SUBVERSION OF GENDER ROLES IN SHELAGH DELANEY'S *A TASTE OF HONEY* AND CARYL CHURCHILL'S *TOP GIRLS*

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THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that in my opinion, the thesis submitted by Ahmed Hussein Sharqi AL-TAI titled "Subversion of gender roles in Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*" is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master in English Literature.

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This thesis is accepted by the examining committee with a unanimous vote in the Department of English Language and Literature as a Master's Degree thesis. 22.07.2022

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is the result of my own work and all information included has been obtained and expounded in accordance with the academic rules and ethical policy specified by the institute. Besides, I declare that all the statements, results, materials, not original to this thesis have been cited and referenced literally.

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FOREWORD

First of all, praise is to Allah for granting me protection and the ability to finish this work. I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness and render my warmest thanks to my supervisor, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nazila HEIDARZADEGAN, who made this work possible. Her friendly guidance and expert advice have been invaluable throughout all the stages of the work.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my dearest parents and to my family.

This thesis dedicated to the memory of my brothers late, who were killed as innocents. May Allah have mercy upon them and grant them the highest place in paradise.

ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to analyze Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* and Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. The plays of these two playwrights witness events that carry some elements of repression and deprivation. The circumstances that the two playwrights had witnessed in their lives forced the two writers to write plays that reflected the bitterness of life. The style that the playwrights employ in their plays depicts the harshness of their lives. The articulation of the concept of gender or gender activation is the behavior reinforced through daily repetition, and the post-structural emphasis on representation and discourse as gender-producing techniques in the social world, and the continued attention to gender as a changing social construct with no deterministic effects. Both writers based their plays on different female characters and confront male domination in different ways. The thesis comprises three chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter deals with the definition and history of subversion, focusing specifically on the subversion of gender roles in modern drama. Chapter Two covers the various characteristics of womanhood and highlights the feminism theme of Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*. Chapter Three investigates women's socially imposed roles of women and the influence of patriarchy on Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*. The thesis concludes the gender subversion in the selected plays maintains that a person of female sex does not always have a feminism gender. As exemplified in *Top Girl's*. In *A Taste of Honey* stereotypes such as the working-class matriarch, the rootless ideal of black man's sexuality, and the teenage single parent, all represent gender subversion.

Keywords: Gender; Gender Subversion; Gender Roles; Modern Drama; *A Taste of Honey*; *Top Girls*

ÖZ

Bu tez, Shelagh Delaney ve Caryl Churchill'in iki oyununu analiz ediyor. Bu iki oyun bazı baskı ve yoksunluk unsurları taşıyan olaylara tanık oluyor. İki oyun yazarının hayatlarında tanık oldukları durumlar, onlarr hayatın acılarını yansıtan oyunlar yazmaya yöneltti. Oyun yazarlarının oyunlarında kullandıkları üslup, hayatlarının acımasızlığını yansıtır. Cinsiyetin gerçekçiliğine, toplumsal cinsiyet kavramının günlük tekrarlarla pekiştirilen davranış olarak ifade edilmesicinsiyet aktivasyonu olarak nitelendirilir. Ayrıca, toplumsal cinsiyet üreten teknikler olarak temsil ve söylem üzerindeki post-yapısal vurguya ve cinsiyete olan ilginin, belirleyici etkileri olmayan, değişen bir sosyal yapı olarak devam ettiğini vurgulamak gerekir. Her iki oyun yazarı da kendine özgü kadın karakterleri oyunlarının merkezine koyar ve erkek egemenliğine çeşitli şekillerde yaklaşır. Bu tez üç bölüm ve bir sonuçtan oluşmaktadır. İlk bölüm, özellikle modern drama ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin altüst oluşuna odaklanarak yıkımın tanımı ve tarihi ile ilgilenir. İkinci bölüm, Shelagh Delaney'nin *A Taste of Honey* oyununda feminist unsurlarını sunar ve kadınlığın farklı yönlerini inceler. Üçüncü bölüm, kadınların toplumsal olarak belirlenmiş rollerini ve ataerkilliğin Caryl Churchill'in *Top Girls* üzerindeki etkisini sorguluyor. Tez, sonuç olarak *Top Girls*'da, cinsiyet rollerinin altüst oluşuna, ve kadın karakterlerinin sadece kadınsal kimliğe sahip olmamasını öne sürüyor. *A Taste of Honey* oyununda, işçi sınınfında anaerklik, siyah erkeğin köksüz cinsel idolu, ve yanlız ve ergen ebeveyni cinsiyet rollerrinin altüst oluşunun basmakalıpları olarak öne sürüyor.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Toplumsal Cinsiyet; Toplumsal Cinsiyet Yıkımı; Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolleri; Modern Drama; *A Taste of Honey*; *Top Girls*

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ARŞİV KAYIT BİLGİLERİ

Tezin Adı	Shelagh Delaney'in *A Taste of Honey* ve Caryl Churchill'in *Top Girls*'inde Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerinin Yıkılması
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SUBJECT OF THE RESEARCH

The main reason behind this study is to discover the subversion of gender roles and the stereotyping of women in selected plays by Shelagh Delaney and Caryl Churchill.

PURPOSE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE RESEARCH

This study aims to discuss the reasons of the subversion of gender roles, in Shelagh Delaney's and Caryl Churchill's selected plays. The significance of this study is to highlight subversion of gender roles in literature and the benefit of studying such cases. The writers' perspectives about women characters in society will also be examined in this thesis. Their plays attempt to pay attention to the difference in the women's characters, which they believe to be a departure from the norm for women. They use the female characters to illustrate how the patriarchal system impacts women in terms of Subversion of Gender Roles.

METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

The subversive characters in the plays of Shelagh Delaney and Caryl Churchill are analyzed by the Subversion theory. The research result assists the readers to understand the capacity of the influence of subversive and gender roles and subversion theory upon these characters.

HYPOTHESIS OF THE RESEARCH / RESEARCH PROBLEM

The concept of subverted character can be observed in similar and different way, used simultaneously by both playwrights Shelagh Delaney and Caryl Churchill. Both playwrights portray a subverting picture in their plays because of the loss of their rights or the bad situations in their time.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS / DIFFICULTIES

The limitation of the current thesis is focusing on the main play of each playwright. The study will be dedicated to discussing the elements of subversion and gender roles that appear in each playwright's play. Also, the theoretical framework on which the study stands is mainly the subversion of gender.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Definitions of Gender Subversion

Gender refers to socially constructed differences between the sexes, norms and cultural expectations on women and, men; and how femininity and masculinity are defined. Gender is used when analyzing the relationship between men and women, regarding their different access to power, life opportunities, vulnerabilities, and different strategies for change. Gender is also used when discussing differences between different groups of women and, men, e.g., age, ethnic background, social class, sexuality, etc. Gender norms are expressed in laws, customary practices, etc. (Kanter, 1977).

Gender is a social construct that creates the unique roles and responsibilities that women, men, and children have in a given community or cultural context. It explains its role in family, workplace, community, political organization, and government, among other places. It is common for roles and obligations assigned to men and women to diverge significantly. It is often assumed that a woman will take the lead role as a mother and caretaker. While in certain societies, women take on more responsibilities in the public arena and men in the private; this is not the case everywhere. Rice production may fall to women, whereas fishing may fall to males in agricultural activities. To understand how men and women, interact and what they do, can do, and are expected to do, gender analysis must emphasize the differences in duties and roles between men and women (Kanter, 1977).

It was popular in America throughout the 1970s to refer to people by their gender instead of by their "sex" (Krieger, 2003). Many people believe that our masculinity and femininity are genetically predetermined at birth. To disprove this, researchers and campaigners coined the term "gender" (Krieger, 2003). "Gender," refers to the set of socially and culturally constructed notions about what it means to be male or female, rather than the biological characteristics we refer to as "sex."

To Newman and Grauerholz (2002), the distinction between men and women can be traced down to biological differences in gender. It is also stated that most people assume that men are macho, and women are feminine based on their gender,

which is not always true. Gender and sex differences are socially constructed, not only as a result of biological differences, but as the distinction and relationship between men and women. Gender has an impact on every aspect of relation. Therefore, relations are influenced by people's conceptions of gender. Individual's position in the family is also influenced by their gender beliefs, with certain people commanding more power because of their gender.

Gender roles are based on the expectations of individuals, groups, and societies depending on their sex, as well as each society's gender norms and beliefs. Gender roles are the result of interactions between people and their settings, and they provide indications to people about what kind of behavior is considered proper for which sex. Appropriate gender roles are defined by a society's perceptions regarding gender differences. Understanding the concept of "gender roles" necessitates knowledge of the term "gender". Gender is a social-bound term that is frequently confused with sex: Gender and sex are two distinct terms. Sex is a biological concept that is determined by an individual's fundamental sex traits. Gender, on the other hand, refers to the meanings, values, and qualities that various sexes are associated with (Kanter, 1977).

Gender roles are ones that men and women are expected to play based on their gender. Many Western nations have always assumed that women care for their children more than men. Hence, the conventional concept of the feminine gender role dictates that women should be caring. One alternative for women to engage in the traditional feminine gender role is to nourish their household by working full-time within the house rather than outside of it. Men on another hand are supposed to be leaders by gender conventions. Therefore, the traditional idea of the mescaline gender role proposes that males be the heads of their households, giving economic help and making the choices for the family (Lindsey, 1997).

Gender roles, according to a biological approach, are generated through interactions between individuals, groups, and their environments. That is, while individual persons contribute to the construction of gender roles, so do the physical and social settings in which people live. According to a biological perspective on gender roles, women have a natural affinity for the feminine gender role, whereas males have a natural affinity for the masculine gender role. The biological perspective, on the other hand, does not imply that one role is fundamentally more valuable than

another. Gender roles can be linked to male and female expectations in areas outside of the home, such as work (Williams, 1995). Men and women are frequently discriminated against in the workplace (Kanter, 1977).

There were many social scientists before Ann Oakley (1972) who recognized that gender and sex are two distinct entities and that they should be treated as such. Men and women are biologically classified as either male or female, but socially classified as either male or female, according to Oakley (1972). In other words, gender is a social construct created by humans, but it relies heavily on biological differences between men and women for its existence. Gender is often referred to as a "social construction" because of the role that society plays in determining what a person is. To illustrate how society constructs gender, it should be considered that how different societies and cultures attribute different characteristics and statuses to people based solely on their gender. These characteristics and statuses also change over time within the same society, further demonstrating how society constructs gender.

The relationship of connecting the gender roles of men and women outside of the home is an expectation worth exploring, such as at work (Williams, 1995). Men and women in the workplace are frequently expected to perform distinct duties and play distinct roles as a result of their gender (Kanter, 1977). By the year 2000, many businesses operated with a gender-biased perspective, favoring mothers over fathers and only providing parental leave benefits to mothers. In addition, because many corporations still adhere to a traditional view of gender roles, women and men are often segregated in the workplace. More women than men have the expectation of being secretaries or administrative assistants, while men have the expectation of being managers or executives. Men are also thought to be more goal-oriented and task-oriented in the workplace, whereas women are thought to be more relationally oriented.

Gender can be further understood as the roles, attitudes, attributes, and behaviors associated with and/or assigned to each sex (Hatchell & Hatchell, 2007). In this case, gender can be seen as subjective depending on how it has been learnt and can take various forms accordingly. There are two types of gender roles: traditional and atypical, which are referred to as a person's "gender role orientation." Men and women, according to conventional gender norms orientation, have distinct distinctions,

are traditionally viewed as having a natural affinity for different behaviors. The rules and rituals of earlier generations can have a considerable impact on a person's gender role orientation. When it comes to atypical gender roles, a person's behavior is not or should not be based simply on his or her gender identity. Individuals rights to select what roles they perform and how closely those roles are tied to their gender identity are more likely to foster equality in male-female partnerships than traditional gender roles.

There have been three main approaches to the concept of 'gender' in the past. Theories such as social role theory and social constructivism, for example, all fall under the umbrella of evolution. They are all summarized in the following order: Different heterosexual mating patterns have resulted in unique gender norms, according to evolutionary theory, based on the proportional costs and rewards of various sexual acts. On the other hand, in pre-industrial society's pre-industrial women's reproductive success was dependent on the time and money they spent caring for their children and their mate (Guo et al., 2007; Hatfield et al., 2010). So, in order to have a happy family, people established rules for how men and women should behave. Evolving theories suggest that gender norms may change throughout time. Men's and women's features are studied separately, but in relation to, evolutionary theory, in order to determine the function played by brain structure and hormones (Gurian & Henley, 2001; Brizendine, 2010). Despite the study's validity, no antisocial or unhealthy behavior should be justified by it. Testosterone, a hormone linked to sexual desire and aggressiveness, may be elevated in men and boys. There is no evidence to support the idea that having several partnerships, compelling a partner to have sex, or physically abusing someone to settle a disagreement is caused by high testosterone levels. Using testosterone as a justification for bad behavior weakens men's ability to self-regulate and treat others respectfully.

According to the principle of social roles, men and women are on an equal footing. According to social norms, there are no alternative ways to display one's femininity or masculinity (Courtenay, 2000). According to social role theory, a wide range of acts, roles, and expectations can be used to define how gender manifests itself in many ways (i.e., gender is not a binary variable). Respect for one another is an important lesson to learn. People are molded by their relationships with others, including their families, friends, and communities, according to social constructivists (Courtenay, 2000). When it comes to gender, it is not something was' born with, but

rather something the one learns via observation and experience. The upshot is that men and women are seen as active players in the development of gender norms (and their deconstruction). Social constructivism's emphasis on the concept of agency emphasizes the potential of individuals to exercise control and influence over their own lives. From the United Nations, the World Health Organization, US federal funding agencies, and domestic and international non-governmental organizations, gender is increasingly being examined from a social constructivist perspective in human sexuality research (Tolman et al., 2003). This article investigates gender from a social constructivist angle. Gender is seen as a socially constructed construct that describes the traits, behaviors, and duties that are seen as appropriate and expected in a certain community. Through the socialization process, characteristics and responsibilities are learned and reinforced throughout one's life.

