct theories of the past is stressed by Nancy Reinhardt thus:

> The theatre historian should re-examine this historical evidence with a lens which focuses more closely on the position of women in productions of earlier centuries. The dominant *public* action both on the stage and in the audience stresses a male world in which women are kept to the sides, in recesses, or are placed on display for the male viewer (Aston, *An Introduction* 2-3).

Feminist Theatre studies turned to feminist literary criticism and theoretical approaches in the re-framing of theatre history. The methodologies of the study of the images of women in male authored plays, the empirical research of non- documented work by women in theatre, and feminist appropriation of semiotics were borrowed from feminist literary studies. The study and criticism of women as sign in mainstream production gave way to the concern with theory and practice of women's texts, and theorizations of feminist theatre. The need was felt

to question the context from which women's work were produced, the tradition in which they wrote and women's part in theatrical production. One tradition of female performance theatrics which have been recovered is the history of 'stage cross-dressing'. Women were allowed to make their stage appearances during the 1660s and this had made study of the English stage of the 1660s important to feminist scholarship as the actresses soon took the roles of men and even travesty appearances were documented during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The attraction of cross-dressing lies in the fact that the strict traditional gender divide had been subverted.

As the issue of gender divide is an inherent element of theatre, sexual politics becomes a dominant subject of feminist theatre and theatre being a heterosexual, male dominated field, its sexual politics not only criticised the issue of women in theatre, but the issue of Gay identity and sexuality also found representation. It is in the representation of alternative identities which do not comply with traditional norms of sexuality, gender or gender roles, that the use of cross-dressing is used tactfully as a subversive theatrical device. Patriarchal gender binaries of fixed gender roles are parodied with satirical irony.

In the initial development of socialist-feminist debate, Michelene Wandor observes that socialist-feminism "seeks to locate oppression in terms of the complex matrix of gender, class, race, ideology, etc., and identify the historical sittings of such oppressions in order to radically transform society". For the socialist- feminist the theatre theory and, "practice of Bertolt Brecht whose anti-illusionistic performance aesthetic challenged the form and ideological content of the classic realist tradition" (Aston, *An Introduction* 73) has a great influence. Brecht's principle of 'historicisation', 'gestus', a combination of physical gesture and 'gist' or attitude, use of song, direct audience address and narrative structure which he incorporates in his 'epic theatre' or 'dialectical theatre' are appropriated by women playwrights. The purpose of these techniques being: to make strange or alienate the play from

the audience minimizing their empathy and illusion so that they will be able to evaluate the message and meaning that the play had conveyed. This *Verfremdungseffekt* or alienation effect, which according to Elin Diamond in her essay *Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory : Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism* is, "A cornerstone of Brecht's theory... the technique of defamiliarizing a word, an idea, a gesture so as to enable the spectator to see or hear it afresh" (84). As his plays address social issues, Brecht's 'dialectical theatre' or 'epic theatre' insists on its spectators not only to understand the play but to think about the issues and of possibilities which the dramatist could constantly remind the audience that they are watching a play and intellectualize with the core social issues represented.

As Epic theatre is a politically social theatre, it works well for feminist theoretical practice as feminism is a politics with the slogan 'the personal is political'[1]. For a playwright like Caryl Churchill, who expresses her political view that 'feminism and socialism are not synonymous but would not be interested in one that did not include the other'; who claims that a playwright's political stance inevitably comes through in her plays[2], the appropriation of the epic theatre devices have been fruitful in making her plays politically relevant. For her issues of sex, gender and class are inevitably intertwined in her dramaturgy where the marginalization and oppression of the working class, in a hegemonized capitalist system is exposed, often questioning and suggesting the possibilities of subversion. It is here that the Brechtian device of alienation, historicization and social gest becomes useful in foregrounding the issues which are being brought forth for examination and activism.

Alienation effect can be used as a very powerful tool in feminist theatre in the critique of the politics of gender and representation. Elin Diamond writes thus:

> Understanding gender as ideology-as a system of beliefs and behaviour mapped across the bodies of females and males, which reinforces a social status quo-is to appreciate the continued timeliness of Verfremdungseffeckt,

> the purpose of which is to denaturalize and defamiliarize what ideology makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable.(Diamond 85)

Apart from the Alienation effect, in Brecht's dialectic theatre, the technique and use of historicization and 'Gestus' is an integral part which have been widely and effectively appropriated by feminist playwrights including Caryl Churchill. In the understanding of the sex-gender system and the material-political history of women, Brecht's theory of historicization with his deep understanding of social-class relations as part of a moving dialectic have been the basic tenet of feminist theatre criticism. As Elin Diamond argues, "The crux of "historicization" is change: through (Alienation)-effects spectators observe the potential movement in class relations, discover the limitations and strength of their own perception, and begin to change their lives" (86-87). This includes the preservation of the distinguishing points of the past at the same time acknowledging the present perspective.

This may be assumed to be the reason why feminist playwrights often reject classic realist traditions and turn to Brechtian theatre theory and practice to develop a Feminist Theatre.

The historicization of plays culminates into the Brechtian concept of the 'Gestus'. Elin Diamond explains it as, "a gesture, a word, an action, a tableau by which, separately or in a series, the social attitudes encoded in the playtext become visible to the spectator". In fact Brecht distinguishes between a gest and a 'social gest' thus:

> Not all gests are social gests. . . .the social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances. (89)

The gestic moment in a play explains the didactic purpose of the play while at the same time exposing its social and discursive ideologies. Brecht suggests that the use of the social gest enables the spectator to "criticize human behaviour from a social point of view, and the scene is played as a piece of history" (89). If one uses this in feminist criticism, "the social gest

signifies a moment of theoretical insight into sex-gender complexities" (Diamond 90). It throws light not only on the story but also on the cultural and historical context of the play. Throwing light on the erasure of women's experiences in the theatre, and the possibilities opened by Brechtian dramatic theory which Elin Diamond elaborates the importance of 'Gestic Feminist Criticism' thus:

> A gestic feminist criticism would "alienate" or foreground those moments in a playtext in which social attitudes about gender could be made visible . . . highlight sex-gender configurations as they conceal or disrupt a coercive or patriarchal ideology . . . refuse to appropriate and naturalize male and female dramatists, but rather focus on historical material constraints in the production of images. It would attempt to engage dialectically with, rather than master the playtext. (Diamond 90)

Elin Diamond's argument and proposal redefines feminist criticism within the theatre as the nature of a feminist theatre criticism and theory is often not on par with its sister criticism based on the reading and interpretation of fictional writings. Nevertheless, it would be worthwhile to mention that innovative female dramatists like Caryl Churchill had used and appropriated Brechtian theory in her dramaturgy as early as 1976 in her two plays *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and *Vinegar Tom*, which would be analysed within this chapter in the light of the present theoretical argument. At the same time Elin Diamond's essay had foregrounded the ground on which to firmly base feminist theoretical praxis within the theatre and further explains its use for the feminist critic thus:

> For the feminist critic and theorist this Gestus marks a first step toward recovering a women playwright in her sexual, historical, and theatrical specificity. It also marks a site, in the text, of indeterminacy, of multiple meanings. (Diamond 92)

Churchill's play *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* was one of the first plays staged by the Women's Theatre Group 'Joint Stock' on 7th September 1976, during the developmental years of Feminist Theatre. In rebelling against the status quo of the dominant traditional

theatre convention, feminist theatre developed the practice of collaborative writing which included group discussions, research, experimentation on theatrical devices and touring. Churchill expressed her experience about collaborative playwriting thus:

> I like [collaborations]. I'd always been very solitary as a writer before and I like working that closely with other people. [With Joint Stock] you don't collaborate on writing the play, you still go away and write it yourself . . . What is different is that you've had a period of researching something together, not just information, but your attitudes to it, and possible ways of showing things, which means that when you come back with the writing you're much more open to suggestions. (Fitzsimmons 87)

The play marked the beginning of a very productive and long standing collaboration with Max Stafford-Clark as director which marks, "one of the most fruitful partnerships of modern theatre"(Aston and Diamond 149). This collaboration led to the production of a play about the forgotten and often mis-represented participation in the English Civil wars[3], of the Levellers[4], Diggers[5] and Ranters[6], those who were at the left of Oliver Cromwell's 'New Model Army'[7] during the English Civil Wars of the 1960s. Churchill used the historicization technique of Epic Theatre and the play is set in the seventeenth century. As Max Stafford-Clark writes:

> *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*... was about an experience very distant from us- Levellers, Ranters and ecstatic religion in the mid-17th century.
>
> (Aston, *Caryl* 53)

The English Civil War had often been simplified as a war between the Cavaliers (Royalists) and Roundheads (Parliamentarians) to overthrow monarchy, disregarding the more vigorous revolutionary ideals working beneath the more politicised version of the war. It was believed by many that within this war lies the possibilities of changing the lives of the oppressed class of the English society and the ideals of universal suffrage and equality seemed a possibility. The 1640s and 1650s had been claimed to be the "greatest upheaval that has yet occurred in

Britain" (Aston, *Caryl* 58) with the defeat of Charles I and his execution in 1649. In her historiography of "a revolution that didn't happen" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 183). Churchill's attention is focused on those whose very existence would have been changed if the revolution had succeeded. She writes in the forward to the play:

> For a short time when the king had been defeated anything seemed possible, and the play shows the amazed excitement of people taking hold of their own lives, and their gradual betrayal as those who led them realised that freedom could not be had without property being destroyed. (183)

The title of the play has been taken from a surviving Digger Pamphlet of 1649 which criticises "You Great Curmudgeons, you hang a man for stealing, when you yourself have stolen from your brethren all land and creatures. *More Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, a Digger pamphlet 1649", which advocated and called to equality of property as all men are alike privileged by birth, and all men have the right to equal share of property. With this revolutionary fervour and in drawing a similarity with the belief based on the Christian millenarian hope that a heaven on earth will be established in Christ's second coming, the men fought for the Parliamentarians. But the Levellers and Diggers were crushed by Cromwell's army and as Churchill herself writes, "What was established instead was an authoritarian parliament, the massacre of the Irish, the development of capitalism" (183). History is often written by those in power which often excludes the roles and experience of those individuals who were part of making the history. Churchill by rewriting the history of the losers of the English Civil War, from the perspective of the marginalised, brings back a reified account of that history.

The play written as series of striking episodes or scenes captured the excitement of the common people after the defeat of the king Charles I by Oliver Cromwell's army. This is reminiscent of Brecht's episodic technique in his 'Epic Theatre' which demands an episodic

structure other than a traditional linear structure in which each scene is to be connected. The play focuses on ordinary people like the common soldiers, labourers, poor women, vagrants and voices their experiences of oppression, suppression and disillusionment which have been otherwise left untold. Churchill also borrows from the texts of the period such as Digger pamphlets and the Bible which is one of the most important text of the period. She also borrow material from the Putney Debates which was a three day debate held between the common soldiers who had fought for Cromwell including the Levellers and leaders of Cromwell's army including Cromwell himself. "The debates were fundamentally about what we now call democracy, about who would be granted a stake in governing the country for whose future they had fought" (Aston and Diamond 40). This is corollary to Brecht's theory as he writes in the *Appendices to the Short Organum* that, "it is important that the scenes should, to start with, be played one after another, using the experience of real life, without taking account of what follows or even of the play's overall sense. The story then unreels in a contradictory manner: the individual scenes retain their own meaning" (qtd. in Morelli 55)

Churchill uses real historical characters of the war like Laurence Clarkson and Abiezer Coppe, two Ranters and the Roundhead leader Oliver Cromwell. She writes in the production note to the play:

> The characters Claxton and Cobbe are loosely based on Laurence Clarkson, or Claxton, and Abiezer Coppe or Cobbe, two Ranters whose writings have survived; the others are fictional, except for those in the Putney Debates, which is a much-condensed transcript of three days of debate among Army officers and soldiers' delegates which took place in 1647.
> (Churchill, *Plays:1* 184)

In the representation and incorporation of real historical materials Churchill uses the historical materialist approach which is the foundation of Brecht's dialectical theatre.

The play opens with an appropriation of epic theatre device: the singing of all the cast a verse from the Bible, Isaiah 24: 17-20:

> Fear, and the pit, and the snare are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth.
> And it shall come to pass that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he who cometh out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for the windows from on high are open and the foundation of the earth do shake. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 191)

If one takes a hermeneutic study of the above quote, the *New Bible Commentary* interprets it as "Cosmic judgement. The first three nouns . . . hammer home the relentlessness of the judgement" (Carson 648). Judgement by God upon the people of the earth, as according to the *New International Version: Study Bible*, "probably collective [judgement] for the godly community that wastes away because of the villainy of the treacherous nations that seek to crush the people of God" (Barker 1067).

> The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall and not rise again. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 191)

The above quote demonstrates how the judgement would bring utter chaos for the people of Israel. The *New Bible Commentary* states that this particular biblical chapter is a part of the four chapters in the book of Isaiah which "often partly loosely known as the 'Isaiah Apocalypse', [which] shows the downfall of supernatural as well as earthly enemies" (Carson 647). Isaiah "lived and worked in Judah during the second half of the 8th century B.C, when the Israelite people had separated into two kingdoms of Israel to the North and Judah to the South . . . At the time when Isaiah received the call to be a prophet the two Israelite kingdoms were prosperous and at peace though it seems that the prosperity was enjoyed chiefly by the wealthy landowners and the merchants and corrupt officials" (Partain and Deutsch 1).

Jean E. Howard in her essay "On owning and owing: Caryl Churchill and the nightmare of capital", comment of this:

> Here appropriating the languages of biblical prophecy and warning, Churchill predicts the shudderings of the world's foundations that her play will explore, religious discourse providing the terms through which social catastrophe and utopian yearnings alike will be expressed. (Aston and Diamond 40)

Churchill draws a similarity between the English civil war and the times in the Bible in which Isaiah lived, who prophesied the invasion of Jerusalem by Assyria as God's punishment for the acts of apostasy under King Ahaz' rule. Their only hope was God's intervention and grace, not political wisdom nor material wealth and religious teachings. The play opens with a mood of doom and pessimism which is clearly elaborated in the next episodic scene COBBE PRAYS. Churchill's innovative stagecraft is evident from the fact that the twenty five roles are played by two female and four male actors. In her production note she explains:

> The characters are not played by the same actors each time they appear. The audience should not have to worry exactly which character they are seeing. Each scene can be taken as a separate event rather than part of a story. This seems to reflect better the reality of large events like war and revolution where many people share the same kind of experience. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 184)

This stagecraft is not only an invention but also a means of subverting traditional theatrical conventions as such characterization and refuses linearity of structure. The emphasis is on shared experience and collective consciousness, not individual lives. In appropriating Brechtian episodic scene, it does not allow the audience to be emotionally involved with the play's political argument but helps to objectively understand the plight of those often forgotten in history.

Cobbe's prayer demonstrates the role of religious belief and religious fervency prevalent in the society. As a true Christian repentant sinner he firstly asks God, "Forgive my sins of the night and already this new day. Oh prevent me today from all the sins I will note-action, word, thought or faint motion less than any of these" (Churchill, *Plays: 1* 191). Cobbe being a gentleman of higher class shows hatred for the religious fervency and hypocrisy of his own class. He prays, "let me not go to hell, hot nor cold hell, let me be one of your elect" and he is aware of the oppression meted out by his social class on the lower class, he prays for the beggar who, "swore when they whipped him through the street and my heart leapt at each curse, a curse for each lash. Is he damned?" and asks himself, "would I be damned?" (191) for doing nothing for the beggar. He is also aware of the fact that there are many who are starving while people of the privileged class where he belongs had turned a deaf ear toward the plight of the lower less privilege class. Being aware of the injustice prevalent in his society, Cobbe turns his back on the hypocrisy and greed of his class and supports the plight of the downtrodden and those on the margins of society: the plight of the Diggers. With the Biblical tone and Christian teaching already set by the opening scene, Cobbe's transformation is clearly explained from the vision he has. Having been stripped of all his strength, his house being burned and being forsaken by his parents, while in deep agony:

> (he) heard . . . a most terrible thunderclap . . . I saw a great body of light like the sun, and red as fire, in the form (as it were) of a drum, whereupon with exceeding trembling and amazement on the flesh, and with joy unspeakable in the spirit, I clapped my hands, and cried out, Amen, Halelujah, Halelujah, Amen . . . I (inwardly) cried out, Lord what wilt thou do with me . . . fear not. I will take thee up into my everlasting kingdom . . . And I heard a voice saying, 'Go to London, to London... and tell them that I am coming" (206).

In order for Cobbe to understand the plight of the oppressed he has to stoop down from his class and really live with them. The last command in his vision is in keeping with the belief in the millennial and that Jesus would come and establish heaven on earth.

In another scene, titled, 'STAR RECRUITS', Star a corn merchant seeking personal profit from the war recruits for the Parlaimentarians. The scene is being alienated which truthfully foregrounds the way religious teachings are manipulated for personal gain. The sermon like speech which Star makes is filled with Biblical allusions comparing England to Babylon he said, "Babylon is the kingdom of Antichrist. The kingdom of property. The kingdom of the king. And it must be destroyed" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 195). Here, he clearly manipulates the sentiments of the common people hopes that the war would usher in a more congenial society in which they will have equal rights to property. Star continues to incite hope as "because then will come the kingdom of Jerusalem. And in Jerusalem you will be free. That is why you will join as soldiers. To destroy Antichrist". Using the allegory of Christ's second coming, he compares soldiers to saints, "Christ's saints", he continued, "And who are the saints? You are. The poor people of this country". Here, Star knows clearly the millennial beliefs of the people and also the longing for a better life other than their marginalised state. He further coax them, "But if you join the army you will have everything. You will be as important as anybody in England" (195). Churchill turns this scene into a 'social gest', which Brecht explained that it should be 'relevant to society'.

The scene documents the way the poor are manipulated into joining the army and a futile war. The poverty of the men is manipulated by tempting them with a pay of eight pence a day, better than a pay of a day's labour. It is to these promised conditions that Briggs enlisted. However, in a later scene titled 'BRIGGS RECALLS A BATTLE', the futility of the war and its promises is clearly known. Briggs recalls, "I didn't know which our side was and which was them, but then I saw it didn't matter because what we were fighting was not

each other but Antichrist and even the soldiers on the other side would be made free and be glad when they saw the paradise we'd won" (208). Briggs recollection of the war clearly explains the way the poor and oppressed are manipulated by the few privileged Parliamentarians for their class interest.

The powerful and historically relevant scene 'THE PUTNEY DEBATES'[7] have been re-enacted from original historical records by Churchill though it is a condensed reproduction. It is an event in which representatives of Levellers in the form of Colonel Thomas Rainborough, representatives of common soldiers in the form of Edward Sexby submits demands of equal representation and civil rights to Oliver Cromwell, during three days of debate in 1647. The four demands drawn up, "Agreement of the people" read out by Sexby for they, "have found little fruit" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 209) for their endeavours during the war, are similar to the original, "Levellers' constitution entitled *An Agreement for the people for a firme peace*" (qtd. in Morelli 56) where the first democratic constitution was proposed. The declarations were:

> First: That the people of England being very unequally distributed for the Election of their deputies in parliament ought to be proportioned according to the number of inhabitants.
> Second: That this present parliament be dissolved.
> Third: That the people choose a parliament once in two years.
> Fourth: That the power of representatives of this nation is inferior only to theirs who choose them, and the people make the following reservations:
> First: That matters of religion are not at all entrusted by us to any human power.
> Second: That impressing us to serve in wars is against our freedom.
> Third: That no person be at any time questioned for anything said or done in the late wars. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 209)

General Ireton declares that he does "not know what ground there is of anything [called] a man's right" (211). In arguing for equal vote in elections, Rainborough's reply reveals a common man's wisdom thus:

> For really I think that the poorest he in England hath a life to live as the greatest he; therefore truly sir, I think it's clear, that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under it. (212)

The yearnings for true equality by birthright is seen in Rainborough's appeal to Ireton:

I do not find anything in the law of God that a lord shall choose twenty members, and a gentleman but two, or a poor man shall choose none... But I do find that all Englishmen must be subject to English law, and the foundation of the law lies in the people. (212-213).

Rainborough also questions that should only a rich man be called automatically to the parliament when the time comes and does he have the right to crush a poor man who lives near him. He calls the law which excludes the poor people as "the old law of England- and that which enslaves the people of England-that they should be bound by laws in which they have no voice" (214). It is for the freedom from this law that they have fought for.

From Ireton's reply that, "I cannot consent so far . . . I have a property and this I shall enjoy" (215) it has become quite clear that their battle and debate is futile to which Sexby rightly replied:

> I see that though liberty was our end, there is a degeneration from it . . . If we had not a right to the kingdom, we were mere mercenary soldiers . . . If this thing be denied the poor . . . it will be the greatest scandal. (215-216).

The men have fought not for themselves but to give power to only a few men and only to enslave himself further.

If one reads the demands of the Putney Debates carefully, the foundations of modern Democracy like right to equal representation and right to vote; the government be elected biennially; the people should have certain rights like right to religion; rights against conscription and human rights; these had already been laid down by those thought to be low class, ignorant and pushed to the margins by a few in power. One can decipher the codes of subversive elements already at work within the realms of the social and economic reality that men like Ireton were too blind to see. The four demands read out by Sexby may have resonances of democracy, but if one reads Rainborough arguments, we can read between the lines the making of Socialism, a longing for a social- welfare state, common property where a man has the right to till the soil free from tenancy and earn his living without oppression.

In the Putney Debates one do not see the participation of women nor the voicing of a concern for their welfare even though they are victims of abuse and oppression especially in times of social turmoil. However, Caryl Churchill juxtaposes the battle of men with the part played by women in the war and voices their oppressive experiences. The women, doubly oppressed by sex and class, is depicted in scenes like 'MARGARET BROTHERTON IS TRIED', in which two Justices of Peace, questions and tries Margaret Brotherton a vagrant woman for begging and poverty. She is not given enough time to answer their questions nor opportunity to plead her case. The two officers concludes everything for her, and praising their system of poor relief, orders her:

> 2ND JP: Margaret Brotherton, we find you guilty of vagrancy and sentence you to be stripped to the waist and beaten to the bounds of this parish and returned parish by parish to. . .
>
> 1ST JP: Where she was born. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 94)

The legal system which is supposed to rehabilitate poverty stricken women instead abused her, and her punishment of being stripped is a means to ridicule her sex, a most degrading

form of misogynist oppression. In another scene, 'BROTHERTON MEETS A MAN', as she does not have a place to stay the man invites her, "Come and lie down. Out of the wind. I'll give you half a penny after", Brotherton answers, "No, with ten pence you can get indoors for that" (198). It can be seen that women like her does not have a chance in a society which strips her and beats her for poverty but to expose oneself to alternative ways of survival like prostitution.

Another powerful scene, 'HOSKINS INTERRUPTS THE PREACHER', serves as a powerful social gest. The preacher using a sermon as a means to convince the congregation of their support of the Parliamentarians, gives a sermon very mush reminiscent of Star's previous speech. In his support of the parliamentarians, the preacher uses the metaphor of the few elect, comparing them to saints who will take the kingdom from Charles I rule forever. To this a vagrant woman preacher, Hoskins in her personal interpretation of biblical teachings of the inclusiveness of what Jesus preaches present in the congregation answers "But no one is damned. We can all bind the king" (200).

The preacher continues in a state of ecstatic support for the Parliamentarians that Christ first came to the poor and that he will come again in which, "A noble can be damned and a beggar will be saved". But as Hoskins speaks and interrupts his sermon which did not include women he retorts "Women can't speak in church" and repeats the words of St. Pauls about women considered to be an example of women's oppression during the times in which he wrote. The preacher repeated from the Bible, "I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over a man, but to be in silence" (201). To this Hoskins, rightly replies using a Bible verse from Joel 2:28 thus:

> And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and daughters shall prophecy, and your old men shall dream dreams and

> your young men shall see visions. And also upon all the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. (202)

This the preacher calls "taking the freedom of speech too far", to which Hoskins questions his claim as to why most are damned chosen before birth and the reason why one is damned when one had not done nothing wrong. The preacher's answer to this is that, it is God's free will. Hoskins to further irk the preacher asks,

God's pleasure? That we burn? What sort of God takes pleasure in pain?

> The king thinks most people are bad. He's against the king but he's saying the same. (202)

Hoskins was thrown out of the church and in her disillusionment retorts that in the preacher's kingdom there's going to be a few in bliss and majority in hell. For this the preacher condemns her "Woman you are certainly damned" (202). Here Churchill through Hoskins highlights the hierarchies of power such as class power which is at work within the society. She also questions the oppressive nature of religious dogma which excludes women and the poor alike. By making Hoskins speak in church and interpreting religious teaching from her own reading, Churchill subverts and challenges the hegemony of power which is most of the time thought of as unquestionable. She clearly sees collective emancipation and collective understanding to be the element that may one day free women of their oppression.

Claxton having understood the inequalities that looms large in their society takes Hoskins to their home. In the scene 'CLAXTON BRINGS HOSKINS HOME', Churchill contrasts two different women, Hoskins the vagrant preacher who believes in the equality of women and men with Claxton's wife, a woman who had internalised marginality. Claxton's wife is known only as 'wife' to show her internalised marginality who believes, "But women can't preach. We bear children in pain, that's why. And they die. For our sin, Eve's sin . . . we have to obey. The man, whatever he's like . . . We have blood, we're shameful, our bodies

are worse than a man's. All bodies are evil but ours is worst. That's why we can't speak". To this Hoskins replied, "Well I can" (204) speak in church, the epitome of patriarchal oppression from which she had been thrown. Here, one deciphers a subversive voice which is a decisive element to help bring about emancipation. But this does not deter her in her quest for collective emancipation for she understands that the hierarchy of power which victimises them is not infallible. Through Hoskins' interruption of the church service and Claxton's wife's self-confession Churchill displays a powerful and practical social gest, which alienates the idea of marginality as a product and tool of patriarchal hegemony, and demonstrate the possibility of subversion through collective emancipation.

A powerful social-gest and demonstration of class and gender oppression is the scene, 'TWO WOMEN LOOK IN A MIRROR', where two nameless women have gone into the great house of a landlord who has fled after they have been defeated. They have never been inside the home of the person they may have worked for. They are confounded by what they see, like white linens and wool blankets on which they have never had the privilege of sleeping in. They decide not to burn the corn as it has become theirs now. Their consciousness of their class and oppression perpetuated by a few in power is known from what they decided to do with the legal document that they found. They decide, "We're burning the papers, that's the Norman papers that give him his lands. That's like him burnt. There's no one over us" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 207). They also recognise the inherent hierarchy of power in the long row of family portraits which they decide to pull down as an assurance to the end their oppression. But what confounds them most is the discovery of the full length mirror. The mirror is a signatory piece of the have's and property owners. The difference between the have and have not is clearly demarcated by a simple thing as ownership of a mirror. As the two women look at themselves in the mirror they say in wonder "You see your whole body at once . . . They must know what they look like all the time. And now we do"

(207). The last sentence, 'and now we do' becomes a powerful reverberation of what they have achieved, they have defeated the shackles of oppression and announce themselves equal with whom they thought were their masters and serves as a social gest for the defeat of class oppression. At the same time, by seeing their bodies, they become conscious human beings. They have now seen for themselves not through the eyes of men as sexual objects but through their own eyes and consciousness. The last sentence is also very affirming in the sense which asserts that their feminine consciousness had been awakened.

The scene of the women discovering the mirror can be claimed to be what Elin Diamond calls a 'Gestic Feminist Criticism' which "would 'alienate' or foreground those moments in a playtext in which social attitudes about gender could be made visible... highlight sex-gender configurations" (Diamond 85). Churchill in her appropriation of Brechtian theatre device makes the scene a powerful 'gestus' and puts the subject of women's bodies and emancipation to the forefront of the play which may be related to Elin Diamond's examination that:

> If feminist theory sees the body as culturally mapped and gendered, Brechtian historicization insists that this body is not a fixed essence but a site of struggle and change. If feminist theory is concerned with the multiple and complex signs of a women's life: her colour, her age, her desires, her politics- what I want to call her *historicity*- Brechtian theory gives us a way to put that historicity on view- in the theatre. (Diamond 89)

Churchill links together all the episodic scenes even though it defies traditional linearity. The characters may be played by different actors in every episode but this does not lead to confusion. She works against individualism and the bias to a single story or the writing of individual history and this innovative technique is reminiscent of Brecht's Epic theatre technique which he writes in In *A Short Organum for the Theatre,* 1949 thus:

> . . . the individual episodes have to be knotted together in such a way that the knots are easily noticed. The episodes must not succeed one another

> indistinguishably but must give us a chance to interpose our judgement…The parts of the story have to be carefully set off one against another by giving each its own structure as a play within a play. (qtd. in Morelli 61**)**

Act One of the play is powerful with resonances of the longed for revolution nearly won or partly won, but in Act Two we have a shift in focus which opens with the crops planted on wasteland by the Diggers being destroyed by soldiers, announcement of the war with Ireland, the funeral of Lockyer, a Leveller leader shot by soldiers, a women out of sheer poverty, attempting to leave her baby on the door step of a rich man who will be able to take care of it. The play does not end only with the establishment of parliament but also gives space for the representation of those whose contributions are purposefully neglected in the making of history; those disillusioned individual who resort to alternative ways of living and seek radical religious dogmas. In the second last scene titled 'THE MEETING', where the Ranters come together at a drinking place to share the few ounces of hope they have in what seem like a kind of Holy Communion and a prayer meeting. Despite their anguish and disillusionment on what had fallen on them, their conversation is still filled with hope. Cobbe's mutterings or supposed prayer filled with blasphemous words said out of frustration and anger curses those who hide behind the facade of religious teachings thus:

> Damn. Damn. Damn. Damn. Damn.
> There's angels swear, angels with flowing hair, you'd think they were men, I've seen them. They say damn the churches, the bloody black clergy with their fat guts, damn their white hands. Damn the hellfire presbyterian hypocrites that call a thief a sinner, rot them in hell's jail. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 230)

Cobbe identifies Christ in ordinary people like themselves, and not dismayed by Lockyer's death he calls him, "the mighty Leveller, Christ the chief of the levellers is at the door" (231). As an enactment of equality, they pass an apple which is a creation of God amongst them. This is a re-enactment of the Holy Communion, a practice which symbolises

equality and brotherhood of Christians through Christ. Just as an apple is a representative of God's creation and as God manifests himself in his creation he claims "God's in us. This form that I am is the representative of the whole creation. You are the representative of the whole creation" (232). Here he stresses the all inclusiveness of God's love and the inclusion of the poor and the oppressed in Christ.

The play ends with the singing of a Bible verse from Ecclesiastes chapter 5 :

> If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgement and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for he that is higher than the highest regardeth; and be higher than they.
> He that loveth silver shan't be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity.
> The sleep of the labouring is sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. (239-240)

Churchill inserts the songs in the play not only to innovate or entertain but to bring out more clearly the didactic message of the play. The verse from the book of Ecclesiastes, reminds the audience and readers of the pessimistic and despondent mood which hangs like a mist throughout the play. It follows 'THE MEETING', where we learn that the poor and those in the lower hierarchy of the social class have not been given their rights no matter how they try to console themselves and be optimistic of the future with a belief in the millennial and oneness in Christ. The song throughout reminds the audience not to be surprised if they see the poor being oppressed and justice denied them as this is what had been witnessed by humanity throughout history. The song further reminds us that, the profit of the earth is to be consumed by all as even a king feeds on the labour of his peasants. It may be interpreted that wealth in the form of land or money attracts dependents and there cannot be justice when it comes to the question of property. The verse ends the play with the mood of the impossibility of change and justice achieved.

However, Churchill plants in the play scenes which can be called a prologue, like the singing of Isaiah 24, followed by Cobbe's prayer, and in the middle of the play before the Putney Debate, when there was a possibility of change, Walt Whitman's poem, *Song of the Open Road*, is sung. The play does not end with the bleak and despondent Biblical observation but with characters accepting their fate with the only way they know how, adapting to the system which oppresses them and finding alternative ways of resistance. Hoskins consolation is clear in her belief that, "I think what happened was, Jesus Christ did come and nobody noticed. It was time but we somehow missed it" (240). For Brotherton her only way of survival is stealing food as the social institution which is meant to provide for the destitute to abolish vagrancy is responsible for her public humiliation and physical abuse. The disillusioned Claxton had given up his radical religious zeal and forsaking his beloved England had moved to Barbados. He says pessimistically, "I see it fraught with tidings of the same clamour, strife and contention that abounded when I left it". His only comfort is to benumb himself from the world and his, "desire is to see and say nothing" (241). Churchill succeeded in giving historicity to the plebeians; the religious ecstatic like the Ranters, the Diggers and Levellers in which the cause which had been the element which had made them often a misunderstood leftist lot had been justified. Churchill's Socialism comes through in her representation of the forgotten fight in history.

In making poverty struck women a part of the fight for the revolution in the character of Hoskins and Brotherton Churchill defies traditional roles written of about women. As Sian Adiseshiah observes from a Marxist viewpoint:

> Typically of Churchill, she subverts, the traditional masculinist configuration of class politics generally espoused by mainstream Marxism by foregrounding women as central agents of class struggle. (Adiseshiah 55)

Through the representation of common men and destitute women who are often the victims of wars Churchill has given historicity and voice which thereby contributes to the historiography of women lost in history which Feminist Theatre intents to develop.

