

**University of Pardubice**  
**Faculty of Arts and Philosophy**

**Reflection of Gender and Political Issues in Top Girls and  
Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill**

**Petra Smažilová**

**Thesis**

2008

Univerzita Pardubice  
Fakulta filozofická  
Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky  
Akademický rok: 2006/2007

## ZADÁNÍ DIPLOMOVÉ PRÁCE

(PROJEKTU, UMĚLECKÉHO DÍLA, UMĚLECKÉHO VÝKONU)

Jméno a příjmení: **Petra SMAŽILOVÁ**

Studijní program: **M7503 Učitelství pro základní školy**

Studijní obor: **Učitelství anglického jazyka**

Název tématu: **Reflection of Gender and Political Issues in Top Girls and Cloud Nine by Caryl Churchill**

### Z á s a d y p r o v y p r a c o v á n í :

Kromě zařazení autorky primárních textů, tj. Caryl Churchillové, do adekvátního literárního a kulturního kontextu se studentka ve své diplomové práci zaměří na analýzu druhé vlny feministického hnutí ve spojení s politickou situací v Británii druhé poloviny 20. století, především období ministerského předsednictví Margaret Thatcherové. Politická a genderová témata budou analyzována v kontextu postav děl Caryl Churchillové Top Girls a Cloud Nine. Studentka se bude především věnovat způsobům, kterými jednotlivé postavy vyjadřují tato témata a bude je vzájemně srovnávat.

Kulturní analýzu založenou na výzkumu sekundárních zdrojů doplní textové analýzy primární literatury.

Rozsah grafických prací:

Rozsah pracovní zprávy:

Forma zpracování diplomové práce: **tištěná/elektronická**

Seznam odborné literatury:

Beauvoir de, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London: David Campbell Publishers, 1993.

Churchill, Caryl. *Plays One*. London: Methuen, 1985.

Churchill, Caryl. *Top Girls*. London: Methuen, 1982.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. New York: W. W. Norton, 1963.

Friedan, Betty. *The Second Stage*. New York: Summit Books, 1986.

Halsey, A. H. *Change in British Society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986.

Vedoucí diplomové práce:

**Mgr. Olga Roebuck**

Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Datum zadání diplomové práce:

**30. dubna 2007**

Termín odevzdání diplomové práce:

**31. března 2008**



prof. PhDr. Petr Vorel, CSc.

děkan

L.S.



PaedDr. Monika Černá, Ph.D.

vedoucí katedry

V Pardubicích dne 30. listopadu 2007

**Acknowledgement:**

I would like to thank to Mgr. Olga Roebuck, MLitt., Ph.D. for her encouragement, help patience and understanding. Special thanks are extended to Mgr. Libora Oates-Indruchová, M.A., Ph.D. for her priceless complaisance and for providing me with enriching insight. I would like to thank also to my family and dear friends for their understanding and support.

## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to focus on the plays *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill and on the artistic discourse of women's feminism and its shift that follows and depicts the changes that British women underwent. The thesis portrays the shift from sisterly solidarity, so common for the Women's Liberation Movement and especially for the dramatic surge of feminism at the end of 1970s, towards stress on individual achievements emphasised by Margaret Thatcher.

## **Keywords**

Caryl Churchill; drama; Great Britain; second wave of feminism; Margaret Thatcher

## **Název**

Odráž genderových a politických témat v *Top Girls* a *Cloud Nine* od Caryl Churchill

## **Souhrn**

Tato práce je zaměřena na hry *Cloud Nine* a *Top Girls* od Caryl Churchill a na umělecký diskurs ženského feminismu a jeho posun, který sleduje a odráží změny v životě britských žen. Práce analyzuje posun od ženské solidarity, která byla tak typická pro ženské osvobozené hnutí a zvláště pro období dramatického vzednutí britského feminismu na konci sedmdesátých let, k důrazu na individuální úspěch, který propagovala Margaret Thatcher.

## **Klíčová slova**

Caryl Churchill; drama; Velká Británie; druhá vlna feminismu; Margaret Thatcher

# Index

<b>1. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Cultural and Political Context .....</b>	<b>3</b>
2.1. Women’s Liberation .....	3
2.2. The Golden Age of Women’s Liberation .....	6
2.3. The First Woman Prime Minister and the Turning Point .....	11
<b>3. Cloud Nine .....</b>	<b>16</b>
3.1. The Discovery of the Noblest Form of Sisterhood .....	16
3.2. The Process of Discovering History .....	24
3.3. Finding the Way to Sisterhood.....	29
<b>4. Top Girls .....</b>	<b>34</b>
4.1. A Ruthless Woman .....	35
4.2. Top Girls – Marlene and the First Woman Prime Minister .....	40
4.3. Top Girls and a Man’s Creation .....	45
<b>5. Conclusion .....</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>Resumé .....</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Appendixes .....</b>	<b>61</b>

## 1. Introduction

The plays *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill, a contemporary British playwright mostly concerned with questions of feminism and socialist conviction attacking capitalist system, are considered to be the plays that stood for a watershed in Churchill's career. Both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* are remarkable plays for multiple topics brought together and for quite a unique form and language experiments. Therefore, they made Caryl Churchill famous outside Great Britain, won recognized prizes in the USA and were analyzed from many perspectives.

Caryl Churchill is believed to be a playwright who depicts contemporary questions in her plays. Since both *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982) were written in the period when British society, and especially women, were going through dramatic changes and since the plays depict the life of women in Great Britain and their concerns, both *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* can be considered, in spite of the doubts of some reviewers, feminist plays dealing with women's situation, questions, and strains.

*Cloud Nine* belongs to the period of the dramatic surge of British feminism characterized by the peak of sisterly solidarity and sharing among women. Moreover, the late 1970s also represent the period of group dynamics connected with the rejection of patriarchal values, the period when women tended to question traditional orders, were attempting to liberate themselves and to find new ways of life. Therefore, the period itself brought radicalization of feminism and the recognition of women's self-reliance that in many cases found the answer in lesbian separatism and women's communities without men. The play *Top Girls* was written short after the election of the first woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who stressed individual achievements and enterprise, patriarchal family and women's traditional role. The question that arises is, whether the artistic discourse of women's feminism and its shift follow and depict the changes that British society and British women underwent; it means whether the shift from sisterly solidarity towards stress on individual achievements is apparent in those two plays.

As a cultural as well as a political context stands for a necessary background for understanding the above mentioned plays, cultural and political situation is the theme of the chapter preceding the section focused on the analysis of the plays. Cultural context

depicts the beginning and the process of the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain, its group dynamics, changes influencing women's lives and a belief in women's solidarity that represented an important attribute of the movement. The chapter also highlights some of the major preoccupations of the movement at the end of 1970s; these themes are further analyzed in *Cloud Nine*. Political context, which is mostly connected with Margaret Thatcher's policy changing the atmosphere in Great Britain and with her approach to women, is another part of second chapter.

Since the literary context of Churchill's life and her production do not represent the necessary argument following the research question of the essay, historical context of the development of drama connected with the Women's Liberation Movement and feminism is depicted in the appendix.



## 2. Cultural and Political Context

### 2.1. Women's Liberation

After the Second World War the British society was going through the changes that seemed to be accelerating in the late 1960s. According to Marwick, these changes were marking “the end of Victorianism” and he further claims that “all of the ‘reforms’ of the late fifties and sixties marked a retreat from the social controls imposed in the Victorian era by evangelicalism and non-conformity.” (Marwick 145) The important and characteristic change standing for “the end of Victorianism” was the result of the trial over D. H. Lawrence’s *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* that was written in the 1920s and that was forbidden for its not a very moral content, so to speak, till 1960. The act of republishing the above mentioned novel made a significant contribution to not a very traditional belief that a woman finds satisfaction in a sexual act, which Betty, a character from *Cloud Nine*, as will be further shown, finally recognizes on her way towards developing a sisterly solidarity. Moreover, the republishing of the book helped, together with other issues, which will be further noted, to destroy last fragments of the belief of an existence of two types of women - pure ‘Madonna’ type or a woman of the street; thus, the articulation of the recognition of black and white women led to highlighting the male fear of female sexuality. Furthermore, republishing of the novel is closely connected with the fact that women’s sexuality outside the marital status became widely accepted by public in 1960s. Hence, firstly, an attempt to destroy definitely the idea of ‘an angel in the house’, which reemerged in its importance after the Second World War, was made. Secondly, the assumption of a female sexuality, which was believed to be closely connected with the procreation further helping the society to make a strong link between a woman and a natural wish to care, was demystified.

The great change towards ‘sexual liberation’ in British society was also marked by many reforms that, together with the replacement of thirteen years of Conservative ruling by the Labour Party and Harold Wilson as the Prime Minister (1964 – 1970, 1974 - 1976), awakened the hope of feminists. The legalisation of abortion, which was “an example of a reform which effectively predated women’s liberation; consequently the chief task for feminists subsequently was to *defend* the status quo rather than extend it” (Pugh 328), the Family Planning Act and the Divorce Reform Act stand for the most significant reforms passed under Wilson’s government when women’s question is taken

into account. The legalisation of abortion, the provision of contraceptive advice by local authorities and the emergence and wider availability of a contraceptive pill represented women's empowerment and the gain of a control over their bodies. Thus, the intercourse between a man and a woman outside a marriage lost considerable part of mystification and became a widely acceptable practice without any inevitable and unpleasant consequences. Moreover, the Divorce Reform Act passed in 1969 supported the equality between the sexes during the process and, according to Marwick, "the trend in this and other legislation was towards recognizing women as independent individuals." (Marwick 152) However, according to Pugh, although the 1960s and the Labour Party brought some changes focused on greater equality of women, neither the achievement of social reform, which could be regarded as the result of an accidental influence of individuals than of wider female attempts and pressure within the party itself, was satisfying nor the Prime Minister proved to be as receptive to women's influence as he had seemed to be. Thus, the anti-party attitudes and inclination towards seeking solutions outside the male-dominated British politics was gradually adopted by feminists. (Pugh 313-314) What is more, women realized that not only the political structure, in which previous generations had put so much belief, but also other factors highly influencing women's lives and hiding from public inside their houses created many obstacles to equality; and therefore, the claim that 'personal is political', a dictum that was adopted from the student movement of 1968, was pronounced. As Sander stated:

[W]omen can only find their identity if the problems previously hidden in the private sphere are articulated and made into the focus for women's political solidarity and struggle. (Rowbotham 1992, 262)

The articulation of the recognition of the importance of women's personal lives as a part of the way to freedom and equality stood for an important landmark giving women more easily accessible means for their struggle.

Thus, events mentioned above led to a so called 'historic moment' in post-war British feminism, the conference at Ruskin College in Oxford in February 1970. Some sources consider the late 1960s and especially the year 1968 to be a watershed for the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement in Britain not only because of the sexual liberation, the fiftieth anniversary of women's right to vote, but also because of

numerous movements such as student protest movements, the Black and anti-Vietnam movements in the USA or the growing tension in Northern Ireland. None of the movements particularly articulated any question of women; however, as it can be observed through history, women tended to relate to struggles of downtrodden groups sensing the common grounds of oppression, and in this way they articulated their problems.

Although during the late 1960s many women in Britain received some pieces of information about the starting movement in the USA and though they discussed the issues on intellectual level, they did not think of, according to Rowbotham, arranging as a group or forming a movement. (Rowbotham 1990, 14) However, the initiative came in 1968 first from fishermen's wives fighting publicly and campaigning for enhancing the safety conditions of their husbands at work and, more significantly, from the working-class women working at Ford and striking for equal pay; the strike was springing from the disappointment with Harold Wilson taking no action on better working conditions of lower-paid classes of men and women. Rowbotham claims that the strike "lasted for three weeks and received the full glare of publicity; the papers called it the 'Petticoat Strike' and the women received the usual sexual banter which any action taken by women provokes." (Rowbotham 1990, 15) The Ford women and their strike, apart from the interest of the press, had far more reaching meaning in awakening the sense of solidarity and sisterhood in women and in their realizing that the need of a change towards equality in many fields was absolutely necessary through women's own and explicit initiation. As Boland stated, "the Ford women have definitely shaken the women of the country." (Rowbotham 1990, 16) Thus, the urgency of an action to enhance the quality of women's lives was generally recognized.