1.2. Historical Background of Gender Subversion

The women's movement was critical to the progress of women during the twentieth century. When women gained the right to vote, access to birth control, and legal abortion in the 20th century, Western culture was compelled to reexamine long-held beliefs about women and their roles in society. After World War II, sociological, anthropological, and psychological studies focused on gender and gender roles. Even though the terms "gender" and "sex" are commonly used interchangeably, they refer to two distinct concepts and should not be combined. This inquiry commonly uses the following terms. Men and women become physiologically and hormonally intertwined when they engage in sexual activity.

Six major schools of thought evolved to try to explain why men and women play different roles in different communities. These theories are based on a wide range of notions about human development and cultural practices, including biological, structural-functional, social learning, cognitive development, gender schema, and symbolic interaction, among others. According to the notion of biology, male and female roles are based on biological distinctions between the sexes (Christen, 1995; Dobson, 1995; Maccoby, 1966). According to the structural-functional paradigm, each sex must have tasks and professions that support society for it to function correctly (Eagly, 1987; Parsons, 1960; Parsons & Bales, 1955). Gender roles are taught and

reinforced in phases in the theories of cognitive development put out by Baldwin (1971), Kohlberg, (1966), as well as Mischel (1966). However, views differ on how rewards and learning are interpreted. Gender schema theory combines stage and socialization theories, claiming that people learn about gender and gender roles through the learning of schemas (Bem, 1988). Gender is socially constructed, according to symbolic interaction theory, and numerous institutions within society are responsible for handing down and maintaining distinct gender roles based on society's concept of masculine and feminine (Blumer, 1969).

A significant portion of the research in this study was based on the gender roles symbolism interaction hypothesis. Since socialization, which is defined as "the lifelong process by which individuals learn their culture, develop potential and become productive members of society," gender role development occurs as a result of this process (Lindsey, 1997, p. 53). It is via symbolic touch that social duties are gained and perpetuated (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1964). According to SIT, a person's conception of his or her job is also opened to change when circumstances change. If social models are to be trusted, the portrayal of female and male characters in a play reveals how society views gender roles. So, the portrayal of gender in plays can either strengthen or undermine the message being communicated.

A crucial aspect in shaping gender roles in the past was the structure of the family. This is the first time that long-term differences in family structures, including gender roles, have been documented, according to Alesina and Giuliano (2010). Women devote themselves to housework while men work full-time in communities with strong family ties. This is known as the "man breadwinner hypothesis." A strong family bond means that both men and women are more inclined to participate in the workplace and at home.

Researchers Alesina and Giuliano used three questions from the World Values Survey (WVS) to measure how important families are to people, how much responsibility parents have in raising their children, and how important it is to show one's parents love and respect. With this combined measure, it can examine the impact of strong family relationships on a wide range of outcomes, including female labor force participation and household production. Lower female labor force involvement correlates with higher levels of domestic production, which is predominantly carried

out by women in countries with strong family ties. Their gender roles are also more established. It has been discovered that disparities in family culture can account for lower rates of female employment and longer working hours for women. Alesina and Ichino conduct research on the impact of kinship ties on economic outcomes in Italy (2009a). As Bertocchi and Bozzano (2015) found, the educational gender gap in Italy is mostly a result of family patterns. A lot of their research is based on data collected between 1861 and 1901, the year of America's union. Secondary school students' gender ratio is the major dependent variable for this study. There are two variables that are measured: inheritance rules and the type of family structure (nuclear vs. complicated) (equal division versus primogeniture). Families with nuclear families and equal wealth distribution are more likely to have a larger female-male enrollment ratio, according to their findings.

Traces of violence in intimate relationships are linked to traditional family structures (stem vs. nuclear) in Tur-Prats (2016). As long as at least one of the children stays at home to care for his or her parents, their spouse, and their children, a "stem" family can include two or more generations. To ensure the family name lives on, it's not uncommon for these families to have only one son who receives their entire estate and lives there with his wife. In nuclear families, children receive an equal portion of the inheritance when they leave the parental home and begin their own families. In areas where the stem family was widespread, rates of domestic violence and gender equality were lower. Domestic violence and gender roles may be linked to the structure of a family since the wife's cohabitation with other women lessened a load of household chores, allowing her to devote more time to non-domestic activities. This resulted in greater financial responsibility for the family.

In recent years, the number of publications in the field of language and gender has increased. Jane Sunderland (2000) and Aneta Pavlenko and Ingrid Piller (2002) cite over twenty collections of articles published between 1991 and 2001, and over ten monographs devoted to this topic, according to Block (2002) in two survey articles. A few noteworthy studies include those looking at, for example, the connection between gender and language (Goddard & Patterson, 2000), the specific concerns and issues of immigrant women (Frye, 1999), and the needs and voices of women in EFL contexts (Goldstein, 1995, 2001; Kouritzin, 2000) and (McMahill, 1997).

Journals such as Gender and Education, Discourse and Society, TESOL Quarterly and Discourse, and Society have been progressively publishing works that focus on the interrelationship between gender and language. Applied linguistics and language teaching conferences show an increasing number of colloquia and individual papers that focus on gender and language, as has the number of conferences held on the concepts of language and gender, such as the International Gender and Language Association Conference held at Lancaster University in April 2002 (Block, 2002).

1.3. Subversion of Gender in Modern Drama

Modernism arose as the main art style of the Western world and surpassed it; this was also the heyday of the first wave of feminism, which focused on female votes. The central figure was the "New Woman": a woman who was educated and (relatively) sexually liberated and who was more interested in active life in the public realm than in reproductive life at home. Gender, the feminist movement, and philosophy of the time, as well as reactions to it, became a source of dispute, sometimes referred to as the "sex wars". Gender, particularly in the metropolitan centers of modernity in the twenties, had also been marked by a long shadow of Oscar Wilde's trials, as well as the development of homosexual, lesbian, and cultural cultures. Even though many modifications have been made to the method Women are represented in modernist literature and the "new woman" may undoubtedly be discovered page by page yet numerous men could not let go of the old, well-established, feminine vision of women. The "womanly woman" is still a significant literary figure (Devaki, 2020).

The debate regarding gender in modernism developed in the 1970s, amidst Feminism's second wave and the entrance of women's theory and critique to the academy. This called into question how the modernist tradition and experimental forms of modernism are dominated by men. Several techniques for gender analysis were available early on, including gender styles in French feminist theory, psychoanalysis, materialist feminism, and gyno-critical attention to women authors. In the 1990s, it was assumed that modernist writings would raise gender issues. Debates about the sufficiency of gender as the central concern of feminist philosophy have contributed to a usable understanding of intersectionality, which occurs when forms

between gender and the person are intersected by other social categories such as race, age, orientation, disability, and so on. Challenges to binary distinctions advocated by gender opposition are frequently significant, as is research into how gender is established or carried out by culture (Devaki, 2020).

Early modern gender ideology equated women's speech and writing with sexual promiscuity, according to historicist and materialist feminist critiques. New Historicism and Feminist Criticism have become closely aligned in the field of early modern studies, with the former influencing the goals of the latter. Adrienne Rich assert that feminism became preoccupied with the relationship between text and context as a result of the influence of historicism; it includes an increased readiness to examine all textual remains of the past with same care normally paid to written works. The New Historicism and Feminist Criticism have had an uneasy alliance in early modern studies because New Historicists have tended to marginalize gender issues and focused on public history, male-dominated early modern power structures, and the totalizing nature of the ruling ideology, and rejected the possibility of resistance, subversion, or change. As Carol Thomas Neely points out, "powerful patriarchal structures inevitably contained female agency and subversion." (1983, p.8). While New Historicists downplay gender issues, they continue to emphasize the link between early modern English women's speech and sexuality to reinforce the early modern culture's subordination of women.

Many early modern texts have been shown by feminist critics to link female speech with lasciviousness. Women's speech', Karen Newman writes, was equated with open genitals and immodest acts' in the period, which was fraught with anxiety about women's rebellion, particularly through language. There is clear evidence that the sins of the tongue and the body are analogous, according to Dympna Callaghan. While men are expected to keep their mouths shut, women are expected to keep their mouths shut as well.

There is some truth to the modern world depicted in modern drama. Modern drama places the individual at the center of the stage realism presentation. It captures the angst of the times while also revealing new details about the culture at large. Ibsen is famous for introducing believable dramatic action in the final moments of his plays. As a contemporary author, he is known for bringing up important social issues in his

works. He has a reputation for causing havoc in his own home. Dramatic works by Ibsen, in particular, have a unique quality because they convey a sense of loss and a gradual transition to a state of death where the characters appear to be alive but are powerless and dead. Despite their best efforts, the characters in Ibsen's modern tragedies struggle in vain to achieve their goals. Female gender issues, such as women's emancipation and their ability to express themselves through thought and action, are addressed in the play, A Doll's House.

Ibsen (1879) argued that a modern society cannot satisfy the natural needs of a woman for freedom, and this idea serves as the basis for his criticism of contemporary life or society in his plays. He thinks that the official and private lives of an individual are incompatible. As a commentator on contemporary life, he tries to make this point. A person's status in his or her family reflects his or her position within society as a whole. The hierarchical power structures of the outside world are reflected in the power structure of the domestic home. A latent crisis is highlighted in Ibsen's focus on some contemporary situations. Using the medium of women's destiny, he can convey contemporary social issues.

Ibsen's prose oeuvre propounds realism to people in everyday life making sense of events, themselves, and others using conversation. This is a powerful model of drama that has survived into the twenty-first century. What has also endured from Ibsen's time is the understanding of home nestled between the dialectical points of its need for stasis and the desire for flight.

Early modern gender ideology equated women's speech and writing with sexual looseness, according to historicist and materialist feminist critiques. The area of early modern studies has come to be defined by a strong alignment between New Historicism and Feminist Criticism, with the former influencing the latter's goals. As Adrienne Rich argue, under the influence of historicism, which involves, in Greenblatt's words, "an intensified willingness to read all of the textual traces of the past with the attention traditionally conferred on literary texts," (Rich, 2004 pp.97-127). Feminism became preoccupied with the relationship between text and context, exploring the position of women in early modern English society. Nonetheless, in early modern studies, the connection between New Historicism and Feminist Criticism has always been an "uneasy partnership," because New Historicists tend to ignore gender

problems. The New Historicism viewed history primarily in public terms, male-dominated early modern power structures, and the nature of the dominant ideology as totalizing, rejecting the potential for the opposition, subversion, and reform. As Carol Thomas Neely puts it, "strong patriarchal systems unavoidably contain feminine agency and insurrection." (1983, p. 15) While New Historicists dismiss gender concerns, they reinforce the relationship between women's speech and sexuality in early modern England to impose women's subjugation within early modern culture. Many early modern writings equate female speech with lasciviousness, according to certain feminist critics. As Karen Newman points out, the time was riddled with fear of rebellious women, particularly those who rebelled via words, and women's speech was considered equivalent to exposing genitals and immodest deeds. Dympna Callaghan discovers convincing evidence of a parallel between the tongue and bodily sins. Just as silence is associated with chastity and obedience, this feminine speech is associated with disobedience, sexual incontinence, and deception.

In addition, subversion may be self-or societal, and it may be absurd or planned, as it begins with individuals and soon spreads in the community to affect it as a whole. Subversion may be subject to a great philosophy that has a formula and plans, and perhaps the first to formulate the methods of subversion is the Chinese philosopher (San Tuz), who is famous for many sayings in this regard. We notice an ambiguous transition from the claim of "gender quality" (the core of the feminist lexicon) to the claim of equality in "gender" or "gender" (which is the focus of the gender lexicon). Whereas gender studies originally aimed to "subvert" the doctrine of sex differences, allowing for a "plurality of genders" for more than "two," in the context of the struggle to "democratize" forms of intimate identity and separate them not only from the traditional binary social (men and women) or biological genetic determination (male or female).

2. SUBVERTING GENDER IN *A TASTE OF HONEY*

2.1. Representing Gender and Subversion in Shelagh Delaney's Life and Work

Shelagh Delaney is a British actress who was born in 1939 in Salford, Lancashire. *A Taste of Honey* is her debut play, was written at the age of eighteen. Delaney was the most extensively panned dramatist of the period, but she was not the only one. Because she is a woman, she received less criticism. She, like many other women writers at the time, went unnoticed for the work she was doing. However, substantial research has been done on the writer's male contemporaries. According to several historical accounts, Delaney's gender, as well as her young age, attracted the attention of some critics at the time. Hence, they were unconcerned with the play's substance or themes. A drama, as defined by J.R. Taylor, signifies that the written text alone is insufficiently influential without features like acting and a stage, so the play should be studied in this light (Taylor, 1962).

Shelagh Delaney was born on 25 November 1939 in Lancashire, to a family of Irish heritage (Rusinko, 1989). Her father, who was of socialist views, educated her ―according to the British social pattern of the welfare state and […] socialistic views‖ (Canlı, 1995). After she failed the eleven-plus examination required to enter grammar school, she terminated her education (Canlı, 1995). Deprived of any professional qualifications, Delaney worked at various jobs including ―salesgirl, usherette, clerk, and assistant in the research photography department of Metro-Vickers‖, and being brought up by the socialistic views of her father, Delaney became active in the British movement for nuclear disarmament (Lindroth. 1991). Similarly, her plays *A Taste of Honey* and The Lion in Love were much discussed in terms of their ―representation of working-class experience (Lacey, 1995).