In *Vinegar Tom,* Caryl Churchill again appropriates the Brechtian epic theatre device of alienation to foreground the experiences of women in the seventeenth century who were accused of being witches. She expose the social prejudices, web of power hegemony and oppression at various levels working behind these accusations. The play is worth documentation for Feminist Theatre development as it was also written through the innovative and non-traditional process of writing plays through Churchill's collaboration with the Socialist- Feminist Theatre Group- Monstrous Regiment. It was written in 1976, the same year as *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire,* but did not finish it as Churchill left the draft to work with joint Stock for *Light Shining.* On her collaborative venture Churchill describes thus:

> My previous work had been completely solitary- I never discussed my ideas while I was writing or showed anyone anything earlier than a final polished draft. So this was a new way of working, which was one of its attractions . . . I felt briefly shy and daunted, wondering if I would be acceptable, then happy and stimulated by the discovery of shared ideas and the enormous energy and feeling of possibilities in the still new company. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 129)

The two plays discussed in this chapter seem to be closely created and "overlapped both in time and ideas" (Churchill *Plays:1,* 129). This opening of new ideas and possibilities remains the springboard from which Churchill have become an important playwright in the development of Feminist Theatre as an independent, thriving, alternative canon of expression which works against and outside of the oppressive and repressive patriarchal forces within theatrical traditions and the outside social world at large. For her, as already mentioned she is

not interested in a Feminism that did not include Socialism. On account of this, even *Vinegar Tom*, is a play:

> . . . about witches with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice, and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 130)

So, for Churchill class and gender oppression, poverty and how women become the victims of society's prejudice is central to her dramaturgy. She writes of her conception of the idea that:

> I rapidly left aside the interesting theory that witchcraft existed as a survival of suppressed pre-Christian religions and went instead for the theory that witchcraft existed in the minds of its persecutors, that 'witches' were a scapegoat in times of stress like Blacks and Jews. I discovered for the first time the extent of the Christian teaching against women and saw the connections between medieval attitudes to witches and continuing attitudes to women in general. (129)

Churchill researched on the subject of the play; she had read *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*, 1973, by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English and the detailed accounts of the witch trials in Essex like *Witchcraft in Tudor and Stuart England*, 1970, by Macfarlane (130) that she had read. She writes of her findings thus:

> The women accused of witchcraft were often those on the edge of society, old, poor, single, sexually unconventional; the old herbal medical tradition of the cunning woman was suppressed by the rising professionalism of the male doctor . . . One of the things that struck me . . . was how petty and everyday the witches' offences were. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 129-130)

The play also makes several references to the book also known as the witch hunt bible, *The Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of the Witches*, written in 1484, by two Reverends, Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. The play is not based on any particular historical events but loosely set in the seventeenth century, "because it was the time of the last major English witch hunts, and partly because the social upheavals, class changes, rising professionalism and great hardship among the poor were the context of the kind of witchhunt" (Churchill *Plays:1,* 130). The impetus of the play was an interest in the unreasonable prejudices behind the witch hunts. The title of the play as explained by Churchill in the programme note to the production of the play at Questors Theatre on 1 March, 1987 is that, "Vinegar Tom is the name of a cat- like beast depicted on a seventeenth century engraving along with Matthew Hopkins, the famous . . . witch finder. The head resembles a bull's (with horns), the body is elongated like a greyhound's and the tail is thin and extremely long" (Fitzsimmons 35).

In *Vinegar Tom* like *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire,* also includes songs which are contemporary, sung by actors in modern dress which serves as a contrast to the distantness of the subject dealt with. Even Kramer and Sprenger are played by women dressed as Edwardian music hall gents in top hats and tails. The modernity of the songs in contrasts to the other part of the play serves as another theatrical innovation which can also be a social gest, making the audience aware of the contemporaneousness of the subject of witch hunting and the socio-political elements which surrounds it, though it may be in a different form in contemporary society.

Churchill's use and appropriation of Brechtian epic theatre devices in *Vinegar Tom*, is toned down as compared to *Light Shining*, however the scenes of the play are episodic punctuated by the incorporation of the songs. The women characters fill the central subject of the play. Staying true to her socialist-feminist stance, Churchill does not make privileged

women the core of her dramaturgy. In order to make the play a revelation of the patriarchal society's prejudices and repressive activities against women, Churchill's episodic scenes serve as a social gest. The first scene is an alienation of the life of a woman named Alice, a single mother, living in poverty with her haggard mother. She is looked upon with contempt and suspicion by her society as she is an unwed mother. The objectification of her sexuality is an attraction as well as threat to the males in her immediate surroundings. In the first scene we have her meeting and sleeping with an unknown man who is addressed as a 'Gentleman' on a roadside in the hope that he would marry her and her reputation as a wanton woman and society's prejudices against her would be redeemed. But the instance she asks him to take her with him, the man retorts:

> MAN: Take you with me?
> ALICE: Please, I'd be no trouble . . .
> MAN: A whore? Take a whore with me?
> ALICE: I'm not that.
> MAN: What are you then? What name would you put yourself?
> You're not a wife or a widow. You're not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you are. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 137)

Not satisfied with the verbal abuse he pushes her and Alice falls on the roadside. In the above accusation the patriarchal stereotyping of women is clearly defined. The notion that women should be either virgins or married to have children; a fallen woman or a prostitute where there cannot be an alternative identity other than that prescribed and deemed acceptable by patriarchal society is depicted in the above scene. But Alice knowing and hoping that there is a possibility of an alternative identity defies such identification as she retorts back, "Go to hell then, go to the devil, you devil" (137). Here, she clearly understands the objectification of her body which had been taken advantage of for pleasure and tries her best in the only way she knows, of how to come out of her marginality which is through marriage. But the man who being dictated by the patriarchal codes of virginal women as an ideal wife accepts what

Alice is anointed to be by society, while at the same time takes advantage of the same situation for personal enjoyment. So, Alice becomes a, "damned strumpet, succubus, witch!" (137).

The songs in the play, which are inserted between scenes, are contemporary, and as Churchill writes in the production note "should if possible be sung by actors in modern dress. They are not part of the action and not sung by the characters in the scenes before them" (133). The first song 'Nobody Sings' inserted between scene three and four, talks about the female menstruating body and the cycle of the body which everyone takes for granted, not given credit for the role it plays in reproduction. The song goes:

> Do you want your skin to wrinkle
> And your cunt get sore and dry?
> And they say it's just your hormones
> . . .
> Nobody ever saw me,
> She whispered in a rage.
> They were blinded by my beauty, now
> They're blinded by my age.
> Oh nobody sings about it,
> But it happens all the time. (142)

The song brings to the forefront the fact that, women are nobody when they are young, but only mere objects like Alice and still nobody in old age, as their body is no longer useful, and becomes invisible like Joan, who in scene three asks her daughter Alice, "Where will I go? Who wants an old woman" and thinking of her helplessness as a poor old woman, cries, "If we'd each got a man we'd be better off". Here, Joan is putting into words her internalised sense of marginality and exercises her thought unconsciously within patriarchal binaries. But, Alice subverts the situation by reminding her mother, "You weren't better off, mum . . . think of how he used to beat you" (141). Churchill brings from the margin to the centre the issue of

the female body and makes it a social gest by alienating the song from the dramatic action which makes it relevant beyond the constraints of representation into lived reality. Elaine Aston explains Churchill's motive:

> Making the absent body of menstruating and ageing woman present is the way of showing the threat which women pose to the symbolic (i.e. the dominant order); a way of 'showing the cracks in an overall system'. (Aston, *Caryl* 27)

The song juxtaposed with scene four, also makes significant similarities between the two women mentioned who are husbandless, and the married Margery, the farmer Jack's wife. The scene is an alienation of Margery churning butter which won't come. The butter not churning, with Margery's repeated chanting, "Come butter, come butter come. Johnny's standing at the gate waiting for a butter cake" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 143) is symbolic of Margery's sexual frustration as her husband imagines himself emasculated which he blames on Alice whom he desires sexually, as she is young and active, ignoring his wife whose body has also become old and deformed.

Churchill brilliantly appropriates the alienation technique in Scene Six of the play in which Betty, the landowner's daughter is tied to a chair to be bled by a doctor so as to purge her of hysteria which is believed to be the cause of her refusal for marriage. In scene two, Betty had told Margery that she had been locked up as she refused to consent into marriage. Being a landowner's daughter and having class privilege her refusal is translated as a sickness not a rebellion which it rightly is. If it had fallen on an economically downtrodden woman like Alice, it would have been regarded as a rebellion. Her class would not have a rebellious woman, so the doctor is deployed to cure her of her sickness which is hysteria. Betty being tied to a chair asks, "Why am I tied? Tied to be bled. Why am I bled? Because I was screaming? Because I'm bad. Why was I bad? Because I was happy" (149). In order to

explain Betty's so called sickness because she had chosen to exercise her freewill, the doctor gives an explanation:

> Hysteria is a woman's weakness. Hysteron, Greek, the wombExcessive blood causes an imbalance in the humours. The noxious gases that form inwardly every month rise to the brain and cause behaviour quite contrary to the patient's real feelings. After bleeding you must be purged. Tonight you must be blistered. You will soon be well enough to be married.
> (Churchill, *Plays:1* 149)

The class in which Betty belongs, dictated by patriarchal norms, decided that in order to maintain the status quo it must quell any instances of rebellious activity through blaming the cause of the rebellion to have emanated from within the rebelling person. In the case of Betty, who represents all women of her class, the blame is on her hysteria, which every woman possesses, which must be kept abate in order to be a normal person within patriarchal norms. Michel Foucault in *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1,* 1976, challenges the notion of power as being something that a group of people or an institution possesses and controversially moves beyond the oppression of the powerless by the powerful. Apart from this controversy, power play is most evident in the repression of sexuality and also in the promotion of compulsory heterosexuality. Foucault points out that the word "Repression" (Foucault 81) entail the idea of a rebellious force that has to be kept in check at all times. Foucault argues out of the attempts to reduce sex to only its reproductive function, mechanisms of knowledge and power on sex were formed which brought about:

> *A hysterization of women's bodies*: a threefold process whereby the feminine body was analyzed—qualified and disqualified—as being thoroughly saturated with sexuality; whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices . . . whereby, finally, it was placed in organic communication with the social body . . . the family space . . . and the life of children . . . the Mother, with her negative image of

> "nervous woman", constituted the most visible of this hysterization. (Foucault 104).

In *Vinegar Tom,* through Churchill's alienation of Scene Six in which Betty is bled, one can understand the juridical and political tendencies behind such act of cruelty towards women. Betty is being bled so that she would consent to marriage, fulfil her duties of reproduction, which would automatically ensure the future survival of her class and maintain patriarchal hegemony. Here, Churchill does point to the discriminating treatment of the female body, and also to the source of power as Patriarchy.

The song 'Oh Doctor' inserted before and after scene six, voices the plight of the disempowered a woman, who is treated for her unknown sickness on patriarchal terms. For Betty her sickness is what patriarchy names it to be, i.e. hysteria. The song asks:

> Oh, doctor, tell
> Me, make me well.
> . . .
> I maybe sick
> I maybe bad
> Please cure me quick,
> Oh doctor. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 149)

After Betty is bled the song continues, it seems to be voicing Betty's inner confusion, which represents women's confusion about their body being examined on patriarchal terms.

The song in the first verse asks:

> Where are you taking my skin?
> . . .
> Why are you putting my brain in my cunt?
> You're putting me back all back to front. (150)

In the third verse it reiterates the same issue:

> Who are you giving my womb?

> Who are you showing my breath?
> ...
> Why can't I see what you're taking out?

It alienates the fact that women's bodies are often experimented with, disrespected and misused. Elaine Aston justifies that:

> The lyrics of 'Oh Doctor' are voiced by a woman, positioned as the disempowered patient, who pleads to know what is wrong with her; asks to have her body put back together again and be allowed a sense of herself. (Aston, *Caryl* 28).

In rebellion of the objectification of the female body, the song demands in verse two and four:

> Stop looking at me with your metal eye.
> Stop cutting me apart before I die
> . . .
> Put back my body. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 150)

The song critiques "the mechanistic male medicine" which denies women ownership of their bodies and represents it as "holes" not as "wholes" (Aston, *Caryl* 28). The 'metal eye' is the name for the instrument which doctors use for female vaginal examinations in order to uncover what lies inside the women's body which causes hysteria and other sickness. It is also a metaphor for the male gaze under patriarchy in which women's bodies are looked upon as a mysterious centre of both pleasure and sin. Elaine Aston explains that it is, "the specular gaze of phallocentric desire, in which woman is represented as the marginalized Other" (Aston, *Caryl* 28). At the same time the 'metal eye' may be linked to Luce Irigaray's use of 'Speculum' in her work, *Speculum of the Other Woman, 1974*, in which she appropriates the instrument used by doctors to look into female bodily cavities in her deconstruction of phallocentric thought from Plato to Freud. Its original meaning in Latin

refers to a mirror which Irigaray connects to the speculum which is primarily a concave mirror used by gynaecologists to look into the womb. Toril Moi, in her book, *Sexual/ Textual Politics,* 1985, quotes and explains Irigaray's theory on the speculum in the chapter, "Patriarchal Reflections" as "to make this point Irigaray quotes Plato, who writes of the concave mirror: 'Turned horizontally in relation to the face, this concavity will make it seem as if it was turned upside- down" . The concave mirror is also, "a lens that can concentrate light-rays so as to 'shed light on the secret of caves' and to pierce the mystery of the woman's sex'" (Moi 130). Just as the concave mirror in the speculum will reflect the objects or even the mystery of a woman's womb by virtue of objectified reflection or imitation, turning it upside-down, Irigaray appropriates it by using the same instrument, to question back the silent bodies to women which is used for the establishment of phallocentric thought.

Churchill, through the use of the song lays bare the insensitivity by which women's sickness' are treated during the seventeenth century and draws a parallel with contemporary medical treatment with the modern song. It also serves as a subversive purpose, in highlighting that the treatment of women have not changed. However, like Irigaray's appropriation of the speculum for deconstruction of pallocentrism, Churchill uses the song to form a critical and ideological questioning of the issue of the female body, putting it in the forefront of women's identity based on women's identification of themselves, not on patriarchal terms. Hence, the singer sings subverting the preconceived views on the subject of women's bodies in the last verse thus:

> I want to see myself
> I want to see inside myself
> . . .
> I'll put my heart in straight
> Give me back my body
> I can see myself. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 151)

The verse glorifies women's body from a woman's point of view and demands women's right to one's body.

Churchill in bringing to the forefront the issue of the social control of women's body, weaves within it the role that one's class plays at the level of marginalization. Betty's rebellion is blamed for her sickness as the economic privilege of her father's money saves her from being victimised by social norms while, Alice and Joan falls victims to their neighbour Jack and Margery's displacement of the frustration within their marriage and occupation on them. As already mentioned, Jack being sexually attracted to Alice imagines himself impotent, he tells Alice "I'm no good to my wife. I can't do it . . . It's only when I dream of you or like now talking to you . . ." (Churchill, *Plays:1* 147) Alice ignores him which leaves him with vehemence. Margery's unwillingness to accept her husband's adulterous thought and denial of fact that she is no longer attractive for her husband looks for a scapegoat, and finds it in their nearest inferiors i.e. Alice and Joan. They convince themselves, "Then it's not my sins. Good folk get bewitched" (153), in an attempt to justify their predicament brought about their own actions. In scene four, Margery had refused to give yeast to Joan calling her a "dirty old woman" for which Joan angrily replied, "Damn your butter to hell" and "Devil take you and your man and your fields and your cows. . ." (144). Joan simply retorts back because of the fact that Margery who has plenty of yeast to spare refuses to help a needy neighbour. As Margery and Jack have economic sustenance and are aware of their superior social status, they feel they have the power to label Joan as, "The witch", simply because, "She cursed the butter to hell" (153).

The scapegoating of women as witches does not stop with Joan. In Scene Thirteen, Jack forces Alice to restore his imagined impotency for which he blames Alice who is supposed to have bewitched him. Alice simply answered truthfully, "How can I?" after which Jack strangles her. Here, Alice has no choice but to submit to Jack's horrendous imagination

to save herself. So, "Alice *puts her hand between his thighs"* and says, "There. It is back". On this Jack convincing himself of his imagination replies, "Thank you, Alice. I wasn't sure you were a witch till then" (164), which she forgivingly passes off to be an act of madness. However, ironically in the scene which follows, on account of Jack and Margery's complaint against Joan and Alice, they are captured by the witch finder, Henry Packer who claims that, "God in his mercy has called me and shown me a wonderful way of finding out witches, which is finding the place on the body of the witch, made insensitive to pain by the devil" (165). Following this method, the two women's skirts are pulled up and their legs pricked, while Joan screams and curses them. Claiming to have found the spot, he retorts, "How she cries the old liar, pretending it hurts her". For Alice, in her attempt to defy the cruel accusations, she refrains from crying, as Packer pricks her, blood streams from her legs, for which he claims that "the devil's cunning here" (166), and asks for more accusations on her for which Susan having misunderstood what Alice did for Jack, in confusion claims to know something against her.

Susan is representative of the reproductive woman, who is pregnant one after another. She feels her continuous three pregnancies and several miscarriages, with child care has become a burden for her, and being afraid that she has conceived again before her child is a year old, she is confused and at the same time angry of her helpless situation. As there was no means of contraception during the seventeenth century, women like Susan were left with no choice but to accept the patriarchal explanation about women's predicament which is as Susan herself reiterates, "They do say the pain is what's sent to a woman for her sins" (146). Here, Alice has advised Susan to go to the herbal medicine woman Ellen who may give her some herbs to help her. In scene eight she goes to Ellen who clearly tells Susan that she will help her only if she is clear about her want, for which Susan replies that she wants to be free of pain during childbirth, to which, Ellen wisely accepts to go as a midwife. Susan finally

confesses on Alice's intervention that "I want to be rid of it, but not do anything to be rid of it" (155). She goes home taking with her herbal potion. Here, the class difference is known as Betty is treated by a respectable and acceptable 'doctor', the two women have no other option but to go to Ellen who helps them free of cost and without any ulterior motives or judgement, which the male doctor would have had on their problems. It would have been considered blasphemous by a male doctor for a woman to want contraception.

Churchill, makes the subject of conception and childbirth which is hardly acknowledged and given credit in history, the centre of dramatic action. She also clearly highlights women's helplessness under patriarchal hegemony which discredits the very means of its survival, i.e. the procreation of its kind as a result of sin, and condemns it as something which does not include men.

The web that patriarchal hegemony weaves does not only work through its state apparatuses but also attempts to countermand the knowledge that women as a community have on issues such as childbirth, childcare, midwifery and even the knowledge of herbal medicines. Women being the sole nurturer of the family, have for centuries through experience passed on the knowledge of medicinal properties in plants, which were often used for various illnesses successfully. As time went on to counter the development of women as healers, the medical practice developed for which its practitioners were mostly male. In their book *Witches, Midwives and Nurses*, 1973, Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, notes that the women healers like Ellen were the first apply empirical methods on their practice. They argue:

> The witch-healer's methods were as great a threat (to the Catholic Church, if not the Protestant) as her results, for the witch was one of the first empiricists: She relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine she believed in trial and error, cause and effect. Her attitude was not religiously passive, but actively inquiring. She trusted her ability to find ways to deal with diseases.

> Pregnancy and childbirth - whether through medication or charms. In short, her magic was the science of her time. (qtd. in Morelli 92)

This is reflected in Ellen who is labelled, 'cunning woman' but it is not cunningness that she applies in her practice but reason and rationality which is evident when, Jack consulted her for his imagined impotency. He goes to her in a state of frenzy but Ellen wisely treats him with reason as she sees that it is his blind passion that had made him imagine his impotency. She simply tells him, "You'd better go and ask her nicely for it" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 158). Churchill reverses patriarchal binaries here, just as women are accepted to be governed with hysteria and blinding emotions, it is Jack who is overtaken by his blind passion which made him turn to the very thing which he condemns, i.e. witchcraft. This reversal of binaries is clearly shown in the witch hunters themselves. Henry Packer, the witch hunter explains,

> These cunning women are worst of all. Everyone hates witches who do harm but good witches they go to for help and come into the devil's power without knowing it . . . Yes, all witches deserve death and the good witch even more than the bad one. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 167)

The good witches deserve death in helping people who are pushed to the margins and who are not included in the exclusivity of patriarchal medicine. On account of class and economic subjugation, they pose a threat to patriarchal teaching and hierarchy. Here, Churchill subverts patriarchal hegemony by drawing one's attention to the double standard through which such marginalization takes place.

Ellen clearly sees this, which she reiterates to Betty who had come to her to help solve her dilemma. Ellen knowing that Betty is governed unconsciously by patriarchal hegemony, no matter how she denies it tells her:

> Your best chance of being left alone is marry a rich man, because it's part of

> his honour to have a wife who does nothing . . .
>
> That's the best you can do. What would you rather? Marry a poor man and work all day? Or go on as you're going, go on strange? That's not safe. Plenty of girls feel like you've been feeling, just for a bit. But you're not one to go on with it. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 169)

Ellen here reminds Betty of her class privileges from which she knows she will never want to escape. To this Betty also replies, "If it's true there's witches, maybe I've been bewitched. If the witches are stopped maybe I'll get well" (169). Betty here reiterates the same motive of people like Jack who looks for scapegoats for their personal inadequacies. So, the women on the margins become witches.

Ellen foreseeing what will happen and understanding the pre-determination of her fate under patriarchy, searches for a solution to her situation. She muses upon the practice of submerging women in water by which it is believed that a witch cannot be drowned. Ellen muses upon her predicament thus:

> I could ask to be swum. They think the water won't keep a witch in . . . if a woman floats she's a witch. And if she sinks they have to let her go . . . It's how to sink without drowning . . . No, why should I ask to be half drowned? I've done nothing . I'll explain to them what I do. It's healing, not harm. There's no devil in it. If I keep calm and explain it, they can't hurt me. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 169-170)

This is Ellen's last monologue. Within patriarchy there is no room for explanation, of reasoning; for one to be outside and against the norms of the hegemony is to be condemned. This draws similarities in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* when Margaret Brotherton given no opportunity to voice her innocence is stripped to the waist and beaten by the so called 'Justices of Peace'. Betty is saved from condemnation by her class privilege even though she

had gone to Ellen to whom she says, “even though some know I come to see you” (169), who has help in reminding her what her class thought to be rational thinking, while Susan is condemned on account of her action that she, “went to this good witch, and you destroyed the child in your womb by witchcraft”. Even though she voices her regret and grieves “I never meant to harm her”, she is condemned nevertheless for, “That’s two of your children you killed . . . We’ll prick you as you prick your babies” (167). Here, again we see the double standard at work.

In order to make this double standard standout, Churchill inserted the song ‘If you Float’ after Scene Sixteen which clearly highlights through an alienation of the song, the no-win situation of women under patriarchal power. The song clearly serves as a social gest in awakening its audience and readers from complacency into action. The song repeats what Ellen’s rational thinking had already taught her:

> If you float you’re a witch
> If you scream you’re a witch
> If you sink, then you’re dead anyway.
> If you cure you’re a witch
> . . .
> Whatever you do, you must pay.
> . . .
> You may be a mother, a child or a whore.
> If you complain you’re a witch
> Or you’re lame you’re a witch. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 170)

The above lines recaptures Ellen’s final monologue. It depicts through song, the helpless predicament of women under patriarchy, especially women who have the qualities of strength and talent- who want to pursue their talent, women who choose to differ and express free-will. There is no way out of the intricate web that Patriarchy weaves to maintain its status quo.

Churchill also chooses to differ with the norms of traditional theatre through the insertion of her songs. She had received criticism for it. David Zane Mairowitz may not have been harsh in his criticism in 1977, with his critique:

> But the playtext is not strong enough to withstand the breaking of its rhythm and antagonism of the musical interludes. (Fitzsimmons 33).

Similarly, a contemporary woman playwright and critic Michelene Wandor also commented that, as the integration of several art forms in one production is often difficult, perhaps one need to analyse and study more carefully, rather than a straightforward presentation or play (Aston, *Caryl* 26). However, keeping to her socialist and feminist agenda, while at the same time blending it with Monstrous Regiment's agenda for activism and change, Churchill chose to make the brave transition. Gillian Hanna, co-founder of Monstrous Regiment explains:

> The form of *Vinegar Tom* was extremely bizarre. You had a series of quite naturalistic scenes punctuated by very modern songs in modern dress . . .
> If you took out the music you would have something akin to a traditional play.
> but we knew that we had to have the music to smash that regular
> and acceptable theatrical form. (Fitzsimmons 34)

The song also foretells of the bodily manipulation that the women will face in the hands of the witch hunter and his assistant Goody, in order to proove the women of being witches. This manipulation takes account of marks and scars in the body which they claim to be a sign of being a witch. In scene eighteen, Susan's underarm is shaved and Goody finding no marks, searches her private parts and claims that Susan has:

> . . . three bigs in her privates almost an inch long like great teats where the devil sucks her and a bloody place on her side where she can't deny she cut a off lump herself so I wouldn't find it.

To this Packer, proclaims:

> Though a mark is a sure sign of witch's guilt having no mark is no sign of innocence for the devil can take marks off. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 173)

The above line clearly illustrates the double standard by which women are condemned to nothing and tells of the bottomless pit in which women float,

> They're coming to get you, do you know what for?
> . . .
> If you're making a spell
> Do it well
> Deny it you're bad
> Admit it you're mad
> Say nothing at all
> They'll damn you to hell. (170)

As the women realises that they have no way out, Joan decides that she would make them believe what they want to believe, mark or no mark she still is a witch. Having understood the forces of patriarchal power which has made her unimportant as a woman and also of her old age, she would rather die having the full attention of her accusers than die of poverty. So, Joan ignites their passionate crusade by telling them:

> I been a witch these ten years . . .
> My little imps are like moles with four feet but no tails and a black colour.
> Jack is lucky I didn't bewitch him to death . . . But I killed their cows like I killed ten cows last year. And the great storm and the tempest comes when I call it and strikes down trees. But now I'm in prison my power's all gone or I'd call down thunder and twist your guts. (173-174)

Staying true to her Socialist stance Churchill shows even from the above analysed song and scene, how oppression of the 'Other' is brought about and how through the mechanism of

'repression', the so called 'marginalised group' emerges, which helps maintains patriarchal, class and sexual hegemony.

The marginalisation of oppressed groups is elaborated from history and lived experiences by Churchill through the alienation of the song 'Something to Burn', inserted after Scene Seven, the scene in which Jack and Margery makes up evidences that Joan had truly cursed them. The song bravely announces in verse one:

> What can we do, there's nothing to do,
> about sickness and hunger and dying.
> . . .
> Find something to burn

In the second verse, the song blatantly evoke the images of those who are mostly oppressed:

> Sometimes it's witches, or what will you choose?
> Sometimes it's lunatics, shut them away.
> It's Blacks and it's women and often it's Jews.
> We'd be quite happy if they'd go away.
> Find something to burn. (154)

Churchill here locates oppression not only on women but also on other oppressed groups, like Jews, Blacks and even lunatics. It also highlights the similarity of how such oppressions are brought about under patriarchal hegemony and links misogynist oppression to the holocaust and slavery faced by Jews and Blacks.

The song also articulates succinctly how those with power displaces their frustrations on subjects or objects which they know are not in a position to fight back. This is evident in the way Jack displaces his marital sexual frustration on Alice, who he knows does not have the capacity to fight back, as a woman living outside the so called norms of patriarchy; even if she chooses to fight nobody would have believed her. Churchill also reverses this oppression when Alice, looking at her mother's and Ellen's body being hanged, instead of

succumbing to what patriarchy expects of her i.e. to live in a state of internalised oppression, she goes on fighting. She says bravely subverting the power which oppresses her:

> I'm not a witch. But I wish I was. If I could live I'd be a witch now after what they've done. I'd make wax men and melt them on slow fire...
> I should have learnt. Oh if I could meet with the devil now I'd give him anything if he'd give me power. There's no way for us except by the devil.
> If I only did have magic, I'd make them feel it. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 175)

Churchill here links how oppression have often been brought about behind the facade of religious authority. Here, one sees similarities with the way Hoskins was thrown out of church based on a one- sided interpretation of biblical teaching in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* on account of the assertion her voice. Alice's wish for the devil is not contemptuous because of the fact that, the 'them' that had tortured her and hanged her mother, has done it claiming 'God's name'. Henry Packer claims that God has shown him a special way of finding out witches. Alice cannot seek help from the same 'god' who had tortured them. Her only option is to wish for the binary opposite to help her fight back, use the very thing that they have condemned as a weapon.

Churchill purposefully inserts the song 'Lament for the Witches' after the above mentioned Scene Twenty in order to relate the sufferings of the women in the seventeenth century to the modern day women. The song asks thus:

> Where have the witches gone?
>
> Who are the witches now?

The singers in modern dress answers:

> Here we are.

Their reply is a representation of the voices of the modern women in the audience and its modern day readers of the play. The song further questions the condition of modern day women as:

> Look in the mirror tonight.
> Would they have hanged you then?
> Ask how they're stopping you now.
> Where have the witches gone?
> Who are the witches now?

To the question of who the present day witches are, the answer is again,

> Here we are. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 176)

Here, it is crucial to recognize that Churchill draws a parallel between the condition under which the women in the seventeenth were accused of and persecuted as witches and the misogynist/patriarchal mechanisms at work which still oppresses women in contemporary society even though accusations of witchcraft is seldom used. Elaine Aston writes of the song as:

> 'Lament for the witches' asks us to think about who are the witches now, and to what extent we may also be persecuted and scapegoated. (Aston, *Caryl* 29)

The song serves as a reminder of the continuity of the scapegoating and oppression of women and other oppressed groups as the song 'Something to Burn' reflects. It also asks modern women if they would have been hanged if they were to live during the seventeenth century for the small things they take for granted. It also asks them to re-examine the patriarchal mechanisms which may covertly undermine their freedom.

In scene twenty one of *Vinegar Tom,* Churchill makes alive in a music- hall routine, the characters of Sprenger and Kramer, the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of the Witches*. They are introduced as "Professors of Theology" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 176). They ask "Why is a greater number of witches found in the fragile feminine sex than in men?" To

which the answer according to the book of Ecclesiastes in the Bible is, "All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman" (177). The answer for women's wickedness is given by them that "woman is more credulous", "more impressionable", "woman have slippery tongues", and women are, "more carnal than a man" as she "was formed from a bent rib" she becomes an "imperfect animal", hence this explains her, "a defect of intelligence" and "defect of inordinate passions", so, " it is no wonder they are witches" and "all witchcraft comes from carnal lust" (177-178). Churchill alienates this scene in order to show the insensibility under which women were accused as witches and draws a similarity it to the lived circumstances of contemporary women. Here, Churchill traverses on the ground thought to be wholly patriarchal- the issue of objectification of women and she dramatizes the patriarchal notions of women through parody and thereby, subverting patriarchal hegemony and appropriating it for feminist agenda. This is reminiscent of Michel Foucault's concept of power in *The History of Sexuality, Vol I*, he argues:

> Where there is power there is resistance . . . (Foucault 95)

Foucault questions the nature of power wherein it is often accepted that there is no escape from it, in which one is always inside power. Sara Mills explains Foucault's concept of power thus:

> Power is often conceptualised as the capacity of powerful agents to realise their will over the will of the powerless people . . . Foucault focuses on the power beyond repression . . . (Mills 34)

Sara Mills further elucidates that "unlike many earlier Marxist theorists, [Foucault] is less concerned with focussing on oppression, but rather in foregrounding resistance to power" (34). Foucault explains the vulnerability of the existence of power that, power depends on "its points of resistance, which are everywhere in the power network". He further writes of resistance as:

> the odd term in the relations of power . . . the points, the knots or focuses of resistance are spread overtime and space at varying densities . . . and it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance which makes a revolution possible. (Foucault 95)

It is the 'points' and 'knot' within traditional theatre and phallocentric thought that Churchill highlights and makes it the point from where she formulates a resistance to oppressive elements within theatrical space and the society, through theatrical representation.

In order to reverse the status quo of patriarchal traditional theatre practice, Churchill uses the technique of cross- casting and double casting of actors in her enactment of Sprenger and Kramer, for which in the production note she instructed, "Kramer and Sprenger should be played by women . . . They played them as Edwardian music hall gents in top hats and tails" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 134). Churchill, with her improvised use of double casting and cross-casting and through the parody of a music hall routine, satirises the notion of religious and moral truth behind the witch hunts. With women actors parodying Sprenger and Kramer, Churchill also lays bare through the alienation of the scene, the misogynist values and thinking intrinsic to such witch hunts, and thus makes it a social gest. As the song 'Lament for the Witches' asks, 'Who are the witches now?', Churchill concludes the play with a song that subverts the misogynist and phallocentric thinking that made the witch hunts possible and a thinking which still victimises contemporary women. The song 'Evil Women' subverts the very idea the women are 'carnal creatures' from which all 'evil arises' which makes them susceptible 'to evil and witchcraft'. The song subverts this misogynist thinking by projecting that this evilness is a male construct by which their inadequacies are displaced on women, denying the fact that even men are imperfect creatures. The song talks about the male construction of female sexuality thus:

> Evil women

Is that what you want?
Is that what you want to see?
On the movie screen
Of your wet dream
Evil women (Churchill, *Plays:1* 178)

The song also depicts the way women become victims of male desires and frustrations, and of how when this frustrations are not met, how women become scapegoats. The song asks:

Did you learn you were dirty boys, did you learn
Women are wicked to make you burn? (179)

Just as Alice turned to an antithetical power after her mother was hanged, in order to make lay bare the misogynist agenda behind the victimization of women, Churchill ends the song with the women screaming:

Evil women
Is that what you want ?
. . .
In your movie dream
Do they scream and scream? (179)

Churchill, here draws another parallel between the seventeenth century projection of women as witches and the twentieth century's objectification of women's sexuality through the media and their entrapment in such representations. As the song and the play ends with the women screaming, Churchill conveys the fact the she is unsure of the improvement of the status of women, and questioning the difference between the seventeenth and twentieth century with even contemporary times. This will be seen even in her other plays which will be dealt with in other chapters of the thesis.