All these events mentioned above lead British women to the recognition of the importance of an action; and therefore, groups of women started to be shaping in many towns in Britain, and several journals dealing for example with the sexual oppression of women in capitalist society emerged. Notwithstanding, participants at the first national conference, often perceived as a milestone of the second wave of feminism and organized at Ruskin College in Oxford during the weekend at the end of February 1970, articulated four general goals of the Women's Liberation Movement in Great Britain - equal pay for equal work, equal education and opportunity, free contraception and

abortion on demand and twenty-four-hour child care. The feeling of many women sensing the importance of the conference and its results connected with generally recognized determination to bring a change can be expressed by Wandor's claim that:

[A]s part of a generation who took over Ruskin College for a weekend in 1970, we were in at the beginning of a change in the consciousness of women in this country. For me, the most important overall legacy of that weekend was the realization that, marginal as I very often felt, I was objectively a part of the historical process, and that I could help shape and change that history. (Wandor 1990, 2)

Thus, the conference proved the urgency of a co-operation and the awareness of many women of the need to re-develop the sense of solidarity, sharing and sisterhood so that the shift in many fields of women's lives could be brought.

## **2.2. The Golden Age of the Women's Liberation Movement**

The Women's Liberation Movement, apart from the annual national meetings, was organized on a local and regional level, acted on a loose basis and spread "spontaneously across the country without a co-ordination from the centre" (Pugh 320) avoiding any hierarchical structure that reminded so much of the male organizations including politics. Thus, women could be and were encouraged to enjoy the freedom of choosing the most acute or anyhow particular problem to deal with and a method itself. As far as the methods of the Women's Liberation Movement are concerned, they took the shape of debates, journals, conferences and marches, whose aim was to inform political system and wide public about burning problems and to bring, as will be shown in the analysis of *Cloud Nine*, a change in the life of many women influenced by the sisterly solidarity and the sense of sharing. A high number of women became quite quickly actively involved in the Women's Liberation Movement in their own communities and worked effectively, vigorously, enthusiastically; they further built on solidarity and absorbed the broad principle of women's liberation. According to Rowbotham, first groups consisted predominantly of students; however, these groups became later less important. Mostly middle class women in their twenties and thirties, housewives and white collar workers were the women who tended to join the movement. (Rowbotham 1990, 24)

It was also the zeal and sisterly solidarity of middle class women who invested money in a smoother process of women's liberation and who in that way helped to support educated and active women of present time in publishing activities that thus passed the knowledge of women's issues and made wider public aware of the preoccupations of the liberation. As will be shown in the analysis of *Cloud Nine*, many women became very influenced by feminist writing and by their attempt to question the representation of women in literature and to rediscover women's literary tradition and history. Feminists participating in the Women's Liberation Movement realized and articulated that women stood for the most common 'object' studied and represented in literature written by men and that women were depicted as either black perilous and doomed characters or white and virtuous characters that were put on a pedestal to be fully admired; that they were represented as the 'other'. Thus, the second wave of feminism and its group dynamics seemed to rediscover what Woolf detected in the British Museum when searching for women's literary tradition:

One went to the counter; one took a slip of paper; one opened a volume of the catalogue, and ..... the five dots here indicate five separate minutes of stupefaction, wonder and bewilderment. Have you any notion how many books are written about women in the course of one year? Have you any notion how many are written by men? Are you aware that you are, perhaps, the most discussed animal in the universe? [...] Sex and its nature might well attract doctors and biologists; but what was surprising and difficult of explanation was the fact that sex – woman, that is to say – also attracts agreeable essayists, light-fingered novelists, young men who have taken the M.A. degree; men who have taken no degree; men who have no apparent qualification save that they are not women. (Woolf 1957, 26-27)

Moreover, feminists in discussed period went further in their researches and recognized, according to Showalter, the fact that if women study the stereotypes of women represented in literature written by men, misogyny of critics and women's limited roles depicted in literary history, they will not learn what women felt, what their experience was; however, they will discover a woman represented as a person men want her to be. (Showalter 219) The misrepresentation of women in literature and literary canons, which are believed to be, according to Morris, the most prestigious form of an expression since literature depicts the highest ideals and aims of humankind (Morris 19), stood for one of the reasons why women perceived themselves from an angle imposed on them by men and by male authors. Moreover, as Woolf claims:

[A]lmost without exception they [women] are shown in their relation to men. It was strange to think that all the great women of fiction were, until Jane Austen's day, not only seen by the other sex, but seen only in relation to the other sex. And how small a part of a woman's life is that; and how little can a man know even of that when he observes it through the black or rosy spectacles which sex puts upon his nose. (Woolf 1957, 86)

Via the misrepresentation of women in literature and the belief that women's writing is rarely of a good quality, women perceived themselves as subordinated, emotional, unimportant, lacking the skills for more significant role in public life, dependent on men and antagonistic towards other women, and as the 'other'. The Women's Liberation Movement and the several times mentioned sisterly solidarity helped to raise the consciousness of women, to question the biases that were imposed on them and to make women realise that they have their worth and history which needs to be rediscovered and connected with the conditions of the life of the 'other' sex and its consequences. Thus, feminists started to question the representation of women in literature written by men and they also widely searched for women's history and literary tradition that, as Woolf recognised, existed:

[F]or [women's] masterpieces are not single and solitary births; they are the outcome of many years of thinking in common, of thinking by the body of the people, so that the experience of the mass is behind the single voice. (Woolf 1957, 68-69)

Therefore, the second wave of feminism is characterized by publishing many pioneering books not only about the theory of feminism but also about women's literary tradition and history that influenced women on their way towards liberating and finding themselves. Journals represented another way of passing the knowledge of the women's liberation; thus, the period was marked by the rise of many feminist journals which were, according to Pugh, preferred by feminists since they granted the avoidance of the press controlled by men in spite of the fact that Women in Media were founded to enhance the way of presenting women's issues in quality but still male-controlled press. (Pugh 322)

British feminism, inclining to socialism and perceptive of social classes rather than race issues when compared with the movement in the USA, was much less ideologically differentiated at the beginning than American feminism. Socialist feminism, the most common and widespread feminism in Britain playing the main role

at the beginning of the movement and regaining its significant importance at the beginning of Thatcher's government, believed that men were not the only oppressors of women but class, race and culture were the inherent part of oppression; and thus, the need of male allies was included in the movement and men were not marginalized. As Segal claims, women were united in the effort "to understand the connections between women's subordination and capitalism, and to create a movement of and for all women, but not only for women – also for all oppressed groups and peoples and for men." (Segal 45) However, in the late 1970s British feminism radicalized since feminists started to realize that it was not entirely capitalist society that oppressed women but the power of men and patriarchy; thus:

The clearest statements locating women's oppression in men's sexual practices and 'the institution' of heterosexuality came, in Britain, from a few widely influential revolutionary feminist groups [...] ironically, mostly composed of former socialist feminists. (Segal 96)

Radical feminism regarded men and patriarchy as the means of women's oppression and believed that the way out of subordination would be women's emancipation from this way of domination since, according to Millett, in patriarchal systems half of the population that is female is controlled by the other half of population that is male. (Millett 25) Thus, women's communities without men and women's self-reliance that found a radical answer in lesbian separatism became the most desirable expression of radical feminism and "[a] strong belief that women's own sexuality was 'crippled' and 'denied' by men's imposition of 'compulsory heterosexuality'" (Segal 95) emerged. The question of lesbianism appeared in the 1970s as the result of the overall openness of the atmosphere and as a result of sexual liberation, which was also connected with the process of emerging of homosexuals out of a closet<sup>1</sup>; but, also as a political act. That is why radical feminists believed that "being a lesbian is, whether consciously or unconsciously perceived, a political act, a refusal to fulfill the male image of womanhood or to bow to male supremacy." (Fadermann 413) Therefore, radical feminists assumed that "to reject male supremacy in the abstract but to enter into a heterosexual relationship in which the female is usually subservient makes no sense." (Faderman 414) Hence, lesbianism became a means of satisfying, valuable, liberating

---

<sup>1</sup> The process of emerging of homosexuals out of a closet of relative silence was based on the legalization of homosexuality, which was pronounced illegal for men in 1885, under Wilson's government.

and in some circles the only accepted worthwhile relationship and compensating force for disappointment with patriarchy, and the sixth demand proclaiming the right to define one's own sexuality and an end to discrimination of lesbianism was added to those original four demands articulated at Ruskin College.

Because of the overall change in a cultural climate influenced by sexual liberation, the Women's Liberation Movement and legislation passed under Wilson's government, the life of women shifted, as was already shown, towards much greater freedom connected with women's enhanced self-confidence and with their better understanding of other women and of themselves. Women started to perceive their roles from a more complex and critical angle by recognizing subordination, exploitation or 'dual role' in their lives in institutions of a traditional family, marriage itself and motherhood. Thus, many changes brought into personal lives marked women's life. Even though the 1970s cannot be perceived as the period of a dramatic disbelief in marriage – because of the possibility of divorce, one of a major liberating factor for women, and re-marriage – a cohabitation, group dynamics and much tighter bonds with others became widely recognized and practiced, as will be further proved in the analysis of the characters in *Cloud Nine*. Moreover, when considering the sphere of working life, the fact that women, regardless their marital status, were much more likely to have a paid job in the 1970s and that they generally found it very beneficial and fulfilling, as *Cloud Nine* also depicts, can be itself considered a turn from the idea of women's traditional and exclusive role of a mother, wife and housewife. Changes and advancements achieved by the Women's Liberation Movement transformed women's lives tremendously and helped to pave the way for "the 'roads to freedom' that ran on through the seventies, often wider and smoother." (Marwick 188) Moreover, the "roads to freedom" opening to women were, as was already suggested, widened to a certain extent by quite a steady political situation. As Marwick claims, "[t]he Conservatives [...] ousted Labour in 1970; yet a political historian might well prefer to treat 1964-79 as one 'period' of, in general, Labour hegemony." (Marwick 188) Therefore, the relation of policies of the Conservative and Labour government of the 1970s, when considering the basic idea of Welfare State, could be observed although the period itself brought some changes and cuts connected with public spending. However, feminists were continually disappointed with unsatisfactory results brought by politicians when



women's issues were taken into account, with the Labour government in its declining years and with the fact that it was very difficult to bring changes via male dominated and rigid structures of politics. Thus, the expectations of many women were re-awakened when considering the potential end of male dominated politics via the election of the first woman Prime Minister.

### **2.3. The First Woman Prime Minister and the Turning Point**

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, the leader of the Conservative Party from 1975 – 1990 and the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1979 – 1990, became the only woman in British history who has been elected to these posts; and thus, she represented the success of feminists campaigning for fulfilling women's lives via putting stress on equality and empowerment. Thatcher proved that there was a chance for women to become both autonomous and equal. Becoming autonomous was very commonly regarded as an immediate outcome of the beginning of the second wave of feminism when considering women's individual freedom in personal relationships, a right to decide about their bodies and a possibility to manage as an independent human being. However, equality, when concerning the chances provided to men as well as to women on just basis, was generally perceived by feminists to be a target to be still worked at. Thatcher's becoming the first woman Prime Minister, not only in criterion of Great Britain but in whole Europe, could be perceived as the victory leading to the belief that "the eighties are going to be stupendous" (Churchill 1991, 83) for women; however, the very beginning of Thatcher's governing proved that only *some* women thought that "I'm going up up up." (Churchill 1991, 83)

Thatcher's determination, belief in her own skills of making decisions, intransigence and unwillingness to negotiate and to listen to the ideas of others were already apparent during her leadership of the Conservative Party; however, their immediate application when she was elected the Prime Minister led to the astonishment of not only many members of the Conservative Party. To avoid the long disputes and discussions, she started to co-operate with the specially designed circles where decisions about the politics of the government were made with the people who were very often called 'one of us', who stood for her ideas. According to Rovná, the ministers of the Conservative Cabinets were used to different approach of the Prime

Minister, the one where the Prime Minister was presiding the discussions while pondering the ideas of everybody; nonetheless, Margaret Thatcher quickly made all the members sure that she was not going to preside the discussions but to lead them. Hence, the members of the Cabinet started to be more the agents who served the party line and not those who influenced it; thus, Margaret Thatcher's style was compared to the American presidential system. (Rovná 89) Not only was Margaret Thatcher very intransigent and her policy based on her conviction but she was also very quick at making decisions to replace the members who seemed not to be so much devoted to her beliefs.

