

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.3. 2018 (July-Sept)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL
STANDARD
SERIAL
NUMBER
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

SEXUAL OBJECTIFICATION OF MEN IN CARYLL CHURCHILL'S *PLAY CLOUD NINE* AND
TOP GIRLS

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ABSTRACT

Caryll Churchill is one of the greatest dramatists in literature. Many of Her plays represent the radical feministic features. As a second wave feministic playwright, we find feministic issues such as male supremacy, reproductive rights, sexuality, sexual objectification and challenging notion of gender roles. *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982) are two well known plays which deals with radical feministic features. The present paper deals with the reversal role of gender in Caryll Churchill's plays. Churchill reorders society in which male supremacy is eliminated in social and economic contexts.

Key Words: Radical feminism, Sexual Objectification, Second wave feminism, Gender roles, Patriarchy and Lesbianism etc.

Caryll Churchill considered as a radical feminist by many critics. Radical feminists oppose existing social and political organization fundamentally a patriarchy in which men are dominant and women are oppressed. Radical feminist reorders the society in which male supremacy is eliminated in all social and economic contexts. The root of radical feminism find in the political movement of the 1960s. Second wave feminism is a period of feminist activity that began in the 1960s and lasted two decades. It spread across the world. In second wave feminism, issues addressed by the movements, were sexuality, family, the workplace, reproductive rights, de facto inequalities. It also draws attention to the issues of domestic violence and marital rape, engendered rape-crisis centre and woman's shelters and brought about changes in custody laws and divorce laws. Radical feminist tried to abolish the patriarchy and liberate everyone from unjust society by challenging existing social norms and institutions. It includes opposing the sexual objectification of women, raising public awareness about such issues as rape, violence against woman and challenging the very notion of gender roles.

Caryll Churchill has analyzed the arbitrariness of gender roles in his plays like *Owners*, *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*. Churchill, through his characters, displays the imposition of culturally defined roles as artificial constructs. She strictly refuted the fixed gender roles of patriarchy and forms the new sexual politics in the play. Churchill has broken the patriarchal hegemonic ideology in his works.

Caryll Churchill revealed the reversal role of woman in the play. Her plays echoed men as sexual object. In earlier period woman were held as sexual commodity. They were dominated by men in every field. Meanwhile this situation has changed a lot in modern period. Similarly Caryll proposed women at superior level and men at lower level. In Act First, we find the traditional role of the woman and men in *Cloud Nine*. In *Cloud Nine*, women are suppressed their feelings, emotions and fear to expresses love before other people

while in second act they openly express their relationship. They think men are not necessary in their lives. They can manage their life without men. Number of instances is seen in the world where men are viewed as sex objects such as music videos, movies (female centered movie), television shows, woman's magazines and pornography. In modern time's men's body parts (six pack Advertisement). These advertisements are nothing but an example of sexual objectification. *Top Girls* is the play in which all characters played by women. All characters give importance to their individual life than family, male and children. They all held male as a sexual objectification. In *Cloud Nine*, first act shows the patriarchal qualities of characters and second act strongly advocates reversal gender roles.

In *Cloud Nine*, Betty, stands for a stereotype of the female figures created by patriarchal values. She admits that she is "a man creation". She lives for Clive, her husband. She has no sense of her own as a woman. As per cultural tradition, the position of the masculine figure within the family is extremely strong.

In Act I, Betty has treated secondarily. She complains to Clive about Joshua who resents having to fetch her book. Clive winks at Joshua secretly and pretends to be punishing Joshua. The male supremacy is seen in the case of Clive here. In the second act, Caryl depicts the female characters free from the concept of patriarchy which seen in lesbian relationship. Lin and Victoria represent the women who identified themselves as lesbians. Lin is bold enough who tried to fulfill the expectations of society via marriage and conceal the true feelings. She is a young divorced mother. She openly says about lesbianism. She says, "I am lesbian" The Lin and Victoria's relationship shows the tremendous change in the society. The explicit awareness, openness and conscious direction towards the realization of a lesbian relationship is observed through Lin. Lin broke the social rule and moves towards lesbianism. The character of Ellen representing romantic friends and Lin representing contemporary lesbian in spite of many obstacles of the society. The lesbian relation is viewed as a natural love between woman Ellen's loves for Betty represents the love of romantic friends. Ellen suppresses her love for Betty due to the moral social conduct, but after sometimes she openly says her feelings.

In Act Two, The new 'roads of freedom' opened for Lin. This act represents contemporary world in which woman (lesbian) have their own existence and they lives with self-respect in the society. Woman's confident and frankness seen from such questions: "will you have sex with me?". Victoria also influenced by the drastic change of the society and started to develop her lesbian identity which demonstrates relationship with Lin.

Churchill's men and women imitate the characteristic speech patterns, voice, physical mannerism, emotional behavior and dress of the opposite sex. By copying such mannerism and behavioral aspects playwright overthrow the male dominant society in recent years. Today men and women are identical in dressing. Churchill reveals cross-gender casting in the play. The Victorian 'Paterfamilies' is played as expected by a white men. The character of Betty is played by man and his servant Joshua played by a white man. Churchill, in his plays, opposed such black and white, men and women's disparity and duality. Churchill Leaves challenge to us that how you will treat a man in woman's attire? How you will treat black in white man's role? These cross casting technique make us to think the situation in contemporary time. The black intends to aspire white value and at the same time woman wants to take man's values. Here, Betty is shown as wanting conform to Clive's values. Joshua, a black servant, is played by a white man having imperialistic consensus within himself. Later Cathy's role is played by a man in the play.