Churchill may have borrowed from male predecessors like Bertolt Brecht on the theoretical aspects of her theatre however, through her own improvisations and willingness to

experiment with new ideas and forms she had formulated and practiced her own theories and techniques of theatrical representations.

Churchill has shifted the boundaries of traditional theatre; as a matter of fact, she has unfixed the boundaries politically, artistically and even historically. Elaine Aston writes of this:

> The challenge to form, the 'unfixing' of boundaries, are now widely recognized strategies of feminist theatre which explore the liminal in the interests of challenging the sign of Women. (Aston, *Caryl* 27)

Of the incorporation of songs Aston observes:

> the songs are a critical and crucial key to the formal and ideological work of the play. (27)

In continuation of the above quoted statement it may be rightly said that, Churchill has indeed played a major role in the development of a Feminist Theatre that addresses the misogynist and patriarchal biases inherent within theatre politics and academics. Churchill through her theatre brings about awareness and activism of such issues and makes resistance to oppressive powers a possibility of freedom.

END NOTES

[1] Feminist and writer Carol Hanisch's essay titled "The Personal is Political" appeared in the anthology *Notes From the Second Year: Women's Liberation* in 1970. She is therefore often credited with creating the phrase. However, she wrote in an introduction to the 2006 republication of the essay that she did not come up with the title. She believed "The Personal Is Political" was selected by the editors of the anthology, Shulamith Firestone and Anne Koedt, who were both feminists involved with the group New York Radical Feminists. Some feminist scholars have noted that by the time the anthology was published in 1970, "the personal is political" had already become a widely used part of the women's movement and was not a quote attributable to any one person. One may refer to, http://womenshistory.about.com/od/feminism/a/consciousness_raising.htm. In stressing the importance of the political nature of Feminism in the Second Wave Feminism, 'the personal is political' became a slogan of "encouraging women to think that the experience of discrimination, exploitation or oppression automatically correspond with an understanding of the ideological and institutional apparatus shaping one's social status" (hooks 26). One may refer to, hooks, bell. *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*. London: Pluto Press. 2000. Print.

[2]As Churchill explained her political stance in her interview with Rachel Keonig and Kathleen Betsko. Refer to, Betsko, Kathleen, Rachel Koenig and Emily Mann. "Interview with Caryl Churchill". Comp. Lee. A. Jacobus. *Introduction to Drama: A Bedford Book.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 1989. 1078-1081. Print.

[3]The English Civil War was fought between 1642-1651.It was a fought between the Parliamentarians (Roundheads) and the Royalist (Cavaliers). The Civil War ended in 1651 with the victory of the Parliament at the Battle of Worcester. It led to the execution of King

Charles II and the establishment of Commonwealth of England, replacing the English Monarchy between 1649-53, which was again replaced by the Protectorate, under the leadership of Oliver Cromwell in 1953.

[4]The term Leveller was used in the seventeenth century to refer to rural rebels in England. In the play it is used to identify a political movement during the English Civil War, based on equality before the law, religious tolerance and suffrage. These are expressed in their manifesto 'Agreement of the People' which is also enacted in the play.

[5]Diggers were a group of Agrarian Communists, led by Gerrard Winstanley. He published a pamphlet or *The True Leveller Standard*, in which he believed in the reasonable levelling of land or establishment of egalitarian rural communities. Putting their idea to practice they cultivated common land for which they were called 'Diggers'. Winstanley's ideas and believes are re-enacted in the play.

[6]Ranters were a religious sect during the English commonwealth thought to be heretical by the Established Church of the period. They believed in the presence of God in every creature which led them to deny the authority of the Church. They were influenced mostly by the teachings of Laurence Clarkson or Claxton, whom we encounter in the play. He preached that sin is the product of the imagination and is against the ownership of private property. In order to have an in depth study of the Levellers, Diggers and Ranters, one may refer to, Fenner Brockway, *Britains First Socialists*, 1980.

[7]The Putney Debates were a series of discussions between the Levellers and members of the New Model Army concerning the framing of a new constitution for England. It took place at Putney, the county of Surrey from 28th October, 1647 to 11th November, 1647. The Levellers or radicals as they were thought to be, wanted suffrage (one man one vote), equality before

the law and right to property. These were presented through the manifesto ‘Agreement of the people’. But Cromwell suppressed these ideals as he thought to contain near universal suffrage, which Ireton thought it to be anarchy as enacted in the play. The plays re-enacts the scene of the Debates, staying true and verbatim to its historical records for which an example is that, Rainborough’s argument have been taken verbatim.

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CHAPTER - III

INTERROGATING THE POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM

> Socialism and feminism aren't synonymous, but I feel strongly about both and wouldn't be interested in a form of one that didn't include the other.[1]

The above declaration of Churchill's political stance is taken from a statement in an interview by Kathleen Betsko and Rachel Keonig, in February 1984. This interview was held during a time in the words of Gillian Hanna, a founding member of Monstrous Regiment, "feminism was leaping in our heads" (Aston and Diamond 20), to which even Churchill acknowledged the force of Second Wave Feminism as, "I didn't feel a part of what was happening in the sixties. During that time I was isolated" and voiced her readiness to be part of a larger feminist movement in her statement that when the feminist revolution came she would be "swept away" (19). Churchill's support of a class, sex, gender and materialist interrogation into feminist politics is evident in her assumption that she was more in favour of feminism in England which "is far more closely connected to socialism"(Jacobus 1078) as compared to the kind of bourgeois, liberal feminism of America.

This Chapter is an attempt to examine the politics under which women are oppressed under a Patriarchal and Capitalist binary system and to contextualise and critically study the plays *Top Girls* and *Fen*. This examination will be rendered through a discourse in Marxist and Socialist Feminist praxis or Materialist Feminist Discourse. In this context Kate Millett's understanding of the term politics in *Sexual Politics* is similar in views. She has observed:

> The term "politics" shall refer to power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another...one might add that although an ideal politics might simply be conceived of as the arrangement of human life on agreeable and rational principles from whence the entire notion of power *over* others should be banished, one must confess that this is not what constitutes the political...and it is to this that we must address ourselves.

(Millett 24).

This power structure as elucidated above has been the point of argument within Feminist discourse, and within this power structure the term 'Patriarchy' has become the focus on the means of explaining and deciphering the genesis of women's oppression. Marxist Feminists although borrowing from Marx the concept of the proletarian emancipation and the vision of a society free of class struggle, has criticised it to be 'sex blind'.

In the development of a more historical and realistic discourse which tackles women's oppression under capitalism, a more vigorous examination and explanation of Patriarchy have been proposed. Heidi Hartmann defines:

> . . . patriarchy as a set of social relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish and create interdependence and solidarity among men to enable them to dominate women... The material base upon which patriarchy rests lies mostly fundamentally in men's control over women's labour power. (Nicholson 101)

Hartmann further identifies monogamous heterosexual marriage as an "efficient form that seems to allow men control" over women's labour power (101). In the identification of a system that perpetuates this kind of control over labour and women, the subject and importance of sex, gender and class division is often neglected. For this Gayle Rubin have identified what she proposes to be a 'sex/gender system' as:

> Every society also has a sex/gender system-a set of arrangements by which the biological raw material of human sex and procreation is shaped by human, so social intervention and satisfied in a conventional manner. (Nicholson 32)

Rubin proposes an alternative to this system are "mode of production" and "patriarchy" but at the same time is careful in distinguishing "economic systems and sexual systems, and to indicate that sexual systems have a certain autonomy and cannot always be explained in

terms of economic forces. Hartmann takes this concept further and proposes to "label our present sex/gender system patriarchy" and that "Patriarchy is not simply hierarchical organization, but hierarchy in which particular people fill particular places" (Nicholson 103). Gayle Rubin in her essay, *The Traffic in Women*, observes the cause of Feminism's application of Marxists theory of class oppression as:

> It has been argued that women are a reserve labour force for capitalism, that women's generally lower wages provide extra surplus to a capitalist employer, that women serve the ends of capitalist consumerism in their roles as administrators of family consumption. (Nicholson 29)

Marxist Feminism has argued that housework rendered by women, by producing and nurturing the means of production in a society provides surplus value and since no wage is given for housework, they render the ultimate surplus profit to capitalism. Rubin again contests that Engels is not interested in the separation of "relations of sexuality" with the "relation of production" (Nicholson 31). Rather he reduces women's functionalist role to that of biology and this reductionist and functionalist role given to women have served as a means of women's oppression. For this, Michelle Barrett's definition of Marxist Feminism explains thus:

> In the most general terms it must be to identify the operation of gender relations as and where they may be distinct from, or connected with, the processes of production and reproduction understood by historical materialism. Thus it falls to Marxists feminism to explore the relations between the organization of sexuality, domestic production, the household and historical changes in the mode of production and systems of appropriation and exploitation. (Barrett 9)

In light of the above explanation, in a Marxist Feminist discourse the relation of sex, gender division and the issue of women's oppression in Capitalism is inevitably embedded.

The incompatibility of Marxism and Feminism with feminism's allegations of Marxism being sex blind and the tendency of sidelining feminist and women's issues to class struggle have been criticised of absorbing feminism into the class struggle. Heidi Hartmann, in her essay *The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism*, 1979 disapproves of the idea that the participation of women in the labour force within capitalism would end their oppression and the tendency within even Marxist Feminist discourse to relegate women's oppression as another aspect of class struggle shows the authority that Marxism have over Feminism. Hartmann argues that this kind of analysis "gives no clues why *women* are subordinate to *men* inside and outside the family. . . *Marxist categories, like capital is sex-blind"* (Nicholson 99-100). Hartmann argues that even though a "specifically feminist analysis reveals the systematic character of relations of men and women" at the same time "feminist analysis by itself is inadequate, because it has been blind to history and insufficiently materialist" and proposes that in order to understand "the development of western capitalist societies and the predicament of women within them", the Marxist historical and materialist method of analysis and the feminist identification of patriarchy as a social and historical structure is to be drawn upon (Nicholson 97-98). This kind of analysis is a vanguard for the study of the relation of capitalism to patriarchy, how the accumulation of wealth has brought about the perpetuation of patriarchy.

This view is shared by Michelle Barrett who writes that the questions of capitalism's relation to women's oppression must "be treated historically" and that the "definitions of sexuality and structure of the household" must be analysed within "concrete historical and empirical terms" (Barrett 9-10).

Feminists may find it difficult to successfully integrate Feminism with Marxism nevertheless as the division of labour often "reinforce both patriarchy and capitalism" (Nicholson 111) it is always important to remind oneself that capital creates class and class

struggle. On the need of the integration between class struggle and feminist issues, Hartmann suggests that:

> The struggle against capital and patriarchy cannot be successful if the study and practice of the issues of feminism is abandoned. A struggle aimed only at capitalist relations of oppression will fail, since their underlying supports in patriarchal relations of oppression will be overlooked. And the analysis of patriarchy is essential to a definition of the kind of socialism useful to women. (Nicholson 113)

Hartmann further advises that:

> As feminist socialist, we must organize a practice which addresses both the struggle against patriarchy and the struggle against capitalism. We must insist that the society we want to create is a society in which recognition of interdependence is liberation rather than shame...in which women do not continue to support the false as well as the concrete freedoms of men. (Nicholson 114)

The above statement reminds one of Caryl Churchill's vision of a society which she describes as "decentralized, non-authoritarian, communist, non-sexist-a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings, and in control of their lives" (Aston and Diamond 2). Michelene Wandor argues of Socialist Feminism as:

> In terms of its theory, it aims to analyse and understand the way in which power relations based on class interact with power relations based on gender... at both the individual and the social level. (Wandor 136)

On the danger of working or organizing separately for both feminism and socialism within the same movement, Shiela Rowbatham voiced her concern in *Beyond the Fragments* as:

> There is a danger that we might acquiesce to such a division, accepting

> one way of organizing for socialism and another for feminism. Given the existing balance of power between the sexes in society as a whole this would undoubtedly mean that our organizing as feminists became increasingly ghetto-ized. (Rowbatham et al. 39)

The importance of integrating ones feminism with politics has been voiced by Caryl Churchill in an unpublished interview by Linda Fitzsimmons:

> I've constantly said that I am both a socialist and a feminist... If someone says 'a socialist playwright' or 'a feminist playwright' that can suggest to some people something rather narrow which doesn't cover as many things as you might be thinking about. (Fitzsimmons 89)

It may be rightly assumed that a feminism without a political stance may not incorporate theory with practice and might even distance lived experience with theoretical assumptions.

The question of the analogy between theory and practice in theatre is a point of contention which Sian Adiseshiah argues as "In one sense theatre is both theory and practice, or theory in practice; it is conceptualised and/or written (theorised), as well as performed (practised) (Adiseshiah 29). This statement argues that drama is theory in practice which Adrian Page proposes as:

> The challenge which drama poses for literary theory, therefore, is to produce a theory of theatre which allows some didactic intention without resorting to a moribund concept of a single meaning authorised by the playwright. (Page 3)

Churchill's dramatic practice have strived at an amalgamation of theory and practice, especially political theories such as that of Socialism and Women's issues relating it to lived experiences in history. Her theatre practice and improvisations have been a means of transforming theoretical assumptions into reality.

On the question of women's issues regarding work and motherhood within a network of systems which perpetuates class, gender and sexual politics, Churchill's play *Top Girls*, have proved to be a play which brings to the forefront the role which class difference plays in bringing about inter and intra-sexual oppression. Written between the years 1980-82, and performed in 1982, *Top Girls* has an all-female cast and in the first performance sixteen female characters were played by seven actors. In keeping with her non-traditional/ anti-chronological style of writing, Churchill in order to subvert traditional theatre convention and playwriting tradition wrote the play in three acts in which act one is the dinner scene, act two is Angie's story and act three is the story of one year before act one. Churchill has expressed her consent in the production note of performing the play with only two acts but at the same time she voices her opinion that, "*Top Girls* was originally written in three acts and I still find that structure clearer". The thesis follows this structure with three acts in the analysis and interpretation of the text.

Act one of *Top Girls* opens with a dinner scene which is a celebratory dinner hosted by Marlene in order to celebrate her promotion to Managing Director in the Top Girls employment agency. Churchill makes legendary women of various historical space guests at the dinner. The women are Isabella Bird who lived between 1831-1904 who instead of conforming to the role of a clergyman's daughter travelled extensively for her own interest; Lady Nijo who was a courtesan and concubine of the Emperor of Japan from the age of fourteen during the thirteenth century. When she lost the favour of the emperor later in her life she became a Buddhist Nun and travelled across Japan on foot; Dull Gret is an allegorical character from the painting of Breughel in which women in apron and armour lead a crowd of women through hell fighting the devils; Griselda an allegorical character is also known as 'patient Griselda' who is the example of an obedient wife told by Chaucer in 'The Clerk's Tale' of The Canterbury Tales; Pope Joan disguised like a man was thought to have been

Pope in the ninth century. She was stoned to death after publicly delivering a child which was cursed as being Anti- Christ. This trans-historical and trans-cultural characterisation is used tactfully by Churchill in order to highlight how women of various differing times and space are subjected to the same ethnocentric patriarchal marginalization which also serves as a means of highlighting how such oppressions were perpetuated and questioned throughout history even though it might have been futile at times. One need to be reminded that, the playwright here is highlighting the danger of putting first one's feminism and individualism over feminism within capitalist economics without the wisdom of identifying to a larger collective consciousness.

Churchill wrote *Top Girls* during a time in British history when the image of the 'superwoman', a woman successful both at home and carrier wise was popularised with the election of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister in 1979. In an interview with Laurie Stone, in 1st March, 1983 Churchill expressed that she wanted to write a play that seemed at first:

> to be celebrating the extraordinary achievements of women. Then it would cut another way and say that this sort of movement is useless if you don't have a socialist perspective on it. The play came, very deeply out of the climate of having a right-wing woman prime- minister. (Fitzsimmons 61)

Churchill also expressed the fact that the play was also influenced by a visit to America where women were getting jobs in the corporations; of how it opened new opportunities for women. This Churchill acknowledged as a part of feminism but was quick in correcting that "it's not what I think is enough. I'm saying that there's no such thing as right-wing feminism..." (61). Sian Adiseshiah also observes that Churchill's concern is:

> The preoccupation of contemporaneous feminism with individual success within capitalist economics, which automatically excludes large numbers of working-class women. (Adiseshiah 4)

In *Top Girls* the tension between the various debates within Feminism from the camp of the Liberal Feminists to the essentialism of the Radical camp in relation to Materialist and Socialist concerns are questioned. Of these Janelle Reinelt observes that:

> Socialist Feminists or material feminists were different . . . they recognized hugely powerful socio-economic categories among women and men, making some lived realities more unequal than others, and they also criticized radical feminists for failing to understand how much difference class made in the lived experiences of women who did not really share values when divided by status and money. (Aston and Diamond 30)

Churchill being resilient in making a socialist- feminist correction of the kind of feminism advocated by the image of a Thatcherite 'top girl' commented in her interview with Koenig and Betsko that:

> Thatcher had just become Prime Minister; there was talk about whether it was an advance to have a woman prime minister if it was someone with policies like hers. She may be a woman but she isn't a sister, she may be a sister but she isn't a comrade. And, in fact, things have got much worse for women under Thatcher. (Fitzsimmons 52)

The play tactfully opens with a celebration of the success of a 'top girl' Marlene. The opening of Act One at the outset makes one feel privileged to be in the presence of such successful women but as the scene goes on one realises that the women are not what they seem in the exterior but that their individual stories reveal a kind of individualism at the cost of others and a success achieved through the loss of one's humanity. With the issue of an analogy to Thatcherism's principle of "individualism, consumption, efficiency and modernisation" (Adiseshiah 15) and its criticism in the play with its relevance during the time it was first produced, Alicia Tyler noted that:

> Britain's unemployment figures doubled between Thatcher's election and the play's premiere, reaching over three million, which represented more than 11 per cent of the population. Thatcherite policies affected low-income mothers in immediate ways, with cuts in maternity provisions and ending of free school meals. During the 1980s, working mothers had increasingly to fit their family responsibilities around multiple part-time jobs.
>
> (Aston and Diamond 30)

As we will see from the play one can claim that Churchill want to address the misconception of Feminism as individual success and how material success does not build solidarity among women. The playwright sets a tone of irony in the occasion of the celebration of Marlene's success as she announces proudly, "Well, it's not Pope but its managing director" to which Joan replies admiringly, "And you find work for people" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 67). It is ironical that a women's agency which is established to find work for fellow women, becomes a site of oppression and struggle as the play reveals. This is reminiscent of and a satire of the kind of individualism that Thatcherite Feminism makes attractive.

In order to bring out the realities of the women's experience through the telling of one's stories through a conversation, Churchill introduces overlapping dialogues in which one character speaks before another finishes her story which is signified by the use of a backslash (/) and the character continues it in the next line. This enacts the way women converse when passionately conversing with each other. Churchill through a post-modernist improvisation such as this subverts traditional theatre conventions which gives importance to time, space and chronology. Michael Coveney a reviewer for the *Financial Times* comments:

> Overlapping dialogue is a brilliant technical feature of the play, and emerging from the precisely organized cross babble we hear competitive stories of rape, childbirth, transsexual disguise, ambition realized through learning,

> pregnancy and hunger . . . (Fitzsimmons 58).

Churchill had said that one of the influences in writing *Top Girls* had been her observation of women barristers, and how they had to imitate men in order to succeed which she related to women playwrights which made her realise that:

> Wait a minute, my whole concept of what plays might be is from plays written by men . . . And I remember long before that thinking of the 'maleness' of the traditional structure of plays...Playwriting will change not just because more women are doing it but because more women are doing other things as well. (90)

This was her answer to the question of whether there is a female aesthetic in playwriting. Churchill may not have given an affirmative answer but through her introduction of overlapping dialogue and double casting, she had improvised and introduced a theatre style which adheres to specific needs of women and thereby serves as a means of subverting patriarchal conventions dominating playwriting and theatre productions.

In Act I scene I of the play, Churchill through the alienation of the dinner scene brings out the tension between the supposed successes of the women and their lived realities. The experiences of the women from different historical spaces show how their subjectivity and marginalization is perpetuated through different means in different contexts. But as their stories would reveal, these oppressions are perpetuated by the same phallocentric desires and ideology. The sexual objectification of the female body and internalized oppression is clearly seen in Lady Nijo who seems quite exotic as a courtesan and Buddhist nun. Being raised to be given to the Emperor of Japan, at the age of fourteen was summoned as, "Let the wild goose come to me this spring" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 56). Not able to understand what was being done to her Nijo re-tells her story as, "When the time came I did nothing but cry. My thin gowns were badly ripped" to which Marlene asks "Are you saying he raped you" (57).

Nijo preferred a romanticised version of what had been done to her and developed a romantic inclination to the emperor. She became the 'emperor's favourite' for a while which she colours with the memory of luxuries like 'seven layered gowns and thin silk'. When she fell out of favour of the emperor Nijo remembers "There was nothing in my life, nothing without the emperor's favour" (66). Her whole existence had been controlled by the emperor's whims to such extremes that she even had to bring other women to him and even slept with other men of the court with the emperor listening behind the screen on the emperor's order. Lady Nijo is an example of how women's bodies are used for pleasure while with youth and beauty but neglected or mistreated with the onset of age. This reminds one of the song 'Nobody Sings' in *Vinegar Tom* which talks about the female body as a site of sexual objectification.

The scene also puts in its centre the question of work, motherhood and gender. Lady Nijo's child with the emperor died after which she had three other, a girl with Akebono which she hid from the emperor making excuses that she was sick and went away during the time of delivery and she told the emperor that she had miscarried. The baby was adopted by Akebono's wife who ironically raised her to become what Nijo was, a concubine. Her other two babies was by her lover the priest Ariake, one which died and the last one a boy for whom "she felt nothing" (72) as Nijo in her marginalization of the objectification of women as sexual objects does not understand the notion of motherhood. It is this notion of motherhood which Nijo never experienced which made her interested in Griselda's story of being tested by her husband of her loyalty and her promise to always obey him to the extreme end of letting him take her children away making her believe that he had killed them which Griselda explains as "Walter found it hard to believe that I loved him. . . He had to prove it" (76). For Griselda motherhood became a tool for male subjugation and a means of wielding patriarchal hegemony by a male over a female. Motherhood for both Nijo and Griselda was a

traumatic experience as it was brought about through the web of power which is adamant in making one sex a subject of the other.

The internalization of patriarchal hegemony is seen in the extreme in Joan who having the thirst for knowledge and philosophy disguises as a boy, resorted to transvestism and left home at the age of twelve as "women weren't allowed in the library" and she "wanted to study in Athens"(Churchill, *Plays:2* 62). Recalling her life Joan remembers "There was nothing in my life except my studies. I was obsessed with the pursuit of truth. I taught at the Greek school in Rome...Huge crowds came to hear me" (66). Joan initially realises that inspite of all her learning and wisdom which made her become Pope, gender and biology proved difficult to be kept under check. She recalls scathingly "I thought God would speak to me directly. But of course he knew I was a woman" (68) and confessed that she had lovers and became pregnant with her last lover. The irony and satire is not directed at the morale of a Pope falling to the sin of sexual immorality but in the fact that having denied herself her biology in the pursuit of phallocentric wisdom denied to women, Joan who was supposed to be all knowing did not understand her own body and confessed "but I didn't know what was happening. I thought I was getting fatter . . . I don't think I'd spoken to a woman since I was twelve" (70). To this Marlene the middle class individualist who had abandoned her daughter Angie, to be raised by her working class sister Joyce, in order to fulfil her ambition asks from a modern perspective "Didn't you think of getting rid of it" (69) and Nijo from her experience concurs "You had to have it adopted secretly" or "You had to say you were ill and go away" to which Joan replies exasperated "I wasn't used to having a woman's body" (70) when all the while she was a woman in a woman's body. Here Churchill is ambiguous in her satire of whether it is a critique of the repression of one's biology or maternity for personal gain or a satire on the power structure which favours on sex over the other and which drives the women to sacrifice their essence to be a part of a male signified system. Nevertheless,

Churchill has already subverted the status quo by ascribing femininity to a phallocentric figure such as a Pope and plays at the prospects of the possibility of such figure as a woman and a mother. Hence, Joan cynically retorts "Women, children and lunatics can't be Pope" (69) which she already was but an undertone is revealed in the fact that the patriarchal hegemony would not allow such threat to its power to remain unchecked. Here, Churchill reminds the reader and audience of a system of power hegemony which oppresses those less privileged through its apparatuses and institutions to maintain its status quo. This is a reminder of Louis Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' which he explains in *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses* that "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects*, by the functioning of the category of the subject" (Althusser 117).

The women at the dinner party may seem cooperative in sharing their experiences but there are undertones of class and racial differences. The character of Isabella Bird the Victorian wanderlust, who is the image of an independent Lady for her times vehemently, tells herself that "I cannot and will not live the life of a lady" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 80). She uses travelling as an escape from the expectations of social conventions but maintains her class prestige while travelling she recalls, "Well I always travelled as a lady and I strongly repudiated strongly any suggestion in the press that I was other than feminine" (62). In Isabella a close reader or spectator can decipher imperialist attitude in her travel accounts. When a conversation on Buddhism cropped up, she is quick to suggest "There are some barbaric practices in the east" to which Nijo questions "Barbaric?" The following answer show an attitude of upper class snobbery, Isabella clarifies "Among the lower classes" to which Nijo reminding one of her upper class status answers "I wouldn't know" (60). Instead of embracing and appreciating the cultures of where she went, Isabella retells of her experience in China in a condescending tone that "some people tried to sell babies to Europeans for cameras or stews" (69) and one of the 'good work' that she did after her

travels was “talked and talked how the East was corrupt and vicious” (72). On her report of her travel to Hawaii she recalls how she asked her sister Hennie to join her and that they will “help the natives” (55). Isabella in her self- centred accounts of her stories forgets how her pursuits were possible only through the help of her sister who stayed at home to fulfil duties that she could not.

In Marlene’s treatment of the waitress who services them, there is no politeness involved. Marlene is careful in showing that she is superior to her. This kind of female competition is elaborated in Act II scene I where Win an employee of ‘Top Girls’ interviews Louise an older woman who not happy of the gender bias in her present job, goes to Marlene’s company in the hope that her fellow women would be helpful and sympathise with her in finding a better work environment. But Win interviews her with suspicion she asks her “is there any trouble, any reason why you’re leaving that wouldn’t appear on the form/ No personality clashes with your immediate superiors or inferiors” (Churchill, *Plays:2* 105) to which Louise replies that inspite of her hard work and discipline she is not given importance or respect and that she “had seen young men who I trained go on, in my own company or elsewhere” (106). Louise seem to be different from women like Marlene as she talks of a former assistant of hers with good riddance who had done well learning from her with pride and confidence but Win in trying to assert herself tells her rudely, “You shouldn’t talk too much in an interview” and dismissingly asks her “Do you drink” (107). Here Louise’s reply that “I only talk to you because it seems to me this is different, it’s your job to understand me , surely” (107) is a reaching out of one woman to another woman to understand and help each other no matter the class or racial differences. But what we see is a different scenario where a woman hinders the future of a fellow woman when she is in the position to help her. This is the kind of unhealthy competition that Churchill addresses which had been perpetuated by individualist feminism within capitalist economics.

With more job opportunities and carrier advancement opened within capitalist economics, the image of an educated, successful woman tend to be romanticised which hides realities like gender oppression and division which is perpetuated by this romanticism itself. It is this reality behind the romanticism that Churchill pays attention to. In order to de-romanticise the lives of famous women, the character of Griselda, known as the epitome of female virtue, the playwright brings out the other side of her story. The supposed fairy-tale story of Griselda a peasant girl who was chosen by a Marquis to be his wife is deconstructed by Churchill. Other writers like Chaucer had praised her for her virtue and obedience which is supposed to be the ultimate character of women to be looked upon. The play does not intend to romanticise its fairy tale as Marlene does who introduces her as "Griselda's in Boccaccio and Petrarch and Chaucer because of her extraordinary marriage/Griselda's life is like a fairy story" (74), but aims at revealing the operations of gender oppression perpetuated by a system of marriage which aims at the propagation of the superiority of one sex over the other.

The trauma that Griselda underwent in having her children taken from her and made to believe that they have been killed and the cruelty in her being sent home with no proper clothes but only her 'slip' in order to proof her loyalty by her husband is nothing close to a fairy tale that Marlene or literature makes out to be. As all fairy tales she was given back her children and her loyalty having been proved was dressed in 'cloth of gold' as a prize. Griselda may not have been in a position to voice her opinion as she was helpless in a society in which her respectability is judged only through the power that her husband has over her. Churchill reverses her position and lends her a voice which had been silenced through a male constructed history and subverts the identity given to her from a patriarchal perspective when she finally says "it would have been nicer if Walter hadn't had to" (81). Churchill through her postmodernist interpretation of the fairy tale; use of a narrative and dialogue different from

conventional playwriting, brings out voices like Griselda's in a natural tone through self confession different from the statemental tone often used in traditional playwriting

The guests at the dinner party are extraordinary women who had achieved extraordinary things in their own contexts, but the occasion of the celebration is not one to be celebrated about. As the dinner proceeds their alcohol effected conversation reveals a different story. It is here that Churchill's use of overlapping dialogue comes alive in the enactment of a drunken conversation. The women laughs at Joan when she tells them of how she delivered a child on the street but stopped when they hears of her being stoned; Nijo may have been triumphant in having beaten the emperor but she cries "nobody gave me back my children" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 79). Joan being maudlin recites a speech in Latin from the second book of *On the Nature of Things* by Titus Lucretius Carus in order to show her learned self; Isabella recalling the fact that she had been the only European woman to have seen the Emperor of Morocco at the age of seventy says ironically, "but how marvellous while it lasted" (83). In the end the women who comes to celebrate, support and admire each other's achievements becomes competitive. Instead of sympathizing and relating to each other's experiences are blinded by self-glorification. They each drown in self-indulgence and when Gret starts to talk of her story nobody listens. As she talks of her experience through 'hell' Joan cannot contain herself as Marlene tell her "shut up" (82) and Isabella's plea "listen she's been to hell"(ibid) is unheeded and the women goes on talking over each other telling of their stories. The women cannot understand each other or maintain solidarity and interest in each other's problems which is perpetuated by the same factors. On this issue of female solidarity which the play projects Jenelle Reinelt observes:

> Churchill with her finger on the pulse of contemporary culture, wanted to address how material success for a few women did not build solidarity or foster change for the majority. She also began to imagine

> the personal costs paid by women who attained the status of 'high flyer'(a term Marlene uses in *Top Girls* to describe herself). The historical and fictional women in the stand-alone first scene intimate a high flyers' club of female friendship, but that impression is quickly countered as they self obsess, talk over each other, and admit they are miserable. What price independence? (Aston and Diamond 30)

Elaine Aston also observes that the women's narcissistic individualism is made clearer by the use of overlapping dialogue:

> The inability to listen to and to share experiences with women, is indicative of intrasexual oppression, and undscored in this first act through Churchill's use of overlapping dialogue. (Aston 39)

Amongst the drunken confusion, Gret who had been silent speaks out and tells of her tale of having been to hell. Tired of her children being killed and her village being looted and burned by soldiers she shouted to her neighbours "come on, we're going where the evil come from and pay the bastards out". The women followed her in their aprons and ordinary clothes and went to where the "ground opens up and we go through a big mouth into a street just like ours but in hell" (Churchill, *Plays: 2* 82). Here, she makes a comparison to their burned village and the burning hell which is of no difference and Gret realising that she has nothing more to lose decided to fight back. Her triumphant rejoicing "Oh we gave them devils such a beating" (82) is different from the accounts of triumph of the other women as it is not followed by stories of more oppression and individual struggle. The women might have rejected and fought against patriarchal oppression through their own means, nevertheless it is their individualism that does not allow them to gain real freedom. They did not seek the support of solidarity in their own contexts. Gret was not given attention throughout the dinner as she is the most unpolished among them, her actions include stealing bottles, plates and eats crudely.

Among the women class difference and racial difference is very much evident which can be seen even from Isabella's account of her travels and Nijo's assertion of her privileges. But these differences are hidden by the more appealing notion of the attainment of individual gain and emancipation other than the notion of collective emancipation.