Thatcher strongly opposed to the politics of consensus that was built on the co-operation with trade unions, on the highest possible level of employment and the principles of Welfare State. Because of the growing inflation and state investments in a traditional industry, which was proving to be ineffective and which the previous Conservative government attempted to restrict; however, without any significant action taken due to the awareness of possible public protests, Margaret Thatcher made decisions to reduce or close down heavy industries stressing the responsibility of individuals for themselves and liberalism. Furthermore, a strict monetarism propagating the control of invested money to reduce inflation, the growth of the indirect taxes and wide cuts in public spending concerning mostly health and social sphere were applied. Thatcher distanced the state responsibility from the unemployment and encouraged the wide public to become involved in a private business, privatisation and self-reliance, which was, as will be further suggested in connection with young and not particularly bright Angie, a character from *Top Girls* coming from a poor working class background, not so easy. Thatcher's harsh politics denying the society as the whole caused many partings in the Conservative Party itself; nonetheless, as has already been suggested, she always managed to insist on her ideas and replaced representatives of abstemious Conservative policy by those believing strongly in Thatcherism<sup>2</sup>. However, her supporters in the party were constantly on the decrease during the most critical years 1980 and 1981. As Rovná states, the very high number of unemployed people and their

---

<sup>2</sup> Thatcherism itself has been analysed from various perspectives and approached from different points of view; notwithstanding, this paper adopts the definition and approach used by Lovendusky and Randall and understands "Thatcherism as referring to an ideology closely associated with Mrs Thatcher and certain of her colleagues and with the key areas of government policy which it has informed." (Lovendusky, Randall 33)

growing poverty could be considered as one of the reasons why the popularity of the Conservative Party decreased rapidly. Tensions and violent protests, which were always absent in Great Britain, even in the periods of the growing gloom in the late 1970s, and which a British spectator knew only from watching a situation in foreign countries, appeared in Britain at the beginning of 1980s; and thus, real seriousness of a situation in Great Britain was marked. (Rovná 101)

Other features of Thatcherism, apart from already mentioned monetarism, liberalism and features connected with them were definitely authoritarianism, bigger emphasis on hierarchy and order and conservatism influencing the growing authority of the state via restricting the power of trade unions and local governments and authorities, which were the organisations most accessible to feminists. As could be further claimed:

One aspect of the conservatism apparent in Thatcherism has been a form of patriotism, nationalism, or its detractors might even want to call it neo-imperialism, which was most obviously manifest in the Falklands/Malvinas episode. [...] Closely allied with this, many have seen racist undertones in Thatcherism. Before she became Prime Minister, Mrs Thatcher made a television appearance, following which electoral support for the Conservatives jumped by several points, in which she talked of the danger of British family life being 'swamped' by alien cultures. In the prevailing climate of race relations in Britain, it is difficult to view this remark as an innocent one. (Lovenduski, Randall 35)

Thus, through her remarks, Margaret Thatcher can be perceived as a very conservative politician stressing, among other conservative values, a return to traditional patriarchal family.

Thatcher's restricting policies propagating individual enterprise and self-reliance can be widely depicted in her approach to feminism, to which she was hostile. However, in her young age, Thatcher herself could have been perceived as having been aware of women's question when she mentioned in the article published in 1954:

For a short while after our twins were born I was without help and had to do everything myself including three-hourly feeds day and night, so I know how exhausting children and housework can be! As well as being exhausted, however, I felt nothing more than a drudge ... I had little to talk about when my husband came home in the evening and all the time I was consciously looking forward to what I called 'getting back to work' - namely, to using some of the mental resources which I had been expressly trained to use for years. (Lovenduski, Randall 43)

When in a position of a mother, wife and housewife, Thatcher recognised not a very satisfying and fulfilling deal of what later Betty Friedan called 'a problem without a name', which was a part of a more complex 'feminine mystique' governing not only to women but society as the whole after the Second World War. Hence, as many women of that period, Margaret Thatcher felt the need to realise her skills outside the family as well, she was aware of salutary effects of working and realising herself in a public sphere; and therefore, she defended working mothers when asking in an article published in 1954:

What is the effect on the family when the mother goes out to work each day? If she has a powerful and dominant personality her personal influence is there the whole time. ... Of course she still sees a good deal of the children. The time she spends away from them is a time which the average housewife spends in doing the housework and shopping, not in being with the children assiduously. From my own experience I feel there is much to be said for being away from the family for part of the day. When looking after them without a break, it is sometimes difficult not to get a little impatient. ... Whereas, having been out, every moment spent with them is a pleasure to anticipate. ... Later on there will not be that awful gap which many women find in their lives when their children go away to school. (Pugh 297)

However, after becoming the first woman Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher seemed to forget about the opinions and beliefs that she articulated and represented before, when she was at home with her small children. And thus, as will be further suggested in connection with the analysis of the play *Top Girls*, instead of improving the quality of women's lives, Thatcher acquired policies that in fact made women's lives much harder and their poverty more visible.

Thatcher, as has already been hinted above, enjoyed many freedoms gained by women's struggle over the decades. She enjoyed the access to vote, the possibility of a quality education, access to jobs and in that way to financial, as well as personal independence on either her father or her husband, much wider autonomy in marriage connected with changing atmosphere but also overall control over her own body. There is no doubt that all those aspects mentioned were necessary starting points of her career. Thus, women, celebrating their victory through Thatcher's achievement to get to the top of British politics, expected other advancements in women's lives that would be influenced by the policy of the first woman Prime Minister; however, the period of many disappointments emerged. As Pugh states, "Mrs Thatcher chose to believe that

she owed her success solely to her own talents and hard work” (Pugh 335); and therefore, already the very beginning of her enjoying the post of the first woman Prime Minister was marked by very obvious attempt to fit into traditionally patriarchal political system. As Gelb states, “both Thatcher’s critics and supporters see her sex as largely irrelevant and her political views as significant.” (Gelb 59) The disillusion already apparent shortly after the election in 1979 brought many articles about the first woman Prime Minister marking the process of women’s awaking by comments like: “One prime minister doesn’t make a matriarchy” (Pugh 335) mentioned in Spare Rib.

### **3. Cloud Nine**

The overall atmosphere of the late 1960s and 1970s following the “roads to freedom” (Marwick 188) and tremendous advancements in women’s lives are the necessary background for the understanding of the play *Cloud Nine*. The second act, building on the first act set in colonial Africa a hundred years earlier, shows the way of life of the characters, who aged only twenty-five years, in contemporary Great Britain of 1979. *Cloud Nine*, through the Victorian period of act one, links gender oppression with the colonial oppression, shows the parallel between capitalism and colonialism and proves how hard it was for people brought up in the period before “the end of Victorianism”, as Marwick labeled the period of the 1960s, to free themselves and their minds from the biases connected with the atmosphere in which they grew up. The idea of the first act set a hundred years earlier is connected with the workshop of Joint Stock Company and the fact that, as Churchill explained, during the discussion of participants’ backgrounds the feeling that everybody had been born almost in the Victorian age emerged; everyone had grown up with quite conventional and old-fashioned expectations about sex and marriage. Thus, the opinion that enormous changes in personal lives had to be made to change the way of live occurred. (Fitzsimmons 47-48) In spite of the fact that the characters managed to make a big leap forward and unbounded themselves in many respects, which is demonstrated for example via the complete absence of the major embodiment of old patriarchal orders, Clive, in act two, it can be observed that they still have to struggle to find their own identity; and thus, they constantly free themselves from the bonds tying them. It can be stated that the second wave of feminism itself was and is based on seeking self-identity, asking oneself various questions and attempting to answer them on the way towards the “roads to freedom”; the characters are influenced by the new way of thinking, they want to become a part of those new ways opening to them, to experience a change in their own lives and to follow the way of sharing and sisterhood offered as a means of fulfillment.

#### **3.1. The Discovery of the Noblest Form of Sisterhood**

“The end of Victorianism” and the second wave of feminism, especially one of its streams, a radical feminism, brought to the wide public a question of the noblest form of sisterhood - lesbianism, which, in spite of the overall openness of the

atmosphere, was a controversial theme in many circles and among many feminists themselves. The noblest form of sisterhood appeared as a response to the changes brought by the articulation of the fact that 'personal is political', and is linked to a belief that 'sexual politics' connected with sexual domination, "obtains [...] as perhaps the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power." (Millett 25) Millett analyzed the relationships between the sexes as political because "the term 'politics' shall refer to power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group of persons is controlled by another." (Millett 23) *Cloud Nine* depicts the female characters who try to become free from the concept of patriarchy; and thus, some of the characters find the answer and solutions in lesbian relationships.

Lin and Victoria represent the women who identified themselves as lesbians; however, their reasons for that action should be perceived differently. As will be further shown, Lin is a lesbian woman who tried to fulfill the expectations of society via marriage and whose decision to 'come out' with her sexual orientation was influenced by the change in society and by realizing that one does not have to conceal the true feelings. Victoria, on the other hand, represents a woman who was influenced by discussions about sexual domination and sexual politics and who chose the noblest form of sisterhood as the answer to patriarchal values by which she refused to be dominated.

Lin, a young divorced mother, is depicted at the very beginning of act two as a person who has already made her choice. She feels balanced and is open about her lesbianism and attitudes when claiming: "I'm a lesbian." (Churchill 1985, 291) Although the lesbians of a discussed period had to struggle against many prejudices of society, had to be explaining themselves and were continually coming to terms with pejorative connotations, the tremendous change expressed at least by the possibility of explicit awareness, openness and conscious direction towards the realization of a lesbian relationship can be observed through Lin and her past. Ellen, a Victorian governess from the first act, through which she was discovering her affection for Betty, can be perceived as a character who represents Lin's past. Firstly, a parallel between Ellen and Lin's past can be based on, according to *Critical Survey Drama*, the assumption that Lin stands for a diminutive form of Ellen. (Internet 1, 6) Secondly, the representation of Ellen, who was frightened by her own feelings and got married at the end of act one to fulfill her true role, establishes the background of divorced and self-defined Lin. Lin

broke the social expectations, divorced and moved towards lesbianism. Through that parallel the tremendous change in society and in personal life choices is stressed, especially when considering that Ellen's "romantic friendship" (Faderman 20) was supposed to move, when taken from a historical perspective, towards a great doom. The change of the perception of a "romantic friendship" was brought by various theories emerging at the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, describing lesbians as women trapped in wrong bodies or connecting their wrong and unnatural orientation with a childhood trauma, which was; however, believed to be more fortunate theory because of the possibility of curing. The other argument supporting linkage of Ellen, representing romantic friends, and Lin, standing for a contemporary lesbian, could be the fact that, in spite of many differences mostly connected with the atmosphere of those periods, contemporary lesbianism is viewed as "a combination of the natural love between women, so encouraged in the days of romantic friendships, with the twentieth-century women's freedom that feminism has made possible." (Faderman 414) Thus, Ellen's love to Betty when she claims: "I don't hate you, Betty, I love you. [...] I worship you Betty." and Betty's reply: "Oh Ellen, you are my only friend." (Churchill 1985, 271) represents the love of romantic friends. Faderman describes romantic friendships as:

Love relationships in every sense except perhaps the genital, since women in centuries other than ours often internalized the view of females as having little sexual passion. Thus they might kiss, fondle each other, sleep together, utter expressions of overwhelming love and promises of eternal faithfulness, and yet see their passions as nothing more than effusions of the spirit. (Faderman 16)

Even though Ellen's overwhelming and quite articulated love to Betty is not visible to Betty, as female love was not in that period, the audience, as well as Ellen, is sure that by marriage Ellen suppressed something very natural in her in order to fulfill her role that Betty herself believed to be important. Thus, Betty replies to Ellen's confession: "I don't want children, I don't like children. I just want to be alone with you, Betty, and sing for you and kiss you because I love you, Betty." in the following way: "I love you too, Ellen. But women have their duty as soldiers have. You must be a mother if you can." (Churchill 1985, 281) In act two Lin, Cathy's mother, shows she 'fulfilled' that role; nevertheless, "roads to freedom" opened new dimensions of her existence, enabled



her self-realization and new open possibilities to express her affection to women via a direct and confident question: “Will you have sex with me?” (Churchill 1985, 296)

It is Victoria, a character also influenced by the change in society and radical feminism, through which she started to develop her lesbian identity, who after many inward struggles deliberately chooses lesbianism and demonstrates it via the relationship with Lin. Victoria is interested in the theory of feminism, reads many books and proves through the act that the liberation is deeply rooted in her head. According to many critics and Churchill herself, Victoria, represented as a doll in the first act; and thus, demonstrating a Victorian belief that children should be seen rather than heard, still struggles with that learned behaviour in her adult age at the end of 1970s. (Fitzsimmons 52) Hence, it is mostly or entirely her husband Martin who talks when they are supposed to have a discussion, whereas Victoria cries and does not seem to be capable of any reply. When the monologues directed at Victoria are analyzed thoroughly, the reader realizes that it is Martin who, in spite of his accepted women’s liberation, his quite a successful effort to be a good husband and father and his continuous attempt to encourage Victoria, imposes his power over her and makes her tangled. When discussing Victoria’s possibility to work in Manchester, he says:

You take the job, you go to Manchester. You turn it down, you stay in London. People are making decisions like this every day of the week. It needn’t be for more than a year. You get long vacations. Our relationship might well stand the strain of that, and if it doesn’t we’re better out of it. I don’t want to put any pressure on you. I’d like to know so we can sell the house. I think we’re moving into an entirely different way of life if you go to Manchester because it won’t end there. [...] Do you think you’re well enough to do this job? You don’t have to do it. No one’s going to think any the less of you if you stay here with me. There’s no point being so liberated you make yourself cry all the time. (Churchill 1985, 299 - 300)

However, when with Lin, not only does Victoria prove that she is a person able to express her feelings but that she is also aware of the centre of the problem which she openly identifies. She obviously wants to accept the job and to open to new possibilities; notwithstanding, Martin’s doubts about her fit state and the choice between the job and their relationship he implies she has to make unsettles Victoria. Martin and Victoria’s relationship, in spite of their efforts, is not based on equality and openness that Victoria seeks so much. She does not feel free to express herself fully, she

does not feel capable of talking to her husband, traps herself in tears and the distance between her and him widens. The dialogue between Lin and Victoria shows how different person Victoria can be when feeling the security of sharing.

