
BODY AS A BATTLE -GROUND: THE PORTRAYAL OF WOMEN CHARACTERS IN THE SELECT PLAYS OF CARLY CHURCHILL

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Abstract: Since time immemorial the body of woman, in all clime and culture has been viewed as property of the male people around. It made the woman a scapegoat in the hands of the male and his culture. This sort of location left no space for the subjugated woman. It prevented her from charting out her way of fulfillments. The male, as a consequence became the absolute owner of the woman. His vision of her constituted her being and purpose. Hence, what pleased him in her body designed their interrelationship. She also internalized it as a fact. Liberation of the person, therefore, became impossible.

The move for freedom of the subjugated person has a long history. It, with the passage of time nurtured and enabled her to assert herself as an independent being. This ideological temper is the central force behind all the dramatic works of Carly Churchill. The present research paper attempts to show how the patriarchy-ridden-woman face and tackle the enslaving milieu around her.

Keywords: woman, male, body, gender, freedom, culture.

The modern British drama during the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century depicted the social realities around. The reflections of people's sufferings were the traits of the drama of this age. British drama was influenced by the writings of the Norwegian playwright Herrick Ibsen, who brought to the theatre the realistic drama of ideas. George Bernard Shaw the Irish playwright also contributed in correlating the modern British drama to the contemporary social realities. Almost all his plays dramatize the troubled social milieu around. This constituted the relevance and purpose of British drama. Thus, realistic drama continued as a way of making the theatre more pro- society than it was before.

Naturalistic cult of drama added another dimension to the British drama. It was a literary movement that began in the late nineteenth century. It embarrassed environment, heredity and social conditions as its most important concerns that go in shaping the human character. Though naturalism is an offshoot of realism, it heavily emphasized on the accurate picture of the ugly faces poverty, racism, disease, corruption, and prostitution that plague human life. The solutions to these problems faced by humanity were the ends plays of such genre aimed at.

The theater of this age is also called expressionist theatre that attempts to mirror the social, political, and ethical circumstances of the age. Through questioning and challenging the so called established norms it ensued debates and clashes of ideas. The immense change, due to the spread of education and the scientific temper in all walks of life was brought in the theatrical culture of the times.

It is a wide – held belief that woman still oppressed and dominated by male in different ways, socially, economically, emotionally and psychologically. She was not given equal opportunities as man had, in the

field of education, franchise and at work place. In present time woman is allowed to educate, vote and to work but still she faces different kinds of discrimination and obstacles that are not allowed to view her as an equal to the man. The patriarchal ideology views woman as subordinate to man who has become increasingly and obviously misogynistic as woman has advanced in education and at the work place. This can be clear evidence that woman, across all socio-economic levels, and across diverse societies, has a greater capacity to endure all difficulties and achieve more than man can do.

Carly Churchill is one of well – known feminist playwrights who have had the opportunity to work with some companies in Britain. She is considered as one of the most important female playwrights in British drama. She skillfully manages to include a feminist style in her works. She draws an important attention to the woman's issues socially, economically, emotionally and psychologically in the patriarchal society. She portrays various marginalization, humiliation and oppression of woman that result from class differences and patriarchal norms of the time. Through her works, she attempts to expose the injustice in the name of social norms. Besides; she encourages the audience to criticize the constructed social, economic and psychological norms that imposed on the individual. In the patriarchal society, body can determine the individual worth and destiny. Besides, it can give the real power to the individual to harm or force others. The patriarchal system forces its individuals to internalize its policy and act according to the constructed roles. Through the exits social norms, man is legitimizing to gain control over the bodies of women. Throughout history, woman is subordinate and secondary to man's position socially and legally. Such society constructs barriers that

force woman to be inferior to man position. Though woman knows she is oppressed, subjected, humiliated and treated as inferior, she still trapped by the same system. In other words, though she is consciously or unconsciously aware of her right in the patriarchal society, she is subjected, exploited and paid for her successes. Thus, woman attempts to overcome all obstacles in male dominated society. Constantly, she is struggling to gain the right over her own body and her life and to get place in the male dominated –society.

Across all societies, woman is treated as an object as she is not allowed to think of herself as an individual. Her thoughts, opinions, and behaviors must meet man's expectations and judgments. In spite of the constant fighting between the sexes, woman is still tied to the patriarchal policies, patriarchal nature and can't obtain the real liberation. This involves that the patriarchal policies prevent a true liberation of a woman. She cannot stand as an individual; she must be defined with the male. Woman is depicted as an object that is belonging to someone else. In short, the female body causes clash between man and woman over control her own body. Through her plays, Churchill reflects woman's subjection and struggling in British as a civilized society.