Churchill's intention in bringing the women together may be ambiguous but one can read within its layers a feminism that aims to peel away the apolitical notion of feminism often related only to personal liberation. From here one can draw a corollary to what Feminist theorist bell hooks[2] in her stern critique against racism within Feminist Movement defines feminism, stressing on the importance of its political nature:

> Feminism is a struggle to end sexist oppression. Therefore, it is necessarily a struggle to eradicate the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels, as well as commitment to reorganizing society so that self-development of people can take precedence over imperialism, economic expansion, and material desires. (hooks 26)

In stressing the importance of the political nature of Feminism, the slogan which defined Second Wave Feminism, 'the personal is political' which "became a means of encouraging women to think that the experience of discrimination, exploitation or oppression automatically correspond with an understanding of the ideological and institutional apparatus shaping one's social status" (26) on the other hand became a stumbling point which blinded women to the importance of collective consciousness. It encouraged women to voice only personal experiences which as a consequence did not make women understand "their political reality and its relationship to that of women as a collective group" (26). This concern have also been voiced by Shiela Rowbatham in her analysis of feminist movement within Capitalist economics:

> There is a problem inherent in the slogan 'the personal is political' for it tends

> to imply that all individual problems can find a short term political solution. (Rowbatham et al. 31)

One is reminded from the of the inherent danger of the feminist movement voicing the interest of only the personal and individual interest while still wearing the colours of a collective movement. Churchill gives importance to this nature within feminism and the importance of a political consciousness. This importance is stressed by bell hooks as:

> Feminism defined in political terms that stress collective as well as individual experience challenges women to enter a new domain-to leave behind the apolitical stance sexism decrees is our lot and develop political consciousness. (hooks 27)

In *Top Girls* as the women cries of their oppression and failures it is only Gret who is successful in organizing her fellow women and maintain solidarity in paying the 'bastards out'. Here Churchill negates the class superiority which is supposed to empower the other women like Isabella, Joan and Nijo, but subverts the situation by showing how empowerment does not lie within the realms of a classist operation but through solidarity.

It is this lack of solidarity and division through race, class and colour which had hindered the success of Feminism to end sexist oppression.

The issue of solidarity or sisterhood has been a point of debate within feminist praxis. On the issue of organizing through common oppression which seem to be highlighted in Act one Scene one of *Top Girls* bell hooks' critical observation is of importance as she explains:

> The vision of Sisterhood evoked by women's liberationists was based on the idea of common oppression. Needless to say, it was primarily bourgeois white women, both liberal and radical in perspective, who professed belief in the notion of "common oppression". The idea of common oppression was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women's

varied and complex social reality. (hooks 43-44)

The occasion of the dinner in the play is indeed a celebration of the achievement of a bourgeois woman Marlene's success inspite of sexist oppression, and the guests are also women of her same class who embraced male sexism to get ahead in their own contexts. The women may seem to share the same oppression but the dinner conversation as already elucidated shows a divide between them. On the internalization of male oppression which unconsciously perpetuates intra-sexual oppression and division, bell hooks' explanation may be quoted verbatim:

> Male supremacists ideology encourages women to believe we are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men. We are taught that our relationships with one another diminish rather than enrich our experience. we are taught that women are natural enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another. (hooks 43)

On this competing and dividing nature of women, bell hooks hold responsible the internalization of sexist attitude, racism, class privilege and other prejudices. She suggests that "sustained woman bonding can occur only when these divisions are confronted and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate them". But she also reminds one that the divisions will not be eliminated by the romanticism of common oppression (44).

It is this very nature of division within feminism that Churchill addresses. Her commitment to a political intervention of class division is seen in Act three of *Top Girls* in which through her use of a non-linear structure of subverting the traditional norms of chronology, time and place the scene is placed a year before the dinner scene. Churchill's Socialist-Feminist interrogation comes through in the argument that the sisters Joyce and Marlene have in the act which serves as a critique of the kind of class division and

differences that feminism within capitalism can bring about. The women may be sisters but what is crucial is that they are of different class, Joyce the working class mother who holds four cleaning jobs to sustain herself, Angie and their mother while Marlene is the new middle class. From the conversation one gets to know that Marlene got pregnant at the age of 17 and left her working class family and her child who is Angie to be adopted by Joyce in order to chase her carrier. Joyce had stayed home to bear the brunt of taking care of her parents as well as earn a livelihood. The sisters started to argue on the fact that Joyce had not asked Marlene to visit but that it was Angie who had invited Marlene to come without Joyce knowledge. Joyce's frustration is evident when she tells Marlene "Look, you've left, you've gone away,/ we can do without you" when Marlene announces that she had visited their mother and implied condescendingly that she had an "awful life" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 132). The issue of motherhood and work pops up when Joyce questions Marlene "I don't know how you could leave your own child" to which Marlene replies "you were quick to take her" and "I could have taken her with me" (133). Marlene romanticises the image of a superwoman to herself as she says:

> I know a managing director who's got two children, she breastfeeds in the boardroom, she pays a hundred pounds a week to domestic help alone and she can afford that because she's an extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money. (134)

This is exactly the kind of image that the individualist feminism under capitalism promotes. But Churchill is quick to subvert this romanticised image when Joyce reminds Marlene of the reality that, Angie is already seventeen and wouldn't be able to achieve her ideal anyhow. Marlene having rejected motherhood makes sure that it would not obstruct her dreams in the future for which she had had two abortions and probably sterile for being on contraceptive for too long. On the other hand, Joyce had had a miscarriage when Angie was six months old as

she too tired looking after Angie. On the rejection of motherhood Jane Thomas observes in her essay *Caryl Churchill: Essays in Refusal* that:

> The consistent negation of motherhood practised by the characters in *Top Girls* draws attention to its importance as a possible antithetical or resistance stance available to those who seek to alter the strategic situations between men and women. (Thomas 184)

Here Churchill does not provide answers but rather questions the role of women at work and as mothers. The women seeing motherhood and pregnancy as threat to their carrier and view their choice of rejecting as empowerment but the ironic implication lies in the fact that :

They have achieved this liberation by embracing a subjectivity that has been validated by patriarchal power... they have forsaken a phallocratic female identity in order to embrace an equally phallocratic male one characterised by the dismissal of and disdain of all things female. (Thomas 184)

Joyce manages four cleaning jobs at the same time taking care of her family while Marlene independently without familial responsibility concentrates in her carrier. Churchill here juxtaposes the two women's conditions and seems to be asking which one is more favourable to feminism while at the same time critiques and subverts the inherent class difference and politics.

The issue of class difference and politics under Thatcher also flared up. When one studies the following argument one can decipher antagonistic politics relevant at the time which is of importance even today:

> Marlene: And for the country, come to that. Get the economy back on its feet
>
> Whoosh. She's a tough lady, Maggie. I'd give her a job. / She just
>
> Needs to hang
>
> Joyce: You voted for them, did you?

> Marlene: in there. This country needs to stop whining. / Monetarism is not
>
> Marlene: stupid. It takes time, determination.
>
> Joyce: Well I think they're filthy bastards
>
> Marlene: who's got to drive it on? First woman prime minister.
>
> Joyce: What good's first woman if it's her? I suppose you'd have liked Hitler if it was a woman. Ms. Hitler. Got a lot done Hitlerina[3]. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 138)

To this last statement of Joyce, Marlene states "I believe in the individual. Look at me". The person Joyce looks at is a sister who does not sympathise with the hard life that her parents had lived "working in the fields like an animal" (138), but instead embraces and escapes to the same Capitalist economics which had dictated the lives of people as her parents and announces "I hate the working class" (139). Joyce is also true to her political affiliation when she confesses, "I spit when I see a Rolls Royce" and "I hate the cows I work for". For Joyce there seems to be no way out of her situation as her responsibility of motherhood and nurturer does not allow her the privilege that women like Marlene enjoys in a kind of economy which cuts public funds for profit, favours privatization which supports individualism. Elaine Aston writes of this historical scenario as:

> The future remains as 'cruelly bleak' for those women in the 1990s as it did in the Thatcherite years of the 1980s, which were 'stupendous' for one class, but not for another. The need for Churchill's socialist-feminist critique of class and gender issues is arguably, therefore all the more critical in the current backlash climate of the 1990s when even the acceptable face of bourgeois feminism is under threat. (Aston 44-45)

Angie may seem like an innocent bystander, but it is her future which is at stake. In act III Joyce asks Marlene what if her own daughter is "stupid, lazy, and frightened?" to which

Marlene answers "you run her down too much. She'll be alright". Marlene also states her believe that "Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 140) being ignorant of the drudgery under which most of her fellow women live in, but this belief is changed when a year after when she had gained prominent success as seen in Act two Scene three, she patronisingly tells her colleagues that her 'daughter' is "a bit thick. She's a bit funny/ She's not going to make it" (120). Here, Angie's dream in the last scene and the denouement of the play which she describes as "Frightening" (141) becomes a reality.

The individualist Marlene practises intra-sexual oppression to such an extent as to dismiss even her own daughter as someone who 'would not make it'. She does not see her position as someone who could help her fellow women and as someone who can make a difference. As Jane Thomas observe "What is 'frightening' is the single-minded abandonment of the future generation by 'Top Girls' throughout history" (Page 184).

The play *Top Girls* has different receptions and reviews as whether the play celebrates women's achievement or is a critique of Bourgeois Feminism. Helene Keyssar critiques that "it does not provide a positive inspiration that many spectators crave" and that the class issue remains unresolved (Keyssar 98). Churchill had spoken of this in an interview with Laurie Stone as:

> 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... I thought, what the hell; if people can't see the clues, I don't want to spell them out. (Fitzsimmons 61)

Churchill through her postmodernist improvisations, decentering of traditional conventions within theatre and her alienation of individual scenes different from the Realist tradition[4] enable to bring to new light the contemporary issues relevant within the Women's Movement and Feminist praxis. Staying true to her political stance, the play shows and accommodates

the nuances of Feminism, even though the issues seem unresolved just as the conflicting nature of Feminism. Churchill however achieved in subverting the patriarchal assumptions which oppresses women both in and outside the theatre.

The issue of class oppression and the other side of Capitalism, the world of the working class which Marlene despises, is put in the centre in Churchill's playtext *Fen.* The play was produced in 1983 in collaboration with Joint Stock in which Churchill wrote the play after research through a visit to a remote East Anglian Fen village[5]. In the year of its production a book by Mary Chamberlain *Fenwomen: A Portrait of Women in an English Village* was published which influenced Churchill. According to Elaine Aston the book "documents the experiences of girlhood, schooling, marriage, work, religion, politics, recreation and aging of women in a Fen village" (Aston 65). While Churchill acknowledges her debt to this book she and Joint Stock group also conducted their own research through oral research and documentation which is later incorporated into the writing and production of the play. This innovative practice which Churchill also uses in writing *Vinegar Tom* is one of the factors which makes her playwriting authentic and is postmodernist in the sense that it differs from accepted traditional theatre conventions. Churchill records of her experience of research in an interview by Geraldine Cousin as:

> We spent two weeks living in a cottage in the Fens, meeting people, and talking about their lives, and then one week in London. The final week we discussed what we'd found out and what we wanted in the play. (Fitzsimmons 67)

As a result of this research Churchill does not hide the documentary nature of the play and states that "*Fen* is the most documentary of the plays, I suppose . . . I was left [after the workshop] with a lot of notes and quotes and things different people had said. But never a whole speech" (67-68). In the production of the play which opened in the Almeida Theatre in

London in which the stage was designed as a working field in which the floor was completely covered with soil, which added a naturalist touch to it through which the harsh environment which chronicles the dreadful working conditions and lives of the women is made more perceivable to the spectator and as Sian Adiseshiah observes "the backbreaking labour performed by these women was heightened by the impact on the senses of a cold Almeida theatre" (Adiseshiah 68). Churchill's theatrical improvisations and style brings the play beyond the Realist tradition of her predecessors like Arnold Wesker and John Osborne and further through the Gestus of the episodic scenes managed to bring the lives of the poor women to the centre of dramatic and political relevance. She does not enact the lives of her characters to be watched by the spectator but makes them experience and empathise with their reality through her innovative theatrical presentation. Churchill recalls how their witness of the women's condition became the subject of their post-research discussions and retells 'We also talked of women's endurance and their pride in hard work. We remembered the gang master who told us women were better workers than men. They'd work with icicles on their faces. We wanted to show women constantly working' (Fitzsimmons 67). Churchill makes women and work, both domestic and labour the crux of the play around which their oppressions-economic, social and political are interwoven.

The fact that women's productivity and capabilities had been narrowed and confined to their role as mothers and their capacity for domestic work by patriarchal discourse at the cost of cultural and economic mobilisation is questioned by Churchill. She puts the lowest paid women and their community at the centre of her satire of a capitalist economics whose very survival depends on the manipulation of the women's labour. This is reminiscent of Louis Althusser's critical observation:

> How is the reproduction of labour power ensured?
>
> it is ensured by giving labour power the material means with which to

> reproduce itself: by wages. (Althusser 87)

The subject of women's labour capacity both inside and outside the home had been debated by Marxist Feminists in which women's domestic labour is argued to benefit Capital by producing surplus value. The gendered division of labour both inside and outside the home strengthens a gendered hierarchy under the control of patriarchal hegemony. This according to Heidi Hartmann in her essay "Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex" is made a reality by "the continuing interaction of two interlocking system, capitalism and patriarchy" (Adiseshiah 147). The same issue have been put forth more strongly by Mary McIntosh who coins the phrase 'the family household system' in her essay "The welfare State and the Needs of the Dependent Family" and defines it as system in which:

> A number of people are expected to be dependent on the wages of a few adult members, primarily of the husband and father who is a "breadwinner" and in which they are all dependent for cleaning, food preparation and so forth on unpaid work chiefly done by the wife and mother. (Barrett 211)

This system which thrives on the division of labour between men and women is as Michele Barrett observes "not only oppressive for women but divisive for the working class as a whole" (Barrett 163).

Hence, the family especially the bourgeois and nuclear family becomes a unit without which a feminist praxis is incomplete and its critical and crucial role in the study of women's oppression as explained by Michele Barrett is:

> The family-household constitutes both the ideological ground on which gender difference and women's oppression are constructed, and the material relations in which men and women are differentially engaged in wage labour and the class structure. Women's dependence on men is reproduced ideologically, but also in material relations and there is a mutually

strengthening relationship between them. (211)

It is this public and private sphere of women's lives which are advantageous to capitalism and patriarchy that Caryl Churchill's Socialist Feminist stance highlights in *Fen.* She brings to the forefront low paid working-class women which Marxist or Materialist Feminism often neglects in their concentration on the capitalist and class struggle and fails to highlight the inherent gender and intra-sexual, classist oppressions. In *Fen* Churchill shows that the image of a high-powered women whom Marlene describes in *Top Girls* as 'breast feeding in the boardroom' is but a fantasy which only few can achieve under the harsh realities of oppression under the dual system of capitalism and patriarchy.

Fen opens with a speech which introduces readers and spectators to the fen landscape which serves as a prologue. Through this prologue made by a Japanese businessman, Mr. Takai we are told that the fen lands which was a swamp with fishes and eels was drained by "rich lords' in 1630 and the inhabitants of the land which he described as "wild people, fen tigers" who used to walk on stilts and lived on fishes and eels protested and refused to work, which he describes as having "no vision". From the prologue one is introduced to the earliest manifestation of Capitalist and Imperialist investment on land which Mr Takai explains as "change swamp into grazing land, far thinking men, brave investors . . . in the end we have this beautiful land. Very efficient...This farm out of our twenty five farms, very good investment" and exclaimed "how beautiful English countryside" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 147). At the outset a reader may admire the development which is made through investment to a wasteland like the Fens, but the satire lies hidden in the very ulterior motive that Capitalism hides. It is this sugar coated pro-capitalist oppression that Churchill intends to subvert. An ordinary reader may not realise that it is through such investment the original inhabitants of the land are turned into employees working on a land which was their right for the profit of a few 'rich lords'.

Churchill uses an element of the surreal to bring out the generation after generation of oppression under such takeover of land through the character of a ghost which Mr. Tewson sees and the ghost retells the story of poverty and oppression as:

> GHOST: We are starving, we will not stand this no longer . . . You bloody farmers could not live if it was not for the poor.
>
> TEWSON: Are you angry because I'm selling the farm?
>
> GHOST: What difference will it make?
>
> TEWSON: None, none, everyrhing will go on the same.
>
> GHOST: That's why I'm angry. (163)

The Ghost who is a hundred and fifty years old knows very well that the cycle of capitalist oppression of the poor never changes but is adamant in reminding one of the constant oppression, manipulation and harsh reality surrounding the glossy exterior of Capitalist economics when she says:

> GHOST: I live in your house. I watch television with you. I stand beside your chair and watch the killings . . . My baby died starving.(163)

Churchill subverts the notion of a capitalist democracy in the last sentence and highlights that it is under such a system that the people who had enabled a few to live comfortably are the ones that are neglected and who often die of starvation in an economic system which is thought to profit all and also reminds one of the lack of progress and change in the conditions of rural workers. It is here that one witnesses a reverberation of Althusser's observation that:

> The reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers. (Althusser 89)

As an atmosphere of capitalist imperialism is already set from Scene One, Churchill makes women the centre of oppression. The labour work that the women perform is a contrast to the more sophisticated clerical work that the women in *Top Girls* perform. Churchill gives a voice to working-class women who have been neglected throughout history and also by Bourgeois feminism, and portrays the reality under which their lives are intertwined around their labour.

The community in *Fen* is represented by the generations of women, from mothers to daughters who work in the field at the same time looks after their homes and family. The monotonous work that they perform for almost all their lives is enacted in Scene Two where Churchill's stage direction states "Women *and a* Boy *working in a row, picking potato down a field. When their buckets are full they tip the potatoes into a potato grave at the top of the field"*. This scene introduces the women, "VAL, *thirty*, ANGELA *twenty eight*, SHIRLEY *fifty*, NELL *forty*, WILSON *sixteen*" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 148). The women are working and singing in which their shared experiences of drudgery is seen. Elaine Aston observes that their lives are "portrayed as a never ending cycle of drudgery and oppression" (Aston 65). Their working condition under inhumane circumstances is elaborated in Scene Twelve as the stage direction states "WOMEN *working down the field, stone picking. Bad weather. . . It's hard singing in the wind...they go on working silently*" (171). It is here that Mr. Tewson comes out to observe and what he observes shows his blindness towards the harsh environment under which the women work in order to make profit for him but only sees the advantages of female labour exploitation. He tells them:

> TEWSON: You're good workers, I'll say that for you.
>
> Better workers than men. I've seen women working in my fields with icicles on their faces. I admire that. (171)

It is here that Churchill through the eyes of a male brings out the suffering of the women not from the complaints of the women themselves. As she had said in an interview with Laurie Stone:

> It's a complicated world . . . incredibly remote and backward in some ways- in the way the workers are very badly paid and yet still feel loyal to the farmers, at the same time that it's entirely of the present, because the land they're loyal to is owned by multinational corporations. (Fitzsimmons 67)

The women in *Fen* are not only oppressed economically but are doubly oppressed by their gender and class which Churchill through the portrayal of the community in labour dramatises.

In the character of Val, Churchill shows a woman who with dreams and aspirations of a better life attempts to escape to London with her two daughters Deb, Shona and her lover Frank. In Scene Three we see her failed attempt:

> VAL: I'm leaving him. I'm going to London on the train. I'm taking the girls, I've left him a note and that's it. You follow us soon as you can. It's the only thing. New life.
>
> FRANK: Where are you going to live?
>
> How much money do you have?
>
> VAL: Fifty-six pounds. I'll get a job. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 151-152)

Val realising that she is too unskilled to work in London stays in the village and goes to Frank's house to live with him. The "Girl's Song" of Scene Seven tells the same story of yearning, aspirations but which can never be realised as the girl's social destiny does not allow it. The song goes:

> I want to be a nurse when I grow up
> And I want to have children and get married.
> But I don't think I'll leave the village when I grow up.

> I'm never going to leave the village when I grow up even when
> I get married
> . . .
> I want to be a hairdresser when I grow up or perhaps a teacher
> . . .
> I want to be a cook when I grow up
> . . .
> I don't mind much about what I want to be.
> I don't mind housework. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 157)

From the song we clearly see the internalization of patriarchal traditions and an acceptance of their marginality as they dare not venture out of the confines of their village and are trapped into early marriage and labour by a sex/gender system that does not favour women outside the household. On the nexus between women's labour and domesticity Sian Adiseshiah observes that, "the interaction between women's position in the workforce and in the family thus produces a powerful economic and ideological entrenchment of their subordination both inside and outside the home" (Adiseshiah 147).

The play enacts the women constantly working and moving from labour to domestic work and most of the action revolves round manual labour. Churchill does not only highlight the strenuous work but also is resilient in uncovering the susceptibility of the women as low-paid wage earners. In Scene Two, one witness's intra-sex exploitation when Val's request to leave early from work becomes an opportunity for Mrs. Hassett, the gangmaster working under Mr. Tewson to assert her authority which her class difference through capital allows. Her response to Val's request as "You think twice before you ask me for work again" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 148), is a reminder for all the women present. One can draw a parallel to her and the women in the employment agency of *Top Girls* who cannot see their fellow women as sisters which makes collective liberation impossible to be achieved. This division based on class has been a point of debate within feminism, especially Socialist- Feminism

which argues against the notion that material development in women would solve this class difference. In the play Churchill subverts this notion by illustrating that the plight of several women cannot be changed within the present bourgeois capitalist economics. This same concern within feminism had been tackled by bell hooks who, in trying to negotiate race and class differences in feminist praxis writes of the importance of solidarity in her book *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* writes as:

> Solidarity strengthens resistance struggle. There can be no mass based feminist movement to end sexist oppression without a united front-women must take the initiative and demonstrate the power of solidarity. Unless we can show that barriers separating women can be eliminated, that solidarity can exist, we cannot hope to change and transform society as a whole. (hooks 44)

Caryl Churchill does not only give importance to women in the work force but also addresses their domestic role in *Fen*. In Scene Eleven which is positioned between two scenes where the women perform harsh labour, we see Shirley who had just finished packing onions working in her house going from one job to another never resting. She is ironing, cooking or minding the baby while Val is there without doing anything. Val having left her daughters for Frank has freed herself from her motherly responsibility, however she is guilty and becomes emotional after holding the baby as her identity constructed through motherhood and domesticity which, she had internalized, does not allow her to have that guilt free freedom. It is in the conversation between the two women that the cycle of early marriage, motherhood, entrapment in domesticity, poverty and oppression is elucidated. Shirley's confession that "I was a grandmother at thirty two" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 168)reveals how early she had married and that the cycle never ends as her daughter must have also become a mother very early.

The sheer endurance of the women and their acceptance of their plight are known as Shirley tells Val:

> SHIRLEY: You've too much time in your hands. You start thinking. Can't think when you're working in the field can you? It's work work, then you think, 'I wonder what the time is', and it's dinner time. Then you work again and you think, 'I wonder if it's time to go home,' and it is. Mind you, if I didn't need the money I wouldn't do any bugger out of a job. (168)

The continued exploitation of the women is also known as the other work option available to them is work like being domestic servants as Shirley who tells Val that she had gone "into service" at the age of fifteen and hated it. The 'Girls Song' sung by Deb and Shona Val's daughters and Becky, Angela's stepdaughter also reveals their yearning for an alternative livelihood like being a nurse, a hairdresser, a cook and even a teacher. But the song itself negates such possibilities as the song predicts 'I don't think I'll leave the village when I grow up' and predicts the future of the daughters that they will eventually follow their mother's predicaments. The future of the girls reminds one of the 'frightening' nightmare that Angie has in *Top Girls* in which the job opportunities may seem plentiful while compared to the non-existent opportunities of the women in *Fen*. Churchill highlights in both the plays the harsh reality under which women's lives exists be it a monetarist economy or in the peaceful veneer of rural life. Churchill subverts the idealised and romanticised image of the working woman often valorised by Liberal Feminism at the same time highlights the inherent differences which needs to be addressed in order to have effective activism. As she had said that her aim is to de-romanticise the supposed realities such as:

> The English have an idea that the real England is the countryside, and that it's a beautiful retreat, completely separate from the corrupt values of people

> living in cities...But it's a pastoral fantasy. (Fitzsimmons 67)

The realities of motherhood and its implications on the subjective identities of women have been the subject of debate within feminism. As Sian Adiseshiah observes from the ideology of motherhood as serving capital:

> The reification and sentimentalising of motherhood as the most natural and desirable identity for women masks the unpaid labour, unreciprocated devotion, the strong sense of sacrifice, and the alienation to which women as mothers are subject in the context of a capitalist and patriarchal system. (Adiseshiah 139)

If one views motherhood from the above observation it involves painful contradiction. In fact the reality is often that women eventually have to make a choice between motherhood and work entrenched between social expectations and lived reality. In both *Fen* and *Top Girls* Churchill places motherhood as a pervasive reality of women. In *Fen* we see a variety of representations of motherhood which is different from the romanticised image that all women are pressured to achieve.

The struggle with motherhood and the 'self' which is in conflict with personal aspirations and social expectation is manifested most in Val who is in conflict with her identity as a mother and a woman with aspirations to fulfil. Knowing what society and tradition expects of her she flees from the personal confinement that motherhood entails. In scene four we see her leaving her daughters, she tells Deb the elder one "you're to be a good girl Deb, and look after Shona. Mummy will come and see you all the time . . . Mummy loves you very much" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 152-153). In scene five we have only the stage direction which says "VAL *and* FRANK *dance together. Old-fashioned, formal, romantic, happy*" (153). This is the only romance one sees in the play which has ironical implications as Val not able to find fulfilment both inside and outside motherhood turns to her friends for

comfort, when all they can advise her with is the sense of acceptance of their trajectory but not rebellion or a better alternative. Shirley tells her "You've got too much time on your hands" (168) and Angela who doesn't have children judges her as "Leave her own kiddies. If I had my own kiddies I wouldn't leave them" (164) to which the guilty Val turns to religion but unlike the Margaret who is saved from her alcohol addiction by God through giving her a sign, she cannot see the meaning of the 'sign' and for her religion turns out to be a sham as her predicament cannot be solved at the present moment with a sign so Val "rather take valium" (176) rather than religion. It is this web of entrenchment from which Val not being able to escape forces Frank to kill her as it is only in her defacement from her surroundings can Val finds an escape. Here Churchill churns out the dilemma beneath the facade of "motherhood" which women often hide to live up to the expectation of society.

It is the deep-rooted idealised role given to motherhood which feeds the ideology of the family unit which can be an unachievable ideal that constructs the un-reproductive woman as deviant. This is clearly elaborated in the case of Nell, who is the most progressive character in *Fen*, the woman who dares to question and understand how the web of exploitation pervades their everyday lives. Unlike the other women Nell does not maintain an identity within the circle of women and maternity but somehow manages to sustain an identity outside the engulfing sphere of motherhood and maternity. However, Nell manages to identify with the other women and it is her who stands up for them as in Scene Two where she argues Mrs. Hassett for Angela's sake and questions her abusive authority as, "You paying her what she's done" and to Mrs Hassett's reply and threat "Will you mind your own business or she won't be the only one don't get picked up tomorrow morning", Nell justly answers "It is my business. You treat me the same" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 150). Nell is one amongst the women in both the plays who maintains a collective identity instead of an individual one inspite of her difference amongst the women in her community. Nevertheless,

due to the pervasiveness of the image of the ideal mother in her immediate surroundings her femininity is questioned. This is shown when even the younger girls watching her hoeing her garden taunts and makes fun of her. They ask "Is she a man?/ No, she's a morphrodite./ Is she a witch?" (155). The girls teased and taunted her to such an extent as to attack her with the gardening hoe and asks her "Are you a witch" (157). Here Nell's experience is described by Adiseshiah as, "*Fen's* Nell suffers, however, through experiencing the isolation that attends the contravention of deep- rooted behavioural expectations of women" (Adiseshiah 143). The internalization of the same expectation is embodied in the girls treatment of Nell and also the 'Girl's Song' in which they cannot dream beyond motherhood and domesticity. Churchill shows how the 'deviant' identity is constructed to those who choose to maintain an identity outside of the societal expectations and how one can rise above such prejudiced expectations and the possibility and yearning of subverting an oppressive ideology, when Nell tells the girls "Nasty, nasty. What will you grow up like? Nasty. You should be entirely different. Everything. Everything" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 157).

In the representation of women's oppression by class and gender divisions, Churchill is persistent to problematize the notion of a collective identity of women as one class which tends to hide the material differences and disparities that exists between women. In both *Top Girls* and *Fen* Churchill juxtaposes the question and implications of a class- insensitive feminism at the same time alluding to a feminism based solely on class representation. In *Fen* Churchill's Feminism with Socialist implication is unrestrained in her dramatisation of class and identity in which women are pushed to the centre of representation for both feminist and socialist discourses. As already elucidated, the oppressive environment under which the women work and live adds to their oppression as 'women' under the binary of patriarchy and capitalism, but at the same time, Churchill brilliantly sketches underneath the drudgery of a

community with vivid history, pride and culture, which comforts the inhabitant in times of tragedy.

Memory is used through which the women draw a link between the present and the past making present oppression more bearable. The more elderly of the community like Ivy who is ninety years old, remembers on her birthday a more lively history of working class activism and trade unionism, when she retells of a time when her husband Jack would walk without shoes "through the night to the union meeting" and how the generations of farm owners would dissuade the labourers from supporting the trade union. Ivy recalls a "fellow come round his bike and made his speech in the empty street and everybody'd be in the house listening because they daren't go out because old Mr. Tewson might say. 'Vote for the blues, boys', he'd say and he'd give them money to drink" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 177-178). Ivy's recollection of the past is contrasted to the present where there is no sign of any activism as such but the bleak reality of capitalist manipulation of the inhabitants through which Churchill puts socialist discourse at the centre of conflict.

The representation of the shared oppression of class and gender under patriarchal capitalism is enacted and voiced in the lives of the agriculture rural workers who had been neglected by Liberal Feminist praxis and even the trade union movements. Churchill through a dramatisation of their poverty and realities of their laborious lives voices their integrity and aspirations. For the realities of their lives to be best dramatised Churchill interweaves into her dramaturgy elements of the surreal. The cycle of oppression is best enacted in the three generations of women - Ivy, May's mother and May who is Val's mother. The three women from grandmother, daughter and granddaughter as their stories tell do not have the power to fulfil their aspirations. In May, we see a woman who had suppressed her desire to be a singer as she knows that her societal reality in which she is trapped would never allow her an opportunity. The cycle of oppression is best enacted in Val who makes her lover Frank kill

her as she sees no solution to her dilemma of being trapped between personal freedom and domestic responsibility.

In order to link the past, present and future with its cycle of oppression Churchill uses surreal representations which links multiple and collective voices to tell a shared cycle of oppression. In Scene Twenty One as Frank kills Val, she comes back as a ghost who tells of the tragic predicaments of dead souls, she tells passionately:

> VAL: There's so much happening. There's all those people and I know about Them. There's a girl who died. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 188).

Val in particular is telling the girl's story, whose "baby died starving" and this is same story of poverty which can be connected to the ghost that Mr. Tewson met whose baby also died 'starving' which retells the cycle of oppression experienced by the women. Here, through the surreal scene the women are able to tell the stories of their personal pains in a passionate climax of the play. To interject the scene with an element of resistance Nell walks out on 'stilts' as a reminder of how the original inhabitants of the Fen land walked and in an act of defiance she walks out of Fen and announces "I won't turn back for you or anyone" even though she hears an ominous voice in the form of "the sun" telling her to turn back. In adding pathos to the telling of personal oppression, the image of a never ending drudgery is enacted in the scene where "SHIRLEY is ironing the field" (188). In the final scene of the play, May who wanted to sing stands on the stage and the stage direction states "MAY is there singing" (190) when there is no sound to be heard. The ironical implication of the surreal last scene of the play is that it depicts the impossibility of the fulfilment of personal aspirations and the cycle of oppression to end in a politics which is flawed by sex and class hierarchies.

Churchill through the dramatization of the agricultural workers shows how sex and gender oppression eats at the very core of a hierarchically divided society and that any form of politics, be it feminism or socialism, its activism would be meaningless, if it does not

encompass all and be a collectivist movement beyond an individualist propaganda. In being a reminder of her Socialist- Feminist agenda, Churchill places class and gender oppression at the forefront of the play. In depicting the tragic predicaments of women, Churchill does not enact the images of a feminist superwoman or the idealised woman but rather depict the reality behind the stereotypes thereby subverting a feminist politics that rubs to the faces to women the images of an ideal that in reality is impossible to attain. In interconnecting importance of class and gender in *Top Girls* and *Fen*, Sian Adiseshiah observes that:

> Both *Top Girls* and *Fen* reproduce the intersection of class and gender oppression. *Top Girls* plays out the vulnerability of a class-insensitive feminism, while simultaneously implicating a class politics that ignores a feminist agenda. *Fen* performs a palpable sense of the lived dynamic of the two oppressions, foregrounding the lives of working-class women as both the setting and protagonists of the drama. (Adiseshiah 157)

Churchill through the dramatization of economically deprived agricultural labourers reveals the economic, political and social elements which influences such hidden communities which play a vital role in the development of an economic system on which larger societies thrive on. At the same time Churchill proves that the topic and subject of dramatic art or feminist art need not be only based on glossy familiarities of the privileged few but that a feminist politics be it in art form or in activism need to be all encompassing and collectivist.

END NOTES

[1]Churchill stated her views on the political nature of feminism and the inherent interrelated nature of Feminism with Socialism in her interview with, Kathleen Betsko, Rachel Koenig and Emily Mann which was published in "Interview with Caryl Churchill". Comp. Lee. A. Jacobus. *Introduction to Drama: A Bedford Book.* New York: St. Martin's Press. 1989. 1078-1081. Print.

[2]The name of the American author and feminist Gloria Jean Watkins uses a pseudonym in the honour of her great grandmother Bell Blair Hooks. hooks chooses not to capitalize the first letters of her name so that the focus will be on her work not on her name.

http://feministsforchoice.com/womens-history-month-bell-hooks.htm.>

[3]In order to bring out the individualist and despotic approach of Marlene's feminism, Churchill brings in an analogy with Hitler, using the feminised pseudonym 'Hitlerina'.