The play's female playwright adds an extra layer of intrigue to the play's historically male-dominated environment. With its focus on feminine themes rather than masculine characters, the play *A Taste of Honey* shows tremendous dominance in the portrayal of female characters (Wandor, 2001). Regardless of Jo is not a typical "submissive" lady of the time, she is not overlooked in this photograph. It's not

uncommon for Delaney to discuss premarital sex, homosexuality, the link between a black guy and a white lady, or mother-daughter issues. When discussing women's work and financial status during the period, she also mentions it.

Originally, she planned to write the play as a novel, but she realized that a play would be a better fit. She says that she aspired to challenge 1950s standards by designing an unconventional drama that depicts the realities of women's lives rather than the typical ones. "I had a clear vision of what I wanted to see in the theater," she said. A common complaint was that "factory workers would come to a play with their capes on and address the boss as "Sir." The year was 1962 in Kurland, (Oberg, 1966, pp. 160-167).

The play's primary focus is on interpersonal connections, not political issues. However, the forbidden themes of the day, which would have a negative impact on society, are still brought up in the play. The "kitchen-sink drama" style of drama first appeared in the 1950s. It was also thought that Delaney's plays exemplified this new form of theater. For a long time, the domestic drama was mostly disregarded and rarely presented (Wandor, 2001).

As far as themes go, British drama in the 1950s underwent a significant transformation. When John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* appeared in print in 1956, the previously accepted rules were upended. Jimmy Porter, a character created by Osborne, is always ready to unleash his rage. Although the play's authors were not directly involved, a group of "angry young men" formed after the play's success. Angry Young Men Theatre's name conjures up a patriarchal connotation, and Shelagh Delaney's writing was not in line with that of the other writers in the group, so she was considered one of the group's pioneers. In light of this, the title might not be the applicable for a writer like Delaney, who has a wide range of interests and objectives (Rathod, 2017).

They were composed in the late 1950s and emphasized a sense of tiredness while focusing on personal, home, and familial matters. This new wave of British drama in the 1950s dealt with the absurdity of life, but it also dealt with a special subject: personal relationships. According to several who talked, it is the only establishment capable of shielding one from this modern world's lunacy. Samuel Beckett was one of the greatest playwrights of all time, and he was also a friend. They

did not get into a heated debate over global and common concerns like Beckett. So, they avoided delving into existentialism and the quest for meaning in an otherwise meaningless universe. Concerned about unconventional and controversial issues, they talked about them privately. They did not just deal with personal relationships; they also reexamined gender roles, marriage, and other aspects of sexual orientation and gender identity. Instead of focusing on well-known topics, they turned their attention to lesser-known ones, such as the lives of marginalized people. Analysis of society was their goal, and it was done with all of the angst and resignation that they felt inside (Gascoigne, 2005).

Kitchen-sink drama was coined by critics and reviewers to describe the plays written in the wake of this new wave of playwriting. That's because the name immediately draws attention to the distinguishing new wave qualities. They stood apart from the rest of the early 1950s drama productions at the time (Sunderland, 2000). The plays of the previous generation examined and staged the opulent homes of the middle class. However, the term "kitchen sink drama" derives from the fact that playwrights often depicted the homes of the poor, which are typically furnished with plain and uninteresting items. The playwrights wanted to convey the harshness of British life. Moreover, few amounts of the country's residents could afford to live in opulent mansions. Overstuffed comfort, velvet draperies, and stylish paintings were replaced by gas stoves, sinks with creaking wooden chairs, and bare kitchen tables," according to Cornish (1985).

Actors can use instantaneous scenery changes in their plays since the stage is "non-representational," according to Kerensky (1977). With the introduction of this revolutionary new element, the British theater scene was set to get a breath of fresh air. Other changes were also made. The characters developed by the playwrights all suffered from the same set of flaws. They considered themselves to be a working-class family who was struggling to make ends meet. Nevertheless, one of the playwrights, Shelagh Delaney, chose not to continue her education after graduating from college (Taylor, 1993). She and other playwrights were more interested in honing their craft than in going to school and picking up new skills. The playwrights of kitchen sink drama had one thing in common, however: they all intended to create genuine works of theater. The principal breadwinners of British working-class families were their parents. It has been a middle-class preserve in the West End for many years, with mid-

class writers not mentioning university degrees and targeting middle-class readers," adds Taylor: "Simply said, the landscape has shifted. Furthermore, "She (Delaney) communicates with a vernacular vocabulary, idioms, and syntax that upper-class and middle-class English speakers do not." The audience, critics, and journalists were all unfamiliar with the new subjects, styles, and settings. The working class may have shunned theater for this very reason. To witness their own lives on stage, they became interested in theater as a result of the growth of "kitchen sink drama." Art began to take on a more socially concerned tone starting with this new era. The aspects of life were attractive as well as stunning, as for that culture, which was expected to have a double life.

One of the first plays written by Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste of Honey*, tells the story of the relationship between an elderly mother and her young daughter. The peculiarities of their characters and their exclusion from society make them unsuited for the ideal women's standards of the time. England is where the play takes place. Helen, the girl's mother, is an irresponsible person who neglects her daughter. The state of their finances enrages her. Jo was born as a result of affair she had while married to another man. When it comes to the fact that she is involved with a man prior to marriage, Jo bears some striking similarities to her mother. Helen does not care about Jo anymore after she becomes pregnant, so she marries Peter, a wealthy businessman. However, Jo is not alone during her pregnancy. Geof, a gay college student, goes with her and takes care of her. Despite the fact that Helen makes occasional visits to Jo, it is obvious that her interest is merely a facade.

2.2. Gender and Subversion in *A Taste of Honey*

Even after it was coined as a movement's catch-all phrase at the tail end of the nineteenth century, historians in Europe were split on the issue of gender. It was not uncommon to hear people refer to it after the turn of the twentieth century; there was a "feminist agenda" or "women's rights." As the term "feminism" gained popularity, women in Europe began referring to themselves as suffragists rather than feminists. Because of their goal for equal voting rights and other freedoms, American female citizens invented the term "feminism." 'Feminism,' on the other hand, sounded better because it encompassed both gender relations and home difficulties (Hannam, 2007).

In *A Taste of Honey*, Delaney employs several otherness-inflected themes that do not seem to fit into a traditional family or social structure. This is a time when the divide between the rich and poor was visible on stage, and it was not until the new wave emerged that the British working class appeared in plays. The marginalized individuals and issues in Delaney's work are brought to the forefront by the usage of these otherness components. Because Geof is both gay and a gifted artist, the author can make extensive use of music band singing in his narrative, allowing him to portray homosexuality as an inherent part of the creative process. Before the new wave, it was uncommon for a play to focus on the lives of young people. Post-war British playwrights, according to Komporaly, are the ones who were the first to emphasize young-woman protagonists (2006). As a communist couple living in a class-conscious society, Jo and Geof are outspoken communists. Peter, on the other hand, can get everything he wants, even Helen, because he believes in capitalism. In addition, the play's characters are based in northern England, a region closely associated with the working class that had been mostly forgotten about by the 1950s. In northern areas such as Salford, an attempt is being made to marginalize the characters and portray them as British bourgeois or upper-class people, as seen in the works (Lacey, 1995).

Traditional 1950s examples of 1950s subservient women models do not apply to the two ladies in the play. As a result of their sex, they are masculinized, and this masculinity is coupled with their innate femininity, resulting in distinct personalities. A woman's most significant virtue and dedication, according to the traditional feminine mystique, is her pursuit of her quest for femininity. The Western world undervalued the importance of this quality. If science is unable to study and define the feminine because it is too irrational, complicated, and human-created, then it must be rejected. There are no negative features in comparison to human nature; in fact, they may even have some positive ones. Ancient mysticism holds that women suffered because they were envious of men and tried to act like them. As a result of this, they should have acknowledged gender roles and have been at peace with themselves, which necessitates sexually inactive behavior, obedience to male dominance in the universe, and maternal tenderness must be maintained (Friedan, 1963). Jo and Helen's masculinity may be attributed to their envy of males since they do not appear to follow gender roles.

An act of defiance against customary norms can be seen in the fact that Jo is pregnant with the child of her premarital sexual encounter and refuses to terminate it. A woman's desire to have a child even when she is not married might be interpreted as a form of protect for authoritarianism, (Rich, 1986). Because, the play's author added Jo's pregnancy in order to convey her rebellious nature. Women who are made to do so because of their gender are free to express themselves and resist doing so.

Women, who cannot support themselves financially, according to Beauvoir, are still not considered autonomous simply because they possess the right to vote. Although society has less of an impact on them, they cannot be considered wholly unaffected by their surroundings. Hence, they will remain, servants, both at home and in the community. Full-time employment is the most important factor that helps women stay pace with males and achieve complete independence. Therefore, they will be able to eliminate their dependence on males as a financial intermediary, and they will no longer need them.

When Jo gets away from the people, she has had tumultuous relationships, she regains her self-confidence. A pleasant home awaits them as Geof takes her in. Her emotional well-being is taken care of and supported by Geof. In addition, she gets her own job depending on her-own. Before moving in with Geof, she was more passive and spoke less, but now she is more self-confident and speaks with determination. The fact that she has a job and is making the decision to give birth herself can be perceived as an act of liberation.

Even if some of Jo's actions are distinct and individualistic, there are feminist acts in the world of womanhood that may be linked to her. In a conversation with her mother, Jo informs her that she is quitting school and taking on a part-time job at a bar (Delaney, 1958). The reason of Jo's expression is because Helen's ability to make out the judgment of her own regarding her future. In the 1950s, in the United Kingdom, starting work in a pub was unusual for a woman. Women's employment was a hot topic, and many British women got their first taste of working life during this period. Hence, it is a feminist ideology to create business for women. From that, we understand that society and other external differences change the behavior of individuals. When an entire performance is broken into acts, they are a collective action and a shared experience. There is more theatrical and less selfish interpretation

of actions that helps to dues the accusation of activity theory being too existential. Just like within feminist theory, it is seen to include political structures. Gender, which is known as the act which is solely not one's own, as embodied agents actively and dramatically personify and use cultural distinctions. Therefore, it is understood that the gender of an individual is not an entirely personal matter, and it is not a decision that such punishments and precepts are used.

"The Personal is Political is the slogan of second-wave feminism. While some feminist acts are initially personal, they eventually become political as time goes on. In the context of collective action, one of the most crucial activates is women's employment. Society and cultural conventions also have an important influence in shaping women's behavior, which means that the majority of women in a country will act similarly. So, collective movements for feminist ideas and views can build momentum and advance over time.

It is not Delaney's goal to create female characters that can be labeled 'good', 'bad', 'nasty', or anything like that. Each of Helen's and Jo's characteristics sets them apart from those around them, as well as from each other. For Jo, Delaney tries to show the difficulty of realizing one's own identity. Therefore, she is neither a normal lady of the period nor a truly ostracized or separate woman in practice. Despite her occasional outbursts of rage and rebellion, she is powerless to affect meaningful change in the lives of others around her or even herself. It is possible that she is this way because she has always been reliant on her mother for everything and has never been able to make her own decisions. Even if Helen does not like the house when they move in together at the beginning of the play, she has little choice but to grumble about it. However, because she is not financially self-sufficient, she is unable to make an effect in the real world. As a result of her relationship with Helen and exposure to social conventions, Jo's personality and actions are shaped. However, "the act that one does or performs is in a way an act that was going on before one arrived on the scene" according to Butler (1988). Hence, Jo exemplifies distinct personality traits that are both relevant to and incongruent with the times in which we live. It is Delaney's goal to give each figure its distinct personality. She introduces them in a way that neither glorifies nor degrades men. She remarks, despite the fact that it is not suitable to flout social conventions throughout the 1950s for women:

BOY*:* You naughty woman!

JOS: I may as well be naughty while I have the chance. I'll probably never see you again. I know it.

But I do not care. Why should I? Stay with me now- it is all I want and I you do come back I'll still be here-

BOY: You think I'm only after one thing, don't you?

JOS: I'm sure you're only after one thing. (Delaney, 1958, p.34)

"Rebellious" is used as an adjective to characterize ladies who do not act in a rebellious manner; that is, they do not match tradition society and, therefore, are an uncommon sight. The unorthodox nature of their personalities and inner worlds, as described in the introduction chapter, is enough to label them as ''rebellious.''Women are expected to play particular roles, for example, an ideal wife and mother, without hesitation. When women in the minority begin to recognize their distinct sexual identity, they begin to understand that they are not obligated to act like ideal women because society sets the standards for appropriate behavior. Helen and Jo's approach toward *A Taste of Honey* is one in which they defy established rules. As the offspring of an extramarital relationship, Jo now finds herself the mother of a child in yet another extramarital relationship. The fact that Helen works at a bar makes her an 'unpleasant' person in the eyes of the general public. There is an understanding of one's uniqueness that comes with being a member of the 'tiny percent women' club. Even though Helen's personality traits are similar to Jo in many ways, it. Jo Just like denies Geof claims to be the only one of his kind, she believes there is only one of her (Delaney, 2003). These women's isolation and alienation can lead to a condition where they can create social and ethical principles and live more freely when checked to the most of women because they are less influence by cultural and social norms. In contrast to the expectation that men and society are expected to treat women, especially during pregnancy, they are expected to be emotionally sensitive, Jo says:

Jo: The colour's wrong. (Suddenly and violently flinging the doll to the ground) I'll bash its brains out. I'll kill it. I don't want this baby, Geoff. I don't want to be a mother. I don't want to be a woman.