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

LIN: Yes.

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

LIN: Yes.

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

LIN: Yes.

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

LIN: And me?

VICTORIA: Yes.

LIN: Yes.

VICORIA: And I feel apologetic for not being quite so subordinate as I was. I am more intelligent than him. I am brilliant. (Churchill 1985, 302-303)

This dialogue proves that Victoria starts to realize she does not feel oppressed when with Lin, she articulates her awareness of feeling liberated and of perceiving her own worth and brightness that surpasses her husband's, which is a rather new discovery for her; a discovery which she did not dare to think of or pronounce before. She seems to be aware of the real possibility of what she has read in books - that radical theory of women's communities without men could be liberating, that women's independence that can be fully and radically expressed by a lesbian relationship could represent a real solution how to get out of the trap in which she finds herself. Heterosexual relationship does not seem to offer her any possible way of feeling liberated to a greater extent than to that she has already achieved and that she does not find completely fulfilling. There is no doubt she feels dominated by her husband and what seems to echo in her strongly is the claim that:

As long as woman's liberation tries to free women without facing the basic heterosexual structure that binds us in one-to-one-relationship with our oppressors, tremendous energies will continue to flow into trying to straighten up each particular relationship with a man, into finding how to get better sex, how to turn his head around – into trying to make the “new man” out of him, in the delusion that this will allow us to be the “new woman.” This obviously splits our energies and commitments, leaving us unable to be committed to the

construction of the new patterns which will liberate us. (Radicalesbians 156-157)

In spite of starting to be aware of all above mentioned, Victoria's reaction to Lin's offer: "Leave him Vic. Come and live with me." is: "Don't be silly." (Churchill 1985, 303) Hence, Victoria's struggles with herself, her rooted idea of heterosexual relationship and of the traditional family become more visible. Although Lin and Victoria are quite different women when considering status, the level of sophistication, approach to and experience with men (in terms of oppression it was Lin who was even battered in her marriage) and their radicalism, Victoria gradually realizes that Lin's suggestions to live together could be a desirable solution, a move towards the noblest way of sisterhood. She starts to be aware of the possibility of that way of independence, a complete equality in the relationship and the fulfillment of the ambitions without any feeling of guilt, despair or subordination because:

Only women can give to each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men. This consciousness is the revolutionary force from which all else will follow, for ours is an organic revolution. For this we must be available and supportive to one another, give our commitment and our love, give the emotional support necessary to sustain this movement. Our energies must flow toward our sisters, not backward toward our oppressors. (Radicalesbians 156)

Therefore, it is not surprising that Victoria finally claims: "I'm sick of men." (Churchill 1985, 307), that she starts living with Lin and seems to be even more interested in women's history and shared sisterhood so commonly perceived to be an important element of women's liberation. The change of Victoria's behaviour after that decision is evident, she is not represented in tears any more, she is not only seen but also heard at the same time; moreover, she can be perceived as a balanced person who is able to make decisions and who feels confident about them. By the act of leaving her husband and moving towards lesbian relationship, Victoria becomes one of the women who, especially at the end of 1970s, consciously moved to lesbianism, which resulted from unfulfilled heterosexual unions so often connected with male domination, from new possibilities and changes in society brought by the period of an open climate and from a desire to seek closer relationships with true sisters. In this way Victoria identifies herself with a definition suggested by Faderman:

A lesbian is a woman who makes women prime in her life, who gives her energies and her commitment to other women rather than to men. Some even proclaimed, "All women are lesbians," by which they meant that potentially all women have the capacity to love themselves and to love other females, first through their mothers and then through adult relationships. (Faderman 380)

Victoria's gradual process towards lesbianism that was based a lot on theory is made more visible by the contrast with Lin who, as was already suggested, is presented as a self-confident and self-defined lesbian firmly expressing her antagonistic attitudes towards men by claiming: "I hate men. [...] I just hate the bastards." (Churchill 1985, 292) According to Churchill, Lin stands for a character that does not change much and is warm and friendly. (Fitzsimmons 53) She represents a lesbian feminist who has to be also perceived as a result of the second wave of feminism and the overall atmosphere of the 1970s. Her favour to women is realized not only by the "romantic friendship" but also by explicit openness about her physical affection for women, which was, as already mentioned, invisible in the Victorian period and later regarded as wicked and extremely sinful. When asking Victoria if she would have sex with her and adding: "You'd enjoy it." (Churchill 1985, 296), Lin seems to be sure, from her own experience, that:

Sex pleasure [between women] is of a nature less violent and vertiginous than between man and woman, it does not bring about such overwhelming transformations; but when male and female lovers have withdrawn from the carnal embrace, they again become strangers; the male body in itself becomes repulsive to the woman; and the man often feels a kind of flat loathing for his companion's female body. Carnal affection between women is more even, has more continuity; they are not carried away in frenetic ecstasies, but they never sink back into hostile indifference; to look at each other, to touch each other is a tranquil pleasure, prolonging that of the bed. (Beauvoir De 442)

Without any doubt, Lin is a woman who consciously manages to find the expression of women's sisterhood and solidarity in lesbian relationships and in a radical separatism; even though she is not much interested in the theory of feminism and she mostly gains the theoretical background from Victoria, she constantly proves that she fully acquired the ideas of women's self-reliance, self-confidence and sisterly solidarity; the ideas so important for the second wave of feminism and for the late 1970s when feminism dramatically surged. Her ideas presented from the very beginning of the second act depict those of radical feminism building on the assumption that:

All women are oppressed as women. This is the primary oppression, prior to race, class, ethnicity, and other bases of oppression. [...] Men oppress women

because they benefit from doing so, and change is possible only through women's collective action. It is pointless to try to convince men of the need for feminism. In other words, political separatism is necessary; political alliances with men are a diversion. (Lovenduski, Randall 72)

Lin's acquired radical separatism and her approach to men is further intensified when she refuses the chance that Victoria, her homosexual brother Edward experimenting with bisexuality and Lin herself would materialize a goddess since, as Lin states: "She won't appear with a man here." (Churchill 1985, 309) Her feeling of security and self-confidence in living without men and on her own and her independence on others can be further supported by her reaction to Victoria's hesitation to Lin's suggestion to live together. Lin says: "I'm not asking because I need to live with someone. I'd enjoy it, that's all, we'd both enjoy it." (Churchill 1985, 303) Therefore, throughout the independence on others, especially on men, Lin can be perceived as a self-confident and self-reliant woman.

In spite of the fact that lesbianism was believed to be the noblest form of sisterhood based on independence and equality, *Cloud Nine*, via Lin and Victoria's relationship depicts the strains that the sisterhood; however noblest, had to face. According to Radicalesbians, women might tend to oppress lesbians on the basis of a heterosexual concept and role definitions since they feel that lesbians are their potential sexual objects; thus, they apply a surrogate male role on them and oppress lesbians in the same way as they have been oppressed by men. (Radicalesbians 155) This widely discussed topic among lesbian separatists is depicted in *Cloud Nine* when Lin frightens her daughter Cathy, who throws stones at ducks, by saying:

LIN: The man's going to get you.

VICTORIA: What man? Do you need a man to frighten your child with?

LIN: My mother said it.

VICTORIA: You're so inconsistent, Lin.

LIN: I've changed who I sleep with, I can't change everything.

VICTORIA: Like when I had to stop you getting a job in a boutique and collaborating with sexist consumerism.

LIN: [...] I'm sick of dressing like a boy, why can't I look sexy, wouldn't you love me?

VICTORIA: Lin, you've no analysis.

LIN: [...] You read too many books, you get at me all the time, you're worse to me than Martin is to you. (Churchill 1985, 303)

Lin's articulation of feeling oppressed depicts, as was already suggested, the fact that lesbians very often felt to be marginalized by heterosexual feminists. The feeling of being on the boundary induced the radical politics of lesbian separatism that also reflected the disappointment of lesbians over the exclusion of lesbian point of view and authors when the process of discovering women's tradition was taken into account. Heterosexism was criticized by lesbians; and thus, the attempts to establish lesbian literary tradition emerged.

### **3.2. The Process of Discovering History**

As was already mentioned in previous chapter, Victoria is represented as a woman who reads a lot and whose gradual liberation, abandonment of patriarchal bonds and identification with sisterly solidarity were not only influenced by Lin but also by literature which was the clue for Victoria to realize that the change to fully liberate herself was desirable. From the very beginning of act two, Victoria can be perceived as a person constantly seeking answers in literature; thus, as Churchill explains, she is depicted as a person who firstly managed to liberate herself in her head and then struggled to liberate her own life. (Fitzsimmons 52) On the other hand, Lin stands for a woman who managed to liberate herself by changing her life and started to be interested in the theoretical background later, thanks to Victoria. When in a park looking after their children, Lin expresses her wonder about Victoria's concentration when she reads:

LIN: I don't know how you can concentrate.

VICTORIA: You have to or you never do anything.

LIN: Yeh, well. It's really warm in here, that's one thing. It's better than standing out there. I got chilblains last winter.

VICTORIA: It is warm.

LIN: I suppose Tommy doesn't let you read much. I expect he talks to you while you're reading.

VICTORIA: Yes, he does.

LIN: I didn't get very far with that book you lent me.

VICTORIA: That's all right.

LIN: I was glad to have it, though. I sit with it on my lap while I'm watching telly. Well, Cathy's off. [...] I did cry when I left her the first day [at a nursery school]. You wouldn't you're too fucking sensible. You'll call the teacher by her first name. I really fancy you.

VICTORIA: What?

LIN: Put your book down will you for five minutes. You didn't hear a word I said. (Churchill 1985, 290)

The dialogue between Victoria and Lin is very rich in topics. Firstly, it shows that it is hard for women to find time for themselves and for reading and that the need of “a room of one’s own” (Woolf 1957), which Virginia Woolf connected with the lack of literature written by women, is still desirable even for women who do not tend to write but long for the discovery of women’s tradition. In that dialogue Victoria articulates the problem of many women and just by using different words she expresses Miss Nightingale’s idea quoted in Woolf that “women never had an half hour ... that they can call their own.” (Woolf 1957, 70) Secondly, the dialogue represents Victoria’s influence of Lin when the act of borrowing a book to her is considered; in that way she helps Lin to understand the theory since as Victoria later claims when talking about women’s issues: “It never hurts to understand the theoretical background.” (Churchill 1985, 309) Moreover, the dialogue represents Victoria’s love to theory as her main preoccupation that makes her forget that it could be the influence of other people around her, in this case of Lin, who can transform her life and conditions with a greater impact than the books can.

Victoria’s continuous liberation and the discovery of her true self via reading links her interest with the atmosphere of the 1970s that reawakened the sense of sisterhood and solidarity via the boom of the process of discovering women’s literary tradition and history and via rereading male authors and questioning the representation of women in their work. Women’s writing started to be searched for and examined intensively since, according to Showalter, the links between the female writers were not taken into account before because female writers were studied separately; thus, it was necessary to rediscover dozens of unknown female authors and, via them, to find women’s tradition (Showalter 228) because “the books continue each other, in spite of our habit of judging them separately.” (Woolf 1957, 84) Lin and Victoria’s relationship can be understood as a relationship influenced by the process of discovering women’s tradition and women’s writing that gradually freed itself from the male perspective and male view of women; it was a woman writer who suddenly depicted a woman from a completely new angle absent from the antagonistic attitudes towards other women. As Woolf claims:

We are all women, you assure me? Then I may tell you that the very next words I read were these – “Chloe liked Olivia ...” Do not start. Do not blush. Let us admit in the privacy of our own society that these things sometimes happen. Sometimes women do like women.