[4]Realism is a movement in the art and literature which according to *Collin's English Dictionary* "advocates detailed realistic and factual description . . . Realism attempts to represent the familiar or typical in real life, rather than the idealised, formalised or romantic interpretation of it". The movement was at its peak in the last two decades of the nineteenth century and emerged again in the Kitchen Sink dramas of the 1950s and 1960s in the works of Arnold Wesker, John Osborne. Refer to, *Drama and Theatre Arts*. R.A Banks and P. Marson,London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1998. Print.

[5]East Anglia is a peninsula of eastern England. Before the 17th century East Anglia was dominated by lowland marshes called the Fens. It flooded frequently but at the same time provided its local inhabitants with livelihood through fish and fowl. Many landowners wanted to make this land productive agriculturally which could be achieved only through draining. http://visitely.eastcambs.gov.uk/history/draining-fens/>

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CHAPTER – IV

CHURCHILL'S IDEOLOGY OF INTERSUBJECTIVITY

> I'd been thinking quite a lot . . . about methods of social control in general... about how you can control people without the necessity of violent means once you have a whole lot of systems to fit into.[1]

The parallel between Churchill's Feminism and Socialism is not only evident in her women centred plays but also in plays like *Softcops*, a play with an all-male cast and *Cloud Nine*. Churchill's social commitment makes her question the manifestations of power in various forms which engulfs every aspect of social and individual identities through its various institutions. Churchill questions power, its role in identity formation and the means by which it is manifested.

The chapter studies the issues in Churchill's two plays *Softcops* and *Cloud Nine* which addresses subjectivity and identity formation perpetuated through normalization of individuals in order to adhere to the dictates of the status quo. This normalization can take place in various levels, be it through the dictates of the law and the penal system or the normalization of gender identities through various social institutions. The plays will be studied with the analysis of the theoretical formulation of Michel Foucault on power and the questions raised on sexuality and gender by Judith Butler.

The play *Softcops* was written in 1978 but was performed only in 1984. On the development of the play Churchill acknowledges the influence of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* which she observes as "fascinatingly analyses the changes in methods of control and punishment" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 4). She commented in an interview that the play:

> shows how hospitals, schools, crime, prisons- things whose existence in their present form one might take for granted- how they're connected...and what

> effects . . . it can have on you . . . Being free from that control is helped by understanding how it works. (Fitzsimmons 73)

The play *Softcops* is set in the nineteenth century which follows the Foucauldian genealogy of history as evident in *Discipline and Punish* which Churchill acknowledges as, "when I came across the Foucault book, and was so thrilled with it that I set the play not here but in nineteenth century France" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 3). Maintaining her postmodernist innovative and experimental style, the characters are trans-historical and in order for the historicist enactment of the development of the punitive system, Churchill borrows from Foucault various personalities mentioned in *Discipline and Punish* and the punitive ideas or techniques advocated or developed by them. However, the play is not to be read or interpreted only in the light of a Foucauldian reading but keep in mind that Churchill shares a similar ideology with Foucault the "corresponding concern with the operations of power and its individualising techniques" (Thomas 160).

Softcops is made up of scenes or tableaus which enacts and demonstrates the various forms of punishments rendered throughout history in order to normalise and control people or bodies. The chronological linearity which traditional playwriting favours is not followed and each scene or tableau can be compared to Brechtian 'gestus' or episodic scene which has its individual importance in itself while at the same time is connected to the other scenes making each scene of the play meaningfully intertwined with each other. The play's main characters are Pierre, a nineteenth century social reformer who is adamant in making every criminal punishment a public spectacle so as to reform society. The other characters include Vidocq, a criminal who became chief of police and Lacenaire, a murderer and thief [2]. Churchill also personifies Jeremy Bentham[3] in the play who demonstrates his 'Panoptic' system of punishment as seen in *Discipline and Punish*.

The play opens with Pierre supervising the preparation of a scaffold for the public displaying of the punishment of Duval, a thief and Lafayette, a murderer. Pierre pays acute attention to detail in the draping of the scaffold in black, which symbolises grief and red ribbons which "is a symbol of blood and passion, the blood shed by passion and the blood shed by Reason in justice and grief" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 6). The first scene or tableau is a demonstration of punishment as a public spectacle which is being demonstrated to school boys brought by their headmaster for educational purpose. For a social reformer like Pierre and an agent of discipline like the headmaster, school children are the perfect subjects for instruction of the power of the law, and thrilled by the presence of the school boys, Pierre exclaims "Ah, you've brought them for me. I need children with their soft minds to take the impression" (5) of "punishment as education" (8) for which a boy is made to read a sign which says "Jean Lafayette murdered his employer by strangling and will himself be strangled by hanging in the neck" (6). The demonstration of criminal punishment in the scene takes the form of a ceremony with a procession of a magistrate dressed in black, an executioner in red, a prisoner in a cart dressed in black except for his right hand in red glove. The prisoner has a placard around his neck which says "Jacques Duval, thief" (7). The red glove symbolises the hand that had stolen a leg of lamb. The children are there to learn the power of the law from the examples set by the criminals through the public maiming of their bodies and execution.

The irony behind the making of a spectacle for such public execution can be deciphered in the magistrate's speech which Pierre had written in advance.

> Magistrate: This is the day of mourning.
>
> We are, you see, in black. We mourn that one of our citizens
>
> has broken the law. We mourn that we must separate ourselves
>
> from this citizen and inflict this penalty upon him . . . And it is

with grief that his right hand will be taken from him. (9)

The contents of the speech show the beginnings of the classification of criminals into a separate class, the criminal class and their stereotyping. After this speech the criminal Duval is put on the scaffold to make a supposed repentance speech written by Pierre. The speech reveals both the wrongs of the act of theft and the social order.

Duval. I, Jacques Duval. Under sentence of having my right hand cut off

Learn by my terrible example. Never steal even if you're hungry . . .

Watch what is done to me today and remember it tomorrow. (10)

As the speech has been written by Pierre, it does not seem to have any effect on the criminal as it is addressed more to the crowd than the heart of the criminal. Duval's hand is cut off and he faints, while a school boy Luc turns aside sick from what he had witnessed for which he is made to stand with his arms over his head as a disciplinary precaution by the headmaster. The scene enacts the fact that during the eighteenth century discipline and punitive measures were aimed at the body not the soul or conscience of the criminal to the extent that limbs were pulled apart by horses as public spectacle. The maiming of the body in such executions reveals how power preserves its hegemony as a natural law through the bodies of the condemned. Foucault observes that:

> The atrocity that haunted the public execution played, therefore, a double role: it was the principle of the communication between the crime and the punishment in relation to the crime. It provided the spectacle with both truth and power; it was the culmination of the ritual of the investigation and the ceremony in which the sovereign triumphed. (*Discipline* 56)

But this do not always achieve the desired results as crowd often rioted against the law and take the side of the criminal as the minister from his experience tells Pierre.

Minister. People don't want to read, they don't want speeches...what's the use

of punishment if nobody sees it? . . .

They don't want a school, they want a festival.

On the possibility of subversion and reversal of the achievement of the desired effect of Pierre's idea of reformation, the minister tells him:

Minister. Listen my boy people have vile dreams. The man who dares cut a throat while while he's awake is there hero. But justice dares cut and burn and tear a man's body, far beyond what he did . . . So they worship us. That's why it's a festival. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 12)

In the first tableau of the play Churchill shows the fruitlessness of punishment as public spectacle. A close and critical reading of the scene may bring to light certain power plays that are intrinsic to such punitive public displays. Churchill's plays including *Softcops* reveal the workings of power and "operations of power and their individualising techniques" (Thomas 161). Michel Foucault in his analysis of how the means of punishment moved from public execution in the eighteenth century to the prison cell of contemporary times reveals how it is the agenda of power to disguise itself as a natural law in the guise of concern over a more humane punishment. The forces which maintain power as a natural law make sure that subversive elements in culture are silenced, excluded or marginalised whereby the notion of what is 'truth' is difficult to question. Jane Thomas defends Churchill's dramaturgy as:

> Her plays challenge the notion of truth . . . They do so by privileging and articulating deviant or subversive knowledges which have been silenced or disqualified in the interests of social control or normalisation . . .
>
> Her investigation of the way power functions is grounded in an analysis of the forms of resistance associated with its exercise. (162-163)

The subjects in Churchill's dramaturgy are thus women, children, homosexuals, racial minorities, the insane, criminals – those who are often treated with the necessity of being

normalised to the dictates of power. Churchill shows that the network of power is more clearly revealed when attention is given to the very subjects that have been silenced. This is a necessity which makes her Socialist and Feminist agendas make a point through her plays.

As the network of power passes through the various social institutions and individuals Michel Foucault concentrates on what he calls 'human sciences', discourses on psychiatry, sexuality, medicine and criminology. In *Discipline and Punish* Foucault traces the development of corporeal punishment as public spectacle to incarceration through the disciplinary techniques of normalisation through surveillance which he claims as "the body as a major target of penal repression disappeared" (*Discipline* 8) and observes that

> The body now serves as an instrument or intermediary: if one intervenes upon it to imprison it . . . in order to deprive the individual of a liberty that is regarded both as a right and as property. The body according to this penalty, is caught up in a system of constraints and privation, obligations and prohibitions . . . punishment has become an economy of suspended rights. (11)

The 'body' thus becomes the most important tool for the perpetuation of power and "power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, mark it, train it, torture it, force to carry out tasks . . . This political investment of the body is bound up . . . with its economic use...the body becomes useful only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (25-26). As seen in Churchill's enactment of the punishment of a subjected tortured body, and its failure to bring about the desired result of repentance, corporeal punishment moved from the maiming of the physical to the desire for a rehabilitation of the soul through disciplinary measures carried out through different social institutions in which the 'body' serves as both subject and tool for the enactment of power hegemony.

The shift from the techniques of punishment from the body to the mind and the solution to Pierre's dilemma of the possibility of punishment without the use of the body is demonstrated in the next tableau of the play. The site for punishment and control had shifted from the maiming of the body to the making of 'docile' and obedient subjects. This is shown in the play through the enactment of how schoolchildren are disciplined by their headmaster. As the stage direction in the play demonstrates:

> *The* HEADMASTER *rings a bell.* SCHOOLCHILDREN *run to their benches. Some of them are wearing harness to correct their posture.*
>
> (Churchill, *Plays:2* 30)

The reform of the means of punishment is not solely for the punishment of the criminal alone, but it has its roots deeply embedded in the societal set up. As Foucault observes:

> The true objective of the reform movement, even in its most general formulations, was not so much to establish a new right to punish based on more equitable principles, as to set up a new 'economy' of the power to punish, to assure its better distribution, so that it should be neither too concentrated at certain privileged points . . . so that it should be distributed in homogeneous circuits capable of operating everywhere, in a continuous way, down the finest grain of the social body. (*Discipline* 80)

The pedagogical institutions like the school and their disciplinary techniques served as a medium by which power is distributed 'down to the finest grain'. Churchill in her resilience in revealing power's hidden agenda of social control enacts how bodies are made docile through the school system. In another stage direction she re-enacts Foucault's account of how the Brothers of the Christian Schools used a wooden apparatus, which he records as:

> It was called *par excellence* the 'Signal'. . . the first and principal use of the signal is to attract at once the attention of all the pupils to the teacher

> and to make them attentive . . . whenever a pupil hears the noise of the signal, he will imagine that he is hearing the voice of the teacher or rather the voice of God. (166)

In the following stage direction, Churchill demonstrates a parody of the above quoted disciplinary technique:

> *The* HEADMASTER *has a wooden clapper with which he signals instructions to the* CHILDREN. *He gives a book to a* CHILD*, signals once, and the* CHILD *starts to read in Latin. The* CHILD *makes a mistake, the* HEADMASTER *signals twice. The* CHILD *goes back, makes the same mistake, the* HEADMASTER *signals three times. The* CHILD *goes back to the beginning of the passage. Soon the* HEADMASTER *signals for the* CHILD *to stop, one signal. He makes a gesture and signals once. The* CHILDREN *start writing.* (Churchill, *Plays:2* 31)

A critical reading of the above not only reveals the means of control within a classroom but a corpus of power play by which society is administered. Churchill through the enactment of the act of discipline in its simplest form highlights to its readers and observers the way by which subversive elements are repressed and subversive activities, individuals, subjects are normalised. It is the methods of discipline as demonstrated above which Foucault observes as making "possible the meticulous control of the operations of the body, which assured the constant subjection of its forces and imposed upon them a relation of docility-utility, might be called 'disciplines'" (*Discipline* 137). He further elaborates the control by power over the human body which not only controls it as a means of discipline but the means of control which dictates one's gender, subjectivity, sex and even sexuality as:

> The human body was entering a machinery of power that explores it, breaks it down and rearranges it. A 'political anatomy', which was also a

> ‘mechanics of power’, was being born . . . Thus discipline produces subjected and practiced bodies, ‘docile bodies’. (138)

The repression of subversive subjects or deviant individuals is demonstrated in a subtle yet critical way in the way the boy Luc is caned and taught to control his impulses when he gets excited by the noise of the distant crowd. This kind of normalising technique is demonstrated with the children in harness to correct their postures which the headmaster explains its purpose when Pierre mistook it as a punishment. The headmaster explains its benefits as “it helps his back grow straight . . . They will all be normal in time” (Churchill *Plays: 2,* 32), and claims proudly that “I enjoy my work. I see the results of it. Their bodies can be helped by harness. And their minds are fastened every moment of the day to a fine rigid frame”. To this the confused Pierre exclaims “if I could fasten the prisoner to a frame...If I could fasten the public to a frame” (32-33) which he thinks is yet impossible but which ironically will be demonstrated to him.

The inter-relatedness of power and discipline, and its control over the behaviour of individuals through discipline, and not by force is best enacted through Churchill’s re-enactment of Foucault’s account of Jeremy Bentham’s Panopticon. In *Softcops*, Churchill uses Pierre as a subject on which the personified Jeremy Bentham demonstrates his Panoptic means of control. This ‘panoptic’ means of control is a system in which, a surveillance tower is surrounded by an annular building divided into cells with its windows placed corresponding to the windows of the tower, in which light penetrates from one window to the other. The building is designed in such a way that inmate in each cell can be seen by one supervisor from the central tower. Here the inmate can be a criminal, a madman, a worker or even a schoolboy. The main reason behind the Panopticon is that it maintains discipline and obedience from an individual through the knowledge of being constantly watched. This makes punishment or discipline more effective while diminishing its economic cost.

In the play the character of Jeremy Bentham makes Pierre imagine himself to be a prisoner sitting inside his cell while he goes behind a curtain watching him. While Pierre thinks he is being watched Jeremy Bentham comes out secretly unseen by Pierre who continues to sit. He soon becomes bored and accepts that "it's most ingenious, Mr. Bentham, an excellent means of control. Without chains, without pain", to which Jeremy Bentham explains the concept as, "you don't need to be watched all the time. What matters is that you think you're watched" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 39-40). Foucault in tracing the development of the modern punitive system through the centuries, in which power is distributed, observes the effect of the Panopticon as:

> To induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures automatic functioning of power. (*Discipline* 200)

This effect of the Panopticon is similar to the way power is diffused in a society and the power that it wields over individuals. Foucault further observes that:

> He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (*Discipline* 202-203)

As quoted above, it is through this Panopticon like schema that normalisation works within society. Here, one is reminded of Louis Althusser's observation which he calls "*interpellation* or hailing" and further observes "*all ideology hails or interpellates concrete individuals as concrete subjects"* (Althusser 117-118). This is what Churchill demonstrates in the last tableau of the play. Individuals are never free from subjugation as power is no longer based on the corporal but attains a non-visible form which is self-perpetuating.

In the last tableau, Pierre is supervising a group of 'MEN' in a beach and converses with a 'HOLIDAYMAKER' and drinking wine. Pierre slightly drunk admits that he had "turned mobs into individuals" through the non-violent means of punishment. But the idle conversation is disturbed when one of the men attacked him who is shot dead by guards who lept out of nowhere in the seemingly peaceful environment. Churchill seems to highlight the way power infiltrates every corner of the societal set up especially in the places which seems most innocent. The man Legrand who attacked Pierre failed to fulfil the role assigned to him while at the same time the system which aims to rehabilitate him also fail by resorting to violence when its foundations seem to be threatened.

Churchill questions the notion of freedom given to individuals. This freedom can mean different things to different individuals. In some it can take the form of religious freedom or political freedom or sexual freedom as the kinds of freedom that one wish are varied. In the end of *Softcops,* Pierre rehearses a speech that he is to make from which the interrelatedness of all systems of discipline and their deployment by power is evident. He says:

> I shall just explain quite simply how the criminals are punished, the
> sick are cured, the workers are supervised, the ignorant are educated,
> the unemployed are registered, the insane are normalised, the criminals-
> no wait a minute. The criminals are supervised. The insane are cured. The
> the sick are normalised. The workers are registered. The unemployed
> are educated. The ignorant are punished . . . Something along those lines.
> (Churchill, *Plays:2* 49)

The above speech of Pierre seem to ask the same question which Foucault asks as "Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prison" (*Discipline* 228). The ending of the play is unresolved while the group of men can be

interpreted as “presumably representative of all deviations from the bourgeois norm including non-whites and women” (Thomas 169-170). In the end all attention is focused on Pierre who in the beginning was a social reformer has become an agent of normalisation of one of the institutes of the power network. Pierre is the inventor of the power network but is mainly a tool of what Foucault identifies as the “carceral network” (*Discipline* 301). The ending of the play seem to suggest that even though the means of punishment have become more humane over the centuries the power play is more deeply embedded deep into its social grain. Jane Thomas observes that “Individuals are merely reconstituted as subjects of power and objects of its necessary correlative knowledge” (Thomas 169). The law and its punitive power with the prison as its tool is used as an example of how power seeps through every thread of the social fabric by which a reader or audience of the play can decipher their very assimilation and participation as subjects and objects within the same system of normalisation. Churchill representation of the society in *Softcops* is corollary to what Foucault calls the present human society as “panoptic society” (*Discipline* 301) and links the various social apparatuses as “linked to a whole series of ‘carceral’ mechanisms which seems distinct enough- since they are intended to alleviate pain, to cure, to comfort- but which all tend, like the prison, to exercise a power of normalisation” (308).

Churchill through the play does not propose a solution or favour mindless revolt but simply brings out the invisible but ever present power structure which influences every individual. The play have been criticised as having no purpose for her Feminist agenda on account of an all male cast but one have to argue for the fact that it is these power structure of the ‘carceral network’ by which women have been subjected. Churchill by highlighting how the carceral network perpetuates itself has charted a map by which women can use in order to find points of resistance and subversion.

In *Softcops*, Churchill enacts the intersubjectivity of all individual subjects regardless of ones gender and identity. The 'men' in the play are subjects as much as women are of the same power structure which is adamant in retaining its power hegemony. Here, if one relates or translates power structure to the phallic symbol or phallus in psychological terms and in its signification of sexual identity or identity in general, the concept of Jacques Lacan is of importance. For Lacan, "it is the phallus that fixes meaning (temporarily)" and Lacan considers not the flesh but the symbolic representative and "substitutes one sexual part, the phallus, and he makes it stand for the whole of sexuality" (Green and LeBihan 172). If it is the phallus and it's signified that leads to marginality in the Symbolic order, than it is in the possibility of the signification of different meanings that marginality becomes intersubjective, "supposedly open to men and women alike" (173). Malcolm Bowie reiterates Lacan's Symbolic order as, "In the Symbolic order 'nothing exists on an assumed foundation of absence. Nothing exists except in so far as it does not exist' . . . the Symbolic is inveterately intersubjective and social" (Bowie 92-93). If there is no fixing of meaning or identity in the Symbolic order, than it is not only women or one identity which can be considered the 'Other' –deprived of the phallus and becomes the marginalised subject, but that subjectivity is not fixed by which all identities are susceptible of being marginalised. Churchill in *Softcops* through her innovative all male casting demonstrates the intersubjective nature of identities, be it biological or socially acquired identities and subverts the assumption that it is not only the female who is with a 'lack' in the absence of a signified phallus but that "it is the affliction of all subjects, male and female, within the Symbolic realm" (Green and LeBihan 173).

This concern which Churchill seems to have on the very structure of power in the real world does not convey that her Socialist agenda is more important than her Feminism but shows how the two are always interconnected in Churchill's dramaturgy. Janelle Reinelt also

observes that the absence of women in the play as having profound implications for the feminist project as "women do not have to be represented on the stage for a gender critique to take place or for a feminist politic to underlie the dramaturgy" (qtd. in Aston 63).

Churchill's Socialist and Feminist trajectory is not only concerned with the control of power on women but also on the issue of gender formation and sexual identities. The 'carceral network' which is demonstrated through the prison system in *Softcops* is focussed towards gender and sexuality.

In the play *Cloud Nine* which was written in 1979, Caryl Churchill, displays "the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression, the mentality of interiorised oppression" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 45). The play is written in two acts; the first act is set in the colonial era of 1879 and the second act traces the characters from act one to a London setting of 1979, although the time shift for the characters is only twenty five years. Act one of the play is opened by an introduction by the patriarch, Clive who introduces his family who are gathered around a flagpole displaying the Union Jack; Betty his supposed wife is played by a man which is suppose to enact the fact that she is a man's creation and had become what a man wants her to be. Edward the son on whom Clive tries to impose traditional male behaviour is played by a woman; the black servant Joshua who wants to be white is also played by a white man. The daughter Victoria represented as a doll does not have a voice. The mother in law Maud and Ellen the governess are not introduced as they are not important enough as single women. Clive the head of the family makes a speech which resonates with elements of colonial pride and chauvinism, he states:

> This is my family. Though far from home.
> We serve the Queen where ever we may roam.
> I am the father of the natives here.
> And father to my family dear.

On introducing his wife he claims:

> My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be.
> And everything she is she owes to me.

Betty replies back:

> I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life.
> I am a man's creation as you see. (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 1)

On introducing his black servant Joshua, Clive said:

> You'd hardly notice that the fellow's black.

On which Joshua retorts back:

> My skin is black but oh! My soul is white.
> I hate my tribe my master is my light.
> What white men want is what I want to be.

On his introduction of his son Edward, a note of disappointment comes through:

> I am doing all I can to teach him to grow up like a man.

Edward replies:

> What father wants I'd dearly like to be. I find it rather hard as you can see. (3)

In the introduction itself, the eighteenth century ethos of the family, as a mechanism of social control to propagate what Foucault calls the "jurisdico-political" (Foucault, *History* 82) dimension is seen. Clive serves the Queen/Monarch or Law and in his family he is the Law. In the treatment of Edward, his identity is a blur as he claims first hand that he finds it difficult to be what his father or the Law wants him to be, which is 'a man'. In the conversation that follows we are acquainted to other characters and a conversation between husband and wife follows. Betty had recently moved to the colonial space in which Clive is serving and is finding it difficult to adapt yet. She talks of her boredom and the monotony but not wanting to disappoint her husband who so proudly serves the Queen she says, "If I lack society that is my form of service", on which Clive replies, "That's a brave girl. No fainting. No hysteria?" (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 4) Within the conversation, the news of the coming of

Harry, a visitor is conveyed. The scene is followed by the entering of Victoria aged 2 and Edward aged 9. Edward is seen playing with a doll and his mother chides him for it, she says,

It's Victoria's doll, what are you doing with it, Edward?

You don't want papa to see you with a doll.

Ellen, the governess replies for him

> He's minding it for Vicky.

Clive proudly replies

> Yes, it's manly for you to take care of your sister. (8)

From the above scenes, the construct of fixed sexual and gender identities and its strict imposition through the family unit is clearly elaborated. Churchill through her introduction of the family unit as an opening of the play seem to share the same view of Foucault that knowledge of sex led to, "Deployment of alliance, a system of marriage, of fixation and development of kinship ties" (*History* 106) which subsequently paved the way for what he termed as "Deployment of Sexuality". The deployment of alliance have the objectives "to reproduce the interplay of relations and maintain law and order; it is firmly tied to the economy due to the role it can play in the transmission of wealth" (106).

In the scene which ensues, Clive is seen bringing in a half conscious Mrs Saunders, their widowed neighbour and an air of tribal unrest is conveyed. Harry the visitor and Edward enter. From this instance we see Edward soliciting attention from Harry. Betty and Harry are left alone for a moment, and from their conversation their attraction for each other is known, Betty asks Harry:

> Betty. Am I dangerous?
> Harry. You are rather.
> Betty. Please like me.
> Harry. I worship you. (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 14)

They are about to embrace, on which Joshua intrudes and Betty runs into the house.

Act one, scene one ends with Harry and Joshua going into the barn soliciting what is implied as a sexual act.

Act one, scene two, opens with Clive and Mrs Saunders talking secretly about their sexual attraction for each other. Clive declares to her,

> You are dark like this continent, mysterious, treacherous . . .
>
> Don't shut me out Caroline, let me in. (15)

This scene ends with Clive disappearing under Mrs Saunders' skirt, which leads to his sexual gratification and leaves her unsatisfied while at the same time the singing of a Christmas Carol is heard which encodes family values. This scene is defamiliarised by the playwright which shows that desire and its fulfilment is also a mechanism of power over one individual over another individual. Mrs Saunders' unsatisfied desire is labelled as "voracious sexual appetite" (17) by Clive. The Victorian double standard of sexual morality is clearly brought to light. Elaine Aston argues that, "the Victorian skirt functions as a sign of the socially constructed feminine which displaces female desire and keeps the female body hidden from view" (Aston 34). A picnic scene follows in act one scene two, where the characters plays hide and seek. In the act of hiding, their secret relations are revealed. Joshua trying to please his master accuses the other black servants of conspiring rebellion and also tells, "your wife also thinks Harry Bagley a fine man" (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 21). The scene between Harry and Edward reveals a paedophilic relation, Edward being confused of his feelings declares,

> Edward. Harry, I love you.
>
> Harry. Yes I know, I love you too.
>
> Edward. You know what we did when you were here before. I want to do it again.
>
> Harry. I do, it's a sin and a crime and also it's wrong. (25)

The next scene shows Betty confessing her love for Harry to Ellen and Ellen declaring her lesbian love for Betty. Betty says:

Betty. I love Harry Bagley.
Ellen. How do you know you love him.
Betty. I kissed him.
Ellen. Like this Betty. (26)
Ellen kisses Betty.

From the above scene which reveals how the characters' appearances betray their true identities one may assume that they have constructed their identities and behaviour to meet the demands of the normalizing gaze who in the play takes the form of Clive.

Churchill's postmodernist use of Cross-dressing brings out the critique of constructed sexual identities more pungently as what the audience really see is Harry the grown up man with Edward played by a woman; Betty played by a man with Harry; Ellen kissing Betty who in reality is a man. This shows how identities are formed based on what the gaze dictates and that no matter how one tries to free oneself from its normalization they are always caught up in the web of control. However, Churchill does not negate the possibility of liberation from fixed identities but seem to share Foucault's theory on power and its hold over sexuality.

In *The History of Sexuality*,1979, Michel Foucault questions Power and its connotations as being repressive. He argues that the notion of power as being something which a group of people or an institution possesses and which is oppressive has its limitations. He moves beyond this view of power as repression of the powerless by the powerful and analyses how power operates within everyday relations between people and institutions. Foucault says that the word "Repression" (*History* 81) itself brings forth or entails the idea of a rebellious force that have to be kept in check at all times. At the same time he argues that, "where there is desire, the power relation is already present" (81). In other words power tries to repress the very thing that it feeds on. He writes that in order to study the dynamics of sex-power relation, "one has to first free oneself from what he calls

'jurisdico-discursive', which is the way law governs the instinct of repression and the thematic of desire" (82). The relationship of power and sex has always been considered to be negative, "one of rejection, exclusion, refusal, blockage and concealment". Power had always used Law to dictate sex. Foucault states, "sex is placed by power in a binary system: licit and illicit, permitted and forbidden. Sex is to be deciphered on the basis of its relation to the law". He also argues that, "powers hold on sex is maintained through language or rather through the act of discourse that creates the rule of law" (83). In the play Churchill elaborates how power maintains its control through discourse or apparatus like the institution of marriage in the next scene in which deviant impulses of the characters are corrected and disciplined.

In Act One, Scene Four, Clive interrogates Harry on his intentions towards his wife, not wanting any enmity between them, he declares:

> I know the friendship between us, 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.
> Clive. There is the necessity of reproduction.
> The family is all important. And there is pleasure.
> There is something dark about women, that
> threatens what is best in us. Between men that
> light burns brightly.

Harry agreeing with Clive and having misunderstood it as a declaration of Clive's attraction towards him, he took Clive in his arms, the shocked Clive retorts back,

> My god, Harry how Disgusting.
> I feel contaminated. The most revolting perversion.
> Rome fell Harry, and this sin can destroy an empire.
> A disease more dangerous than diphtheria.
> Effeminacy is contagious.

Harry implores Clive,

> Clive, help me, what am I to do.
>
> I am like a man crippled. (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 39-41)

Clive's solution to Harry's crippling problem is getting him married. Act one ends with Harry the sexual pervert getting married to Ellen the lesbian. Thus, on Clive's law of morality they were purified of their perversity through heterosexual marriage and are no longer a threat to the societal set up. The normalising gaze of Act One is Clive who is male, white, bourgeois under whose gaze his household becomes a panoptic microcosm of society whereby his subjects have to adjust their selves, gender and sexuality befitting the norms that he lays down. There is no room for deviation as those who threaten the norm are expelled or ostracised like Mrs. Saunders who in finding that she has no place under such a system where she is disrespected as a widow decided that "There's no place for me here. I have made arrangement to leave tomorrow" (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 45). Churchill in act one of the plays enacts Foucault's observation of how in the eighteenth century, mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex were formulated, from which the stereotyped figures of the hysterical woman, the masturbating child, the Malthusian couple and the perverse adult emerged. This knowledge led to a system of marriage which would maintain law and order; differentiate between licit and illicit. The analyses of the scenes from act one of the play clearly enacts these systems, norms and ideologies inherent in the society to repress sex.

Foucault stressed on the possibility of subversion of oppressive forces from within the power system itself which depends on "its points of resistance, which are everywhere in the power network. He thus writes of resistance as "the odd term in the relations of power, the points, the knots" and that

> Focuses of resistance are spread overtime and space at varying densities and it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a

> revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships". (Foucault 95-96)

On his analysis of sexuality he states that:

> Sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient. It appears rather as an especially dense transfer point of relations of power: between men and women, young people and old people. (103)

Churchill through her dramaturgy highlights the 'points of resistance' which Foucault writes about and demonstrates how subversion can be achieved from within the power structure through its points and knots. Here, her agenda of subverting oppressive structures and its supposed fixed binary oppositions goes hand in hand with her feminist agenda. Churchill's representation of subjectivity maybe read in parallel with Luce Irigaray's observation of what phallocentric discourse assumes of the feminine as "The feminine has consequently had to be deciphered as forbidden . . . in between signs, between realized meanings, between the lines" (qtd. in Moi 132) for which Irigaray constructs a discourse to subvert this assumption by appropriating Derrida's concept of deconstruction and through the "mimicry of male discourse" women must "through repetition-interpretation of the way in which the feminine finds itself in discourse . . . show that on the feminine side it is possible to *exceed* and *disturb* the logic" (139).

Churchill through her interpretation of the power structure which keeps the binary oppositions intact disturbs its 'logic' as she highlights through parody and cross-dressing the possibility of disrupting and subverting what is thought to be fixed or unquestionable. The dramatization of the possibility of subversion within the fixed order is further enacted in Act two of *Cloud Nine*. In Act Two of the play, Churchill through her postmodernist deconstruction of traditional chronological order places the characters in a London setting in

1979, though the time shift is only twenty five years. Scene one opens with Victoria and Lin both mothers sitting in a children's play centre in a park with Lin's daughter Cathy playing. They engage in small talk. Edward enters as a gardener of the park. Lin asks Edward outright,

> Your gay, aren't you.

And tells him,

> I really fancy your sister.

Edward who feels uncomfortable answers

> Don't go around saying that. I might lose my job. (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 52-53)

A change in the attitude of the characters is obvious. Betty enters and declares that she would divorce Clive, which is unthinkable for the Betty of act one. Even Victoria the voiceless invisible doll of act one, is contemplating taking up a new carrier which would require her to move to another city away from her husband Martin. Gerry, Edward's partner talks about how he randomly pick up strangers at a train station, Edward being one of them. As Gerry likes to experiment, Edward interrogates him about the situation, Gerry tells him,

> Gerry. Eddy do stop playing the injured wife.
>
> Edward. I'm not playing its true.
>
> Gerry. I'm not the husband so you can't be the wife. (71)

Heartbrokened he tells Victoria,

> Edward. I like women.
>
> Victoria. That would please mother.
> Edward. I wish I had breasts like that.
> I'm sick of men.
> Victoria. I'm sick of men.
> Edward. I think I'm a lesbian. (72)

Martin, Victoria's husband is hesitant to make a carrier shift with her wife. Victoria angry and confused turns to Lin for emotional support. On account of their circumstances, Lin, Victoria, Cathy and Edward moves into a flat all together. Betty with her new found freedom from her divorce and discovery of sexual pleasure through self gratification liberates herself which made her accept Edward's homosexual identity. The play ends with Betty of act one appearing and embracing Betty of act two. Elaine Aston denotes that, "the sexual politics of *Cloud Nine* takes the body as a critical sight of gender representation" (Aston 31). On Foucault's concepts on the body, Sara Mill states "rather than seeing individuals as stable entities, he analyses the discursive processes through which bodies are constituted" (Mills 83). She further reiterates that Foucault had described the body as "the illusion of a substantial unity", "a volume of perpetual disintegration" and "a historically and culturally specific entity" (83). Bodies are constantly changing depending on the social context and the historical period. Foucault argues that throughout history power relations may have constructed particular types of identities but at the same time he suggests that there are ways of subversively using these powers rather than accepting that these identities are fixed. Elaine Aston observes of the sexual politics in *Cloud Nine* as follows, "Sexual politics in cloud Nine foregrounds the ways in which gay identities are marginalised by heterosexuality" (Aston 37). At the same time Churchill's enactment of sexual identities other than heterosexual, highlights how identities and subjecthood are formed in relation to its social context and enacts the intersubjective nature of identities and experience.