Geoffrey: Don't say that, Jo.

Jo: I'll kill it when it comes, Geoff, I'll kill it.

Geoffrey: Do you want me to go out and find that chap and bring him back? Is that what you want? (Delaney, p.77)

The issue of women's uniqueness persisted even as the second-wave feminist movement was gaining traction when *A Taste of Honey* was written. As a result of being raised by a different mother than their mother, Helen's daughter, and Jo's real mother, they are very different. Some have concluded that Delaney is trying to draw attention to the differences between the two ladies, including their sexual orientations and personalities. As Kristeva argues, once the feminist concept has been properly adopted by society, dividing women into categories is no longer effective (Oliver, 1993). However, despite the fact that Helen and Jo are perceived as outcasts and unusual by society at the time, their marginalization is distinct from one another. Ethical principles and life visions are constructed by both of them, yet they are distinct. Their distinctiveness includes other qualities that make them stand apart from the rest of the population. When discussing feminism, the subject of what it means to be 'different and unique' can be brought up at this time. In this case, the opposing of traditional and/or conventional is not the opposite of different personalities and sexual identities. Because of this, labeling women as either conventional or non-traditional, or distinct becomes a difficulty. Every female's unique set of physical, psychological, sexual, and cultural traits is referred to as 'different'. Therefore, Jo and Helen have difficulties comprehending and relating to one another's ethical principles, as no two women are exactly alike. So, Delaney shows how the mother-daughter relationship is more complex than simply being a mother-daughter unit.

Feminism's emphasis on individual distinctions in identity has not been widely adopted by the rest of society. When women are referred to as 'marginal,' 'different,' or 'other,' they run the risk of being classified in a traditional feminist perspective. More importantly, it raises the issue of treating women who are oppressed or inactive in society as if their plight were commonplace. For the sake of maintaining the male world's control, women's obligations should be seen as being at home, where they cannot fight against patriarchy or experience and appreciate their unique identity pattern. As a result, the patriarchal belief system includes the idea that a "typical" woman's cycle is traditional. There is no such thing as an 'average man'. They exist in

the male world, and they are exempt from the sex laws that apply to other species. Their sexuality is not a secret because they believe that it is not easy to hide it, and later the questions that will be raised for women are a topic of discussion. With regard to women, the lines blur because women gradually open themselves up to a variety of different critical perspectives. Consequently, the vulnerability of women increases, making it more difficult for them to resist this oppressive mentality and change it. Women who exhibit traditional characteristics due to their nature can set themselves apart from other conventional women despite their passivity or perceived 'normality' in society.

In her play *A Taste of Honey,* Delaney emphasizes the two women's distinct personalities and distinctiveness. The feminist movement, which began with a focus on women's suffrage and issues exclusive to that gender, has been demolished by feminists who, as discussed in the introduction, have come to recognize the uniqueness of the female self and the importance of the second wave feminist movement. In post-war British drama, fictional characters Jo and Helen know that they are individually accountable for their own thoughts and deeds. Suppose Helen marries Peter despite Jo's opposition and financial plight, she will be forced to live in poverty as a result of her own decision. Jo places the blame on her mother, saying, "After all, you're my mother! It seems like you just realized it now, don't you? When you entered that door, you didn't even give me a second glance" (Delaney, 1958, p.31). Delaney highlight in *A Taste of Honey*, the distinct personalities and distinctiveness of both ladies. The women's rights movement As for Jo, she has unborn child, and she is currently living with her gay companion Geof because she is expecting her first child. Atypical women's unusual behaviors can be depicted in a variety of ways depending on the choices they make themselves. That, even though she does not physically demonstrate her defiance, one might get the impression that she has a marginal and rebellious mentality by listening to her angry talk in the first act of the play.

People, such as women, are expected to have a good way of life; this is because of the late modernist era's influence. When it comes to marital life and the workplace, women are increasingly left to fend for themselves, as they no longer receive any outside support. Such as, they begin to change their jobs on their own because being confined to a single job for the rest of one's life creates a sense of permanence and identity. The literary works of the post-war or second modernist era are intertwined

with feminist discussions about individuality. Her refusal to interfere with anyone's life and her dislike of being ruled by anyone else make Jo a symbol of individualism in *A Taste of Honey*. This shows her overall outlook on life because it seems that neither her mother nor her flat mate, Helen, are interested in her decision, despite the fact that Helen is her mother and Geof is her flat mate. In contrast, Jo pretends that she does not have any idea about her mother. This shows concern for her well-being. The topic of discussion is second-wave feminism and individuality in the workplace, which is at the heart of this conversation. When it comes to her professional life, it is fair to say that Jo wants a sense of self-sufficiency because she must be proactive rather than dependent or submissive.

In contrast, those who advocate collectivism are more likely to advocate for those who support collectivism and show more support for the party, security, deities, functions, correspondence, and relationships than those who advocate individualism. Members of a society who are collectively minded are bound together by a variety of ties. In addition, collectivists tend to spend most of their time with a few close friends and family members.

2.3. Female Characters Representing Gender in the Play

Delaney's debut play, *A Taste of Honey*, emphasized her working-class upbringing as well as her interest in women's concerns (1958). Delaney began working on *A Taste of Honey* when she was seventeen years old, which she, at first, intended to write as a play. The first performance appeared in May 1958, at the Theatre Workshop, directed by Joan Littlewood (Taylor, 1993). The play sparked controversy and outrage because it dealt with social outcasts and was one of the first to feature deviant characters and taboo subject matter in mainstream production (Lindroth, 1996). These themes included single motherhood, interracial and premarital sex, women's active sexual life, homosexuality, adultery, and divorce. Despite these controversial themes, of the play moved to the West End in 1959, to Wyndham's Theatre. Observers and critics of the play were split in two. Delaney has been praised by some critics for her "bawdy realism" in the play, while others have slammed it as an example of the Kitchen sink school of drama (Lindroth, 1991).

Delaney's breaches of societal boundaries, as well as her direct engagement with forbidden matters, are depicted with bashful truth. Delaney's violation of the community laws, as well as the way she writes about blanket issues precisely, without mentioning that the realistic portrayal of working-class women is implied. The awards she received in 1959, Foyle's New Play Award, and an Arts Council Bursary seem to confirm the latter point of view. Later in 1960, the play was transferred to New York, for which Delaney won the New York Drama Critics Circle Award. In 1961 she wrote the film version with Tony Richardson and won the British Film Academy Award and the Robert Flaherty Award for the screenplay (Lindroth, 1991). In 1981 the Roundabout Theatre staged an off-Broadway revival of *A Taste of Honey*, and after being named Critics Choice in the New York Times, the play was transferred to Broadway.

A Taste of Honey (1958) concentrates on working-class women and their issues (Canlı, 1995). It deals with the lives of two women: Helen, the mother, and Jo, her daughter. Helen is a single mother suffering from poverty. Her first husband divorced Helen as she committed adultery and became pregnant. Jo is the result of this entire extramarital affair. Similar to her sexually liberated mother Helen, Jo is socially deviant, in that she is engaged in premarital sex with a black man, as a result of the affair, she becomes pregnant. Anyway, Jo's mother marries Peter because of his wealth, costing Jo a lot, as she is left on her own, and her only friend during her pregnancy is the homosexual art student Geof, who cares about Jo more than Helen.

The play mainly breaks the social taboos in presenting socially deviant characters and themes: marriage as a means of economic survival, adultery, divorce, an unconventional mother-daughter relationship, and unconventional portrayals of premarital and extramarital sex and single motherhood. Wives are seen as a remedy for healing off the wounds of damaged families during the war; therefore, marriage becomes central to women's lives during the 1950s. Marrying at a young age was a common theme during this decade, and marriage rates were high as a result (Lewis, 1992). Because of the ideology of domesticity, wifery and motherhood were central to women's lives. Based on the domesticity ideology, women's roles as wives and mothers were central to their lives. The only way for a woman to maintain her social status in this decade was through marriage (Beauvoir, 1962). To earn her husband's respect and wealth, the woman served him in return for her social and economic status,

and he enjoyed it (1962). Like Beauvoir, Millett thinks that the life of married couples resembles two people working as a unit to achieve domestic expenses. In other words, married women give up what they have in order to gain money and social prosperity.

In exchange, women give up many things they possess for the sake of their marriage partners. In return for this, their male household members do the rest of the work.

The husband is the one who takes care of his wife and provides for her needs. As for her, she does what her husband desires. When Helen commits adultery in her first marriage, the traditional framework for a relationship is shattered. Consequently, Helen breaks a social taboo. When Helen has no fear and no intention of leaving her religious husband by going to a place to satisfy her needs, she is free of all the myths that traditionally bind women (Chandrika, 1993). As a Puritan, Helen knew that her husband could not have had sex with her because of Helen's religion and her husband's inability to satisfy her in bed; in return, she committed adultery with someone in the country. Because Helen was unfaithful to her husband, she does not conform to the norms of marriage.

Helen, on the other hand, is only married to Peter for financial reasons. When it comes to women, the only way they can justify their relationship with a man is through "romantic love" (Millett, 1970). A woman must genuinely care about the other person to engage in sexual or marital relations. Helen, on the other hand, uses the marriage institution to keep her family financially secure. Helen subverts the institution because she uses it for her own benefit, rather than for the benefit of others. She does not wed Peter because she is in love with him. Helen's conversation with Jo reveals this: Jo: What's the point of getting married to him? There are a lot of good reasons for him there. Clearly, Helen marries Peter in order to make ends meet, defying the traditional institution of marriage. Helen, the unconventional female character played by Delaney breaks the two most important things in marriage: she loses her sincerity, and she betrays herself to a non-romantic man.

Before marriage, premarital sex was uncommon among young people, and sex was only expected to blossom in marriage, particularly with women. It's important for women to stand up for their values and defend their virtues when it comes to sexual activity, because if they give in, they'll be derided (Beauvoir, 1962). For societal

reasons, women were either required to remain chaste or to have sex. There were two distinct views of sex: procreative and deviant (Smart, 1996). The deviant view was socially disregarded. Alternatively, the "49 concepts of romantic love" were another justification for allowing women to engage in sex (Millett, 1970). For a woman, having sex within the confines of marriage was only permissible if she was doing so to give birth to a child and because she was madly in love with the man she was married to. As a consequence of these factors, women were viewed as "passive" and men were viewed as the "takers" (Beauvoir, 1962). Consequently, women were forbidden from expressing their feelings of happiness (Irigaray, 1999). A similar mindset prevailed in the 1950s, when women were expected to please their husbands and saw sex as something to be enjoyed by men and as a duty towards their husbands.

When Delaney's two female characters, Helen and Jo, engage in sexual activity for reasons other than those listed above, she defies social norms. The two women do not have sex for the purpose of reproduction or romantic love, and they do not share a marital bed together. Helen is a promiscuous woman (Lacey, 1995). Using an unromantic tone when discussing sex indicates that she is having sex out of lust, which is not acceptable for a woman to do: […] though it's possible to enjoy the experience a second, third, or even fourth, but the first seems incomparable. Clearly, Helen enjoys and derives pleasure from her sex activities. Therefore, Helen shifts from passive to active in the relationship. During a conversation with Helen, "It wasn't his nose I was interested in" (Delaney, 1958, p. 11). Helen said of one her former lover. Helen always wanted to try relationships outside of her marriage. Therefore, all of these demonstrate that Helen's sexual behavior falls well outside of accepted 1950s norms. Like her mother, Jo engages in sexual activity. When Jimmy, the black sailor of Jo, gave her a kiss in front of her house, you can see her liberated sexual behavior

Jimmy: Were you afraid someone would see us?

Jo: I'm fine with it. Boy: You have the same sincerity. You're the one who I engaged who seemed to give a damn (Delaney, 1958, p.22-23).

Jo can be described as "uninhibited and sexually liberated" because she does not care what other people think, and the way she and Helen interact sexually is shown like a test of normal attitude (Innes, 1992). The differences between the two women are major. As for Helen, she enjoys affairs with strangers. As for Jo, she enjoys the

first affair after feeling abandoned by Helen. Jo has sex with Jimmy in response to Helen's marriage (Oberg, 2010). To make up for the loss of her mother's affection, Helen moves in with her new husband and tries to get closer to him. Despite Jo's transgression of social norms by having sex before marriage, her emotional attachment to her partner minimizes her newfound sexual freedom. Hence, Jo and Helen are shown to be in conflict with the established 1950s, views on sex through their premarital and post-marital affairs. Delaney's depictions of sexually liberated women are groundbreaking in this regard because they go against the grain of what was commonly believed at the time.

Another way Delaney challenges traditional community boundaries is by having Jo try sex with her black boyfriend before marriage. In real life, there are restraints for both races to be in contact with, and these are said to be difficult in society. This can be explained by engaging a black man with a white woman in an affair (Carroll and Wolpe, 1996). However, the story deals with multiple challenges, such as racial and forbidden affairs. This concerns Jo and her black boyfriend. It is precisely such socially marginal and _a-typical 'characters with which the Wolfenden Report − and the press debate that followed it – was so concerned (Lacey, 1995). The society and the state, emphasizing conventional attitudes and values, were concerned with social delinquency and did their best to promote traditional values. Within these values, premarital sex and interracial relations were regarded as socially deviant and marginalized. As for Jo, she committed the two forbidden things before her marriage. With the help of Delaney, Jo tried bad things.