“Chloe liked Olivia,” I read. And then it struck me how immense a change was there. Chloe liked Olivia perhaps for the first time in literature. Cleopatra did not like Octavia. And how completely *Antony and Cleopatra* would have been altered had she done so! (Woolf 1957, 85-86)

Therefore, a woman writer uncovered the relationship that can be based on a mutual approval and articulated that women have many things to share, as in Lin and Victoria’s case. A woman writer gradually realized that freeing herself from male perspectives could enrich the literary tradition and could help women to free themselves, to perceive themselves from a different view, from the view that is their own and natural for them, howsoever suppressed by the attempt to mirror in themselves what men wanted them to be. In the next quote Woolf anticipates what would gradually happen and what women managed together from Woolf’s times till the 1970s, not only via writing literary pieces from their perspectives but also via their theories and researches and via transmitting all of them into their personal lives:

She [Lady Carmichael who wrote about Chloe and Olivia] will go without kindness or condescension, but in the spirit of fellowship into those small, scented rooms where sit the courtesan, the harlot and the lady with the pug dog. There they still sit in the rough and ready-made clothes that the male writer has had perforce to clap upon their shoulders. But Mary Carmichael will have out her scissors and fit them close to every hollow and angle. It will be a curious sight, when it comes, to see these women as they are, but we must wait a little, for Mary Carmichael will still be encumbered with that self-consciousness in the presence of “sin” which is the legacy of our sexual barbarity. She will still wear the shoddy old fetters of class on her feet. (Woolf 1957, 92)

Victoria; thus, exemplifies a woman who is influenced by the process of expressed solidarity of other women’s act of removing “rough and ready-made clothes” from women, and who tries to remove those clothes from herself too and to identify herself with other women. On the other hand, Betty’s perspective of women characterizes the complete opposite from her daughter’s. Betty can be perceived as a person fully influenced by the representation of women by male writers and patriarchy as a whole; she accepted completely the picture of women depicted in ‘malestream’ literature and did not think of the fact that women could have a history of their own, that their representation as black and white inferior creatures might be based just on male idea of ‘the other’. Betty does not find the representation of her own sex anyhow irrelevant and does not question it in any way:

LIN: Have you any women friends?



BETTY: I've never been so short of men's company that I've had to bother with women.

LIN: Don't you like women?

BETTY: They don't have such interesting conversations as men. There has never been a woman composer of genius. They don't have a sense of humor. They spoil things for themselves with their emotions. I can't say I do like women very much, no. (Churchill 1985, 301-302)

Even though Betty left her husband Clive, a representative of patriarchal orders and believes, and she also experienced a gradual change through act two and managed to develop the sense of sisterhood, she expresses her doubts about women and their skills. Her statement strongly depicts what women were taught to believe and accept, how they perceived themselves and other women. Thus, Betty, a character with truly Victorian roots, stands for the women who were still in the process of being influenced by the work of many feminists who tempted to prove that women had their own tradition, that they expressed solidarity to one another and that "genius of a sort must have existed among women as it must have existed among the working classes." (Woolf 1957, 50) Betty's antagonistic ideas towards women, her true belief that they are inferior and that they do not have any wisdom to pass to other women strongly represent that Betty and:

[All the] women have served all these centuries as looking-glasses possessing the magic and delicious power of reflecting the figure of man at twice its natural size. [...] Hence, the enormous importance to a patriarch who has to conquer, who has to rule, of feeling that great numbers of people, half the human race indeed, are by nature inferior to himself. (Woolf 1957, 35)

However, as will be further shown in next chapter, Betty gradually frees herself from patriarchal values imposed on her so thoroughly, she recognizes and refuses to serve "as looking-glass" and acquires women's solidarity, an important idea of feminism of the late 1970s leading to women's liberation from patriarchal orders.

As was already suggested above, Victoria, through the continuous desire to link to women's tradition and women's relevance in history, managed to find the answer in the evidence of women's continual and expressed sisterhood and solidarity which were more or less hidden by male representation of women and which were widely rediscovered in women's writing. When Martin claims: "Yes, I'd like to go home and do some work. I'm writing a novel about women from the women's point of view." (Churchill 1985, 302), he shows how much he himself was influenced by the intensive reappraisal of the depiction of female characters in the writings produced by male

authors and male literary reviewers. Martin seems to understand that many literary pieces written by men, as Morris claims, covertly express the fear of the female sexuality and the need to control that unknown and treacherous vigor. (Morris 54) Another possibility why he feels personally involved in the process might be the fact that women's liberation, sudden openness about sexuality and the articulation of the ways of women's oppression gave him the chance to experience Morris's statement in his relationship. When in a park talking to Victoria about her job in Manchester, he mentions:

So I lost my erection last night not because I'm not prepared to talk, it's just that taking in technical information is a different part of the brain and also I don't like to feel that you do it better to yourself. I have read the Hite report I do know that women have to learn to get their pleasure despite our clumsy attempts at expressing undying devotion and ecstasy [...] (Churchill 1985, 300)

Hence, as Martin's monologue proves, he meets in a sexual relationship with his wife of what the whole generations of men were frightened and what they covertly depicted in their literary writings and what the second wave of feminism brought to public awareness.

The climax of the attempts to rediscover women's history, influence and power connected with Victoria's aspiration to find the sisterhood and to identify herself through women's tradition can be regarded to be the scene in a park "when the women assert themselves" (Churchill in Fitzsimmons 48) via trying to materialize a goddess.

VICTORIA: Goddess of many names, oldest of the old, who walked in chaos and created life, hear us calling you back through time, before Jehovah, before Christ, before men drove you out and burnt your temples, hear us, Lady, give us back what we were, give us the history we haven't had, make us the women we can't be. (Churchill 1985, 308)

The quote shows that Victoria managed to find the theoretical answer she was seeking in the books; moreover, at that time Victoria already decided to stay with Lin, she identified herself in her own life and made a choice she was aspiring to make through the whole act. Thus, the park scene and the attempt to materialize a goddess can stand for Victoria's success in finding herself via women's tradition that existed, via the stress on the true representation of women, their sisterhood and sharing and via Lin. Victoria managed to free herself and her life through the impact of the Women's Liberation

Movement that vigorously surged in the late 1970s and through its belief that the important element of the liberation is women's solidarity.

### **3.3. Finding the Way to Sisterhood**

It is Betty, Edward and Victoria's mother, whose way to recognized liberation and to the discovery of the sense of sisterhood seem to be the longest and the most difficult, she "faces the hardest task in trying to change her life because she is older than others and more set in her ways." (Cousin 44) Nonetheless, at the end of the play it is very obvious that Betty acquired the sense of sharing and found the value of herself and of other women; however, the process towards that awareness, which was influenced by the atmosphere of the 1970s and achievements of the Women's Liberation Movement, was quite gradual in Betty's case because of various circumstances of her life in a truly patriarchal family and due to very often true Victorian values which were imposed on her and which were demonstrated in the first act.

To fully understand Betty's process of recognition of herself and of other women, it is necessary to focus on the patriarchal background in which she was trapped in act one. Betty is depicted as a person completely influenced by her husband Clive and her mother; both of them control her and impose on her a proper feminine behaviour. Thus, Betty is played by a man since, according to Cousin, she is what men want her to be (Cousin 40), she seems to be totally subordinated to her husband and his acquired patriarchal orders. When talking about Betty's fondness to Clive's friend Harry, Betty shows she perceives herself from the acquired point of view.

BETTY: There is something so wicked in me, Clive.

CLIVE: I have never thought of you having the weakness of your sex, only the good qualities.

BETTY: I am bad, bad, bad –

CLIVE: You are thoughtless, Betty, that's all. Women can be treacherous and evil. They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that. (Churchill 1985, 277)

The dialogue further shows that Betty stands for a common perception of a woman who is either a black or white character, who can either be put on a pedestal to be fully admired or removed from it to be doomed completely, who is perceived as 'the other'; and thus, because of her innate danger, she has to be controlled. Hence, patriarchy, so often criticized especially by the second wave of feminism, served as the means of

control of women whose treacherous nature, so to speak, was necessary to be monitored. The family, where all the members are controlled by a man, is represented through the whole act one as a principal institution of patriarchy. As Millett claims:

[Family] is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. [...] Serving as an agent of the larger society, the family not only encourages its own members to adjust and conform, but acts as a unit in the government of the patriarchal state which rules its citizens through its family heads. (Millett 33)

Betty's role as a wife and mother in a patriarchal family, the way she was brought up and taught to think about herself, her husband and other women were of a big influence to her and even in act two, set in 1979 when nearly everything seemed to be possible for women, she finds it hard to change her life and views imposed on her.

Notwithstanding, already in the first scene of the second act Betty, when meeting her children in a park, mentions that she is going to leave her husband, which is rather surprising news for Edward and Victoria. Betty seems to be quite excited about the possibility of a divorce and of the fact that she would rely on herself when saying: "Yes you hear aright, Vicky, yes. I'm finding a little flat, that will be fun." (Churchill 1985, 295) However, when in the process of separating, Betty suddenly doubts about her ability to manage everything by herself and feels somehow outcaste of a patriarchal life that seemed safe and straight when roles are considered.

BETTY: I'll never be able to manage. If I can't even walk down the street by myself. Everything looks so fierce. [...] It's since I left your father.

VICTORIA: Mummy, it really was the right decision.

BETTY: Everything comes at me from all directions. Martin despises me. [...] I don't want to take pills. Lin says you can't trust doctors.

VICTORIA: You're not taking pills. You're doing very well.

BETTY: But I'm so frightened. (Churchill 1985, 298)

As a response to the act of leaving Clive and patriarchal way of life, she starts to relate to her children and their friends much more and via the conversation with them she learns about the new possibilities and new perceptions of life that can be organized in various liberating patterns. Through divorce Betty finally recognizes and refuses patriarchal orders and stops fulfilling the expectations of her husband who claimed in act one: "My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be." (Churchill 1985, 251) Thus, via leaving her husband and finding a job, she rejects the idea that, especially in her relationship, "marriage involves an exchange of the female's domestic service and

(sexual) consortium in return for financial support” (Millet 35) and she stops serving as a “looking-glass” (Woolf 1957, 35) that reflects a man twice as big, which she did through the whole act one.

Even though Betty has made quite a big step in her life when leaving Clive and when recognizing his domination over her, she is depicted as finding it difficult to understand that patriarchal family is not the only option for women and to acquire a positive approach to herself. She slowly learns it especially via warm Lin to whom she seems to relate in spite of Betty’s skepticism to women.

BETTY: You must be very lonely yourself with no husband. You don’t miss him?

LIN: Not really, no.

BETTY: Maybe you like being on your own.

LIN: I’m seeing quite a lot of Vicky. I don’t live alone. I live with Cathy.

BETTY: I would have been frightened when I was your age. I thought, the poor children, their mother all alone.

LIN: I’ve a lot of friends.

BETTY: I find when I’m making tea I put out two cups. It’s strange not having a man in the house. You don’t know who to do things for.

LIN: Yourself.

BETTY: Oh, that’s very selfish. [...] There’s nothing says you have to like yourself. (Churchill 1985, 301-302)

In the quoted dialogue Betty reveals how much she depended on her husband and how difficult it is for her to be on her own, especially when she was taught to despise herself and identify herself via a husband for whom she was used to do everything. Via Clive, she acquired the ‘right’ picture of herself, so to speak, and believed that “a rational and virtuous woman can be proud only of her husband and children; not of herself, for she forgets herself in them.” (Figs 125). The dialogue between Betty and Lin further confirms that Betty, even though divorced and in a way free from a patriarchal unit, still perceives herself as ‘the other’, undervalues herself and shows she still finds it difficult to recognize that “the image of women as we know it is an image created by men and fashioned to suit their needs. These needs spring from a fear of the “otherness” of woman.” (Millet 46) Thus, Lin’s ideas that a woman can do things just for herself, that a woman can like herself and that women have their own value are rather new and shocking for Betty.