Power relation produces certain types of identities which falls under the accepted binary oppositions and is seen as a site of oppression determining certain identities. On Foucault's analyses of power and its relation to identity determinism, Sara Mills observes that:

> Foucault sees that it is in negotiation and play that identities are formed. Foucault suggests that it is possible to construct what he calls counter-discourses and counter-identification, that is individuals can take on board stigmatised individualities that they have been assigned, such as that of 'perverse sexuality' and revel in them rather than seeing them in negative terms . . . Indeed, the very use of the term 'Queer' to describe anti-essentialist lesbian and gay theorising is an instance of counter identification, of celebrating the terms which have been used to condemn us. (Mills 83)

Power through its network of repressive and oppressive mechanisms may have defined what sexuality ought to be or ought not to be through the centuries, nevertheless it is this repressive mechanism itself which had paved the way of establishing forms of resistances and new identities.

Churchill's identification of sexuality and gender identity in the play is important for the fact that Feminist debates have revolved around the deconstruction of women's sex and Essentialism which accuses the very word 'woman' as being a heterosexual construct and that while one assumes the identity of 'woman' their cannot be real liberation. Churchill in her dramaturgical concern with identities other than 'female' is concerned with the development of the importance of gender within feminist theorizing which is similar to Judith Butler's observation thus:

> . . . because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities . . . it becomes impossible to separate out "gender" from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained.(Butler 4-5)

Churchill through the dramatization of identities and subjects other than that of 'woman' maintains a self-critical or self- introspective position which Feminism needs and would benefit from considering its totalizing tendency towards achieving its political goals.

The relevance of *Cloud Nine* as a play which questions gender as a site of both oppression and struggle might not have been given importance during its first production in 1979. Its contemporaneous relevance is echoed in the questions asked by Judith Butler:

> To what extent do *regulatory practices* of gender formation and division constitute identity...To what extent is "identity" a normative ideal rather than a descriptive feature of experience? And how do regulatory practices that govern gender also govern culturally intelligible notions of identity? (Butler 23)

As Foucault argues that power feeds on the very thing that it represses, Butler observes that the 'truth' about sex and gender formation is "produced through the regulatory practices that generate coherent identities through the matrix of coherent gender norms" and that this cultural identification of coherent gender norm requires that "certain identities" cannot exist. However, the reality is that certain identities do exist and do not to conform to the norms of cultural intelligibility, Butler observes that "their persistence and proliferation provide critical opportunities to expose the limits . . . and to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder" (24)

A reading of Act One of *Cloud Nine* within the precept of Butler's argument would reveal that within the regulatory and normalising control of Clive who is an agent of phallocentric power, there exist incoherent identities and subjects who are the production of the same regulatory practices. In order for heterosexuality to maintain its hegemony it has to produce within it divergent unions which will be suppressed for the sake of its survival.

Hence, Harry's and Ellen's homosexual inclinations are 'cured' through compulsory heterosexuality.

If one reads *Cloud Nine* from the point of view of only the enactment of repression of sexual identities in order to maintain heterosexual hegemony, one would be blind of the fact that Churchill not only highlights powers repressive hold on sex but also critically questions individual liberation through sexual liberation or sexual liberation as the only means of true freedom which seem to proliferate contemporary notions of liberation. This advocacy of sexual liberation is blind to or purposefully neglects the power network which controls individuals and dictates sexual identities which in turn rejects the very political nature of such struggle. For Churchill questions of or struggles for identity is always intertwined with the political as Foucault observes "power produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (*Discipline* 194). So, production of identity belongs to the realm of power.

In Act Two of the play the characters talks freely about their sexual liberation which makes the play seemingly supporting sexual liberation. Betty talks of her new found pleasure through self-gratification; Martin prides himself for being a husband who gives importance to his wife Victoria's pleasure; Gerry the outgoing homosexual loves picking up strangers from Victoria train station; Lin being a lesbian does not hide her feelings for Victoria and Edward maintains a relationship with Gerry. However, what one can decipher through a close reading is that the characters are in a dilemma of their identities. In their search for liberation from normative gender stereotyping they have to overcome the process of confusion as the power structure which has pre- gendered them still seems to control their search for identities. In Betty, her divorce and sexual pleasure has certainly made her free from the control of Clive but she finds it difficult to separate herself from what she was used to. Betty confesses, "It's

strange not having a man in the house. You don't know who to do things for" (Churchill, *Cloud Nine* 64). Martin who prides himself for understanding his wife or women by giving them freedom burst out telling his wife "God knows I do everything I can to make you stand on your own two feet. You don't seem to realise how insulting it is to me that you can't get yourself together" (63). Martin's understanding to his wife's need for freedom is blinded by the same phallocentric ideology which produces gender repression. For him giving his wife sexual pleasure is enough as it reflects his virility as a man by which he becomes the winner not his wife. At the same time Victoria's notion of freedom is also blinded by the need for individual liberation and confusion of gender roles as she says, "Why the hell can't he just be a wife and come with me" (65). Lin may have divorced an abusive husband and embrace lesbianism but she is well aware of the power beyond her reach which have a direct effect on her daily life. She admits "I've changed who I sleep with, I can't change everything" (66). Gerry who seems to prefer the phantasm like freedom that homosexuality entails through sexual promiscuity avoids a real relationship with Edward as that would bring about more confusion of identities and roles which he tries to escape, as he knows it would shake the very foundation of his identity. He tells Edward "I'm not the husband so you can't be the wife" (71). The sentence may have a comedic ring to it, but it reveals how new gender identities which fall outside of the heterosexual norm are inherently controlled and measured by the same yard stick from which one desires freedom. The characters transitions into genders other than which had been pre-given to them entails a confusion of their roles and the freedom that it is supposed to give them. Churchill does not provide answers or support any kind of sexuality but one have to ask the question, will Edward's wish "I'd rather be a woman" and his confusion "I think I'm a lesbian" (72) allow him to make that gender change simply because one have the freedom? Will Victoria's moving in with Lin make her a Lesbian even though she does not identify herself as such? It is such identity formation and

subjectivity that Churchill questions. In allowing her characters freedom of identity, Churchill seems to share what Judith Butler observes of gender:

> Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*. (Butler 191)

Churchill highlights the fact that gender identity is not fixed, but at the same time seems to be careful of the blind advocacy of sexual liberation as the only expression of individual freedom which displaces its struggle for liberation from its politics. This is evident within Feminism and Churchill questions the role of Essentialism in the achievement of the goals of the feminist movement.

Monique Wittiq in her essay *One is Not Born a Woman*, distinguishes between 'women' as it takes the plural form depicts social-relations while 'woman' is a political concept. In her campaign for Essentialism, Wittiq propose that while there is "the necessity to exist as an individual, as well as a member of a class" (Wittiq 270) without which there cannot be real transformation; and that 'subjective', 'private', 'individual' problem it always related to the social and political, "new personal and subjective definition can only be found beyond the categories of sex" (270). Wittiq in her defence of Essentialism deconstructs the very foundation of women as a sex and proposes that Lesbianism "provides for the moment the only social form in which we can live freely" in which they are neither men nor women and further vouch that "this can be accomplished only by the destruction of heterosexuality as a social system which is based on the oppression of women by men and which produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression" (271). Judith Butler argues with Wittiq's proposal thus:

> Whereas Wittiq clearly envisions lesbianism to be a full-scale refusal of

> heterosexuality, I would argue that even that refusal constitutes an engagement and, ultimately, a radical dependence on the very terms that lesbianism purports to transcend. If sexuality is no more and no less constructed than other modes of sexuality, then there is no promise of limitless pleasure after the shackles of the category of sex have been thrown off. (Butler 169)

Churchill while giving voice to and accepting the existence, proliferation of identities that have been repressed by heterosexuality, is at the same time careful not to advocate the notion of sexual liberation as individual liberation, but is more interested in highlighting the intersubjective nature and the interdependence of subjectivity in relation to the role of power networks in which these identities unconsciously partake and are controlled.

Churchill's innovative use of cross-dressing of the characters becomes a brilliant technique for exposing the difficulty of transitioning from one gender to another, and the intersubjective nature of any kind of identity formation. In Act One Betty is played by a man as she want to become what men want her to be but is played by a woman in Act Two as she now gives more importance to her identity; Edward a boy in act one is played by a woman and continues in act two; Cathy Lin's daughter is played by a man. Jane Thomas observes that the cross- dressing of characters "draw attention to the fact that the characters they portray are cultural fictions . . . They also point up the complex power relations at work in the process of self-identification" (Thomas 174). Through the use of cross-dressing what Churchill makes the audience see is, Edward (a woman) in reality having a relationship with a man Gerry and who wants to become a lesbian because Gerry does not give him attention. The character of Cathy played by a man who acts as a girl-child depicts the means through which children are pressured into conforming into pre-prescribed genders under a phallocentric heterosexual system.

Churchill adds comedic element to the play in questioning the deconstruction of gender identities. However, just as it is comedic to see a man dressed in woman's clothes who wants to become a lesbian, Churchill brings out the irony into the situation as the transition from being a man to being a lesbian entails a huge shift of power relations which the subject may not be aware of. On the other hand Judith Butler observes of the use of cross-dressing to reveal the fluidity of gender "that suggests openness to resignification and recontextualisation". She argues that cross-dressing and drag parodies the notion of original or primary gender and that "it gives us a clue to the way in which the relationship between . . . the original meanings accorded to gender- and subsequent gender experience may be reframed" and further argues that "*in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself*" (Butler 187). This use of cross-dressing by Churchill reveals what Jane Thomas observes as "the struggle against existing forms of subjection" (Thomas 176) through the process of pre-gendering of identities. The use of cross-dressing in the play does not serve only the purpose of dramatic innovation but is a parody of the way identities are transformed in the real world. It reveals the way genders are performed and how "practices of parody can serve to reengage and reconsolidate the very distinction between a privileged and naturalized gender configuration" and also that "parodic repetition of gender exposes as well the illusion of gender identity . . . that is open to splitting, self-parody, self-criticism" (Butler 200). However, Butler at the same time observes that "parody itself is not subversive" (189) and on the relation between Feminism and discourses on gender Butler observes that:

> the feminist "we" is always and only a phantasmatic construction, one that has its purposes, but which denies the internal complexity and indeterminacy of the term and constitutes itself only through the exclusion of some part of the constituency that it simultaneously seek to represent. (Butler 194).

Churchill's Feminist stance in her dramaturgy is revealed through the representation of identities beyond what is considered normal by the status quo; her representation of class politics within the Feminist struggle; her critique of the privileging of the individual subject within what is portrayed as an inclusive movement and also in her enactment of subjugation through economics, race, gender, sex, class within the phallogocentric capitalist economic system, is an advocacy of the possibilities of subversive possibilities and resistances against the kind of politics which makes women complacent through the belief that liberation had been achieved through individual economic independence or sexual liberation. Churchill's feminist stance seems to be on par with what Butler argues:

> The critical task for feminism is not to establish a point of view outside the constructed identities . . .
>
> The critical task is, rather, to locate strategies of subversive repetition enabled by those constructions, to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity and, therefore, present the immanent possibility of contesting them. (Butler 201)

Through the representation of gender in *Cloud Nine* Churchill 'presents the immanent' possibilities of contesting identities and re-asserts the intersubjective nature of identities other than the ones prescribed by and the ones accepted by the heterosexist-phallocentric system. However, Churchill does not only represent the marginalization of deviant identities within compulsory heterosexuality but also critiques and problematizes how such transition is not a mere parodic performance, but how it entails with it various manifestations of power which militates against the subject as well as how the subject militates against power.

The ending of *Cloud Nine* shows the Betty of Act two embracing with the Betty of Act one. One may interpret that Betty had finally been liberated through the acceptance of her

old self through sexual liberation. However, one may argue that even though Betty had been liberated, the presence of her old self from Act one reveals that the operation of power which controlled her in the past is still at work even in the present. Nevertheless, Churchill succeeds in revealing how power permeates and affect every individual and its relationship to the societal set up and of the intersubjective nature of ones subjecthood as it is in relation with others that subjectivity and identity is formed. As Jane Thomas observes "As in *Softcops, Cloud Nine* contains no comfortable resolution to the questions it raises. It functions as a dramatisation of the way in which we must continually interrogate the particular sexual identities we assume in an attempt to alter the power relations which militate against us" (Thomas 179).

In the use of a historically and ideologically different settings- the nineteenth century setting of act one and the contemporary setting of act two, Churchill draws a parallel to the power structures which controls the characters' lives whereby, she reveals the intersubjective relativity of their identity formations. Through this relativity, Churchill enacts how one may subvert oppressive forces by working within and through the nuances of such power structure.

In the dramatization of how power structures control subjectivity and identity formations in both *Softcops* and *Cloud Nine*, Churchill purposefully enacts how the transformation of power structures are possible, as it is in the intersubjective nature of all human relations that identities and subjecthood cannot be fixed or deemed unchallengeable. Churchill dramatizes that one can resist the manipulative and controlling tendency of power through subversion whether overt or subtle. Considering Churchill's dramatic corpus in light of Foucault concept of power, it is to be observed that she has not conceived sudden overhaul of the society from without, rather the possibility of gradual transformation is an option to work from within the power structure.

END NOTES

[1]This is a quotation of what Churchill had said regarding her views on the means of social control as depicted in *Softcops* in her interview with Lynne Truss for *Plays and Players*, in January 1984. It has been reproduced in *File on Caryl Churchill* bu Linda Fitzsimmons.

[2]Churchill acknowledged the fact that she had adapted the characters of Vidocq and Lacenaire from real criminals in the author's note of the play. She writes that "Vidocq, the criminal who became chief of police using the same skills of disguise and cunning, and Lacenaire, the glamorous and ineffectual murderer and petty thief...they both wrote their memoirs and from the London Library you can take home the original edition of Vidocq's, each volume signed firmly with his name". One may refer to the author's note of, Churchill, Caryl. *Plays:1*. Great Britain: Methuen Drama. 1996. Print.

[3]Jeremy Bentham was an English Philosopher and political radical. He is primarily known today for his moral philosophy, especially his principle of utilitarianism, which evaluates actions based upon their consequences.

His Panopticon is an architectural form for a prison. It consisted of a circular, glass-roofed structure with cells along the external wall facing toward a central tower; guards stationed in the tower could keep all the inmates in the surrounding cells under constant surveillance. http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/441450/panopticon;

http://www.iep.utm.edu/bentham/

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CHAPTER – V

CHURCHILL'S MORAL VISION OF POSSIBLE WORLDS

> I know quite well the kind of society I would like: decentralised, non-authoritarian, communist, non-sexist- a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings and in control of their lives. [1]

The above quotation of Caryl Churchill considered to be her vision of an ideal society is an expression of a classless society, with gender or sexual equality. As all politically conscious writers, Churchill takes the educational and transformational purpose of her art seriously. One may criticise her vision as quoted above to fall under the assumption of a 'Utopian' vision, but the purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the importance and transformative role that such a vision can achieve whether relegated as utopian or not. The concept of 'Utopia' have been debated for its practicability, and the common notion is that, as a political concept it points toward an unrealisable ideal or vision, which is perfect in theory or a hypothetically desirable ideal society or political system which is unrealisable. In *The Concept of Utopia*, 2011, the author Ruth Levitas challenges this common notion of utopia and brings it to a different level as a catalyst throughout history for the realisation of practical ideals and as a functionary element of transformation. She writes that utopia is "not a just a dream to be enjoyed but a dream to be pursued" and that, "the view that utopia is not an escapist nonsense but a significant part of human culture is a fundamental assumption of the expanding field of utopian studies" (Levitas 1). The present study finds spaces of similarities in the view of Churchill as dramatized in her plays, which comes very close to the postmodern concept of utopia conceived by Ruth Levitas. In this chapter Churchill's plays will be analysed in the light of Ruth Levitas' observation and defence of Utopian thought, and practicability of its ideals as transformational tool.

The term 'Utopia' has become a term whose definition is being contested in the academia, and the impossibility of a concrete definition has given it a multidisciplinary

identity. This multifarious nature of Utopia or Utopian thought is voiced by Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor[2] thus:

> The essentially contested nature of the concept of utopia and the chequered history of utopian thought can be traced back to the paradox at the heart of the pun which (Thomas) More coined: is the good place (eutopia) by definition *no* place (utopia)? Differently put, is utopia necessarily unrealisable because of its ideal nature? (qtd. in Adiseshiah 38).

The present chapter attempts to study Churchill's theatrical sensibility in the light of Ruth Levitas' conception of Utopia as "Utopia is the expression of the desire for a better way of being" (9). Churchill's dramaturgy as expressed in the other chapters of the thesis exudes an expression of desire, the desire for alternative worlds and existence. The desires that are expressed in her plays does not entail only physical desires which maybe the longing of freedom of sexual expression but the desires as expressed in Churchill's texts includes all desires whether political, religious, social, individual and its realisation. Frances Gray describes Churchill's work as, "Churchill's work has always explored alternative worlds both good and bad" (Gray 49). In her theatre practice, style and techniques Churchill has always searched for an alternative way of casting, of writing scripts and also preferred experimental and collaborative working environment. As already mentioned in the previous chapters this accounts for her preference of working with Theatre Groups and experimentation with techniques and styles. Her innovative dramaturgical practice has set her apart as a dramatist by which her non-linear and non-chronological plays; her experimental and collaborative techniques has proved her dramaturgical trajectory to be an expression for the possibilities of alternative worlds and existence; the expression of the possibilities of desire.

On the subject of desire as studied in Churchill's work, it is the desire that has the potential of realisation of possibilities. It is not the one sided representation of the desire

which is immoral or physical, but a desire which works towards possibilities. Churchill has achieved in bringing a shift in her audience and makes possible the realisation of their present position which helps them liberate themselves from their politico-economic/ social/historical situations. Churchill's moral vision is not that of the imposition of religious teachings or to differentiate only the good and bad, but it is a vision of the possibility of transformation from ones' stereotypical identities and envisions possible worlds and alternative existences. Churchill's possible worlds are not fixed, or pre-fixed, but a transcendental world of existence and a world of freedom where stereotypical identities are transcended and a world which moves towards future possibilities.

In light of Levitas' definition of utopia as 'the expression of a better way of being', which she further elaborates as "The essential element in utopia is not hope, but desire-the desire for a better way of being" (221), Churchill's plays and dramaturgical trajectory expresses and elucidates personal and collective desires; the vision of the possibilities of alternative identities or fulfilment of desires. In Churchill's dramaturgy utopian and dystopian visions are given equal significance and "the expression of degenerative utopia, anti-utopia and dystopian fears is additionally a tangible mode of political signification in Churchill's work" (Adiseshiah 37). If utopia is looked upon as the expression of the desire of a better way of being and living, Churchill's plays are the expressions of utopias juxtaposed with dystopian visions. However, this is not to imply that Churchill's visions is an escapist fantasy but the expression of possibilities for a better state of being, for the purpose of driving society forward and the possibilities of the subversion of repressive elements.

The world of theatre is a space which is an expression of reality and also not real. It can be 'eutopia' good place and 'utopia' no place. Diana Knight describes it as "a sort of laboratory for constructing the liberated social space of utopia" (qtd. in Adiseshiah 48). It is this knowledge of its spatial fluidity that inspired theatre groups like Joint Stock and

Monstrous Regiment with whom Churchill collaborated to experiment with space, techniques and styles while at the same time challenging the static spatial tradition of conventional theatre. Adiseshiah writes of the spatial fluidity of theatre and its advantages for the possibility of alternative existence thus:

> The theatrical space oscillates between the real and the not real; it is an identifiable site (if only temporarily) but in its transient nature as well as its reference to other fictional sites, it gestures towards the imaginary and the utopian. (49)

Ruth Levitas stressed on the importance of the 'function' of utopia which is different from the study of only its 'form' and 'content'. She explains the significance of defining utopia in terms of form, content and function. She elucidates:

> Broadly, one may divide approaches to utopian studies into two streams. The liberal-humanist tradition tends to focus on definitions in terms of form. In contrast a largely, but not exclusively, Marxist tradition has defined utopia in terms of its function-either a negative function of preventing social change or a positive function of facilitating it, either directly or through the process of the 'education of desire'. (6)

On the importance of 'function' on utopian studies Levitas stressed that the importance of utopia lies not in "whether utopias exist or not, but whether they can carry out the function of transformation" (196). The utopian function of transformation and the expression of desire whether realised or not may be looked upon as the main element which drew feminists to utopian studies and constructed its relation to feminist praxis. Within the various forms through which utopian thought is expressed, theatrical space proved to be a medium which allowed and gave freedom for the expression of possible realities and existence. It allowed the experimentation of the enormous issues concerning women under the oeuvre of feminism.

Churchill's collaborative theatre groups Joint Stock and Monstrous Regiment were also touring groups who experimented with form and function. On the possibilities which theatrical space offered feminist theatre is elucidated by Sian Adiseshiah:

> Most obviously they challenged the static spatial configuration of (bourgeois) drawing –room theatre's presentation of a seemingly natural and trans-historical reality at the same time as deconstructing a similarly conventional use of space in the social realist and kitchen sink drama of The Angry Young Men of the 1950s.(Adiseshiah 48)

As already elucidated in the previous chapters Caryl Churchill's use and improvisation of Brechtian Epic theatre's techniques is an innovative move in order to effect a transformational experience on the audience and readers in order to awaken them from the shelter of their complacent and apathetic conditions.

In distinguishing the definition of utopia under the criteria of form, content and function, Ruth Levitas stress on the limitations of a study of only the form and content of utopian thought expressed in works of art implying that "a broader consideration of utopian possibilities in contemporary culture . . . inevitably shifts the focus from the form to the function of utopia" (193). Here, one needs to reiterate the argument of Z. Bauman on the importance of 'function' in utopian studies or the function of utopian thought in his book *Socialism: The Active Utopia* paraphrased as by Levitas:

> First, 'utopias relativise the present', that they undermine the sense that the way things are is inevitable and immutable by presenting alternative versions of human society. Secondly, 'utopias are those aspects of culture . . . in which the possible extrapolations of the present are explored . . . Thirdly, utopias relativise not only the present but the future, by dividing it into a set of

> competing and class- committed projects and fourthly, utopia does influence action. (196)

In consideration of the above explanation of utopia, we may claim that Caryl Churchill's plays are committed to the utopian function of effecting transformations and the staging of possibility of for a better way of living and being.

In *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* 1976, through her use of Brechtian Epic Theatre's technique of episodic scenes Churchill historicised the English Revolution 1640s giving voice to the underdogs of the Revolution, the Ranters, Levellers and the Diggers thereby destabilizing established history and deconstructing a history written from the perspective of the victors thereby challenging the status quo. Churchill's collaboration with women theatre groups such as Joint Stock in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* and Monstrous Regiment in *Vinegar Tom* is a reflection of the development and impact of feminism within theatre and women playwrights who felt the need to fight back to the inferior treatment and misogynist assumptions such as "women had nothing to write about- they hadn't *done* anything in the world" (qtd. in Gray 50). In order to deconstruct such assumptions, theatre provided women playwrights the space for expression on women's terms. The rejection of the linear structure followed by traditional conventions reflects how the nature of women and men's lives are different and how the episodic and fragmented scenes in plays reflects the life of women which as described by Gillian Hanna as "for a woman, life is not like that. It doesn't have a pattern. For a woman life and experience is broken back" (qtd. in Aston, *Introduction* 54). For Churchill this is the pattern that she chooses for her plays which is experimental, innovative and challenges the established structures which often do not open space for the expression of women's experiences.

In the scene TWO WOMEN LOOK IN A MIRROR of *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire,* Churchill re-identifies the women who had been so marginalised by their

class, poverty and gender in which through the act of looking and seeing oneself in a mirror for the first time realises their individual subject selves and potential. The scene describes an incident in which a house of the rich is being raided of its possession by the poor revolutionaries of the English Civil War. It reflects the sense of victory which the oppressed class feels they have achieved and the identification with the class which had oppressed them. The scene depicts thus:

> 1st WOMAN: Look, look, you must come quick.
>
> 2nd WOMAN: What you got there?
>
> 1st WOMAN: Look. Who's that? That's you. That's you and me.
>
> (Churchill, *Plays: 1* 206).

The scene depicts a moment in history where class hierarchy is abolished and material possessions shared:

> 1st WOMAN: Nothing happened to me. You can take things-
>
> 2nd WOMAN: That's his things. That's stealing. You'll be killed for that.
>
> 1st WOMAN: No, not anymore, it's all ours now, so we won't burn the corn because that's our corn now and we're not going to let the cattle out because they're ours too. (206)

The scene depicts a moment of utopian transformation and the possibility of utopian yearning where the oppressed are now the owners of the material possessions of their oppressors. Further, the desire and possibility of the permanence of this transformation is demonstrated thus:

> 2nd WOMAN: Oh if everyone's taking something I want a blanket. But what when he comes back?
>
> 1st WOMAN: He'll never come back. We're burning his papers, that's the Norman papers that gave him his lands. That's like him burned.

> There's no one over us. There's pictures of him and his grandfather and his great great-a long row of pictures and we pulled them down. (206)

The above conversation of the two women reveals a sense of victory over their class oppressors. In the scene the two women look at themselves in a mirror for the first time in their lives and discover themselves through their own eyes or self- identification which reveals new meaning to their existence as women. Frances Gray explains the importance of this discovery that "its value, for the woman who took it –rather than food or a warm blanket- lies in the fact that a mirror situates you in the material world, granting –literally –self-possession" (Gray 47). A moment of self-discovery and possibility of the re-writing of one's identity and history on one's term is depicted as,

> 1st WOMAN: There's an even bigger mirror that we didn't break . . . You see your whole body at once. You see yourself standing in that room. They must know what they look like all the time. And now we do. (Churchill, *Plays:1* 207)

The act of the two women looking in the mirror prompts a feminist reading whereby the women discovers their own self- identification and possession of sexuality not through the male gaze but in their own terms. Through this discovery the scene depicts a moment of utopian realisation that it is possible to choose to live in life free of the dictates of patriarchal hegemony or class oppression as the women realise that they have been identified and objectified by forces outside of their immediate selves and can choose new identities.

The two women's discovery of the mirror and their self-realisation inevitably points to Jacques Lacan's theory of the 'Mirror Stage' and the 'Symbolic Order'. Lacan discussed the importance of the pre-oedipal stage when the child makes no distinction between itself

and the external world, which he called the 'Imaginary Stage' or imaginary order. Lacan, characterises the period when the child begins to draw distinctions between self and the other as the 'Mirror Stage'. This is the period when the child's sense of self and the first steps in the acquisition of language emerge. Before the entry of the father, the infant's life can be characterized as unified. The child can be thought of as a signifier and the image it sees in the mirror is the signified i.e, the meaning that the child gives to itself. The child's acquisition of language is its initiation into what Lacan termed as 'Symbolic Order', which involves the experience of separation from the mother and also from the preverbal 'Imaginary Order'. Malcolm Bowie further describes that "the Imaginary is the order of mirror-images, identification and reciprocities. It is the dimension of experience in which the individual seeks not simply to placate the Other but to dissolve his otherness by becoming his counterpart". The Symbolic order however "is the realm of language, the unconscious and an otherness that remains other" (Bowie 92). In the Symbolic order the individual loses its oneness with the other and results in the repression of desires experienced in the Imaginary order.

Churchill's play as referred to, subverts Lacan's 'mirror stage' whereby two women, not one look at themselves in the mirror in which they recognise themselves not as the 'Other' but in unison discovering for the first time their potential as capable subjects and who depart from the world of the Symbolic Order in which their existence and identities have been dictated as it is a "world of society's ideologies, it's belief's, values and biases" (Tyson, 31) which oppresses them and dictate their existence on patriarchal terms. With the entry of the male figure, the father in the 'mirror stage' entails with it a lack, a loss of the phallus for the female child, in Lacan's theory she enters the Symbolic Order with this lack which alienates her. Churchill inverts this in the scene as it is through the discovery of the mirror

that the women identifies and discovers their oneness but not the Lacanian 'lack' which is signifyingly an anti-female order. The woman "identifies herself not as alienated but, in solidarity with another woman, as a political being" (Gray 48) capable of re-identification in their own terms. In other words, the women discover their female self, sexual being which has been threatened and ruined by patriarchal paradigms. Churchill re-creates a moment whereby women are capable of re-writing history and depicts that transformations can be effected if there is the desire and collective will. From Churchill's play, it emerges that feminism does not insist on individuation of women's aspiration or predicament; nonetheless, the individual freedom is not discriminated against. In order that the patriarchal order, which is a collective social order established by dominant male ideologies, be negotiated on equal basis, women must first of all come as a community, form solidarity as a group before being identified as separate selves, individual beings.

The play *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is divided into two Acts with episodic scenes which Churchill explains as, "each scene can be taken as a separate event rather than part of a story" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 184). So, each scene becomes a space where transformations are possible whether realised or not. Churchill has commented in the production note of the play that it is about "the idea of a revolution that hadn't happened" (184) and represent the silenced voices and desires of the plebeians, women and place them at the centre of representation. The play depicts both utopian and dystopian images in which women occupy a central space. In the scene where Margaret Brotherton a vagrant is tried for vagrancy its dystopic vision depicts the injustices of the legal system where its victim like Margaret Brotherton is ordered to be beaten from parish to parish as punishment but nevertheless, Churchill uses this as a preliminary to the depiction of the possibility of gender equality. The scene HOSKIN INTERRUPTS A PREACHER serves as a development of the utopian fervour where Hoskins a female vagrant preacher in her sense of inclusion within the

sermon of the preacher which advocates the doctrine of the elected few as "for he has chosen a certain number of particular men to be his elect" answers "He's chosen me. He's chosen everyone" to which the preacher replies "women can't speak in church". Here, Hoskins answers "God speaks to me" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 200) through which Churchill asserts the possibility of self-possession by women on their own terms which enable women like Hoskins to claim the gospel and use it for emancipation. This is depicted as the preacher feeling challenged by a mere woman cited texts from the Bible to which Hoskins challenges back and recites:

> HOSKINS: Joel. Chapter two. Verse twenty-eight. 'And it shall come to pass that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophecy . . . And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. (201)

Churchill subverts orthodoxy and creates here a moment of realisation of a utopian possibility and even though a transformation may not be effected immediately as juxtaposed it with a dystopian vision of such possibilities as Hoskins is thrown out of the church; nevertheless it is transformational moments as these which effects reality and makes change a possibility. This reflects Bauman's concept of utopia which Levitas reiterates as, "Utopia is desired and fought for, but it does not have to be won to be utopia" (Levitas 196).

Churchill depicts differing versions of utopia in the rewriting of an established history and destabilises the established history. In various scenes 'Millenial beliefs' are juxtaposed with the hopelessness of the present scenario. In the scene STAR RECRUITS in which a corn merchant by the name of Star recruits volunteers for the Parliamentarian army, Biblical allusions of Christ's Second Coming is used as "Christ will come in person, God and man, and will rule over England for one thousand years . . . If you join the army now you will be one of the saints. You will rule with Jesus a thousand years" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 195). This

yearning for the establishment of a heaven on earth is repeated in different aspects as when Claxton takes Hoskins to his home his repeated questions about her identity as "Who are you with then" is answered by "I'm with Jesus Christ" (203) and her answer to the probing of her roots by Claxton's wife "Christ will be here soon so what's it matter" (203) reveals a desire for the fulfilment of a better state of existence. This depiction of millennial beliefs points to Karl Mannheim's[3] explanation:

> Wishful thinking has always figured in human affairs. When the imagination finds no satisfaction in existing reality, it seeks refuge in wishfully constructed places and periods. Myths, fairy-tales, other- worldly promises of religion, humanistic fantasies, travel romances, have continually changing expressions of that which was lacking in actual life. (qtd. in Levitas 80)

Of the human need for the hope of a better future, the question of 'agency' becomes important. As Ruth Levitas states "human agency may not be capable of implementing the good society, but a literal *dues ex machine* may be invoked to do so" (Levitas 224) for which she further justifies the validity of millennial beliefs as an expression of the desire for a better existence and she writes:

> Millenial beliefs are known to occur most frequently among the powerless groups – i.e. groups which perceive themselves, often correctly, as unable to exert control over the course of history without divine intervention. The millennial transition, then, enables utopia to be located in the future as an expression of desire, and frequently also permits action which is at least expressive of opposition in symbolic form, if not instrumental in implementing the desired transition. (224)

So, for a woman like Hoskins whose identity and freedom of expression is thwarted by dominant cultural identifications she has no other choice but to wait upon religious promises for a better time and place.

The play *Vinegar Tom* written in 1976 is also a collaborative work with the Socialist-Feminist theatre group Monstrous Regiment which is set in the seventeenth century. In the staging and text of the play Churchill breaks the traditional linear structure of the play by juxtaposing scenes with songs which are to be sung in modern dresses. These songs serves as a radical break from male oriented conventional structures of plays and achieves the purpose of commentary and as satires on the treatment of the women by patriarchy. The insertion of the songs into the structure of the play achieves the utopian vision of a style of writing establishing a form exclusive to women writers. The play gives voice to women who have been accused of witchcraft and burned on account of their defiance of a system which sought to suppress their individuality and self-hood. The play also highlights the inter-connection between the social institution like the church, family and state and how the members especially women are subjected to misogynist assumptions on their sexuality self-hood and social roles.