Woman accepted the patriarchal ideology and can't go beyond its borders. Even if she pretends she is free and liberate, in reality she still bond to the social norms and her conventional roles as woman in the society. The nature of woman's subjugation varies from one place to the other due to the differences in class, caste, religion, ethnicity and the culture.

The plays of Churchill show how the independent woman is easy to victimize in the patriarchal societies. She falls outside of societal norms. Woman is degraded and humiliated by some socio- cultural practices and beliefs that cause her alienation. Such society denies woman right to be active resident and gives her opportunity to use her experience, capabilities and serve her societies.

For example, in *Top Girls* play, Churchill attempts to explore many aspects of women's lives throughout history. She uses different techniques and violates the chronological order of time and place. The dramatist attempts to highlight that how woman can be trapped socially and naturally. That is explaining Marlene's feeling of guilt towards her own daughter and she still traps to the traditional role of woman in a family. Thus, sometimes she can't hide her worried about her own future as a mother and as a woman. In other words, woman is still trapped by the biological factors and social factors as well. The entire patriarchal system supports man superiority over woman. In such system woman doesn't allow to occupy any reserved position and be in a place of power over man. For example, Joan by becoming a

pope she has got the power to deconstruct the patriarchal system and has right to control everything around. Unfortunately, woman is treated as the place of sexuality. She doesn't have any identity apart from her physical identify. Woman internalizes the patriarchal policy and becomes a part of it. We see Joan herself connects every bad things happened as a punishment because she violates the system. Apparently, her ignorance and her little knowledge about her body as a woman lead to her tragic downfall. In the patriarchal society, woman is punished and man is Scott free. The pope can have children because he doesn't give birth to them. The physical weakness of woman makes her inferior to man as her body will show the result of her action, makes her legally responsible for it and deserves the social and natural punishment.

According to the double standards of morality man is free from any responsibility; no one asks or blames him for any illegal action because he is superior. The dramatist attempts to explore how woman's body has sealed her tragic destiny. It is safely assumed that sex determines the individual worth. In the patriarchal society woman is tamed to obey their husband and follow all norms unconditionally. The patriarchal society success to make the individual internalizes its policy. For instance, Isabella feels guilty because she dears to break the constructed norms. Her violation of such norms makes her feel guilty and self-denial from the enjoyment of her journey. As she takes man roles, she is not satisfied with herself. Through *Vinegar Tom* play, the dramatist successes to depict the fact that the oppressor of woman not only man, woman also helps in oppressing other women. For example, Goody, Margery, and Susan cause other women's suffering and end their lives. Woman can be oppressive to each other as they are oppressed by their male and the entire system.

. The aim of her plays is to investigate the oppressive forces of patriarchy on woman throughout history. The position of woman in male-dominated societies and their 'vain struggle against the oppressive patriarchal agents is effectively highlighted throughout her writing.

Conclusion: According to the patriarchal culture woman can be bought, sold and owned. This ideology enlarges to the relationships amongst individuals' further causing struggles over control and power between the sexes. The patriarchal society turns woman into object rather than individual that is not permitted to think for herself and value herself as an individual. It successes to make woman herself internalize this policy. Her thoughts, opinions, and behaviors stem from the constant judgments of man and always seek man's satisfaction. In her plays, Churchill challenges this issue by depicting the female figure in confrontation with the male.

Through her plays, Churchill attempts to show how the biological aspect of the woman determines her own destiny. Noticeably; Woman is still tied to the implications of patriarchal and natural norms. They have to face natural and social norms. In other words, woman's destiny is governed by the physical laws which are unstable. The woman's physical form makes her inferior to man since her body will show the result of her action and makes her legally responsible for it and deserves the social punishment. On the other hand, man is free from any responsibility; no one asks or blames him for any

illegal action because he is superior. Man can withdraw easily from any responsibility. The dramatist depicts characters who protest about all injustice norms against them as women which is result of their biological forms. Though the female characters are from different time, place, they are still similar in their experience of humiliation, subjection and they all exploited and victimized by the same system. All of them attempt to violate the patriarchal system either by adopting or by revolting against the exits system.

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