However, throughout act two, Betty shows that she managed to acquire solidarity towards herself, which can be perceived as a necessary step towards learning

to express solidarity to and recognition of other women, the acceptance of their worth. Her self-discovery and the way towards liking herself is depicted in her monologue about previously tabooed masturbation and in a detection of her own sexuality suppressed in her by the society's perception of a true woman. By the statement: "I used to think Clive was the one who liked sex. But then I found I missed it." (Churchill 1985, 316) Betty proves that she recognized untruth in believes so long imposed on her not only via the large amount of philosophers and psychologists but also via her mother and Clive; and thus, she starts to doubt that: "In an uncorrupted woman the sexual impulse does not manifest itself at all, but only love; and this love is the natural impulse of a woman to satisfy a man." (Fichte in Figs 124) The discovery of her sexuality so long suppressed and hidden from her resulted in final separating from her mother and Clive's believes and led towards Betty's acceptance of herself as an individual. She realizes that she does not have to take for granted what she was made to believe and to accept, she understands that she can doubt about the ideas of patriarchal authority and she starts to discover her own worth when expressing her feelings about the act of touching herself and when accepting the fact that she enjoys it.

BETTY: I felt myself gathering together more and more and I felt angry with Clive and angry with my mother and I went on and on defying them, and there was this vast feeling growing in me and all round me and they couldn't stop me and no one could stop me and I was there and coming and coming. Afterwards I thought I'd betrayed Clive. My mother would kill me. But I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them. (Churchill 1985, 316)

Some critics suggest that the act of masturbation represents Betty as a very solitary person fighting with loneliness; however Churchill herself claims that the monologue representing Betty's discovery of her true self makes her advance forward (Fitzsimmons 44), which is clearly visible when considering other movements towards freeing herself and finding her own value. In scene four Betty reveals how joyful, fulfilling and liberating the act of leaving domestic duties always automatically expected from her and moving towards paid work can be when she claims:

I do miss the sun living in England but today couldn't be more beautiful. You appreciate the weekend when you're working. Betty's been at work this week, Cathy. It's terrible tiring, Martin, I don't know how you've done it all these years. And the money, I feel like a child with the money, Clive always paid everything but I do understand it perfectly well. Look Cathy let me show you my money. [...] Look what a lot of money Cathy, and I sit behind a desk of

my own and I answer the telephone and keep the doctor's appointment book and it really is great fun. (Churchill 1985, 313-134)

Betty's pure excitement about her new way of life and her emotional and material independence on her ex-husband shows her new perspectives, values and meanings. In that scene she is represented as a person excited by life, she seems to be very positive and her fright, which was expressed above, of being alone and a suspicion that she cannot manage by herself disappeared. Her feelings about her own and regular income can be linked to Virginia Woolf's feelings. In the following quotation, a pronoun '*I*' can easily stand for Betty, not for Woolf, which further stresses Woolf's urgency of her argument:

Indeed, I thought, slipping the silver into my purse, it is remarkable, remembering the bitterness of those days, what a change of temper a fixed income will bring about. [...] Food, house and clothing are mine for ever. [...] I need not hate any man; he cannot hurt me. I need not flatter any man; he has nothing to give me. So imperceptibly I found myself adopting a new attitude towards the other half of the human race. (Woolf 1957, 38)

Moreover, last scene further supports Woolf's claim since Betty is depicted there as a person not refusing the possibility of finding another partner, her way towards self-realization and self-understanding did not leave her bitter when men are taken into account. On the contrary, she acquires a new attitude towards men via freeing herself from a patriarchal world, via earning her own money, thus being materially independent on a man, and via adopting a new attitude towards other women. It is women's solidarity and achievements of the second wave of feminism building on sisterhood and sharing that helped to change Betty's life. Therefore, it does not seem surprising when Betty suggests that she would buy a house with a garden where Victoria, her son, Lin and her daughter and Edward could live together with her because as Betty says: "You do seem to have such fun all of you." (Churchill 1985, 317) Betty obviously wants to be a part of new orders and dynamics so long unknown to her; hence, by the recognition of the group dynamics, solidarity and sharing, she seems to leave patriarchal world of act one for good and recognizes and acquires the dynamics of women's solidarity so commonly believed to be the important element of women's liberation, especially of the dramatic surge of feminism in Britain at the end of the 1970s.

## 4. Top Girls

It was also women's solidarity and achievements of the second wave of feminism building on sisterhood and sharing that helped to change the life of Marlene, the central character of *Top Girls*, and of other women working at the Top Girls Employment Agency. Unlike in *Cloud Nine*, the characters in *Top Girls* are represented as already liberated from the very beginning of the play, they are depicted as extricated from patriarchal bonds and prejudices. However, the sense of sisterhood and solidarity, so typical for women's movement and for its dramatic surge at the end of 1970s, for experiencing a change in women's lives and for suppressing patriarchal values and bonds, as was shown in the analysis of *Cloud Nine*, disappeared from many circles and from the atmosphere of the early 1980s. The end of these values is linked to the changes in British society brought by the Conservative Party and especially by the first woman Prime Minister and her policies stressing individual enterprise, patriarchal family and its values and refusing the importance of communities. As far as feminism is concerned, the feeling that struggle for equality was over prevailed because, as will be further shown, women had the chances to get to the top since "anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes." (Churchill 1991, 86) Hence, due to the changes of atmosphere in British politics and society many women acquired quite quickly new values of competition and harshness that, in fact, forced them, as will be further shown, to stand against one another and to perceive other women as enemies.

The growing gloom imposed on women's common dynamics can be even noticed when seasons of the year, so important in *Cloud Nine*, are taken into account. The second act of *Cloud Nine* starts in winter, goes through spring, summer and finishes in late summer, by which time all the characters identified themselves and acquired the sisterly solidarity. The play *Top Girls* starts in autumn;<sup>3</sup> hence, taken from this perspective, it can be expected that the sense of sisterhood will be somehow dying and disappearing, or not present at all in the play.

---

<sup>3</sup> Churchill herself claimed that: "[T]he first scenes should probably be in the early autumn because of the conversation between Joyce and Kit – Kit has just moved up to a new class after the summer holiday and it is the first term Angie hasn't been back at school, bringing home to both Joyce and Angie worries about her future." (Fitzsimmons 63)



#### 4.1. A Ruthless Woman

In act one Marlene, a central character of *Top Girls*; however, not a protagonist, dines in her dream with five extraordinary women<sup>4</sup> taken from history and mythology and in that way she celebrates her promotion to a managing director in the Top Girls Employment Agency (in reality she fell asleep in front of the television). Thus, at the very beginning Marlene can be perceived as a character whose quest for women's history could be linked to Victoria's desire and interests to find sisterhood and women's tradition; in this way the sisterly solidarity can be perceived as a point of departure of the play. Nonetheless, the inability of those five remarkable women to listen to one another and to talk about somebody else than themselves presents all of them as egoists who, according to Kritzer, imitated and were obedient to male authority through their lives and whose toughness enabling them to succeed did not challenge but rather validated patriarchal power. (Kritzer 144) Hence, the remarkable and self-interested 'top girls' with whom Marlene chooses to celebrate her promotion provide a historical context for a new woman whose success builds, as will be further shown, on harshness, on an acquisition of masculine authority and on the denial of sisterly solidarity to other women. Marlene is shown as a woman who can feel as a true sister only with those five 'top girls' taken from history and, as will be further proved, with another 'top girl', the first woman Prime Minister.

At the beginning of act two Marlene is depicted working in the office. Her absence of sisterly solidarity, her acquired harshness and unwillingness to waste more time with job seekers than it is necessary are evident when considering the impersonal way she treats them. Moreover, as will be further shown, Marlene fails to fulfill Woolf's claim that a woman who accepts any job should not prevent any other human being, a man or a woman, a white or a black person, from practicing the occupation. On the contrary, the woman should do anything what she can do to help them. (Woolf 2000, 79) When she interviews Jeanine, Marlene shows her professionalism to perceive Jeanine from the employers' point of view but also the biases that the denial of

---

<sup>4</sup> The dinner involves: "Lady Nijo, a thirteenth-century Japanese courtesan who became an itinerant Buddhist nun; Lady Isabella Bird, a nineteenth-century Scottish woman who travelled to remote parts of the world; Pope Joan, the apocryphal church leader; Dull Gret, a figure in a Breugel painting who leads a charge through hell; and Patient Griselda, the obedient wife in stories by Boccaccio, Petrarch, and Chaucer." (Kritzer 140)

sisterhood and desire to make it to the top made her fully acquire. Thus, the interview lacks any personal interest, consideration and desire to help to find a job for Jeanine that she seeks. Marlene's harsh pragmatism is made explicit when she firmly condemns Jeanine's wish to work in advertising: "People often do think advertising. I have got a few vacancies but I think they're looking for something glossier." (Churchill 1991, 31) Hence, she even does not give Jeanine a chance to try to succeed and chooses a secretarial position in a small concern focused on knitwear or lampshades, which Jeanine does not find interesting. When Jeanine expresses her feelings about "just lampshades" (Churchill 1991, 32), Marlene, even though aware of the fact that there would be no further prospects for Jeanine, dismisses her coldly by saying: "There's plenty of different kinds of lampshade." (Churchill 1991, 32) Jeanine, disappointed with Marlene's offers, tries to explain her idea of a job that would enable her to travel from time to time, to which Marlene replies:

MARLENE. Does your fiancé want to travel?

JEANINE. I'd like a job where I was here in London and with him and everything but now and then – I expect it's silly. Are there jobs like that?

MARLENE. There's personal assistant to a top executive in a multinational. If that's the idea you need to be planning ahead. Is that where you want to be in ten years?

JEANINE. I might not be alive in ten years.

MARLENE. Yes but you will be. You'll have children.

JEANINE. I can't think about ten years.

MARLENE. You haven't got the speeds anyway, so I'll send you to these two shall I? (Churchill 1991, 32)

The dialogue further proves how much ruthless Marlene limits Jeanine's prospects in a public sphere and how she applies discrimination during the interview. When Marlene further claims: "I'm putting myself on the line for you." (Churchill 1991, 33), it is obvious that her statement is not genuine. Thus, according to Kritzer, the Top Girls Employment Agency does not offer possibilities realized by the combination of caring and competition via finding jobs for other women; on the contrary, "Marlene defends the power base she has acquired by patronizing, intimidating, and further narrowing the options of women who come seeking opportunity." (Kritzer 145) What is more, Marlene shows she has acquired the male biases when women's work is taken into account and she does not hesitate to discriminate against women in the same way as men do. When Jeanine mentions that she is saving money to get married, Marlene reacts

by asking: “Does that mean you don’t want a long-term job, Jeanine? [...] Because where do the prospects come in? No kids for a bit?” (Churchill 1991, 31) Marlene’s response shows that struggle for equal possibilities at work is not over yet even with women in executive positions since many of them lack the sense of solidarity to other women, the attribute of women’s movements.

The other woman Marlene meets in her office and whom she treats with the same kind of ruthlessness and efficiency is Mrs. Kidd who comes to have “a chat, an informal chat” (Churchill 1991, 57) with Marlene about her husband Howard Kidd who was not promoted and who feels devastated.

MRS KIDD. If you could see him you’d know what I’m talking about. What’s it going to do to him working for a woman? I think if it was a man he’d get over it as something normal.

MARLENE. I think he’s going to have to get over it.

MRS KIDD. It’s me that bears the brunt. I’m not the one that’s been promoted. I put him first every inch of the way. And now what do I get? You women this, you women that. It’s not my fault. You’re going to have to be very careful how you handle him. He’s very hurt. (Churchill 1991, 58)

When Marlene replies: “I’m sorry he’s been taking it out on you. He really is a shit, Howard.” (Churchill 1991, 59), the audience must more or less agree. However, the audience must more or less agree also with Mrs. Kidd who, when realizing that Marlene is not going to waste any more time with her, accuses Marlene of not being natural. The fact that Marlene was promoted and left a man behind does not signify any sign of unnaturalness; on the contrary, it marks the victory of the women’s movement in the professional field. Nonetheless, what makes Marlene unnatural is her denial of sisterly solidarity and the fact that she does not seize the opportunity, already recognized as important by Woolf, to establish a better world because she, as well as many other women, dissipates that chance by slavish imitating of men. (Woolf 2000, 86) What is more, Marlene’s complete absence of solidarity towards women and her harsh treatment of others are further characterized by her co-worker’s statement that: “Our Marlene’s got far more balls than Howard and that’s that.” (Churchill 1991, 46) As Frank Rich pointed out in his review, for Marlene, “the ability to make it by male success standards is the only criterion of female worth”, which makes her, “figuratively speaking, a male oppressor.” (Brown 118) Thus, Marlene, when taking into account her desire to get to

the top without any consideration of other women and without any need to question old orders, discovered that:

[I]t is easier to fit in than to restructure. [...] It has proved simpler – though not simple [...] for women to begin traveling traditional (male) routes than to change those routes. It is simpler to dress for success than to change the definition of success. (Friedan 32-33)

Therefore, because of her acquiring “traditional (male) routes”, harshness and ignorance of other women, Marlene cannot be perceived as a protagonist of the play, as a woman standing for a feminist victory.