In the first scene where Alice sleeps with a stranger only known as MAN, a utopian transcendence of societal norm is already achieved through the act of a woman sleeping with a stranger. However, it is Alice's plea to the man "Will you take me with you, to London, to Scotland?" and her longing to escape from her immediate surroundings "Nothing happens here" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 137) which is filled with utopian yearning for a better state of being in a distant place or space. But this sense of hope is juxtaposed with the man's condescending reply "A whore? Take a whore with me" which contrasts it with the dystopic nature of the fulfilment of such desires. But, Churchill brings in an element of the alternative possibilities

of defiance as Alice being pushed refuses to be identified on patriarchal terms retorts back "You foul devil, you fool, bastard, damn you, you devil" (137).

For Churchill the issue of class difference and its influence on women's social status is of importance for her socialist-feminist agenda. In *Vinegar Tom* we see how class difference between Betty, the landowner's daughter and Alice a poor single mother brings about a different social standing in the way they are treated. On account of her upper class status on economic terms Betty's refusal to marry is taken to due to "excessive blood" that "causes an imbalance in the humours" for which bleeding will purge her and she will be "well enough to be married" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 149). If this is contrasted to the way Alice is treated we can see that on account of her poverty and lower status, she becomes a victim of Jack's sexual frustration as he believes that her lower status would make her yield to him. But it is in Alice's refusal and defiant reply "Go away to hell" to Jack's temptation "I'd be good to you. I'm not a poor man" (148) that triggered the desire for revenge and hence he scapegoats Alice as being a witch. In the attempt to reveal what class separation can do to harm women's integration, Churchill has highlighted a dystopic vision of the victimisation of women under the patriarchal system. However, one finds within it utopian yearnings and transformation even in Betty as she expresses her desire for a better state of being that "On my way here I climbed a tree. I could see the whole estate. I could see the other side of the river. I wanted to jump off and fly" (140). This expression of utopian yearning reveals the fact that it is not class position that gives women emancipation but that patriarchal marginality and oppression is alive in all classes be it social kinship or economic based class stratification. Here, Churchill highlights the need for women to surpass class based separation and organise for a collective fight for emancipation from all kinds of patriarchal subordination.

As elaborated above, in the play *Vinegar Tom* moments of utopian yearnings are scattered and expressed by the different women having different social standings. Here, it is the longing for the fulfilment of personal desires and the desire to rise above the passive self-hood to an active self, powered to control one's own body and needs that is expressed. On the subject of the importance of desire on utopian thought and transformation, Ruth Levitas states:

> Utopia expresses and explores what is desired; under certain conditions it also contains the hope that these desires may be met in reality, rather than merely in fantasy. (Levitas 221)

The play depicts a gloomy existence where women who are strong enough to voice out their desires are either accused of being witches; but this gloomy scenario is contrasted with a stronger will, a utopian urge for resistance subversion. In Alice, one witnesses this urge and knowledge of a possibility of alternative existence as she vehemently tells Susan "I'm not a witch. But I wish I was. If I could live I'd be a witch now after what they have done . . . There's no way for us except by the devil. If I only did have magic, I'd make them feel it" (175). This same urge for imaginative utopia which is the only relief from the oppressive and unjust present circumstance is voiced by Joan as she declares "I been a witch these ten years . . . And the great storm and the tempest comes when I call and strike down trees (173-174). Here, Joan in a dystopic environment creates for herself a utopic space where she commands power and "fleetingly transcends the ideological parameters imposed upon her" (Adiseshiah 62).

Churchill in *Vinegar Tom* creates a utopian space amidst the gloomy circumstances where the women are free to voice their desires. The cunning woman Ellen's cottage becomes a site where the women meet in which they talk about their 'women' problems such as child birth, possible contraception, pregnancy and even marriage. Ellen's cottage becomes

a counter site where the women meet to talk out their troubles. Alice goes to Ellen for a cure for her heartache and takes Susan along who tired of her miscarriages and sixth pregnancy is thinking of a means to be free of it. Ellen gives importance to free will and personal choice to the women and tells Susan "Take it or leave it, my dear . . . If you want to be rid of your trouble, you'll take it. But only you know what you want" and Susan's reply sums up the dilemma of woman only what her woman folk can understand as she says "I don't want it but I don't want to be rid of it. I want to be rid of it but not do anything to be rid of it" (154-155). For Alice, as Ellen sees her helpless situation as a single mother in a prejudiced society, she offers to teach her to learn her trade and tells Alice "There's all kinds of wisdom. Bit by bit I'd teach you" (155). Ellen's cottage becomes a space where the women finds answers for their troubles where even Betty in a desperate attempt to be free seeks Ellen's counsel. In the play Ellen's cottage becomes a counter site or space which has significant parallels to Foucauldian 'Heterotopia' which he describes thus:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places- places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society- which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. (Foucault 1984, n.p)

As utopia is a 'no place' which is also a 'good place, Foucault proposes this site where things happen in a real place. As explained, in *Vinegar Tom* Ellen's cottage serve the purpose of a heterotopia where the women have the space to contest and challenge the very reality which engulfs their self-identification. The play highlights the possibility of a "specifically female matrix of space, language and consciousness, which in turn is figured as a mode of survival and local resistance" (Adiseshiah 63). Thus, Churchill has theatrically interwoven socialist and feminist imperatives towards possibilities of freedom.

In the creation of female utopian space in *Fen*, written in 1983 in collaboration with Joint Stock, Churchill traces the lives of three generations of women, Ivy, May, Val and Val's daughters Deb and Shona amidst the gloomy world of East Anglia's Fenlands. The play highlight the lives of the victims of capitalist economy especially women who work under harsh weather conditions, with low pay working with "icicles on their faces" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 171). What is more important is how Churchill creates moments of utopian possibilities in the personal and collective existences of the women when the circumstances they are confronted with seems unbearable. The images of utopian possibilities of desire is juxtaposed with the dystopian images that a profit motivated capitalist economy have brought about. If one looks at the positive aspect of Capitalist economy, the image of a free market encapsulates a good society in economic terms in which there is growth in production as long as consumers exist but one needs to see its negative side as, "Monopolies manipulate markets. The pursuit of profit results both in the pollution and destruction of the environment and in the absolute as well as relative impoverishment of those less able to compete in the labour market". For its proponents it may be considered the best system yet, however one may "criticise it in terms of internal coherence, particularly by reference to what it does not address in terms of the more vulnerable members of society" (Levitas 216).

In *Fen* Churchill depicts the utopian image of a capitalist economy which she juxtaposes and contrast with its dystopian image through her postmodernist innovative use of the supernatural. In Scene Nine of *Fen*, Mr. Tewson a farmer and Miss Cade, a representative from a city firm are conversing and negotiating a deal which would make profit for both parties. Their conversation does not include the plight of those who would actually make the profits, i.e. the labourers thus:

> TEWSON. I am a member of the Country Landowners Association. We have ears in the corridors of power. My family are landowners. If I sell to you I become a tenant on my grandfather's land.
>
> CADE. With us, your grandson will farm your grandfather's acres. The same number of acres. More. You'll have the capital to reinvest. Land and Machinery. (Churchill, *Plays: 2* 162)

The above conversation and negotiation is what every farmer with only a profit motive in mind would dream of. It is not surprising as Tewson concedes:

> TEWSON. No problem getting a new tractor then. (162)

It is this reality of a capitalist utopia that is often hidden for the purpose of its survival, but as this often entails inhumane activities, for transformation to occur one needs to underscore its dystopian reality. This is what Churchill succeeds in doing as she brings in a supernatural element such as a ghost to decipher its hidden realities. After Tewson and Miss Cade negotiate, he sees a woman barefoot, working in the fields wearing rags. She is a ghost from the nineteenth century and she tells Tewson:

> GHOST. We are starving, we will not stand this any longer . . .You bloody farmers could not live if it was not for the poor.
>
> . . .
>
> TEWSON. Are you angry because I'm selling the farm?
>
> GHOST. What difference will it make?
>
> TEWSON. None, none, everything will go on the same.
>
> GHOST. That's why I'm angry. (162)

The woman, who represents generations of women labourers since the nineteenth century is angered by the fact that even after a hundred years the system had not been sensitive to the plight of the poor victims of capitalism. She reminds Tewson of the importance she represents for his survival and the intolerable conditions under which she had been employed:

> GHOST. I live in your house. I watch television with you . . . I watch the food and I watch what makes people laugh. My baby died starving. (162)

One can decipher the wretched conditions under which the woman labourer who represents all women is employed. Churchill here not only brings to attention the negative aspects of capitalism, but through this dystopian image draws attention to the way women are doubly oppressed for their gender and class where they are deprived of fulfilment of basic human needs and more importantly the fulfilment of their desires is not even an option.

In *Fen*, Churchill effectively brings in the image of a capitalist reality and may draw a gloomy picture, but the strength of the play lies in the utopian spirit expressed in the desires of the women, the hope and desires both personal and collective desires that they have and share. This need for transcending ones present state of existence and fulfilment of one's desires is seen most poignantly in Val who in Scene Two is seen fleeing from a potato field in urgency to run to her lover Frank to tell him that she had decided to leave her husband and go to London with her two daughters Deb and Shona. She tells Frank:

> VAL. I'm leaving him. I'm going to London on a train. I'm taking the girls . . . You follow us as soon as you can. It's the only thing. New life. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 151)

This passionate decision is a moment of utopian possibility for Val whose desire for a better life is fuelled with hope. But it does not last as the realities of economic deprivation does not allow this utopian fulfilment as Frank asks her, "Where are you going to live?/ How much money you got?" (151). However, it is moments as these where the possibility of fulfilment is just at an arm's reach that stimulate utopian possibilities and transformations. This reminds one of the functions of utopia as Bauman explained as, "those aspects of culture . . . in which the possible extrapolations of the present are explored" (qtd. in Levitas 196). One may read Val's desire to move to London as the attempt to fulfil the possibility of a better state of

being. But as this is not fulfilled Val and Frank create a moment in which they imagine their desires are possible, where in Scene Five the stage directions of the play reads as, "VAL *and* FRANK *dance together. Old-fashioned, formal, romantic, happy*" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 153). They create a hypothetical world where for a moment their desires are possible and lead to momentary happiness.

Churchill is not blind to the fact that it is human nature to refer to a past memory in order to make the present circumstances more bearable. The act of re-membering is used in the play as a tool to create and visualise utopian present or possible future. This is depicted in Scene Sixteen when Ivy, May's mother on her ninetieth birthday tells muddled stories of a more class-conscious past when the trade union was more sensitive to fair labour laws and equality other than profit. She recalls:

> IVY. Jack didn't wear shoes till he was fourteen . . . Walked through the night to the union meeting. Fellow came round on his bike and made his speech in the empty street and everybody'd be in the house listening because they daren't go out because of what old Tewson might say. 'Vote for the blues, boys,' and he'd give them money to drink. They'd pull off the blue ribbons behind the hedge. Still have the drink though. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 177-178)

Ivy's remembering of the past recalls a time in her life when she was freer and more important. Now with old age and circumstances which seem to be getting worse it is this image of a better past that she refers to for momentary relief. From Ivy image of the past one can understand that the prospect of the farm labourers have not changed for the better but seems to be rolling downhill as seen in the way Mr. Tewson had negotiated for his own profit with Miss Cade. Churchill here juxtaposes the present bleak existence with the image of a better past which as Barbara Goodwin formulates of utopian thought thus:

> First, it may involve an idealisation of the past as a criticism of the present . . . Secondly, the present may be justified by reference to a hypothetical past. (qtd. in Levitas 202)

This is further elucidated as, "Utopia refers not simply to a past state, but to the past as immanent in the present" (Levitas 8). From what Ivy tells of the past, its remnants are still alive in the present circumstances where the poverty stricken farm workers are still under the employment of the Tewsons and their lot is still the same as the past. So, the past is still very much alive in the present and it is this re-remembering of the past that may act as a catalyst for transformation.

A Churchillian dramaturgy amidst all the gloom and dystopian image that it depicts always has room for a subversive and deviant character capable of transcendence. In *Fen*, we find the spirit of subversion in Val who caught in a world where her economic deprivation and search for personal emancipation makes her resort to death as a means of transcendence. When she left her daughters to live with Frank, she defies societal prejudices where even her mother May reminding her of the impossibility of finding the fulfilment that she is looking for asks her, "What you after? Happiness? Got it have you? Bluebird of a happiness? Got it have you? Blue Bird? (Churchill, *Plays:2* 159). Val defies her with a spirit of the yearning of a possible change as she answers, "Don't start on me. Just because you had nothing" (ibid), and her answer to Alice's invitation to accept Jesus after a church service as, "I'd rather take valium" (176) shows her subversive and deviant temperament which reminds one of Joan Hoskin's expression of the hopelessness of ever finding emancipation as a woman and betterment of her poverty in *Light Shining in Buckinghamhire*, "I think what happened was, Jesus Christ did come and nobody noticed" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 240). Churchill not only asserts Val's subversive spirit but also in the character of Nell, a single woman in her forties on whom society's prejudices on a single is depicted in Scene Seven, when Becky, Deb and

Shona watches her hoeing her garden. The insinuations on her identity such as "Is she a man? / No, she's a morphrodite / Is she a witch?" and their demeaning taunt such as, "Have you got- have you got-?" shows society's prejudices on a woman who because of the circumstances in her life chose to remain single and the internalisation of such prejudices by the girls without knowing that they share the same history and future as Nell.

Churchill is critical of the idea of change through the compromising of one's desires and negotiations being aware that sometimes it is only through subversive politics that transformation can be affected. As Val sees no other option of transcendence of her present dilemma but only through death she asks Frank to kill her. Churchill, instead to making Val's death a pathetic end it becomes a tool to depict the possibility of alternative ways of existence and a tool for the criticism of the socio-economic circumstances which had driven the inhabitants of Fen to the state of their poverty. The dead Val comes back to the play and tells of the people she sees who also had died of poverty and ill-treatment as victims of the socio-economic order. Her confused description resounds with the tone dread and sadness:

> VAL. There's so much happening. There's all those people and I know about them. There's a girl who died . . .
>
> There's so many of them all at once. He drowned in the river carrying his torch . . .
>
> The girl, I'll try and tell you about her and keep the others out. A lot of children died that winter . . .
>
> I can't keep them out. Her baby died starving. She died starving who. Who?
>
> (Churchill, *Plays:2* 187-188)

In relativising the past to the present and unimproved circumstances of the present is depicted as Churchill showcases different levels of sufferings which are personal, collective and communal but instead of closing the play with the voicing of these sufferings, the play highlights the potential for transformation within these very elements which oppresses the characters find courage to change their present circumstances within their own terms as Nell

amidst the confusion comes out walking on stilts and announce that she is walking away from the Fenland as, "I was walking out of the fen. The sun spoke to me. It said, 'Turn back, turn back'. I said, 'I won't turn back for you or anyone'" (187).

In the play Churchill is adamant in the depiction of the possibility of subversion of oppressive powers and the play's denouement is the voicing of hope and fulfilment of transformation, as May fulfils her desire to sing. Val still voicing the futility of being alive in such a world says, "My mother wanted to be a singer. That's why she'd never sing" but to defy such assumptions and complacent acceptance of oppression, May fulfils her desire and the play ends with this fulfilment as "MAY *is there. She sings.*" (190). Churchill makes implicit the possibilities of utopian yearning when one seeks to finds those spaces and sites even within the oppressive element if one have the desire and hope for betterment of one's situation. This desire and hope for the fulfilment of utopian yearning can be related to Ruth Levitas' statement:

> Desire must be transformed into hope, the wish for change into the will for change and the belief that there is an agency available to execute it. (Levitas 200).

In the representation of those at the margins of society and the periphery of power hegemony, Churchill staying true to her socialist-feminist agenda depicts both the utopian yearnings and dystopian images of the achievement of 'emancipation' by women under the liberal-capitalist economy.

In the play *Top Girls*, 1983 Churchill depicts both sides of the picture of the celebration of women's emancipation and financial independence brought about by capitalist economy and the reality of the women who are not able to compete with their female counterparts. The play *Top Girls*, begins with the utopian image of successful women from different centuries celebrating the promotion of Marlene, their twentieth century counterpart.

As the women go on with the course of the dinner, their individual stories of success unfolds which are remarkable when considering to the socio-historical contexts of their own times. The reader is first introduced to Isabella Bird, a nineteenth century traveller who had written her memoirs and Lady Nijo, a 1st century Japanese courtesan who travelled throughout Japan as a nun on foot for twenty years and later wrote her memoirs and even poetry. The two women are remarkable for their courage and determination, and for being able to fulfil their individual desires on certain levels which is a fulfilment of utopian existence considering the patriarchal conventions which determined their identity.

Churchill while applauding the achievements of the two women does not leave unnoticed the ironical circumstances under which they had gained fame. The two women had been able to achieve their status by sharing and absorbing the assumptions that patriarchy have on them. Isabella in pursuance of a better life through her travels claims, "I didn't get married till I was fifty" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 57) and confesses her sense of un-rootedness as, "I longed to go home, but home to what? Houses are so perfectly dismal" (61). When she did get married it did not last long for which she claims "I did wish marriage had seemed more of a step" (65). It is clear that Isabella had absorbed the individualist patriarchal norms for which she had to hide her own femininity and maintain a blind eye to what her nature subscribe to her. In compliance and internalization of patriarchal objectification of women Lady Nijo stands assured who at the age of fourteen was given to the emperor as a concubine by her father with just the sentence, "Let the wild goose come to me this spring" (56). Having no self-determination of her own she recalls that what she enjoyed the most was being the 'emperors favourite'. Despite her reputation of being a nun who had travelled by foot throughout Japan and having lived her life in repentance, Lady Nijo blames herself or judge herself as having tempted men which shows her internalization of patriarchal norms as being objectified sexually and she blames herself for having condemned her lover, a priest by the

name of Ariake to hell of which she recalls "Misery in this life and worse in the next all because of me" (65). Nijo left the emperor's court as she recalls, "I left on foot and nobody saw me go. For the next twenty years I walked through Japan" (66) and this shows that nobody bothered that she had left as her role as sexual object has lost its value. In the depiction of the women's stories, Isabella and Nijo struggled to be free of their oppression, they have gained success in their own right but they could not free themselves of their oppressed status.

In Joan and Griselda's story, one can read in them the complete internalization of patriarchal norms to the extreme ends. In Joan we have a woman who had climbed to the zenith of the patriarchal hierarchy of being the Pope which she had achieved by pretending to be a man. She recalls proudly her journey to being Pope through deception as, "I dressed as a boy when I left home" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 62) and later even forgot that she was pretending. In her ultimate ambition to be what her sex can never allow her to be, Joan completely submerged herself into the realm of phallocentric thoughts which she retells triumphantly as, "I was obsessed with the pursuit of truth" and this knowledge of the ultimate logocentric truth would make her Pope and she would "know everything" (66). But the satire lies in the fact that Joan did not know everything and it's ironical that she did not know how her own body functions for which she self-righteously defends herself as, "I wasn't used to having a woman's body" (70) while all along she had been living in a woman's body and in her complete internalization of patriarchal 'truths' she had not understood pregnancy. Joan's ultimate knowledge of the truth is betrayed by her biology as denial of her biology betrays her and is stoned to death after giving birth in public. On her fall from papacy Joan still claims, "I shouldn't have been woman" (69). If Joan had not denied her womanhood and masqueraded as a man to be the Pope but had become the Pope as a woman it would have

been an ultimate and valuable achievement for women. However, Churchill here depicts the dystopic vision of the need to achieve patriarchal goals wholly on patriarchy's terms.

Amidst the dystopic accounts of the lives of the women at the dinner party, the story of Gret becomes a binding thread. Churchill had taken Gret from the painting by Brueghel named Dull Griet in which according to Sharon Ammen "Brueghel is usually interpreted as both making fun of shrewish, aggressive women" (Ammen 90) and Gret is depicted as descending to hell to fight the devils. Churchill subverts this and instead of making fun of her "re-visions the figure of Gret in feminist fashion, and creates a heroine who is calling forth all of the women to go to "where the evil comes from and pay the bastards out" (90). It is Gret's account of her journey to hell that awakens the women from their maudlin indulgence of their personal tragedies and inspite of their class and historical difference, it is Gret's story which binds them together. For Gret instead of living a passive existence she recalls, "I'd had enough, I was mad, I hate the bastards" for which knowing she could not defeat the 'bastards on her own' call her neighbours to go to where the evil came from and "pay the bastards out". The vision of which her story depicts as the women "come out just as they was/ from baking and washing" and "we give them devils such a beating" (82) is a utopian vision of the possibility of organising for the achievement of alternative existence and the possibility of subversion of what is thought to be irreversible. As Janet Brown noted:

> Gret is the figure which calls for a new, third wave of feminism, one that is not as focused on individual concerns as on the fight to end all oppression. (qtd. in Ammen, 90)

Churchill here shows the glimpse of a utopian possibility amidst the gloom of the women's personal miseries if they transcend their individual egotism and come together despite differences for collective organisation.

In Act three of the play, Churchill following her postmodernist non-linear style of writing takes its reader back a year earlier, to Marlene's sister Joyce's kitchen where Marlene is visiting after six years. From the argument that ensues it is revealed that Angie is the daughter of Marlene whom she had had at the age of seventeen and had left with Joyce to pursue her carrier. Marlene's success had been possible on account of Joyce's willingness to sacrifice her desires to take care of her child with four cleaning jobs to meet their needs while Marlene without any responsibilities do whatever is required to rise to the top. Marlene having rejected the responsibilities of motherhood and embracing the individualism of a Capitalist economy makes sure that she wouldn't be turned into "the little woman" (Churchill *Plays:2*, 137) for which she had had two abortions. She claims, "I believe in the individual" and voices her support of Thatcherism as, "She's a tough lady, Maggie . . . This country needs to stop whining. Monetarism is not stupid" (138). In her individualistic narcissism she even forgets her roots as "I hate the working class" and sneers at the reason why she is able to be what she had become -her sister's sacrifice for her. Marlene is blind to the fact that she is being oppressed by the thing she is most afraid of which is her internalization of capitalist patriarchal ethos of segregation. She does not realise the impossibility of her claim that "Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes" to which Joyce's question "And if they haven't" (140) is a testament to the fact that the impossibility of what she advocates if one do not have another person to bank on as she had done to her sister.

As the two women argues on Thatcherite politics, Angie runs in having had a nightmare and her last word is "frightening" (141) which is also the last word with which the play closes depicts the dystopic image of a feminism based on the internalization of the patriarchal ethos of individualism which produces a female hierarchy as seen in the play which can very well exist even between blood related sisters and family based on monetary gain. Churchill had said that she had "deliberately left a whole in the play, rather than giving

people a model for what they could be like. I meant the thing that is absent to have a presence" (Fitzsimmons?). The play had also been accused of not drawing any blueprint for a better future and it may be read as showing only the dystopic image of liberal- feminism. However, as Churchill herself claimed, through the depiction of what feminism and women's movement have become, one can chart out what its utopian vision would be and how it may be achieved. As Sharon Ammen states:

> Churchill, instead, is warning against the possible dystopic future in which a "Hitlerina" will be considered a successful woman. She believes the future can only bloom in socialist terms and there's no such thing as "right-wing" feminism. (Ammen 95)

The play is concerned with the utopian image of a feminism combined with humanism.

In the representation of sexual politics and issues of gender, Churchill is critical in her depiction of the gender bias and gives voice to those pushed to the periphery on account of their deviance and alternative identities other than those prescribed by patriarchal norms. Ruth Levitas elaborates on the importance of what she calls 'critical utopias'. She reiterates T. Moyland's[4] description of the importance of critical utopia and its function thus:

> The critical utopia differs from its predecessors in both content and literary form. It presents in much greater detail the society of which the utopia constitutes a critique. Utopia itself is presented ambiguously as imperfect, subject to difficulties, inconsistencies, faults and change. (Levitas 197-198)

If one consider the difference of 'critical utopias' and its functional importance, Caryl Churchill's subject and content of dramaturgy are 'critical utopias' and further elaborates:

> The agency of transformation is collective action, but 'in critical utopia . . . heroes of social transformation are presented off-centre and usually characters

> who are not dominant, white, heterosexual, chauvinist males but female, gay, non-white, and generally operating collectively'. (198)

In *Cloud Nine*, 1979, Churchill collaborated again with Joint Stock and the play was a result of a "workshop on sexual politics" and "the parallel between colonial and sexual oppression or "the colonial or feminine mentality of interiorised oppression" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 245). Churchill's inventive postmodernist experimentation with cross-casting as a means of disrupting traditional stage convention also serve to "theatricalise identity strain in the Victorian era and the then-present" (Reinelt 180). In the first Act of the play, Churchill plays with identities of the characters through cross-gendering and cross-casting, which highlights the irrepressible nature of one's innate identity which may or may not fall under the accepted norms prescribed by society. The cross- gendering reveals that Betty as Clive's wife who claims, "I am a man's creation as you see" (Churchill, *Plays:1* 245) is indeed a man which focuses on the internalisation of patriarchal norms in a farcical but ironical way. At the same time Joshua being played by a white man who claims, "My skin is black but oh my soul is white/ I hate my tribe. My master is my light. (245) reveals the imposition and internalisation of racial inferiority and oppression. The representation of Edward by a woman on whom Clive places his hope for the continuance of his patriarchal legacy is ironical in that it exposes the social conditioning of one's gender and the opposition between culture and nature. The representation of Victoria by a rag doll is also to bring to attention the unimportant position as a daughter and female. In the first scene itself Churchill breaks down the utopian image of patriarchal and imperialist achievement through her innovative use of cross-casting and cross- gendering. As Janelle Reinelt observes:

> (Churchill) Managed through these strategies to destabilise the normal, to make fun of, but also to critique, the disciplinary methods family and culture

> use to require compulsory heterosexuality and gender normativity. (Reinelt 183)

The setting of Act One of the play may be a space in history where there seems to be no room for alternative identities and existence other that the ones prescribed by patriarchy but Churchill, "uses the colonial setting and cross casting to show a 'world of alternative identities and practices while demonstrating the link between dominant ideology and institutionalized gender roles and sexuality'" (Aston, *Churchill* 32) In the deconstruction of the very elements of patriarchy which undermines theatrical representation, Churchill breaks the linearity of traditional stage practice by placing the Second Act of the play in London of 1979 and the time frame is that of a hundred years but the characters have aged only twenty five years older. This postmodernist break from conventional theatre norm is reminiscent of what Ruth Levitas observes of 'critical utopias' thus:

> Critical utopias also depart from the unified and representational narrative form . . . They shift backwards and forwards in time, deny its unilinear nature and thus the unidirectional nature of change and causality, and offer alternative futures. They present male and female versions of the same character, and divide characters into multiple parts. (Levitas 198)

In the second Act Betty is played by a woman and Victoria is now represented as human, having a voice and married to Martin who claims to be liberated and tells Victoria, "My one aim is to give you pleasure" (Churchill, *Play:2* 301) when he feels that he had not pleased her. In her postmodernist intervention of traditional dramatic structure, Churchill catapults the characters from the Victorian setting to a modern space where they find the freedom to express their inner sexual identities and desires. It is this space which gives courage to Betty to divorce Clive as her discovery of sexual pleasure is a liberating force for her as she explains, "I thought my hand might go through space" (316). This triumphant person is on

the road to understanding the possibility of self-determination and an acceptance of the life of Edward, her gay son and Victoria and Lin's lesbian arrangement. The play depicts a world where there are possible negotiations and the acceptance of alternative identities other than heterosexual. As Jenelle Reinelt observes, the play depicts "the various conflicts and unresolved conditions among radical people trying to rethink and live new kinship relations" (Reinelt, *2009* 28).

The existence of the past in the present and the knowledge of the judging eye of institutionalized patriarchal norm is evident in Edward who answers to Lin's knowledge of his homosexual identity as, "Don't go around saying that. I might lose my job" (Churchill, *Plays:2* 292) and when his relationship with Gerry breaks down deciding to reject his homosexual identity declares "I'm sick of men/ I think I'm a lesbian" (307) and live with his sister and her partner Lin as a family in order not to be identified as gay couples. Even Lin expresses her position of being trapped between conventions and the desire of fulfilling her hopes as "I've changed who I sleep with. I can't change everything" (303). Nevertheless, this reveals Churchill's diversified knowledge of complications when a societal transformation is to take place as she does not advocate homosexual relationships to the extent of discarding the heterosexual ones but is exploring and depicting means and ways through which the acceptance and inclusion of alternative identities can evolve. A truly utopian possibility is depicted in the scene in a park where Victoria, Edward and Lin calls on the "Goddess of breasts/ Goddess of cunts/ Goddess of fat bellies and babies" (309) and asks her through incantation "give us back what we were, give us the history we haven't had, make us the women we can't be" (308). This ceremony is supposed to end in the fulfilment of a sexual orgy but is disrupted by Martin's arrival which is a reminder of the reality. However, this scene depicts a moment of a utopian fulfilment of the desire to express one's sexual identity freely. Elaine Aston elucidates this scene thus:

> The call to the goddess of 'breasts', 'cunts', 'fat bellies and babies' . . . invokes the absent 'offside' female body, which they need to remake desire and identity beyond the conventional ordering of sexuality. (Aston, *Churchill* 36)

Besides the remaking of desire and personal identity beyond the conventional norm, Churchill also inserts the depiction of the possibility of kinship relations as we see the re-ordering of the family institution by the family created out of necessity by Lin and Victoria's lesbian relationship which includes Edward, Cathy and Tommy. Janelle Reinelt observes this union thus:

> The play's contemporary figures are trying to make new families- beyond the heterosexual contracts and monogamous privileges there is an opportunity to bind together in one household a brother and sister and a female friend who are polymorphously sexual. (Reinelt 29).

It is this family who will raise Cathy in a new community and kinship relations and would eventually evolve into acceptable family if the members accepts their roles within the familial relation that they have opted. Here, Churchill depicts the possibility of such existence and the need to make realities beyond conventions. This is a similar in view to Ruth Levitas' observation of critical utopias:

> In concentrating on action rather than system, it is more capable of performing the consciousness- raising function of representing and stimulating the will to transformation which is a key function of utopia. (Levitas 199)

In her socialist-feminist dramaturgy instead of advocating a woman-only environment, Churchill advocates the necessity of an inclusive politics and vision with attention to voices of the oppressed in a social system that seems to be resistant to the change that new interventions from the gay and lesbian identities advocates. Her vision may be that of utopian

possibilities but Churchill depicts in her plays the transformational importance of utopian vision whose importance Moylan describes thus:

> Oppositional cultural practices such as the critical utopias can be understood as part of a boarder, ongoing cultural revolution as the dominant mode of production is challenged by the possibility of one that can redirect post-industrial reality towards the goal of human fulfilment. (qtd. in Levitas 199)

Churchill's vision can be claimed to be that of a 'critical utopia' which envisions the possibility of change and realisation of human fulfilment beyond the patriarchal boundaries.

In the play *Softcops,*1978 staying true to her non-conventional style of writing, Churchill divides the play into tableaus which functions as a Brechtian 'gestus' in order to demonstrate how the penal system have evolved from bodily maiming and punishment as public spectacle to the modern prison system. Following Michel's Foucault's analysis in *Discipline and Punish* of how power with its social institutions as agents seeps through the social fabric and maintains its hegemony through the interpellation of persons, Churchill demonstrates and highlights how these power structure works and in drawing attention to these structures lays bare the possibility of subversions and points of resistance. As Elaine Aston observes:

> Churchill explores the evolution of social systems of control and punishment. The spectator is taken a series of scenes which explicate different methods of social control, from the spectacle of the tortured body to Bentham's Panopticon; from watching punishment to the punishment of being watched. (Aston, *Churchill* 60)

In order to highlight how repressive forces can be subverted from within the repressive agency, Churchill depicts the way prisoners were chained together with iron collars round their necks, joined by a central chain and made to roam the country for people

to witness their punishment for instruction. The 'chain gang' who are the "Lowest of the low" and "the worst punishment . . . in terms of deterrent effect on the prisoners and also on the public who see them pass" (33-34) is the realisation of a punishment which would have the most instructive effect on the people in the enactment of the power of the law. However, Churchill reverses this utopian vision of power enactment and depicts the possibility of subversion as the criminals of the chain-gang uses their punishment as a means of collective expression by which they manage to portray their punishment as exciting and glorifies themselves leading to its romanticism. Instead of walking around looking gloomy and regretful, they decorate themselves with "*plaited straws and flowers"* and "*dance and sing"* (35). Churchill incorporates songs sung by the chain-gang which serves as a tool for subversion from their oppressive situation. The song goes:

What do people want with us,

Do they think they'll see us cry?
We rejoice in what is done to us
And our judges will die. (35)

The song further incites an alternative scenario and subversion of oppressive powers as,

Children break your chains,
They're beating on a drum
Our star is shining in the sky
And our day will come. (36)

In the tableau analysed, Churchill depicts the impractical nature of what is thought to be the ultimate penal methods while at the same time highlights the possibilities of subversion and utopian possibilities of transformation in such enactments of power through the very points of resistance embedded within it.