Jo's pregnancy can be attributed to the fact that contraception was unavailable to the unmarried young in the 1950s. As evidenced by Jo's predicament, women of the decade were deprived of the ability to exert control over, or even master, the experience of "being a mother by choice" (Irigaray, 1999). The pregnancies of Helen and Jo are presumed to be a reflection of the fact that women had no legal claim to their bodies and no say in how they reproduced. Abortion was illegal in the 1950s, so women had no choice but to suffer the consequences of their pregnancies. Since Helen and Jo are examples of this, it can be said that forced pregnancy results in destitute children who have no one to care for them (Beauvoir, 1962). Aside from the fact that there was no option for abortion or contraception, both pregnancies resulted in disastrous consequences: Jo and Helen were forced to encounter the result of their

actions, which cost them a lot because of Helen's divorce and her unwanted pregnancy. According to Delaney, unwanted pregnancies are difficult because of the lack of effective contraceptives and abortions that would allow women to control their fertility.

Another taboo topic is brought up in the drama: divorce. Because of its association with broken homes and delinquency in the 1950s, divorce was seen as a bad thing. It meant the collapse of the social order that was maintained by the marriage institution. In addition, in order to obtain a divorce, one spouse had to be found guilty of adultery. Prenuptial unchasteness past affairs committed by woman were considered proof of divorce in those cases where it was permitted at all (Lafollette, 1988). Helen's predicament reflects this. Helen's husband leaves her because she betrays him by cheating on him, and this causes financial ruin for Helen. Helen's predicament reflects the negative effects of divorce on women in the 1950s, when the majority of women's income came from their husbands.

In addition to being a wife and a mother, women's lives in the 1950s were heavily centered on motherhood. The concept of "natural destiny" and the purpose of life sensation came to be viewed as motherhood. Therefore, a stereotypical image of a mother was born: "the ideal mother." Cognitive and shared beliefs about men and women form the basis for the ideal mother's image; this sex stereotype is thought to be cognitive in nature (Williams and Best, 1990). It is a type of relationship which makes a set of rules concerning gender and social traditions forcing men and women to obey. As a result of such stereotyping, both men and women are obligated to follow social habits concerning how they should behave. Sexist attitudes are used to keep people in line in the social arena.

An 'appropriate' female is described in terms of her characteristics, which also describe the characteristics of an ideal mother. To maintain social order, the ideal mother image imposes standards on women that they must meet. The ideal woman image imposed a one-size-fits-all definition of what a woman should be. According to the sex stereotype, a woman's ideal image was docile, passive, futile, and weak (Beauvoir, 1962). Graceful, good as well as tender (Millett, 1970). This kind of woman was an image of a good mother. A mother should be kind, affectionate, and passive like a perfect woman. The myth resulting from these prescriptions is that a woman's

chief occupation is the role of a mother, and it is the major component of the feminine gender role as taught to a female child by her parents, thus making the assertion all women need to be mothers come to be true (Oakley, 1974). However, according to Phoenix and Woollett (1991), it is a type of life that shows what kind of a woman she is (Lawler, 1996). In other expressions, women from the very beginning are taught to be better as females as well as mothers. This myth of motherhood included three major components:

The myth of motherhood is challenged in Delaney's play through unconventional mother portrayal (Helen), rejection of motherhood (Jo), and reversed gender and family roles. Helen has no remorse for her daughter's behavior (Chandrika, 1993). We could say that the play aims to debunk some myths associated with being a mother. As much as they claim to have a general idea of what it means to be a good mother, neither Jo nor Helen can live up to that standard. In both Helen and Jo's cases, they refuse to accept any responsibility for their unborn children (Taylor, 1993). A mother's inability to fulfill her role as a "proper," nurturing, affectionate, and caring parent is a sign that not all mothers are capable of this. Therefore, Helen's lack of motherly traits debunks this popular myth. This mother-daughter relationship seems to be skewed toward Jo's maternal instincts, while Helen's is the one that is expected to have these traits. When Jo's mother asked her to bring her whiskey, she rejected it, it is clear that she believes that children owe their parents these small gestures of appreciation. That being said, it is the role of a mother to be watchful and caring for the children. This was observed when Helen asked her daughter Jo that: "Have you got any aspirins left? Jo? " (Delaney, 1958, p.76)

As for Helen being a mom, has no idea what is and is not in the house. Helen's method of talking about Jo is likewise unusual, implying no trace of care and tenderness like any mother should have. Helen says, "Wouldn't Jos get on your nerves?" Oh! She depresses me, and wouldn't she drive you insane?" (1958, p.59) The manner of her carrying her stuff around and Jo's erratic behavior confirm Helen's lack of maternal love and devotion. "You've certainly never been affectionate with me," (1958, p.12). Jo tells her mother Helen. Helen has no recollection of Jo's birth date:-

Jos: What day was I born on?

Helen: I don't know

Jos: You should remember such an important event. (1958, p. 20)

Because of this, she is characterized as being indifferent toward her daughter, lacking feelings of love and concern for Jo. Helen's new husband, Peter, is more important to her than Jo. According to Helen, she is siding with Peter rather than her own daughter when she teases him:

 If she doesn't watch out, I'll give her a good whack on the head. Jo, please keep your mouth shut. Don't play pranks on him either. If she's not careful, I'll knock her head around. The only thing you need to do is keep your mouth shut. In addition, please do not play pranks on him (1958, p.9).

This type of language is not appropriate for a mother to use when talking to her daughter. Since the role of Helen being in love is central, but the life of motherhood during the 1950s seems more controversial. The support of Jo's mother for her boyfriend rather than Jo is something not right. Aside from that, Jo's mom abandons her own child in favor of spending time with Peter, failing to even consider the child's basic need for food, which one would expect her to provide. "We can't bring Jo with us," Helen says. Jo is welcome to stay here, and I've never claimed to be a proper mother. The only option if you're too lazy to cook for yourself is to eliminate food from your diet completely" (Delaney, 1958, p.26). Helen knows that she is not a good mother for not treating Jo as any good mother should do. When it comes to Jo, she does not even give a second thought to the most fundamental aspects of the relationship.

For example, Jo tells Peter that Helen should be in a state of being when she leaves the house to get married. Helen, you appear pale and ill. In a motherly way, Jo is concerned about Helen's health. It is observed that Jo does the housework on the opposite side of Helen. Helen's motherhood has nothing to do with Helen's domestic duties (Lacey, 1995). This is the reason; Jo tells her mother, "Aren't we going to clean this lot up?" (Delaney, 1958, p.13). Jo cares about the house's cleanliness. 'You get your own coffee too'. is the response Jo gives to Helen when she requests that she make her coffee. "What do you expect me to do for you? I didn't get anything from you." (Delaney, 1958, p.9). Helen is unable to provide for Jo's basic needs because she does not cook, does not clean, and does not look after her daughter properly; she cannot meet even the basic needs of Jo. On the other hand, Jo is the thoughtful party

concerned with her mother's health, the heating of the house, and the cleaning of the place. This demonstrates that Helen has none of the attributes of a proper mother and housewife, while Jo, as a daughter, carries out the duties and roles of a mother.

Jo behaves in a similarly rebellious manner to Helen, who is rejecting her role as a mother after becoming pregnant. So, she rejects being a mother and even being a woman because she sees those roles as inescapable. In her outburst to Geof, "I'll smash the baby's brains out," (1958, p.62) she demonstrates. "I'll put an end to it." Geof, I don't want his child..." Motherhood isn't something I'd like to do. "I don't want to be a woman," I said (Delaney, 1958, p.77). It is seen that there is no room for rebellion in Jo's life as a mother, and this seems to be her only point of contention (Taylor, 1993). Jo does not overtly rebel against the irresponsible behavior of her mother. However, the unavoidable circumstances of motherhood and the unbearable, burdensome state she is in drive Jo to rebel against being a woman and a mother.

Another reason for poverty is that women's employment was not socially approved, because of the ideology of domesticity; therefore, women remained economically dependent and disadvantaged. Women were supposed to remain at home; thus, the labor force was male-dominated. Consequently, women were not employed in full-time jobs, and the most they could do was to combine their familial responsibilities with low-paid, low-status, part-time jobs that could not offer economic independence. As a reflection of this, it is observed that Helen does not have a proper job and no specific profession mentioned. Helen's source of income is not obvious, and it can be deduced to what Jo says: "we're supposed to be living off her immoral earnings" (Delaney, 1958, p.3). As women were offered no chance of full-time employment in high salary and qualified jobs, Helen is driven to provide her income elsewhere, as in the case of her marriage to Peter. Jo also takes on a part-time job, which is singing at a pub. Jo's is a low-salary, part-time, and low-qualified job, which was a typical "woman's job" in the 1950s. Also, Jo's job is typically "feminine" because, for appearing on stage in the pub, she has to buy nice clothes, and put on make-up (Delaney, 1995). To apply Mulvey's terminology used in her book Visual and Other Pleasures, Jo's occupation involves appealing to men fantasy and turns her into a topic of masculine desire.

The reason for women not to be hired in qualified jobs was also because of gender segregation in the educational field. Girls were not given equal opportunities, and their education was terminated sooner compared to boys. As a consequence of the emphasis on marriage, female's education had to serve to enhance their domestic skills. In Jo's situation, she suffers from lack of a proper education, which is also due to being a child in a single parent family; single mother's limited resources, such as a lack of knowledge, actually add to their children's lower levels of educational attainment and life opportunities (Moore, 1996). This is observed in Jo's condition when she says she has never been to any proper school (Delaney, 1995).

Jo has an obvious talent for art, mainly painting. She has such a talent that evens her indifferent mother. Helen, is surprised upon seeing her drawings and says: "Have you ever thought of going to a proper art school and getting proper training […] I'll pay" (Delaney, 1995 p.9). Jo does not take it seriously because it is obvious that Helen cannot pay for her art education with her little income. Jo also implies this while talking to Geof, "Of course we can't all be art students, going to expensive art schools, nursing our little creative genius" (Delaney, 1995 p.54). As a woman, Jo cannot have high educational aspirations because girls are not expected to continue their education due to the prejudice against them. Moreover, as a single parent's daughter, Jo, and her single mother, Helen, cannot afford to be educated in an art school.

Delaney illustrates the view that the unavoidable circumstance of motherhood causes women's talents to be wasted, as in the case of Jo. Despite being talented, Jo cannot go to school due to the reasons above. This is also symbolically implied through the flowers Jo brings home. When Jo moves into the house, she brings flower bulbs, "I hope they bloom. Always before when I've tried to fix up a window box nothing's ever (Delaney, 1995 p.7). Flowers, especially blooming ones, are generally associated with hope, and in this case, they can be read as "symbols of potentiality of growth" (Esche, 1998, p.35). However, later in the play when Jo is pregnant, Geof finds the bulbs dead. When Geof finds the dead bulbs, Jo says: - "They never grew […] they're dead" (Delaney, 1995, P.58). It can be concluded that Jo's potential to develop died when she became pregnant. Her aspirations and talent for art were swept away with the burden of motherhood, which she could not escape from. Esche interprets the dead flower bulbs in the same way: […] when they are discovered by Geof much later in the play they become the symbols of […] failure and loss – the

bulbs die, and the drawings are relics of an activity that we never see taken up again. Therefore, the so much-emphasized motherhood in the 1950s causes Jo's artistic and professional aspirations to die (Page, 1992, p.75).

So, to sum it up, one of the first feminist playwrights, Shelagh Delaney, is that type of woman playwright who challenges the difficulties and boundaries of a woman's capability to lead a good life and participate in different roles in plays. Through her actions, Shelagh Delaney challenges the norms of marriage that have been set over the previous decade. This woman takes issue with a double standard in sexual behavior and the fact that women are denied access to abortion and contraception. Using the opposite parental and gender ideologies among characters, she challenges the central idea that motherhood comes naturally to women. Although Delaney paints an unrealistic picture of women, she also depicts the poor way of life and situations that single mothers face in life, as well as the social norms that follow consequently. For example, she points out that women's economic disadvantage stems from their inferior position in the workplace and the educational arena.

3. SUBVERTING GENDER IN *TOP GIRLS*

3.1. Representing Gender and Subversion in Caryl Churchill's Life and Work

It was in the 1980s that Caryl Churchill became one of the most important British playwrights of the late twentieth century. Critic Amelia Howe Kritzer (1991 , p.107) points out that Churchill's rejection of realism in favor of ingenuity and subversive comedy makes her so essential in British Playwrights 1956-1995. Kritzer also points out that Churchill is best recognized for writings that address issues of gender equality and inequality. Her plays are known for their social commentary and introspective themes. Her most recent plays, on the other hand, cover a wide spectrum of current political issues, making her one of the most influential British female writers today. When it comes to social and political injustices being shifted onto sexual morality, Churchill is concerned, according to Bigby (1981) with the suppression of women of the powerless and the poor.

A staunch advocate for women's rights and an iconoclast, Caryl Churchill has a distinctive place among modern British dramatists. A twentieth-century artist in the modern era, Churchill, breaks tradition by rejecting both respectable moralities as well as literary success' rules of engagement..." Caryl Churchill's works frequently feature gender issues, since she aims to disrupt the established systems of representation. As a result of exploring patriarchal society's ideals as well as gender roles and power dynamics, her plays raise questions that challenge long-held assumptions about gender and sexuality. When it comes to highlighting the role women play in society, Churchill is a standout. Churchill vividly retells the representation of women and the realities of living in a patriarchal society in her plays, which are primarily based on the experiences of women.