Marlene has a child Angie who believes that Marlene’s older sister Joyce is her mother and who is brought up in the country. Although sixteen-year-old Angie, who is not very intelligent and shows vestiges of frustration, admires and idealizes her ‘aunt’, Marlene sees her very rarely, once in five or six years. In act three Marlene appears in her sister’s house. While the talk between two sisters continues, not only does the audience realize that Marlene is not Angie’s aunt but also that it was Angie who invited Marlene to come to see them after a long period of six years. Thus, the negative approach to Marlene, who does not feel any drive to see her daughter more often, is intensified not only by this pure fact but also by the ignorance Marlene further shows. On one hand, Marlene tries to be nice and thoughtful; on the other hand, this kindness shows her overall heartlessness and ignorance she acquired. When Marlene says that she has brought “just a few little things. I’ve no memory for birthdays have I, and Christmas seems to slip by. So I think I owe Angie a few presents.” (Churchill 1991, 67), it shows how ruthless Marlene learned to be; moreover, it is obvious that it is not a present that Marlene owes Angie. Angie later defends herself and her idea to invite Marlene without letting Joyce know by words: “I thought you’d like to see her. She hasn’t been here since I was nine. People do see their aunts.” (Churchill 1991, 71) Even though Angie’s statement seems to be powerful enough to shake the emotions, it is not powerful enough for Marlene who replies: “Is it that long? Doesn’t time fly?” (Churchill 1991, 71) Angie’s passion for Marlene is further shown when she says that this day is better than Christmas, when she reveals she remembers details about Marlene’s travels in the USA and brings a postcard Marlene sent to her or when she shows how much she remembers about Marlene’s last visit. Angie says:

You were here for my birthday when I was nine. I had a pink cake. Kit was only five then, she was four, she hadn't started school yet. She could read already when she went to school. You remember my birthday? (Churchill 1991, 74)

Marlene's reply does not seem to be surprising any more when she says: "Yes, I remember the cake." (Churchill 1991, 74) Later, when Angie comes downstairs seeking her mother, she finds Marlene, who is just about to go to bed. Marlene asks her if she had a bad dream since Angie keeps repeating: "Frightening" (Churchill 1991, 87) which meaning is multiple. These are the last words of the play and reveal Angie "as stranded between her own 'frightening' powerlessness and Marlene's power to be 'frightening'." (Kritzer 149) The statement "frightening" also stands for the feeling towards Marlene's way to success that was marked by harshness and lack of solidarity expressed to other people, even to the closest ones, or for the fear of the future of women like Angie, who lack power and brightness.

When Angie visits Marlene in London a year later, "Marlene chooses to ignore the obligations of this personal bond in favour of the demands of the office routine. She treats Angie with the same impersonal efficiency accorded clients and the unfortunate Mrs. Kidd." (Kritzer 146) What is more, Marlene judges Angie without any concern, as she does other women; she is not willing to help Angie and tells her colleagues that Angie's prospects are those of a "packer in Tesco" (Churchill 1991, 66) because she "is a bit thick. She's a bit funny. She's not going to make it." (Churchill 1991, 66) These words are the final ones when the chronology of the play is considered; and thus, Angie's future seems to be determined in her presence; she is sleeping on the sofa in the same room; however, she might be half-awake. The urgency of such a judgment gets stronger when in the next scene (that chronologically happened a year earlier) Marlene seems to regret that she left her child and seems to think about taking Angie with her to London. This was the moment when Marlene could be seen as a lady who considers her feelings, who can express solidarity to other women; however, the statement mentioned above shows that Marlene really just considers her feelings and, what is more, only once in six years when she gets upset. Thus, according to Wandor, Marlene, even more successful and powerful, did not become more receptive to Angie. (Wandor 1987, 125)

The fact that Marlene, at the age of seventeen, left her daughter to her married sister and went to London to find possibilities and to enjoy a better life is not the main point Churchill makes and criticizes; nevertheless, what stands for criticism is Marlene's complete lack of interest in Angie, in her skills and future. Marlene is criticized for the fact that she is not willing to help her 'niece' at all, and ignores Angie completely. Moreover, Marlene works at the place where she is expected to express solidarity to all the women who come to seek her help, not only to women who are close to her in relation. Angie is a person very close to Marlene in relation and she even escapes from her village to seek Marlene's help because, as Angie says to her friend Kit: "If I don't get away from here I'm going to die." (Churchill 1991, 36) Nonetheless, Marlene fails to show any willingness to help and to express solidarity to any woman no matter what bonds tie them together since she does not believe there could be any attachment among women. Thus, Marlene represents a woman who fully acquired Thatcher's statement that "there is no such thing as society: there are only individuals, and families." (Lovenduski, Randall 36) What is more, since Marlene left her daughter to Joyce, lives on her own and visits Angie very rarely, she severed family bonds; and thus, only individuals exist for her. Because of her complete lack of sisterhood, Marlene validates a disappointing fact that "you can't count on any woman, once she gets some power, not to sell other women out." (Smeal in Friedan 25) Thus, Churchill seems to highlight that the empowerment of individual women who do not recognize the importance to help to the powerless women lacking the skills necessary for achieving recognition does not stand for a feminist victory; and therefore, Marlene can be perceived as a woman disloyal to feminist ideals.

#### **4.2. Top Girls – Marlene and the First Woman Prime Minister**

In the final scene, during the discussion, Joyce and Marlene reveal how different they are, and the audience realizes that Angie is the only link between them. Marlene is the person who believes in an individual, has managed to leave her poor background and to be successful, hates working class, and represents the opinion that the working class does not in fact exist. On the other hand, Joyce despises Marlene's success and the way she achieved it, believes that nothing will change for most people in the eighties, thinks about the upper classes as 'them' and the working class as 'us', and seems to be

sardonic because of her hard life. When Marlene and Joyce start to talk about the 1980s and Margaret Thatcher, the tension, which persisted between the sisters for the whole evening, starts to culminate into an argument.

MARLENE. I think the eighties are going to be stupendous.

JOYCE. Who for?

MARLENE. For me. I think I'm going up up up.

JOYCE. Oh for you. Yes, I'm sure they will.

MARLENE. And for the country, come to that. Get the economy back on its feet and whoosh. She's a tough lady, Maggie. I'd give her a job. She just needs to hang in there. This country

JOYCE. You voted for them, did you?

MARLENE. needs to stop whining. Monetarism is not stupid.

JOYCE. Drink your tea and shut up, pet.

MARLENE. It takes time, determination. No more slop. And who's got to drive it on? First woman prime minister. Terrifico. Aces. Right on. You must admit. Certainly gets my vote.

JOYCE. What good's first woman if it's her? (Churchill 1991, 83-84)

As the dialogue reveals, Marlene identifies herself with the policy of the first woman Prime Minister and perceives Thatcher as a true 'top girl' with whom she shares not only the belief in an individual, monetarism and toughness but also, as will be further explained, more convenient conditions for women fought for and improved by the second wave of feminism. Like Thatcher, Marlene benefited from the solidarity and sisterhood of the Women's Liberation Movement, which enabled her to be autonomous on men (when regarding her decisions about her body, ability to manage to be recognized as a woman or freedom in personal relationships) and equal with men (when considering the chances in professional field provided to men and women on just basis). However, Marlene's failure to recognize the gains of the movement is evident in the statement: "I've had two abortions, are you interested? Shall I tell you about them? Well I won't, it's boring, it wasn't a problem. I don't like messy talk about blood." (Churchill 1991, 81) By this claim Marlene proves that she does not think or talk about abortion and any other questions for which women struggled, she takes the achievements of the second wave of feminism for granted and does not seem to have been anyhow involved in the movement. Therefore, she represents a complete opposite of Victoria, Lin and Betty who, as was already proved, identified themselves with sisterly solidarity which they were ready to express to other women. Moreover, Marlene even fails to link abortion and other issues and gains to the struggle of the Women's Liberation

Movement and to solidarity aimed at other women; and thus, she connects those issues with “blood” about which she does not want to talk. In spite of the fact that Marlene stresses reliance on an individual, she fails to understand that she would not have managed to succeed as an individual without her sister’s solidarity to look after Marlene’s daughter.<sup>5</sup> Notwithstanding, Joyce is aware of Marlene’s dependence which she stresses during their conversation.

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

JOYCE. So what’s that got to do with you at the age of seventeen? (Churchill 1991, 80)

Marlene does not seem to be aware of the reality that Joyce outlines; on the contrary, like Margaret Thatcher, Marlene believes that the attainment to get to the top and the success Marlene achieved came solely due to her skills to compete, hard work and determination to use new opportunities open for women. Thus, the first woman Prime Minister herself and her policies seem to be the only influence on Marlene’s approach to her achievements since Thatcher’s:

[O]ccupation of the supreme political office, and of the confidence and authority with which she carried out its duties, had some effect. She must have made it seem more possible for women to be powerful, to succeed in a ‘man’s world’. (Lovenduski, Randall 53)

Moreover, like Thatcher, Marlene also did not even attempt to recognize the importance of other women whose tradition of shared sisterhood helped her to be powerful; on the contrary, as was already proved, Marlene did not try to acquire caring ethic, narrowed the chances of other women and used male biases and orders that were criticized by feminists. Hence, Marlene could be connected with many powerful ladies who were climbing up the capitalist ladder and who claimed that: “I don’t want to think about discrimination against women, and I don’t have to. [...] All I have to think about is myself.” (Friedan 59) Marlene, even when considering her success in a professional field, can be thus perceived as a loser since women’s solidarity, the attribute of

---

<sup>5</sup> It is necessary to point out that abortions were not legalized at the time when Angie was born.



women's movement and dynamics, is defeated by Thatcher's policy strictly stressing individuals on their way to success.

Margaret Thatcher, Marlene's idol, did very little to enhance the living conditions of women when she became the Prime Minister. On the contrary, her views are characterized as hostile to women's liberation, she distanced herself from women's interests and because of her policies, women's poverty became more visible and their lives harder. According to many critics, Thatcher reasserted traditional values and social morality; hence, her politics is very often connected with the reaction against the feminist achievements of previous two decades. (Lovenduski, Randall 41) Although, as was shown in the first chapter, Thatcher, when bringing up her own children, recognized the necessity to fulfill her life by going to work and by realizing herself in a professional field, "as Prime Minister, she was forever talking about the family as the *centre* of women's lives, and tended only to refer to women's common experience in their capacity as housewives." (Campbell in Lovenduski, Randall 42) Even though Thatcher did not make any official move to discourage women to work when "jobs were hard to get" (Churchill 1991, 43), which would contradict her belief in freedom of choice, her strong opposition to 'nanny state', constant limiting of the nurseries and child care centers, belief in a traditional patriarchal family, stress on the responsibility of individuals for their families and broad cuts in service sectors on which women were dependent forced many women to make existential choices of which Marlene and her co-workers seem to be aware. Both Nell and Win, who consider themselves the "tough birds" (Churchill 1991, 48), seem to recognize the either/or situation of women made much more visible under Thatcher's government when Win states: "You could marry him and go on working." to which Nell replies: "I could go on working and not marry him." (Churchill 1991, 48) Therefore, a feminist victory is not constituted by the ability to get to the top in a public sphere if that means that women have to make choices between careers connected entirely with acquiring ruthlessness and competitiveness, and a family life in a typically patriarchal unit. Moreover, the stress on individual skills and harshness when approaching the success in a professional field does not represent a feminist victory when taking into account the powerless.

Marlene's belief in Thatcherism, her gained power, recognition, success and self-centeredness is contrasted with her sister's struggle when considering emptiness,

monotonousness and toughness of Joyce's days filled with the care for community and others – her ill mother, her father's grave, Angie and households of other people. Marlene's focus just on herself is further highlighted when the sisters start to talk about their ill mother who Joyce goes to see every week and who Marlene visited after many years. Marlene believes that it is Joyce's choice to visit her mother regularly since she does not have to; however, Joyce asks: "How would I feel if I didn't go?" to which Marlene replies: "A lot better." (Churchill 1991, 79) The difference in the way of perceiving others is expressed in Joyce's reply: "I hope you feel better." (Churchill 1991, 79) Moreover, by contrasting Joyce's struggle and poverty, which is thoroughly described in act three, with Marlene's life of material abundance and power to influence lives of other women, Churchill suggests the growing differences in the life conditions of women in Britain. As Lovenduski and Randall claim:

The Thatcher governments did little positively to realize feminist objectives, in contrast to governments in a number of other European countries at the time. But, beyond this, it has to be emphasized that the impact of Thatcherism varied enormously amongst different groups of women. Some women, already in a reasonably favourable position, were able to improve on it. [...] For others, probably the great majority, life got harder in a number of ways, and the problems were greater for women in the north than in the south, for black women than for white women, and so on. (Lovenduski, Randall 54)

What is more, the urgency of the situation and of the growing differences in life conditions, when considering Thatcher's stress on an individual, the peak of the crisis at the very beginning of the 1980s connected with three million of unemployed inhabitants and Thatcher's policies that "lowered the living standards of the poorest and most vulnerable" (Segal 218), is depicted when Marlene and Joyce start to talk about Angie.