The male dominance of Clive and submissiveness of Betty shows traditional cultural and social construction of the society. Churchill creates hundred years gap to reveal the changing scenario of the society. Later, the submissive and oppressed Betty begins to speak on sexuality in the play. We find opposition thinking in Clive's nature. He values his friendship with Harry. But the romantic relationship of Harry and his wife Betty gives him jolt. He seduces Mrs. Saunders and calls her "voracious". The perspective of Clive is enormously eccentric at female in the play.

Betty divorced Clive due to his continues torture and dominant nature. She is no more a sexual object and lives independent and free individual life. She has no objection the unorthodox choices of her children. Caryl Churchill presents the free atmosphere for male and female. This can be called "live-in-relationship" in modern times. There should not any barrier between the male and female and gay and lesbian relationships. In short, Churchill made an effort to express the radical feminist aspects in the second act in the play.

The structure and power and authority are changed in the Act two. The alteration of power relations shows the change in the characters and represents the contemporary life. Female is no more the object of sex. In the second act, the setting of the play is public place that is park. It shows that people's choices have changed today. They speak openly on sexuality while the sexual topic held as taboo in act one. The central character of the play imposes his ideals on his family and natives as well. In the first scene Lin openly speak about 'lesbian'. Betty and Gerry also explicitly describe their previous relationship. The relation of Lin, Victoria and Edward is three way relationships. Their sexual relationship is homosexual, heterosexual and incestuous which is taboo in earlier period. Churchill allowed freedom of sex in modern times through this play.

The characters communicate freely on sexual desire in Act Two. Woman and gay characters expresses more freely than heterosexual characters. Churchill tries to exposes the people's attitudes relating to love, life and sex which drastically changed since the Victorian times. There is contrasting pictures in the *Cloud Nine*. The characters of Victorian times are different from contemporary period. The people of contemporary period enjoy more freedom open sexuality. In the modern age, the characters discuss their sexual issues openly. Thus, the play *Cloud Nine* is an analysis of the individual liberation through the expression of repressed sexual desire.

In *Top Girls*, we find five woman's from different historical period. Merlene invites these entire five women to celebrate their success. Five women are Isabella Bird, Lady Ninjo, Pope Joan, Griesalda and Gret. The opening scene takes place in a restaurant. Merlene invites all five guests to celebrate her promotion to Managing Director of the '*Top Girls Employment Agency*'. They all belong to different field. Isabella Bird is nineteenth century Victorian traveler and a daughter of clergyman. She travelled extensively abroad between the ages 40 to 70 for the adventure. She becomes the emperor of the Morocco at the age of 70. The modern age is an age of information and technology. The advancement in technology, physical work becoming less and less. The facility like babysitting and housekeeping gives woman free time to develop themselves as an individual in modern times. In *Top Girls*, modern's has daughter namely Angie whom Joyce, Merlen's sister, brought up.

The woman's abandoned their feminine qualities and female attributes. It symbolizes opposition patriarchy in the play. The main characters Merlene gives up her daughter Angie and motherhood to pursue a successful life, power and career. Merlene is the pivotal character who holds a lot of power in her life. She has cold instinct in terms of a family and love. She is also advises Jennie stay away from mentioning a family or wearing a ring in the interview. Merlene resist her and encouraged to abandon traits that are common in woman's lives. Caryl Churchill through the character of Merlene denied the male supremacy and advocated 'Individualism'. In this way Merlene's living single life, her abandonment of child, drinking and celebrating party all these shows challenge to the notion of gender roles. All characters resentment shows their lack of interest in domestic and social work. Isabella at once declares, 'I cannot and will not live the life of lady....Why should I? Why should I?' Lady Ninjo was an Emperor's Courtesan and Buddhist Nun. She is careless about family and the child. Pope Joan takes more interest in knowledge. She always dressed as boy.

All women tried to avoid maternity responsibilities which considers as a female identity. Merlene has abandoned her child Angie, Ninjo discarded children for the sake of adventures and tours and travelling Isabella took interested in horses rather than children. It seems that all woman' have negative view towards motherhood in the course of the play. The social structure is male -centered in the field of politics, corporate sector, business, industry, banking field and other many more field. Merlene occupied highest position in '*Top Girls Employment Agency*'. Churchill portrayed the characters in terms of matriarchy.

In *Top Girls*, we find employment is the main action of the play. Success, money, work and promotion are common topics of the conversation throughout the play. Churchill intention is that woman needs to be financially independent, political power and social status to change the current scenario of the society. The basis of all these factors is the money, employment and success in life.

Thus, the plays of Caryl Churchill have represented the radical feminist aspects. The society changed a lot in the course of the time. Earlier male dominancy began to end and new female power comes into force in many fields like politics, economic and social status. Caryl has made an effort to project the sexual objectification of men in *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine*.

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