Discussions on Churchill's plays have focused on the themes of gender equality and women's rights. Alisa Solomon (1981) is an early example in which Churchill's plays Owners, Vinegar Tom, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, and Traps are all discussed in relation to this topic. A feminist and socialist writer, Churchill, may "interweave historical data, dramatic representation, and the non-illusionistic

theatricality of that depiction," according to her research (Solomon, 1981, p. 50). A political dramatist, Solomon asserts. Churchill uses her plays to demonstrate the impact of certain political and social policies on the lives of people in society. When it comes to topics like the objectification of women, bourgeois morals, and Western society's quest for material acquisition, Churchill's plays make us think profoundly.

On the other hand, Fitzsimmons (1987). Claims that some of Churchill's plays depict wealthy women. However, despite the presence of rich women, her plays focus on the wretched lives that women lead because of poverty. It is said that Caryl Churchill was inspired to speak up for women's issues because she was aware of the political climate in the 1980s that had negatively affected women's economic well-being in Britain. Churchill's portrayal of women's fight against gender discrimination, she adds, was also influenced by Churchill's words.

Using ideas from Louis Althusser, Michel Foucault, and Jean Baudrillard to dig out the notions of subjectivity in a number of Churchill's plays, Hamilton (1991) dissects pieces like Fen, Soft Cops, Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, *Top Girls*, Hot Fudge, Ice Cream, and Serious Money. For the most part, she is attempting to show how far Churchill was willing to go in presenting societal transformation as a possibility. The primary focus of her research is on the ways in which the female characters in these plays question masculine ideology as it is expressed in the language they use. So, she draws on Althusser's theory of interpellation and Foucault's theories on the link between speech and power. Many characters are shown to be scared to disrupt the social order, while others are shown to be eager for social change in their lives and the larger community. Hamilton, on the other hand, points out that the protagonists in each play face an uphill battle in their fight for change since they are governed by the authority figures (Hamilton, 1991).

To further understand how Churchill saw communities based on capitalist values, Merrill (2001) looked at Churchill's writings. The figure of Marion, a self-sufficient woman featured in the play Owners, is a focus of her investigation. – For her financial personal advantage, she believes that Marion is exhibiting capitalistic values. "A recognized male idea of power" is another way of describing Marion (Merrill, 1988, p.74). Furthermore, in Churchill's plays, women's success depends on them rejecting their traditional responsibilities as wives and mothers in favor of the male-dominated notion of power.

"The political, medical, and social transgressions" of women's bodies are examined by Ebtehal in the works of various playwrights, notably Caryl Churchill in Vinegar Tom. Women in Churchill's plays, she claims, are subjected to sexual violence, social exclusion, and intense feelings of anxiety and shame. Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* (1976), *Cloud Nine* (1979), *Top Girls* (1982), *Fen* (1982), and *Serious Money* (1987) are examined by Danellen in "Power and Oppression: a Study of Materialism and Gender in Selected Drama of Caryl Churchill" (2003). It is his conclusion that women's oppression is rooted in "traditional relations of power."

When looking at the works of many playwrights over the course of history, Bigrigg (2004) uses a comparative approach. *"Light Shining in Buckinghamshire"* (1976) by Caryl Churchill makes an important link between history and today's struggle to achieve social equality through revolution or riot. She also asserts that the wretched lives of women who voluntarily accept the roles allocated to them reflect the social roles accorded to women today. Because of this, she views such works as historical revisionism, particularly in the way they depict the brutality and abuse of power perpetrated by men against women.

Churchill's constant tinkering with dramatic form is another thing that sets her apart from her contemporaries as a playwright. Based on these experiments, the author raises questions about power dynamics and traditional gender roles, leading to an exploration of possible solutions. Churchill's inquiries, according to Kritzer (2003), pose a challenge to conventional thinking and perceptions. She leaves a fundamental question unsolved at the end of her plays. The play's open-ended nature encourages the audience to think about the replies rather than simply agreeing or disagreeing with the play's theme. Her works are notable for being a new sort of drama that has not only penetrated the mainstream but also has the ability to influence the path of this stream, according to Kritzer.

According to Christopher Innes in Modern British Drama, Churchill drew inspiration for her play from 1960s theater humorist Joe Orton (1992, p.449). For the first time, a playwright captured the 1960s psychotic style in a stage production. In her first full-length play, Owners, Churchill employs the straightforward characterization of Orton's comedy to great effect.

An unremarkable play by Churchill in 1975, Objections to Sex and Violence, was her first foray into feminism. When Cloud Nine was initially staged in 1979, it was her first play to be well recognized. It is a kaleidoscope of ideas. Colonialists and natives, masters and servants, and men and women are all key themes in Churchill's play. It was in the 1980s that Caryl Churchill had her most significant stage achievements, covering a wide range of topics, expressing challenging perspectives, and exhibiting a constant exploration of the theatrical form. In the years that followed, she premiered four plays that garnered critical praise, international recognition, and major awards: *Top Girls* (1982), *Fen* (1983), *Soft Cup*s (1984), and *Serious Money* (1987) (Kritzer, 2003). In 1982, critics acclaimed *Top Girls* as "the best British play ever written by a woman writer" for its portrayal of women who must choose between having children and pursuing their dreams (Kritzer, 2003).

As a playwright, Churchill is still going strong. Also, she is still experimenting with dramatic form. The endless conflicts in the world and the increasing tolerance for inhumanity are discussed through a girl and her aunt's life over several years in Far Away (2000), A Number (2002), which takes the audience into the ethical labyrinth of its title, and A Dream Play (2003). She has written several musicals and a number of plays composed of two unrelated but thematically interconnected acts. Through a combination of political literature and personal experience, her plays continue to challenge societal expectations about gender roles and power dynamics.

It is a fundamental issue that Churchill deals in her writings: the oppression of women by patriarchal society. The norms imposed by patriarchal society are scrutinized, as are traditional sexual mores, racial relations, and power dynamics. Churchill is also interested in time and the possibilities of three changes. She points out the extrinsic constraints on freedom and militant individuality that stifle progress and harm society as a whole, preventing constructive transformation. "Power," weakness, and exploitation; individuals as longings, passions, and aspirations," in an interview with the New York Times, Churchill stated (1987). By reversing the traditional expectations of male and female behavior, she rejects patriarchal society's attempt to achieve gender equality and turns women into surrogate males. In addition, Churchill makes a parallel between colonialism and the oppression of women. Through the use of women playing men; men portraying wives; and a white actor playing a black servant, she shows her point. It is via Churchill's use of gender and cultural reversal

that the characters' sex and race roles are highlighted as artificial and conventional. As Churchill points out, it is artificial for women's status to alter since the triumphs of female characters take one of two forms: either they succeed by accepting roles reserved for men or they represent the stereotypical feminine attributes as defined by the patriarchal society.

In the light of Kate Millet's Sexual Politics, this thesis examines Churchill's critique of culturally defined gender roles, temperament, and status in patriarchal society in terms of their arbitrariness and will argue that Churchill draws attention to her female characters who, despite their apparent rejection of patriarchal structures, remain trapped by patriarchal essentialism regarding archetypes. In three of Churchill's plays, *Owners* (1972), *Cloud Nine* (1979), and *Top Girls* (1982), these themes are investigated and critiqued from the perspective of classic feminist criticism. Throughout this thesis, it's organized by theme.

In her plays, Churchill expresses her disdain for gender essentialism, which she sees as oversimplifying and defining hierarchically what is manly and womanly. In other words, conventional gender roles are defined by essentialism in part because of an underlying belief that "biology is destiny." (Firat, 2005, p.38) women are capable of handling important responsibilities such as childrearing and housework, while males are expected to be the breadwinners and leaders in business and politics. These characteristics of essentialism are clearly absent from Churchill. She critiques the essentialism of patriarchy that is based on gender. Gender stereotyping is resisted by Churchill's characters in her plays, who defy social expectations. In the process, Churchill is acutely aware of the patriarchal essentialism traps that could ensnare women in their quest for self-determination. In order to stay enslaved by patriarchal essentialism, women might choose three basic viewpoints, as Steele points out, namely the liberal position, the gynocentric position, and the constructivist position. But this idea of "freedom" and "equality" is based on a male-dominated environment, and it accepts males as our model human beings. This is a major flaw in the liberal perspective. There are those who see women's oppression as the result of a masculinist society devaluing and exalting aggression and individualism, while there are those who see it as the result of a masculinist culture devaluing women's experience. While highlighting body and desire and revealing gender as a story about power, the constructivist stance fails to take into consideration the historical accomplishments of

women and their own liberation from the network they depict, as well as the principles to which they appeal. Because of this, Churchill advises dealing with patriarchal structures but also being aware of and avoiding being ensnared by meaningless concepts of essentialism.

3.2. Gender and Subversion in *Top Girls*

On August 28, 1982, Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* opened at the Royal Court Theatre. Since then, the play has gained critical acclaim and enjoyed an unprecedented level of popularity. "The vastness of Churchill's approaches has secured her status as the most restless and original dramatist now writing, ever renewing her style and pioneering new forms," Gobert (2014) wrote in his book, The Theatre of Caryl Churchill. The over-lapping conversation is a device the playwright use to keep the discourse between the characters from flowing smoothly. During the first act, where the guests were constantly interrupting one other, this method was used excessively. Because the characters could not stand each other, it was necessary to insert these interruptions to show how abrasive and domineering each one felt toward the others. The act's chronological disarray is the second strategy employed. If the play were placed in chronological order, it might begin with Marlene's brief trip to her sister, followed by the dinner party, Joyce's garden scene, and lastly, the agency act. As if that was not enough, Caryl Churchill also cast all of the characters in her play as girls, despite the fact that men were a constant topic of conversation.

In Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982), a drama with an all-female cast, the author depicts the world of women. The play investigates patriarchy's repressive effects on women throughout history by providing a realistic picture of women condition in male-dominated civilizations and their fight against oppressive patriarchal agencies of the time. To commemorate her new position as the Managing Director of the *'Top Girls'* Employment Agency, the play's central character, Marlene, arranges a dinner party for her friends and family on Saturday night. Five guests share their stories of horror, disbelief, hilarity, and joy in a long, overlapping conversation in the play's opening sequence. While Marlene examines Jeanine and Win questions Louise, and Nell interrogates Shona at her office in Act Two, the play's central issue of women and work continues to be depicted. It is in this third act that the female characters are

allowed to express themselves without interference from the men in their lives. Joyce's kitchen, a symbol of women's dominance, is where Marlene visits a year earlier. An all-female cast tells a story about a group of women who have been subjected to nearly the same level of humiliation or anguish by men. In one way or another, all of them seek to defy the patriarchal system.

During the twentieth century, a considerable number of literary works were written by woman. Women's experiences in patriarchal civilizations were depicted in these literary works in order to show that they are equal to men and deserve respect. Throughout history, women have been taken for granted and regarded as a second-place citizens. As long as men continue to benefit the most from patriarchy, they are superior to women and should govern over them. Patriarchy provides males with many benefits, but it also requires them to subjugate and mistreat women in order to keep the system in place (hooks, 2000).

Therefore, according to gender norms and social stereotypes, women must be meek, obedient, and dependent, and they must stay at home to raise the children, with no rights to employment, education, or self-reliance. To overcome gender stereotypes and attain some success, women have to acquire masculine attributes. Feminism arose as a response to women's growing oppression and the changes the world had seen, as well as a means of expressing their own needs. In order to comprehend the factors that form women's lives, feminist theory aims to study cultural understandings of what it means to be a woman and rejects the idea that inequalities between men and women are inherent. (Jackson & Jones, 1998, p.1).

It is worth noting that this drama was written as a response to the British capitalist system during Margaret Thatcher's time as Prime Minister. Initially, it was assumed that the victory of Margaret Thatcher would benefit women, but as time went on, it became clear that her policies benefited mostly the middle class and wealthy families in society, leaving the working class to continue to struggle. Based on her conservative political views, Thatcher did not accomplish anything noteworthy for women. As a reaction to Thatcher's election, Caryl Churchill wrote this drama as a response to Thatcher's election. Regarding Thatcher's views on feminism, Rowbotham (1977) reviews that:

Because of the reality that a woman might be prime minister, modern women seem to be capable of anything. Margaret Thatcher, who was born in 1925, was like many other women of her period in that she did not want to be perceived as a woman in politics. There is little common between her and the post-war generation's preoccupations with the rights and wrongs of women (1977, p.12)

In the third act, Churchill used a character conflict between Joyce and Marlene to illustrate her feelings towards Thatcher's politics. There is Joyce, a working single mother who was against Thatcher because she had observed the hardships of the working class firsthand. Marlene, on the other hand, is a supporter of Thatcher because she has personally profited from her policies and because she believes that capitalism should be condemned. For Maggie, Marlene described her as "a tough lady" who she would "give a job to (Churchill, 1982, p.229)

Caryl Churchill, on the other hand, not only talks about the subaltern characters' 'sufferings but also tries to show their subversive attitudes against the suppressions. The characters turn out to be subversive due to their consciousness. To protect their rights, they attempt to subvert the patriarchy's an elite cultures' 'exploitations. This research explores how the female characters can speak from their consciousness against the oppressed cultures. The characters Isabella Bird, Patient Griselda, Lady Nijo, and Pope Joan are submissive figures who speak against the patriarchy silently. On the other hand, Dull Gret and the Waitress are subversive characters. The character Dull Gret expresses her subversive voices aggressively.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" argues that the subaltern people can resist and speak silently. It is possible to think of the subaltern's awareness as an example of a moment of production in which the subaltern is involved. The project is to rewrite the development of the consciousness of Indian nation. There is no proper representation of subaltern subjectivity that intellectuals can know and speak about. The problem is that intellectual literary works have not addressed the real issues of the subaltern. They speak in their subversion's voices.