In the depiction of the most effective system of punishment Churchill's re-enactment of Jeremy Bentham's 'Panopticon' as illustrated by Foucault in *Discipline and Punishment* serves as the fulfilment of the ultimate vision of the modern penal system. In the play Pierre

himself becomes the object of the Panopticon, where the personified Jeremy Bentham illustrates it disciplinary power on him. As Pierre explains how the Panopticon works after being disappointed by the chain-gang thus:

> It's not comfortable being watched when you can't see the person watching you. You can see all the prisoners and we can't see each other . . .
>
> I think it's most ingenious . . . an excellent means of control. Without chains, without pain. (Churchill, *Plays:2* 39)

Through the internalization of the Panopticon's power of continuous surveillance Pierre disciplines himself and learns that the discipline of the mind is more effective than brute force. This translates into the depiction of the reality of how power maintains its hegemony over its subjects, and disciplines them for its self-perpetuation by which the normalising techniques of social institutions like prisons, schools, hospitals and religion are formed. Churchill highlights a utopian yearning for transformation and the possibilities of its realisation which lies within the fractures of the power structure. In the play by giving voice to those considered deviant by the status quo like the prisoners and criminals Churchill enacts what has already been explained as 'critical utopias'.

On the transformational function of utopia, Ruth Levitas stress on the importance of desire as a transformational element. She states that, "Desire must be transformed into hope, the wish for change into the will for change and the belief that there is an agency available to execute it" (Levitas 200). From the statement the question of 'agency' becomes important in the realisation of utopian desire. In Caryl Churchill's dramaturgy one may argue that the utopian visions depicted and utopian yearnings voiced may be unrealisable as the way *Top Girls* is criticised for not drawing a 'blueprint' of how transformation is to take place but only highlight the dystopian vision of liberal-feminism, but this would be to dismiss the importance of agency in the transformational process. For Churchill, the agency for

transformation is the space given by theatre through which her visions of the possibility of a better state of existence are voiced and transformed through its inspiration on audience and readers. On the existence of 'possible worlds' Levitas reiterates Barbara Goodwin's observation of utopia:

> Goodwin sees utopias as exercises in speculative theory whose counterfactual nature enables us to criticise and ultimately perhaps to change society. They must therefore be *possible* worlds: 'any proposals must be subject to reasoned justification which draws on our experience of man and society. (Levitas 203)

From the above observation, one may claim that Churchill's depiction of utopias and dytopias are a result of the yearning for 'possible worlds' which draws on the experience of men, women and society.

The interpretation of Churchill's dramaturgy on utopian precepts is not to invalidate her visions or artistic subject and object as something unrealisable or an exercise in fantasy, but it is, as Barbara Goodwin elucidates of the study of utopia, "a crucial aspect of social and political theory and thus to counter the objection that utopias are a waste of time because they cannot be realised" (203). The function of utopia may be measured in terms of its ability to catalyse change in which its practical possibility and political agency become important; however, in Churchill's dramaturgy, it is not its function as a catalyst of practical change that is crucial, but is as Levitas observes, "utopia does not need to *be* practically possible; it merely needs to be believed to be so to mobilise people to political action" (221). Churchill's use and incorporation of the utopian vision maybe summed up in the words of Toril Moi, who observes thus:

> Utopian thought has always been a source of political inspiration for feminists and socialists alike. Confidently assuming that change is both possible and desirable, the utopian vision takes off from a negative analysis of its own

> society in order to create images and ideas that have the power to inspire revolt against oppression and exploitation. (Moi 121)

For Churchill it is in playwriting and representation through the agency of the theatre that her visions of 'perceived possibility' of the fulfilment of the desire for a better state of being are transformed into reality. It is the theatrical space which has the power to mobilise people into action. Churchill's utopian vision may be elucidated as expression and exploration of what is desired and "under certain conditions it also contains the hope that these desires may be met in reality, rather than merely a fantasy" (Levitas 221). Churchill's dramaturgy thus envisions a society that is progressive and inclusive of all identities marching towards a better state of being.

END NOTES

[1]Churchill had said this in an interview in 1982, which is quoted by Judith Thurman, "The Playwright Who Makes You Laugh about Orgasm, Racism, Class Struggle, Homophobia, Woman-Hating, the British Empire, and the Irrepressible Strangeness of the Human Heart', *Ms*. (May 1982), 51-7, 54.

[2]Levitas in her book *The Concept of Utopia* quotes and reiterates from the book, *The Politics of Utopia*. Hutchinson: London. 1982. by Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor.

[3]One may refer to the book by Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia.* Routledge and Kegan Paul: London. 1979.

[4]Ruth Levitas reiterates the concept from T. Moylands book *Demand the Impossible*. Methuen: London. 1986.

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CHAPTER – VI

CONCLUSION

Caryl Churchill's drama has achieved respectability and the political nature of her drama has been sustained even in her production of the highly political play *Seven Jewish Children*[1] in 2009. Her theatre is celebrated for her brilliant and innovative improvisations and her pioneering experimentation with theatrical form which breaks down the barriers of traditional and restrictive theatrical conventions has been looked up to. Churchill's dramaturgical trajectory is that of a postmodern artist striving to make a difference within a structure which often silences and muffles the voice of those who hope and desire to challenge and change the forces which repress them. Through her theatrical style which insists on experimentation with form and content and her openness to innovative improvisations, Churchill has created a theatrical style which is exclusive to her through which she expresses her concerns. Her reputation as a playwright maybe deduced from Benedict Nightingales observation of Churchill in *The Times, 19th April, 1997* as "the most gloriously original preposterously gifted of all British Dramatists" and Mark Ravenhill in *Guardian, 3rd September 2008* has also written that "of all the major forces in British playwriting, I can think of no one else who is regarded with such affection and respect by her peers" (qtd. in Aston and Diamond 163). However, as all inspired artists who give importance to the educational as well as activist purpose of her art, Churchill has also been criticised and accused of being anti-Semitic in her representation of the ongoing Palestine-Israeli war. Nevertheless, this accounts for the complexity of her oeuvre as a playwright.

Churchill's dramaturgical trajectory can be described in relation to Helene Cixous' observation in *The Laugh of the Medusa,* of the necessity for women to write about the experiences of women, which is the first and foremost tool of subversion. Cixous writes:

> Writing has been run by a libidinal and cultural-hence political, typically masculine –economy; that this is a locus where the repression of women has

> been perpetuated, over and over, more or less consciously . . . this being all the more serious and unpardonable in that writing is precisely *the very possibility of change*, the space that can serve as a springboard for subversive thought, the precursory movement of a transformation of social and cultural structures. (Cixous 879)

However, Churchill's 'writing' of women differs from Cixous' concern of essentialism that is, "woman must write woman. And man, man" (877). Churchill's socialist-feminist agenda works from within patriarchy in order to dismantle its structure which oppresses individuals, nevertheless she shares the importance of the need to rewrite the stereotypical identity given to women in patriarchal literature and the tendency to generalise women's identity and needs in feminist movement which Cixous argues that "there is, at this time, no general woman, no one typical woman . . . you can't talk about *a* female sexuality, uniform, homogenous, classifiable into codes" (876). In the analysis and study of the subversive elements and its possible realisation in the socialist-feminist theatre of Caryl Churchill, the thesis pays close attention to the perpetuation of oppression, be it gender, class based, economic, political, social and particularly the oppression of women. As a socialist-feminist study the thesis investigates into the root of oppressive power hegemony of patriarchy and patriarchal societal set up under which women seem to be most targeted. However, as socialist-feminism acknowledges the interrelationship of all subjectivity and identities which falls under the control and manipulation of the phallogocentric system, the thesis is inclusive of the expression of the differing ways oppression is perpetuated, and brings to the forefront the ways that subversion of oppressive and repressive forces maybe achieved as elaborated in Churchill's theatre. The thesis gives importance to the differences amongst women and feminist movement and highlights the issues related to the distinctions of family, class, sexuality and gender which is implicit in Churchill's theatre in her advocacy

of the possibilities of the subversion of patriarchal forces. For the purpose of the analysis of the differing elements which make up Churchill's theatre and her dramatization of the socialist-feminist agenda of subversion, the thesis studies them in different chapters which individually presents the nuances of Churchill's theatrical agenda through various theoretical precepts.

In the development of Feminist Theatre, Churchill's contribution is instrumental in making it a theatre which celebrates differences and challenges the male biases of the traditional theatrical conventions such as the importance given to chronological linear structure, which governs time, place and character. Its developmental years coincides with the beginnings of Churchill's collaborative and experimental venture with feminist theatre groups, which plays an important role in the establishment of feminist theatre as working differently from traditional theatre. As discussed in Chapter II of the thesis which is titled "Churchill and Feminist Theatre", it is Churchill's openness to research and group discussion on the making and writing of a play that makes her writing different from her contemporaries, especially from those of the 'Kitchen Sink Drama' of the 1960s-70s and the Social Realist dramas of John Osborne and Arnold Wesker. This also accounts for the establishment of a socialist-feminist theatre, as the idea and practice of community involvement in the development of a play is on par with their socialist agenda as represented in their theatre. Out of the necessity to develop a theatre technique which would most represent their differing need and subject matter, feminist theatre appropriated theatre theory of playwrights like Bertolt Brecht whose non-conventional representation of society relates to the subject matter of feminist theatre. This issue of appropriation of techniques has been discussed in Chapter II of the thesis in light of Churchill's successful use of Brechtian techniques in her representation of sex, gender, class and political oppression.

Churchill's collaboration with Joint Stock in *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* is representative of feminist theatre's rebellion against traditional mode of playwriting and production. This also accounts for the fact that Churchill's willingness to share ideas through workshop and research other than confining one's ideas to the self has made her work valuable not only to her but also to others who were involved. It is this element in the making of a Churchillian play which has contributed to its success and respectability. In the establishment of a technique of playwriting different from traditional convention, the importance given to research of the subject matter to be represented gives credibility to the play while at the same time shows Churchill's seriousness of her responsibility to the people that she represents which make her accountable to others. Janelle Reinelt in her essay, *Churchill and the Politics of Style,* has written of Churchill that "she is a socialist-feminist intellectual; serious historical and philosophical reading forms the background of her work". She further situates Churchill within the "feminist- socialist trajectory which intercalated cultural products with theoretical preoccupations" by the feminist historians which centred on a "feminist historiography which recognised women as discrete subjects, acknowledged the need for an analysis of gender and sexuality which did not simply reduce to class, and provided a theoretical ground for psychoanalytic explorations of sex and gender while retaining a concern for ordinary people and their socio-economic lives (Reinelt 177). On account of the importance placed on her research in theoretical writings, Churchill's plays have been claimed to perform theory or stage theoretical debates concerning feminism and socialism and other subjects as seen in the present study. Her dramaturgical techniques are innovative as she brings in new ways of representation in theatre which is different from the male tradition.

It is this willingness and openness to embrace a working style and condition outside of her own which Claire Armitstead observes as "one of the qualities that has enabled her to keep developing long after most of her contemporaries either dried up, moved out or become set in their ways" (qtd. in Aston and Diamond 145). Apart from her differing working style, it is Churchill's experimentation with form that has set her apart from traditional theatre. Her innovative use of cross-casting and cross-gendering in *Cloud Nine*, to the breaking of the traditional linear chronological order which governs time, place and character in both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* shows a firm establishment of playwriting which insists on being different and challenges the status quo of the traditional theatre. This is one of the major and important contributions of Churchill in the establishment of Feminist Theatre. Churchill's innovative insertion of modern songs between scenes in plays like *Vinegar Tom* and *Fen*, may have been rightly criticised of "breaking the rhythm of the playtext" (Fitzsimmons 33), but one may argue that it is the breaking of the monotonous rhythm of traditional playwriting which Churchill's theatre wants to achieve thereby establishing an art of theatre which through its difference becomes an instrument of subversion and change.

It is in the representation of women and their oppression under patriarchy and capitalism that Churchill's strength as a playwright is truly evident. For her, as already mentioned feminism always includes socialism, and she does not envision one without the other. The dynamics of oppression of various kinds under patriarchy and capitalism as evident in Churchill's dramaturgy takes the form of the oppression and abuse meted out mostly to women. It is here that her Socialist- Feminist stance makes a difference from the common notion of Feminism based on common oppression which often neglects class and gender differences. In her socialist-feminist agenda of subverting oppressive forces, Churchill acknowledges the inevitable participation of identities other than female and the ones

accepted traditionally. She recognizes the intersubjective nature of identity formations, hence her feminism is not a woman only purview or an essentialist criticism. Churchill is careful to demonstrate in her dramaturgy, the differences in the way oppression is being perpetuated in different contexts, be it classist, gender based and even sexuality. She does not advocate a feminism which emancipates only the women of the privileged class or the financially capable, but her feminism seek to locate and bring to the forefront the elements which makes possible the subversion of oppression. Her socialist-feminism is on par with Barbara Ehrenreich's observation in *What is Socialist Feminism,1976* that "Socialist feminist, while agreeing that there is something timeless and universal about women's oppression, have insisted that it takes different forms in different settings, and that differences are of vital importance" (Ehrenreich N.pag). It is this difference that makes up Churchill's feminist oeuvre in her representation of women from various time period, class and identities. However, as oppression is mostly meted out on the economically dispossessed, Churchill focuses on women of the working-class on whom the injustice of capitalist and patriarchal hegemony is best demonstrated.

In the representation of women's oppression, Chapter III of the thesis, titled "Interrogating the Politics of Patriarchy and Capitalism", studies the workings of patriarchy and capitalism which is best revealed in the lives of women of different economic, historical, cultural and ideological backgrounds. Through the dramatization of the lives of women Churchill locates the genesis of oppression in the patriarchal set up which is self - perpetuating. Churchill brings to the forefront the way oppression hides behind the facade of economic emancipation in a capitalist economy which liberal feminism seem to advocate and voices the dangers of advocacy of a feminism which does not really tackle the problem at the grassroots, which for her lies in the binary set up of both capitalism and patriarchy. As

discussed in chapter three through the analysis of the play *Top Girls*, Churchill questions the grounds on which emancipation has been won, be it through the advocacy of liberal feminism or Marxist feminism in the dramatization of the lives of the sisters, Marlene and Joyce. Churchill's dramatization of the success that the women in the dinner scene of *Top Girls* have achieved focus on the way patriarchal norms have dictated them and in their internalization of patriarchal ideology they have taken on the characteristics of the structure they strive to be free of and hence, oppresses themselves. In *Top Girls* through the unresolved debate of the pro-liberal feminist Marlene and pro-socialist feminist Joyce, Churchill dramatizes the dangers inherent in a feminism that does not pay heed to differences among women based on class, gender and ideology but only advocates the facade of individual emancipation through economic independence. Churchill has been critiqued of not providing a road map that feminism should follow and has left the play open ended, however this is where the strength of her art theatre lies through which she brings to attention the path that the feminist movement is following in a consumerist, capitalist society. The predicament of those forgotten or neglected by liberal feminism is dramatized in *Fen*, in which in the dramatization of the lives of the poverty stricken and abused women labourers, Churchill expose the root cause of oppression as inherent in the capitalist-patriarchal structure under which the women strive. However, being true to her socialist-feminist agenda of difference and subversion Churchill juxtaposes the economically and socially bleak setting of the play with transformational possibilities which a collectivist and inclusive form of feminism would achieve.

In the identification of the origin of the perpetuation of oppressive elements, Churchill gives importance to the dramatization of how power structures maintain its status quo through its various social institutions. This is reminiscent of Louis Althusser's concept of

'interpellation' which Churchill is obviously bringing into focus, as it is in this very concept that sexist/gender and class oppression is perpetuated under the facade of peaceful and legal social control. This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter IV of the thesis titled "Churchill's Ideology of Intersubjectivity", in which Churchill's two plays *Softcops* and *Cloud Nine* are studied. Churchill's dramatization of the way power structures have been established throughout the centuries in *Softcops* accounts for the fact that, for her, the identification and determination of the source of power oppression is necessary if one is to establish a counter discourse on it. The focus of the play is the dramatization of how power is perpetuated through social institutions like schools, hospitals and prisons, and the important part it plays in the normalisation of subjects which works in parallel with the repression of deviant or subversive elements. For Churchill, this identification and location of the crux of power structure is the foundation of her Socialist-Feminist agenda, as it is only by working from and within the power structure that the subversion of oppressive element which marginalise subjects can be achieved. In *Softcops* Churchill may have used an all-male cast, but this is not to dismiss it as a non-feminist play but as a means of drawing attention to the power structure which a wholly feminist or womanist agenda tends to neglect in its focus on essentialism. In the dramatization of the network of power through the appropriation of Michel Foucault's concepts of power as elaborated in *Discipline and Punish*, Churchill highlights the intersubjective nature of all kinds of identity formation and its oppression, whether class based, sexist, gender or even based on sexuality, as the source from which such oppression emanates is one and the same, which is the patriarchal binary system. It is in the knowledge of this source that resistance and subversion can be achieved which is dramatized in *Cloud Nine.*

In *Cloud Nine*, it is through the dramatization of the construct of fixed heterosexual identity and its strict imposition through the family structure that Churchill questions the validity and coherence of such identities. The play brings to attention the inherent existence of identities other than those accepted by patriarchal binary system and through a parody of identity formation based on her use of cross-dressing and casting, Churchill exposes the inevitable nature of the formation of what is relegated as deviant identities as it is in the biased need to maintain its status quo that patriarchal hegemony breeds subversive identities and subjects. Churchill's postmodern breaking down of chronological order questions the validity of such patriarchal binaries as counter discourses resistant to it has been evolving, and the strategic placing of the characters from the Victorian era to the modern London setting of the 1970's is a dramatization of subversion itself, a subversion of the Victorian ethos of patriarchal binary system which seem to engulf individuals even in contemporary society. Apart from the acknowledgement of identities that differs from the ones that befit patriarchy, Churchill's advocacy of a feminism that gives importance to the issue of identity formation based on gender and sexuality, which would go side by side with the advocacy of class and economic emancipation is evident it her dramatization of characters which differs from the heterosexual norm. She does not only subvert the norms of traditional patriarchal theatre through her innovative use of form and content, but also subvert and resist an oppressive force which dictates and controls subjects in the world of theatre and the larger world outside it. Churchill dramatizes the possibility of existence and a social structure outside of the phallogocentric system and acknowledges the possibility of families and human relationship which differs from the norms of heterosexuality. Churchill's dramatization of differing identities shows the all-inclusive nature of the Socialist –feminism that she advocates. She maybe claimed to be one of the first playwrights in Feminist Theatre to be sensitive towards the acknowledgement of the inherent reality of the need to include the

issues of gender and sexual identities in the feminist movement if one looks forward to the achievement of true emancipation. This is the very element by which one can claim Churchill to be heralding the debut of 'Third Wave Feminism'[2], which insists on the inclusion of difference based on class, race, gender and sexuality, and discards the notion of the universality of women's oppression and the tendency to generalise women's oppression solely based on the experiences of upper-class women.

As already elaborated and discussed in the chapters of the thesis, the subject matter of Churchill's dramaturgy is true to what she has explained it to be that of "power, powerlessness, exploitation, people's longings, obsessions, dreams" (qtd. in Aston and Diamond 168). The landscape and environment in which her characters strive maybe sometimes bleak and the circumstances which engulfs them may seem bereft of hope, however Churchill's succeeds in her purpose of the dramatization of possibilities and transformation through the subversion of the assumptions of the unchallengeable and unquestionable power structures. As observed by Dan Rabellato " Churchill's work reminds us, in the words of the political slogan, that another world is possible, and continues to offer models for a political theatre of the twenty-first century" (Aston and Diamond 177). It is this very possibility of alternative worlds and transformational possibilities that is explored in Chapter V of the thesis, titled "Churchill's Moral Vision of Possible Worlds".

One needs to remind oneself that Churchill's moral stance is not that of the application of traditional religious dogma or religious morality, but a vision of the possibilities of transcending one's present situation free from the oppression of abusive and repressive powers. Churchill brings to life her vision of possibilities through its dramatization in theatre which further affects the larger world outside of it through its artistic and educational nature. This vision of alternative existence and possibilities in Churchill's

dramaturgy is analysed in Chapter V of the thesis based on the precepts of Utopian thought. However, one need to assert that this is not to reduce Churchill's Socialist-feminist agenda of subversion to the common understanding of utopia as an ideal which cannot be realised in reality, but adheres to the postmodern and poststructuralist redefinition of the concept of utopia as an essential element, a catalyst which brings about the achievement of transformation. As discussed in the chapter, the study of the utopian nature of Churchill's plays is based on the postmodern concept of utopia as deduced by Ruth Levitas in her book *The Concept of* Utopia, 2011, which defends its accusation as something impractical, but brings to the forefront its transformational power and function in the realisation of all political and social possibilities which have been achieved and are yet to be achieved.

Churchill does not advocate only utopian visions or possibilities, but rather juxtaposes it with dystopian realities in all of the plays studied in the thesis which demonstrates her knowledge of the inconsistencies between theory and lived reality. Nevertheless, this accounts for the seriousness of her art which insists on its transformational function and not to be studied for a purely aesthetic purpose. It is on account of its transformational possibility that in *Vinegar Tom*, amidst the hopeless situation of the women accused of witchcraft, Ellen's cottage becomes a site of hope, a transformational site in which the women's class, gender and ideological differences break down and they gather for a common cause which is to find refuge and a possible state of existence from a society which oppresses them. It is Churchill's insistence on the possibility of alternative existence and identities that in *Cloud Nine*, Edward, Victoria, Lin and Cathy moves in together to form a family as opposed to patriarchal norms. It is in the "desire for a better for a better way of being" (Levitas 9) that Val in *Fen* comes back alive after dying in which her confused dialogue delivered in a hysteria like state voices the lives of all other women who have been oppressed like her. It is

this desire for transformation which gives May the inspiration to sing at the end of *Fen.* It is through the dramatization of what is believed to be impossible that Churchill subverts the common notion of the indelible nature of power hegemony.

Churchill's dramaturgy is the staging of desire and the hope for a possible and better state of being which lends voice to those that have been muffled in history, marginalised and victimised for their consideration of an alternative state of existence other than the prescribed norm. Churchill advocates progress in her vision of the possible utopia and this as Sharon Ammen observes, "This possible utopia, for Churchill, is one that combines feminism and socialism" (Ammen 99) which is the reason behind the enormous corpus of subject in her oeuvre ranging from feminist issues to identity formation; the politics of power dissemination; sexual politics to capitalist economics. In her feminist agenda of subversion, one may draw a corollary to Luce Irigaray's observation of what feminism ought to be:

> Women's relationship to power is not exclusively one of victimization. Feminism is not simply about rejecting power, but about transforming the existing power structures- and, in the process, transforming the very *concept* of power. (qtd. in Moi, 148)

It is in light of the above quoted observation that one may conclude that in the transformational purpose of her work, Churchill is adamant in bringing to the forefront the subversive potential of working within the Lacanian 'Symbolic or Phallic Structure' as opposed to women working in isolation. Churchill's use of parody, theatrical style and structure opposed to male dominated theatre tradition has been effective in the transformation of existing power structure within theatre itself and the world outside of it.

Churchill's Feminist agenda of the representation of women's subjectivity in relation to her socialist agenda is seen in scenes that are exclusive to her as a woman writer which are

implanted in almost all of the play studied. As her socialism and feminism are intertwined, a theoretical study of her art inevitably connects her to the concepts of 'Semiotic and Symbolic' structure propounded by Julia Kristeva who unlike Helene Cixous refuses to define 'woman' and argues, "the belief that 'one is woman' is almost an absurd and obscurantist as the belief that one is man" (qtd. in Green and LeBihan, 249). However, for Kristeva language is what forms all subjectivity and recognizes the intersubjective nature and interrelatedness of all identities, especially that of women. As already discussed in Chapter Four of the thesis the significance of the Lacanian concept of the phallus which does not signify only one meaning of the Symbolic but makes room for multiple signification of meaning, Kristeva constructs a term the 'semiotic' which "represents the repressed, feminine aspect of language, which is always capable of disrupting or subverting the Symbolic" (249). Kristeva recognises that subjectivity is not fixed to a particular identity but rather it permeates all identity formation. For her the semiotic working from within the symbolic can erupt at any time and is capable of disrupting the stability of the phallogocentric order. If one translates the 'semiotic' into the context of feminist/woman's theatre "it is the breaking up of dramatic dialogue, form and character etc., which is analysed in relation to the semiotic and the possibility of *jouissance"* (qtd. in Aston *An Introduction* 56). The concept of the 'jouissance' which Kristeva appropriates from Lacan, even though its exact meaning may not be definable, maybe translated as 'total joy or ecstasy' and it is in Cixous' term what a woman writing in her own space and writing about herself may achieve which Toril Moi explains as "a series of ruptures, absences and breaks in the symbolic language (that a writer achieves), but can also be traced in his or her thematic concern" and further states of Kristeva's anti-essentialist view that "there is no *other space* from which we speak: if we are to speak at all, it will have to be within the framework of symbolic language" (Moi 170).

It is important to mention that Kristeva's theory is theoretical and does not include a materialist approach to feminism, but it is relevant to Churchill's dramaturgy on account of the fact that it is from within this 'semiotic' space that Churchill achieves in the subversion of the symbolic/ phallocentric oppression. If one studies her technique of breaking the symbolic language and tradition of the phallocentric theatre in scenes like in *Vinegar Tom* where in the end of the play she parodies Sprenger and Kramer, the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum: The Hammer of the Witches*, in which women dressed as the men perform a dance which is followed by the song 'Lament for the witches' as discussed in Chapter II of the thesis, one may insist that Churchill has brought to reality, whether in theatrical space or the larger world, a moment of 'jouissance'. This may seem a radical and impractical observation, however, this is what feminism aims at, as in the words of Helene Cixous,"Women's imaginary is inexhaustible, like music, painting, writing: their streams of phantasms is incredible" (Cixous 876).

One may claim that Churchill has succeeded in the representation of the various issues that feminism has strived to find the answers to. However, for her a feminism with a material base that will tackle the root cause of oppression without working in isolation or enclosed camps is what seems to be most important. Her dramaturgy includes the staging of the various theories of feminism that have developed. As theatre puts theory into practice, one cannot dismiss the importance of theoretical precepts in the formation of meaningful activism. Theatre serves as an agency for subversion through which it is dispersed to the larger world, and through her theatre Churchill has been able to positively display a (female) creativity which differs from the oppressive structure which she subverts.

Caryl Churchill's Socialist-Feminist agenda as analysed in the thesis has succeeded in the crucial identification of the crux of sexist-oppression, which is intrinsically intertwined with the perpetuation of marginality. Her feminist stance is that of the need to tackle the root

of oppression which lays hidden in the patriarchal and capitalist matrix of social control. For Churchill, a theoretical approach to oppression without practical activism will not be meaningful if the politics of differences, individualism and economic disparity are not taken seriously into consideration and any kind of oppression, be it sexist, economic, political or even gender oppression will continue. As a study of her dramaturgy reveals, it maybe concluded that for Churchill what is most crucial to the current politics of feminism is an inclusive approach that would embrace the differences while at the same time working towards political activism. One may add that with the accusation of Second Wave Feminism being blind towards class, gender, sexual and race differences in its tendency to generalise women's oppression, Churchill's Socialist concern with the issue of oppression perpetuated by classism, which inevitably includes intra-sexual oppression is the first hindrance that has to be addressed if feminism is to achieve real emancipation and liberation.

As evident in her plays discussed in the thesis, the achievement of few women in the financial and political world based on the internalization of patriarchal norms, with the neglect of the working class and economically or financially deprived women does not mean that emancipation has been achieved. Churchill is resilient to bring to the forefront the necessity of equality and the need for the issues of class, sex, gender and race to go side by side, given equal importance in the feminist movement. Theoretical precepts of feminist theorist who advocates essentialism have been used in order to elaborate the multi-subjectivity of her art, however, one may deduce that Churchill may brilliantly appropriate theory to give life to her theatre, but her feminism is a desire to achieve an all-inclusive, collectivist vision that would bring to reality a non-sexist, non-authoritarian society. Churchill's feminism focuses on the contextual differences of women's oppression but does not advocate its fragmentation based on the differences. Instead Churchill dramatizes the vision of a possibility where inspite of one's difference, subversion of patriarchal oppression

and repressive forces will be achieved through the understanding of the source from which it emanates instead of allowing oneself to be fragmented by individualist concerns.

As analysed and studied in the thesis, one may conclude that Churchill's dramaturgical trajectory is the dramatization of oppression which aims to expose the source of its perpetuation, from which one can identify and construct a counter force for subversion. Churchill through her educational art and unparalleled artistic innovation, has succeeded in bringing to focus the main crux of feminist concern, which lies in the identification of oppression perpetuated by the patriarchal binary system, and through its dramatization, advocates the possibility of change and transformation not only within the walls of the theatre but also outside in the larger world. Hence, Churchill's dramaturgical theatre is a world of possibilities, the realization of alternative worlds. Churchill's theatre is the dramatization of the possibilities of the subversion of oppressive and repressive power structure which has pre-fixed or pre-conceived and undermined identity formations. It is Churchill's vision of the possibility of transformation and existence alternative worlds that has made her theatre a subversive tool which is the main element in the possible achievement of transformation, be it on, societal, political, individual and personal levels. The theatre of Caryl Churchill does not aim at the complete overturn of socio-political structures, but rather at destabilising the inherently discriminating and repressive orders of the society. It is through this dramatization of the possibility of destabilisation that her theatre empowers women and all sections of society who are marginalised.

END NOTES

[1]*Seven Jewish Children* is a political and tactical response to the Israeli military attack on Gaza between 27th December 2008 and 18th January 2009 in which there was a heavy number of Palestinian casualties, most of whom were children. The play was produced in 6th February, 2009 at The Royal Court Theatre and also made freely available on the web, with performances licensed free of charge. The play was received differently by different communities, while it received praise at the same time received accusations of being 'anti-Semitic'. For further reading refer to, Elaine Aston, *Caryl Churchill*, 140-144.

[2] The exact historical and ideological demarcation of third and second wave feminism is unclear. One may say that it arose in the early 1990s out of the backlash against second wave feminism's neglect of differences in colour, class, sex, gender and race. It seeks to avoid the essentialist trend of defining femininity inherent in feminism, which is based on the experiences of white, upper class women. On the theoretical precepts it relates to a post-structuralist interpretation of gender and sexuality, while some proponents focus on the issue of race and ethnicity. As being different from the second wave feminism, the issue of contextualization is given importance. This construct of a 'third wave' is received with a lot of criticism and differing views as to the question of whether it really functions or not. While some critiques have questioned the validity of the 'wave' construct of feminism as adhering to the feminist movement of the United States. For further reading refer to, http://www.pacificu.edu/magazine_archives/2008/fall/echoes/feminism.cfm/>

http://www.thirdwavefoundation.org/about-us/history/>

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APPENDICES

Name of Candidate	**:**	**Vanlalchami**
Degree	**:**	**Ph.D**
Title of Thesis	**:**	**Caryl Churchill and Theatre of Subversion: A Socialist-Feminist Study**
Department	**:**	**English**
Date of payment of admission fee	**:**	**No. 4291, Dt. 12. 9. 2007**
Registration No.	**:**	**MZU/Ph.D/281 of 30.3.2009**
Date of Submission	**:**	**14th March, 2014**

(Dr. Sarangadhar Baral)
Head
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BIO-DATA

Name	**:**	**Vanlalchami**
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		Aizawl, Mizoram
Phone	**:**	**(0389)2329592, 9436354857 (M)**

Educational Qualification

Examination	Board/University	Div/Grade	Percentage	Year
HSLC	**Mizoram Board of School Education**	**I**	**62.5%**	**1998**
HSSLC	**Meghalaya Board of School Education**	**II**	**57%**	**2001**
B.A (Eng)	**North Eastern Hill University**	**II**	**54%**	**2004**
M.A (Eng)	**North Eastern Hill University**	**II**	**53%**	**2006**
NET				**2005**
Pre-Ph.D Course Work	**Mizoram University**	**'A'**	**6.4**	**2011**

(VANLALCHAMI)
Aizawl, Mizoram

OTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION

1. Participated in the Regional Seminar on **"Rewriting Oral Narratives of North –East India**, organised by the Department of English, Mizoram University and sponsored by Sahitya Akedemi, on November, 18th -19th , 2008.

2. Participated in the National Seminar on **"The Dynamics of Culture, Society and Identity: Emerging Literatures of Northeast India",** organised by the Department of English, Mizoram University in collaboration with Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Shimla on November, March 10th – 11th, 2009.

3. Participated and Presented a paper in the **National Seminar on Mizo Drama and Theatre**, organised by Department of Mizo, Mizoram University on November 15th - 16th, 2012.

4. Participated in the National Seminar on **"Narrativizing Trauma in North Eastern India and Beyond"**, organised by the Department of English on 5th -6th November, 2012.

5. Participated and Presented a paper in the **UGC Sponsored National Seminar on "Narrativizing Cultures of the North East: Indigenous to Contemporary",** organised by Government T. Romana College, on 3rd -4th September, 2013.

6. Attended Pre-Ph.D Course Work from August- December 2011in the Department of English, Mizoram University.

7. Published an article titled **"Subversive Possibilities in Caryl Churchill's Playtext *Vinegar Tom*",** in ***Contemporary Discourse,* A Peer Reviewed International Journal, Volume-4, Number-2, July-2013. ISSN 0976-3686.**

8. Published an article titled. **"Power and Gender/Sexual Politics: A Theoretical Study of *Cloud Nine* by Caryl Churchill"** in ***Shoryabhumi,* A Peer Reviewed International Journal of Multi-disciplinary Research", Volume 1, Issue-2, May-July 2013. ISSN 2319- 720X.**