The subversive personality Dull Gret has powerfully spoken out against the oppressed cultures' 'dominance. She takes a harmer and leads a mass of women to

fight against the traditional culture. She is represented as a revolutionary character. Her subversive attitude is presented in the following dialogue:

Kit: You're horrible!

Angie: I'm going to kill my mother and you're going to watch.

Kit: I'm not playing.

Angie: You're scared of blood. Now I'm a cannibal. I might turn into a vampire now. (Churchill, 1982, pp. 146-147).

The above dialogue shows that Angie expresses her anger towards the character Marlene. She reveals that she will kill her mother. She is in a problem due to the exploitation of the elite class people. The word "my mother" refers to the elite class woman, Marlene. She is a working-class woman, who is oppressed by Marlene for getting personal benefits on her job. She views that she is a cannibal. She wants to fight against the oppressive people. She turns to be a subversive woman from the submissive for rectifying the extreme oppressions of the elitist cultures.

The Waitress is a more conscious character in the play. She expresses her subversive attitudes against the exploitation of elitist cultures. She is a writer who has not gotten a good salary and promotion for seven years. She is unhappy with Marlene, who is the managing director of the restaurant. She aspires to be a nuclear physician but is fated to work as a waitress. Marginalized by patriarchal ideologies. She is sexually exploited by male customers. She is aware of the exploitation of her job. Similarly, the other characters have expressed their subversive attitudes toward gaining their independence. Isabella Bird presents her subversive attitude against the dominating cultures in her books. She wants to share the exploitation and be aware of the other women. Pope Joan has shown her subversive attitude by reciting the passage of the Bible in Latin. She wants to subvert the patriarchal authority in the church. Her subversive attitudes support establishing the identity of women in the church. Lady Nijo expresses her consciousness and rebellious activities against the suppressions through her foot travels.

Dipesh Chakrabarty in his essay "Invitations to a Dialogue" argues that the main aim of Subaltern Studies is to understand the consciousness of the subaltern people. This consciousness informs the political actions that are taken by the subaltern classes to gain their independence from life. They revolted against the suppression of

their elite cultures. Subaltern consciousness is taken as a central place in historical analysis in which the subaltern people are seen as the makers of history.

The character Dull Gret is aware of the sufferings of working-class women. She leads the mob of women to get the independence they have been seeking all their lives. She also inspires other women to raise their voices against dominance. Her subversive attitude is shown in the following speech.

Dull Gret says, "Washing in their apron, we puss down the street and the ground opens up and we go through a big mouth into a street just like ours but in the hall" (Churchill, 1982, p.140). She says that she has got a sword in her hand from somewhere and she feels a basket with the gold cups. They kept running from the fighting. She does not stop and they give those devils such a beating. She moves toward the road to show her revolutionary potential. In this way, she rearticulates the image of "Angie" as "Angie of history." She speaks of her subversive nature toward oppressive cultures for getting their subjectivity. She is the image of Angie, which means that she symbolizes the light. Her smile shines a light of awareness on women. They are ready to fight against oppressed cultures. She is a subversive woman. She motivates the mass of lower-class women to revolt against the dominating ideologies.

Likewise, the character Dull Gret is also called an 'angel of history'. She expresses her subversive attitudes toward patriarchal oppression to establish a new history for the subaltern people. She has the aim of making a new kind of history. She listens to the stories of the other women but says little about her own. She has used pauses and unusual sentence structures in her speech. Her ultimate goal is to make working women aware of their motivations for fighting against dominance. She resists the oppressed cultures' attempts to establish a new history of the subaltern.

Dull Gret represents a subversive character as well as a submissive character in the play. She is more critical of patriarchal ideologies and elite class cultures' 'oppressions. She is not afraid of the punishments meted out by the authorities. Rather than that, she becomes more rebellious. It demonstrates that she bears the extreme exploitation of the ruling class. She aspires to break down the hierarchy between the elite and the subalterns to rewrite history from the perspective of the subalterns.

In his essay, *The Mentality of Subalternity*, Gautam Bhadra says that the mentality of the subaltern is a mixed form of "defiance" and "submissiveness." (1988,

p.72). It is said that "defiance" is not only a characteristic of subaltern groups of people but that "submissiveness to authority" is also an important feature. In short, "defiance" and "submissiveness" constitute the subaltern mentality. Subaltern consciousness is rife with serious conflict. They have both attitudes: submissive to authority and defiant attitude toward the suppression of the patriarchy.

Dull Gret is a rebellious character, although she is also afraid of the patriarchal authorities. Her main intention is to make marginal women aware of their dominance in society. She wears an apron and takes the harmer. She is more critical of patriarchal ideologies. She is not afraid of the punishment that will come from the state holders. Rather than that, she becomes more rebellious. She says that she is a cannibal. She intends to take revenge on the elite class of people. The elite class people exploit the working-class people for their benefit. She says that she might turn into a vampire. On the other hand, she appears to be a submissive woman because she believes she is being treated fairly by the elite class values. A group of women joins her in her fight against oppression. She realizes that she is dominated and exploited by the patriarchy.

The character the waitress is a subversive waitress who is aware of patriarchy's oppression. She is a talented girl. She wants to become a physician in the future. In reality, she becomes a waitress at a restaurant. The waitress expresses her dissatisfaction with traditional cultures. At the beginning of the play, she presents herself as a submissive character. She is also afraid of the power of elitist cultures. She laminates her past life. So, she is a submissive woman because of her poor social and economic conditions. She wants to avoid the submissive life, but she is unable to. She has developed a sense of subversion. Then she explores her resistance to patriarchal culture. The other subaltern characters have both submissive and subversive attitudes. The character Isabella Bird is also conscious of the dominance of her father, lover, and sister. She expresses her subversive ideas through her books and letters. She wishes to raise awareness among other women about their opposition to traditional norms and values. She is a poor servant who wants to get rid of the submissive life.

Subaltern studies are a new kind of historiography that constitutes subversive politics. It explores the various forms of oppression. In the process of investigating colonialism, historians and post-colonial critics oppose colonial dominance to create a better future for subaltern people. A historian should aspire to create a new history that

includes the language and voice of the subaltern people. It talks about the subversive attitudes of the subaltern people. Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* depicts patriarchal ideologies and elite class cultures' 'dominance and exploitation of lower-class women. She tries to project the subversive politics of the female characters onto herself. The character Isabella Bird is oppressed by her father and sister. In creating her identity, she tries to demonstrate subversion against their dominance. The character Dull Gret is also oppressed by the character Marlene. Subaltern studies depict the subversive attitudes of subaltern characters toward oppressive culture. The main aim is to provide an alternative history. Alternative history is a new history that relates to providing rights to the subaltern people. Isabella writes the book to express her subversive ideas against the dominating ideologies. Her main intention is to get freedom from the dominion. The waitress wants to challenge the bourgeois dominance of her right to do so.

Likewise, Ranajit Guha views that subaltern consciousness and the subversion of subaltern people are closely related issues. He further says, "The alleged 'peasant consciousness' 'is a strategy they have got to adopt for establishing subaltern people as an autonomous domain having their own history" (Iwanek, 2016, p.230).

According to Ranajit Guha's ideas, the subaltern people are united with each other due to their consciousness (1997, p.18). The primary purpose of their unity and subversion is to establish their rights. They want to have autonomy and authority concerning their rights. Subaltern characters like Isabella Bird, Lady Nijo, Pope Joan, Dull Gret, and Waitress express their subversion by establishing their autonomous domain of history. Dull Gret leads the mob of women in the fight against the devils. The term "devils" refers to the oppressed groups of people in society. She wants to resist the dominating ideologies. Her main aim is to establish a new history that includes the rights of all subaltern women. Marlene's character criticizes the traditional cultures in which women are treated as passive humans. She represents a modern woman who wants to establish equality between men and women. Her subversive attitudes can be seen in the given dialogue:

Joyce: You say mother has wasted life.

Marlene: Yes, I married to that bastard

Joyce: What sort of life did he have? / working in the fields like

Marlene: Violent life*?* (Churchill, 1982 p.230)

The above dialogue shows that Marlene opposes traditional norms and values like the marriage life. She replies to Isabella Bird that her mother has wasted her life because she got married to her drunkard husband. She strictly criticizes the exploitation of males. She calls the males 'bastards. They destroy the freedom of women's lives in the patriarchy. She is furious about the dominance of patriarchal cultures. She aspires to end men's traditional dominance. She claims that violence can help women establish their subjectivity in life. She is more aggressive toward the suppression of the patriarchy. She aspires to challenge the patriarchal ideologies that underpin violent movements. She says, "Fucking bitch, tell me what to do fucking" (Churchill, 1982, p.221). This extract asserts that she wants freedom from all forms of oppression.

To sum up, the submissive characters turn out to be subversive due to their consciousness in the play. They can resist and speak silently against the patriarchy with their subversive voices to get their rights.

3.3. Female Characters in *Top Girls*

Top Girls by Caryl Churchill explores the ways in which various female social groupings deal with their internal conflicts and communalities in various circumstances. Caryl Churchill's first act *Top Girls* is that of a dinner scene that brings together a variety of ladies from various cultures and time periods. As a whole, they represent a variety of female characters, from the 19th century up to the 20th century, who are all connected by their experiences of life and the injustice they faced because of the domination of patriarchy. The issue of men's subjugation, which dominates the dinner conversation, links the many characters together. The talk revolves around each person's background in a male-dominated culture and the tyranny they faced.

Traditional or classical portrayals of women in plays where they are expected to play certain stereotypical roles wives, mothers, sisters, daughters, and lovers – all parasites on men, rarely having their own individual or independent identity, are a stark contrast to Churchill's portrayal of her female characters. The drama is unique in that it allows the women to speak for themselves and gives them a voice. Both British

theatre and patriarchy are a source of fresh perspectives. Because of patriarchy, Britain's highest-paid workers are all men. It has a lot to do with *Top Girls* because of the play's sexual politics and how it deals with the topic of work. There is a sense in which the dramatist portrays work as a vital means of survival for women against men in terms of social dominance. Hence, it would be simple for professional women to place themselves in the process of social and cultural change. Rather than because she is the CEO of the company, Marlene has been dubbed a 'victim' because of her success in bringing together a group of women who are free to be who they truly are. At the very least, they can think for themselves.

The play's protagonist, Marlene, has been subjected to domestic violence since she was a young child. She bears the brunt of her father's maltreatment of their mother. Her mother, on the other hand, offers no resistance to her daughter's efforts to overcome this treatment. Her mother, like many other mute women, does not think that such cruelty is abnormal. As a wife, she sees it as perfectly natural. So, the spouse sees the husband's harshness as a legitimate element of his authority. Children's minds and identities are permanently shaped by their exposure to toxic environments. Marlene has decided to break away from her mother's mold. She embodies what it means to be a woman in the 21st century: free, empowered, and modern. However, while sharing the same upbringing, Marlene and Joyce have chosen to live very different lives. Joyce is a representation of the traditional lady who is unwilling to take advantage of any of the gains made possible by the feminist movement. She would rather continue to be a hard-working woman in the workforce.

They are all notable figures in their own right: Isabella Bird (a 19th-century Scottish world traveler), Lady Nijo (a 13th-century Japanese courtesan forced to become a nun after losing her master's favor), the 9th-century Roman Pope, Joan, who disguised herself as a man and attained the highest ecclesiastical position; and the 19th-century Scottish explorer, Isabella Bird. Walter, a medieval good wife, put his wife Griselda through all kinds of trials, including forced marriage, exile, and separation from her children; Chaucer, Boccaccio, and Petrarch all praised Griselda; and Dull Gret, the heroic folk figure painted by the Flemish artist Breughel as a woman who leads other peasant women to the end of the world.

All institutions can be assumed to be built for the benefit of mankind. Churches are a good example of places where masculinity is encouraged. Pope Joan defies the odds and proves that women can hold high office. Even if she succeeds in her mission and is elected Pope, she unwittingly adopts patriarchal values. She takes full responsibility for everything that has gone wrong in her life. Her sad collapse was the result of her lack of education and understanding of her own body as a woman. Because her body will show the results of her actions, a woman's physical inadequacy places her at a disadvantage over men. The actions of a woman automatically render her liable for the consequences. Therefore, she is deserving of her present state of social and natural disgrace. On the other hand, because he is superior, a man is exempt from all obligations and is never asked or blamed for anything. "If it hadn't been for the baby, I think I'd have lived to an old age like Theodora of Alexandria," (Churchill, 1982, p.120). Joan protests against all of these unjust norms against her as a woman. "Who was a monk for a time" (1982, p.120) is the sixteenth transgender group. It delves into the ways in which her physical appearance has sealed her doomed fate. In a patriarchal society, a person's worth and fate can be determined more by their gender than by their talent, effort, or intelligence. Joan is the only one who has to deal with the consequences of their sexual relationship. Because of the way they are built, women are considered less than males and are subject to various forms of social stigma. Abolishing a system in which people are subjected to all manner of injustices solely because of their gender is a top priority for Joan.

Another historical figure from the 13th century is Griselda. When she married the Marquis, she came from an impoverished household. She had the rare opportunity to marry the Marquis and thus benefited from his wealth and status. Using Joan and Griselda as her main characters, the playwright aims to show how different it is to be obedient vs. rebellious in a patriarchal culture. In a patriarchal society, women are conditioned to submit to their husbands' authority and adhere to social conventions blindly. The Marquis demands total submission. She agrees to everything the Marquis demands of her because she sees it as his right and duty to do so. Even if she marries a Marquis, she will never have the same position as her husband due to the fact that she is a woman and belongs to a lower social level. When her husband asks Griselda for her allegiance, she agrees to let her children die in order to prove her devotion. She has no choice but to comply with him. Whenever her spouse removes her children from

her custody, she shows no sign of resentment. Such acceptance reveals that a woman places greater value on her man than she does on her children or her personal well-being. She discovers that the system is deeply ingrained in the collective mind of society. Finally, she is awarded for her dedication and obedience after passing all of the exams. "When I turned around, he was still there, wrapping his arms around me and kissing me. I was shocked to the point of fainting. It was at this point that the tears began to flow. "Of course... I adored them." (Churchill, 1982, p.135).

Punishment and reward are key components of the patriarchal system's power structure. For her obedient behavior, Griselda receives a commendation. However, in order to get her husband's love and rewards, she must first suffer psychologically. Also, the Japanese noblewoman and medieval heroine, Lady Nijo, suffered the same fate. At the age of fourteen, her father sent her to serve as an ex-emperor. He demands that she treats him with deference and submission in order to earn his favors. In a patriarchal culture, all men have the right to do anything they want with their female partners. That's why Nijo regards the emperor's oppression as normal and appropriate. As a form of vengeance against the entire system, she takes on yet another boyfriend. This arrangement gives men the ability to create a large number of female children while also making it illegal for women to do so. Nijo believes that she is retaliating against the emperor by faking her own death. Because she lost her children, she is the one who suffers the most emotionally and physically as a result of her actions. It is clear that Nijo is dissatisfied with the system she lives in when she covertly has other boyfriends. She is powerless to do anything about it because it is so ingrained in her. Her actions can be seen as an unintentional protest against patriarchal society's beliefs about injustice.

Since she became pregnant, Nijo has been marked by her deed. Her child also will be scarred. She may grow up to be an emperor's wife and a well-respected member of society. Therefore, she must pay the price. She has no choice but to repress her feelings for the sake of the baby's safety. When she inquiries about Griselda's feelings after her children were taken away, she expresses her quandary. "Do you care about them?" he asked (Churchill, 1982, p.22). Were you moved by the children's plight? I was never reunited with my children. What does Griselda feel about her husband's decision to take away her children from her? Griselda's children were returned to her, and she is clearly jealous of her. Griselda is awarded for her meek and

obedient behavior by Nijo based on these two experiences. In addition, she will be able to reclaim custody of her children and enjoy the respect and affection of her husband and the rest of society. Nijo, on the other hand, gets penalized for defying the system. She loses her children, her lovers, and everything she owns when she is forced to become a nun and live on her own at the monastery.

These fables are designed to reinforce the patriarchal system and instill desirable and undesirable characteristics in a woman. Marlene, the Victorian traveler, also introduces us to Isabella. As a Victorian ideal lady, you're supposed to be devoted to your house and family. In the Victorian era, women were forbidden from engaging in any activities outside of the home. Isabella's father's death frees her from the suffocating influence of men in her life. Women are expected to spend their time at home. Isabella attempts to fit in with society's expectations, but she has health issues that make it difficult. After her husband's death, she sets off on a new path. As a result of his passing, she embarks on a journey that would ultimately lead to her happiness. She is well-traveled and well-versed in the ways of the world. The patriarchal mindset that shapes every woman's psyche was too strong for her to overcome. For all her seeming freedom from male dominance, Isabella nevertheless appears to be shackled by traditional gender conventions. Her lack of self-confidence is further exacerbated by the fact that she defies socially prescribed expectations. She believes that the pleasures of life are not meant for women and that they should be reserved for males. She is remorseful for breaking the rules. A key female character in the drama, Dull Gret has less word to express herself but is a doer. Action for the rights of women is more essential to her than thought or speech. Hers is a case of a woman who, rather than complaining about her oppressors, wishes to devise a strategy for combating them. She is a firm believer in the power of action. She sees no point in shedding a tear or reliving the past. Action and togetherness are the only ways to solve the challenges. In spite of this uncertainty, it is imperative that the activity be carried out.

These six characters share a number of characteristics. They are trying to make it in a patriarchal culture with a variety of methods. Subjugated, exploited, and paid for their triumphs. They are cognizant of their rights in a patriarchal culture. Giving up her daughter and her family in order to pursue prosperity is what Marlene does. Throughout the patriarchal culture, she strives for success and achieves personhood. As a perfect woman and as someone who wants to maintain her social standing,

Griselda must suppress her feelings and those of her children. It is not only Nijo who gives up her children for the sake of social standing. So, Isabella's well-being and feelings are put at risk.

All of Gret's children are subjected to terrifying ordeals thanks to her. According to Churchill, women who defy gender expectations, suffer as a result. The patriarchal system has been around for decades and has been passed down from generation to generation, according to these female characters' 'experiences.

When it comes to the dinner scene, Churchill opted for Isabella Bird (Scotland, Victorian era), Lady Nijo (Buddhist nun), Dull Gret (Brueghel's depiction of a woman leading a crowd of women through the gates of hell to fight against Satan), and the mythological figure of Pope Joan, who is supposed to have been pope between 854 and 856 (Vasile, 2010).

However, despite the fact that the individuals' ''lives differ greatly due to the fact that they were born at various times and in different places, they all have a common experience regarding injustice, misery, and taking up sacrifices. Nevertheless, the struggle between heteronomy and the need for independence shapes every aspect of their life. As it is revealed through Churchill's writing, which is used frequently and theoretically by overlapping statements in the dinner scene, which she frequently employs in her plays. Eventually, the characters' 'discourse devolves into a series of monologues, with just the characters themselves speaking.

The women, despite their commonalities, differ in many ways, from full rejection to fully confirming the woman's kind that is pitted against men. There are many parallels and differences between cultures, but here they will be compared to see what critics say and involve women in terms of comparison between the sexes.

In *Top Girls*, Churchill had two key ideas in mind: the idea of deceased women returning and the idea of women in the workforce. In fact, these are two of the play's central themes, which are tightly connected. As part of a celebration of Lady Nijo's recent elevation, we witness other characters such as Dull Gret, the Pope, and Joan, who celebrate their womanhood with one another in Act One, which takes place in a restaurant. When they come again later in the night to talk about their triumphs, they realize that they have sacrificed their own feminine ways in order to enter the male-dominated world.

Empty women are so well represented by Marlene, a pregnant working-class girl who has left her home village in search of new beginnings in London. Because the old Marlene has died and no one has been born to replace her, we see an assembly of dead women who naively believe that they are the most alive among them (Jones, 1989).

Throughout his life, Churchill urged women to be mindful of their place in society. She must reconsider and reexamine her manner of fighting against any unusual norms in society if she is to overcome any form of marginalization. At the same time, Churchill tries to emphasize the significance of women standing together to attain their emancipation. Since the system is thoroughly entrenched, they must understand that their struggles will never be able to dismantle and combat its injustices. Women need to regroup and rethink their strategy for battling the patriarchal system in order to take down a well-built system. In order for her to break free from the suffocating male-dominated society, she must reject it. She has no intention of slavishly copying the oppressive system. She must start from scratch, remembering who she is and how she came to be.

To sum up, gender and sex differences are examined, as the concept of men and women living differently. Each group has a unique approach to communicating with and dealing with members of its own gender community. Furthermore, each group harbors prejudices both towards itself and towards the other.

CONCLUSION

Gender is defined as the roles and responsibilities that women and men, have in a given context and culture. It defines the role in the home/household, in the school, in the workplace, in the community, in the political organization, in the government, etc. As gender varies, so do such roles and responsibilities. Using the word "gender" allowed academics and activists to challenge the widely held view that human men and women are biological beliefs that pervaded both the scientific and lay worlds at the time.

On the other hand, gender roles are based on the many expectations that individuals, groups, and societies have of individuals depending on their sex, as well as each society's gender norms and beliefs. Gender roles are the result of interactions between people and their settings, and they provide indications to people about what kind of behavior is considered proper for which sex.

Gender, particularly in the metropolitan centers of modernity in the twenties, has also been marked by the long shadow of the Oscar Wilde trials, as well as the development of homosexual, lesbian, and cultural cultures. Despite the fact that many modifications have been made in the method by which women are represented in modernist literature and the "new woman" may undoubtedly be discovered page by page, numerous men could not let go of the old, well-established, feminine vision of women. Historicist and materialist feminist criticisms have shown how early modern gender ideology associated women's speech and writing with sexual looseness.

Discussing gender subversion in general as well as specific plays is the goal of this research. Delaney's *A Taste of Honey* is one of these plays that deals with female issues and has a substantial number of female characters in the play. In this play, the main focus is on interpersonal connections, not political issues. The label "kitchen-sink drama" was coined by critics and reviewers to describe the plays that are written under certain circumstances bring attention to the new wave's distinguishing characteristics.

The new wave of plays has a distinct concentration on *A Taste of Honey* focuses on the lives of young people. The mere presence of women in the United States has the right to vote does not automatically make them independent. There is no guarantee that they are wholly unaffected by society's influence or established practices. Therefore, they will remain servants both inside and outside of their home.

One of the most prominent factors which allows women to live along with their men, supplying them with what they need is their time for staying long enough with men. So, they will be able to eliminate the foundation of their dependency on men and no longer require them as a middleman between them and the rest of the world.

Even though *A Taste of Honey* was composed during the second wave of feminist movement, the issue of women's uniqueness was still a problem. Nonetheless, although Jo is the daughter of Helen, yet they are not alike. Probably, Delaney is trying to highlight the differences between those two women in both their personalities and their sexual attitudes.

Both women are uninterested in the standards imposed by society and are conscious that they are odd. Therefore, it is easy to consider them isolated from society to some degree. Because of these issues, the mother-daughter relationship is not healthy. When it comes to sexual liberation and sexual experience, they also do not conform to the gender stereotype of a woman. In the 1950s, it was unusual for a mother and daughter to become pregnant because of an extramarital relationship. Although Jo claims she does not love her mother and wants to be nothing like her, she runs into problems similar to Helen. The only alternative left for Helen, like Jo, is to bear a child, despite her feelings of regret and guilt. Since Helen has already taken responsibility for her ordeal, she fails to approach Jo with the usual unselfish mother mentality. Meanwhile, Jo's mother was married to another man; she was pregnant with Jo, and this is seen as a challenge for Delaney to go against society and cultural boundaries. These women's openness to sexuality is only one of many unique features that set them apart from other women of their day.

In *A Taste of Honey*, Jo represents independence as she does not seem to be involved in any other's life, and also does not like to be ruled by others. Despite the fact that both Geof and Helen are the mother and flat mate of the girl in question, her talks with Geof illustrate the whole idea of living. It seems to underline the idea that both women have their own different personalities in *A Taste of Honey*. Second-wave feminism has destroyed the feminist movement, which was founded on the idea of a woman's misery as well as the interest of shed light on gender in the same pattern that the feminist movement seems to impose on woman's uniqueness in both figure and character.

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*, which had its world premiere on August 28, 1982, at the Royal Court Theatre, was the second play studied in this study. Throughout its history, this play has been widely acclaimed by reviewers as a huge success. Churchill's unusual staging methods are a big part of the play's enduring appeal. "The vastness of Caryl Churchill's approaches has solidified her status as the most restless and original dramatist now writing, ever renewing her style and pioneering new forms," (2014 pp.151-153) Gobert wrote in his book, *The Theatre of Caryl Churchill*.

It is important to remember that this play was created in opposition to the British capitalist system during the tenure of the Iron Lady', Margaret Thatcher. Joyce and Marlene, the two central characters in the play, had a clear dispute with Churchill's political views on Thatcher. Then there is Joyce, a working single mother who was anti-Thatcher because she saw firsthand the hardships faced by the working class. Marlene, on the other hand, is supporter of Thatcher because she has reaped the benefits of her politics and wants to hold her to a higher standard of capitalism. When Maggie asked Marlene that would she consider hiring her, she responded, "I would" (Churchill, 1996, p. 84)

Hence, the submissive characters turn out to be subversive due to their consciousness in the play. They can resist and speak silently against the patriarchy with their subversive voices to get their rights. Finally, Churchill indicates that societally established gender roles are not always tied to biological sex and that men and women might have completely diverse actions and attitudes. Given the times in which these two plays were written, it is determined that they are timeless, revealing women's independence and uniqueness as well as how male-dominated society has an impact on women's lives in the present day.

Churchill demonstrates in her play *Top Girls* that class oppression is the root cause of marginalized communities' oppression. As a consequence, middle-class women dominate and repress working-class women, who benefit from society's discriminatory strategies against different classes. By portraying working-class characters as trapped in a system of economic and familial relationships, she frequently criticizes Thatcher's policies while defending socialist ideas. While Delaney has attempted to speak for disadvantaged and unrepresented voices in the paly, including homosexuals, youths, and single mothers. In the homosexual man and straight woman

relationship between Jo and Geof, she rejects nostalgic northern working-class identities linked with rigid gender norms. In the piercing satirical interactions between Jo and her mother, Helen, she again resists the stereotype of the witless and passive working-class woman. In addition, the play *Top Girls* shows and condemns Thatcher's other initiatives, such as privatization of the economy and education, as well as individualism. Butler's gender point of view, which is to maintain that a person of female sex does not always have a feminine gender, is also exemplified in *Top Girls*. Because of her frequent male conduct, Marlene has a masculine gender, which affects her own gender. However, *A Taste of Honey* still adopts stereotypes: the working-class matriarch Helen, the rootless ideal of black man's sexuality who impregnates Jo, the harmless sissy Geoff, and the teenage single parents of Jo.

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