MARLENE. I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got what it takes."

JOYCE. And if they haven't?

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

JOYCE. What about Angie?

MARLENE. What about Angie?

JOYCE. She's stupid, lazy and frightened, so what about her? (Churchill 1991, 86)

The answer to this question has already been given when Marlene talks about her 'niece' with her colleagues; Marlene is not going to help her, she even feels very

uncomfortable about Angie's visit. Thus, Marlene's reply to Joyce's question: "You run her down too much. She'll be all right." (Churchill 1991, 86) can be considered very ignorant, the statement serves just as a means to avoid another "messy talk" (Churchill 1991, 81) that does not involve "blood" this time but a frustrated and not very smart sixteen years old daughter facing no prospects in her life and living in the time when only those who have the skills to become successful are acknowledged and when the tradition of sharing, solidarity and sisterhood among women is not recognized as important even within a family. Thus, as Cousin claims:

By implication, Marlene stands for all top people, integrally connected, whether they accept the fact or not, with the have-nots of society, and Angie, the unacknowledged daughter, for the many unfulfilled lives which in Churchill's terms are of value, even if they seemingly achieve nothing. (Cousin 97 - 98)

Thus, the point Churchill seems to make in *Top Girls* is the fact that not only do Angie and other women who are not bright, competitive and harsh but also women like Marlene who are powerful and have the skills required for success represent the defeated. In both cases, women, powerless as well as successful ones, are defeated by other women who are even more powerful, harsh and ruthless. What is more, Marlene and other determined women are defeated by ruthless policy that made them abandon the attribute of the Women's Liberation Movement, women's solidarity, and made them perceive one another as enemies.

### **4.3. Top Girls and a Man's Creation**

Nell and Win, Marlene's co-workers who admire Marlene a lot and consider her a true 'top girl' as Marlene considers Thatcher, acquired same harsh approach to other women and show how important it is for them to seek the potential employees who could be qualified as "tough birds" (Churchill 1991, 48). Thus, "negating any expectation of a sisterly concern for other women, they automatically look for 'men' to fill the 'high-flyer' sales jobs." (Kritzer 145) Like Marlene, they do not attempt to challenge and reject patriarchal authority and hierarchical system; and thus:

To advance themselves, women at the agency promote society's bleak set of givens, always urging clients to accept rather than challenge. In their internalization and support of patriarchal values, the supposedly liberated women who work in the employment agency are merely the most up-to-date examples of what *Cloud Nine's* Act One Betty acknowledges herself to be: 'a man's creation'. (Kritzer 145 - 146)

When talking to Win about women employees, Nell states: “I always want the tough ones when I see them. Hang onto them.” (Churchill 1991, 48), which she proves when interviewing twenty-one-year-old Shona (who pretends to be twenty-nine years old). Shona indicates how important it is to show a macho approach when interested in higher positions; and thus, unlike Jeannine following feminine model, she is given the opportunity during the interview to get a job with higher prospects. Nell seems to be satisfied with Shona’s reactions:

NELL. They [employers] think we’re [women] too nice. They think we listen to the buyer’s doubts. They think we consider his needs and his feelings.  
SHONA. I never consider people’s feelings. [...] I’m not very nice. (Churchill 1991, 61)

When Shona is asked to describe her present job, she further shows her belief in a success managed only by a tough macho approach. She says: “I have a car. I have a Porsche. I go up the M1 a lot. Burn up the M1 a lot. Straight up the M1 in the fast lane to where the clients are.” (Churchill 1991, 63) However, Nell soon discovers that Shona was lying all the time. Although Shona is not experienced in the working field, she proves that she is aware of the fact that she has to show aggression and dismiss any sense of solidarity or sharing if she wants to become successful and get higher. Thus, also Shona could be perceived as a young lady who could not identify herself with the statement quoted in Friedan that stood for all the female characters in *Cloud Nine*: “it [the Women’s Liberation Movement] helped me respect women a lot more – and respect myself as a woman.” (Friedan 321) Nell’s attention to Shona and even Nell’s offer to Shona to work at the Top Girls Employment Agency confirms, as was already suggested above, that she (and the whole Top Girls Employment Agency) looks for “tough birds” to fill high status jobs.

The lack of solidarity and the acquired harshness of ‘top girls’ or women who want to become ‘top girls’ is shown from a different perspective when considering the interview with forty-six-year-old Louise, a middle manager who also thinks she passes as a man at work. When talking to Win, Louise seems to seek solidarity and understanding, something that she herself did not apply at work since she admits she doubted about ‘girls’ at work. Her need to be understood and her mistaken expectation

that it is the job of the employees at the agency to express solidarity and to be empathic towards job seekers is expressed in the interview:

WIN. You shouldn't talk too much at an interview.

LOUISE. I don't. I don't normally talk about myself. I know very well how to handle myself in an office situation. I only talk to you because it seems to me this is different, it's your job to understand me, surely. (Churchill 1991, 53)

Thus, Louis seems to desire what she suppressed in herself or what she did not consider important because of the attempt to get to the top without taking into account other women. She seems to desire to be understood, to feel sisterhood and values of which women in *Cloud Nine* were aware and which they fully enjoyed, the feeling that Friedan describes: "We *listened* to each other with care and respect, at least at first. We took ourselves and each other seriously, as people – which was new for women." (Friedan 252) In spite of the fact that Louis has devoted her life to the company (even her private one), has been influential, has worked very hard even during the evenings, she feels she is not considered to be an authority, her credits are not taken into account, and she has not been offered a chance for promotion to the upper-level management. She mentions during the interview:

I've built up a department. And there it is, it works extremely well, and I feel I'm stuck there. I've spent twenty years in middle management. I've seen young men who I trained go on, in my own company or elsewhere, to higher things. Nobody notices me, I don't expect it, I don't attract attention by making mistakes, everybody takes it for granted that my work is perfect. They will notice me when I go, they will be sorry I think to lose me, they will offer me more money of course, I will refuse. They will see when I've gone what I was doing for them. (Churchill 1991, 52)

Therefore, Louise represents a typical example of a woman who tries to get through a 'glass ceiling', an impenetrable and frustrating boundary that prevents women (even those who pass as men at work and who apply harshness towards other women) from getting from middle-level management positions to upper ones. The 'glass ceiling' enables them to see the top of a company; however, they cannot reach it. Louise stands for many women who left their job because they felt that their work and credits were not valued, they were blocked by the 'glass ceiling' that might be also the barrier stopping ruthless Marlene in her attempt for further advancement. As Kritzer believes, Marlene's success, which is limited and which is obtained because of her competitive striving,

does not mean a lot if she cannot progress higher in the hierarchy, her future possibilities in the field of her career seem to be questionable when considering Louis. (Kritzer 146)

Churchill seems to highlight in *Top Girls* that the lack of sisterhood and solidarity towards other women, the stress on individual skills and achievements without considering others and harshness directed at other women do not represent the victory of feminism. Women in *Top Girls* refused to accept what women in *Cloud Nine* managed to understand – that not only respect to themselves but also respect to other women is important when attempting to change their own life and to struggle for a greater equality in every aspect of women's lives. Moreover, women in *Top Girls* are shown as isolated characters who, through the stress on individual achievements, do not tend to make friendships or any other personal bonds. On the contrary, unlike in *Cloud Nine* where personal bonds, group dynamics and friendships were depicted as important and fulfilling, out of sixteen women in *Top Girls* only two, Angie and Kit, represent the characters who recognized the value of each other and of a close relationship.

The play *Top Girls* shows the truthfulness of the answer to Abzug's question: "If women ruled the world, would it make a difference? [...] Not if they followed the male model." (Friedan 365) As Kritzer stresses, Marlene, like the first woman Prime Minister, whom she highly admires, shows that women can be even more competitive, pitiless, and successful at climbing to the top than many men. However, by Marlene's rejecting Angie and refusing to help to other women, it is emphasized that the acquisition of power by a woman who is not concerned with the powerless does not constitute a feminist victory. (Kritzer 141-142) Marlene and her co-workers have the power to influence the prospects of other women; notwithstanding, they limit career chances of the job seekers and refuse to recognize women who are not similar in characteristics as they are, those who are not heartless and ruthless. What is more, they are not willing to be concerned with the helpless at all; with the victims of Thatcher's system, like Angie, no matter what bonds tie them together. Thus, women stand for those who are defeated because women's solidarity, so important in the 1970s, loses its battle with Thatcherism, which via the stress on individuals puts women against other women. A woman who has the skills, which are required by Thatcher era, to become successful, has a chance to be recognized in a professional field; nonetheless, provided

that she abandons solidarity to women who lack the necessary skills or who chose a different way of life. Thus, such a woman who does not take into account powerless women betrays feminist ideals. However, there are no other choices under Thatcherism, if a woman wants to achieve another feminist aim, which is success in a public sphere, she has to abandon sisterly solidarity.

## 5. Conclusion

The plays *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982) were, without any doubt, influenced by feminist issues and preoccupations discussed at the time when Caryl Churchill wrote the plays; moreover, this essay managed to prove that the artistic discourse of women's feminism and its shift depict and follow dramatic changes that British women underwent. It means that the shift from women's solidarity, so common an attribute for the Women's Liberation Movement and especially for the late 1970s when British feminism surged dramatically, towards stress on individual skills, enterprise and achievements without remembering and helping to other women is depicted in those two studied plays. Therefore, the essay confirms that *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls* highly follow and mirror feminist preoccupations and issues of a particular period in Great Britain.

The play *Cloud Nine*, written in the period of radicalization of British feminism and of its dramatic surge influencing everyday lives of ordinary women, depicts that the important feminist belief in sisterly solidarity and the sense of sharing stood for a widely recognized and applied practice. The fact that women's solidarity helped to change the lives of other women, influenced their recognition of self-worth and of the worth of other women and helped them to recognize and refuse patriarchal bonds and oppression is undeniable. All three women characters analyzed in the essay managed to leave patriarchal orders that were tying them so much, they identified their own sexuality, recognized the biases long imposed on their lives and started to perceive themselves and other women from a different angle, the one that the second wave of feminism, women's solidarity and their group dynamics helped to be generally recognized among women. Therefore, the sisterly solidarity supported the characters to find themselves via the reappraisal of women, via the influence of feminist activities questioning traditional 'male' depiction of women and via proving that women have their own tradition and history. Moreover, the analyzed characters became influenced by group dynamics, an open climate (which is also represented by setting all the scenes of act two in a park), so characteristic for the late 1970s, and by widely recognized belief that women are self-sufficient. Thus, radical communities of women living without men, lesbian separatism and the identification with true sisters affected their lives.



In the play *Top Girls*, the characters are represented as already liberated and self-identified; thus, they do not struggle to find self-worth and they do not discuss patriarchal bonds and values from which they are freed. However, the characters in *Top Girls* lack the sense of solidarity and sisterhood which they do not apply even when their position at the Top Girls Employment Agency evoking ethic of caring is taken into account. On the contrary, they are depicted as harsh women who have acquired a tough 'macho' approach which they consider important and desirable characteristic of any woman who seeks a prosperous job and recognition in a professional field. Therefore, the women who do not represent "tough birds" (Churchill 1991, 48) or those who lack the skills to manage to be recognized are completely marginalized, the sisterly solidarity, so important for women's liberation in the 1970s, and the help of powerful women are denied to them no matter what bonds connect an influential woman and the one who is powerless.

Marlene and other powerful 'top girls' are highly influenced by Margaret Thatcher's policy stressing individual skills and enterprise, fierceness when desiring to be successful, patriarchal family, responsibility of individuals for themselves and women's role of carers connected with the belief that women should stay at home with their children. Thatcher's reactionary policy against the achievements of the second wave of feminism forced women to make existential choices between a traditional role in the centre of a family life and recognition in public sphere connected with the necessary acquisition of ruthlessness and determination. Thus, women in *Top Girls* are represented as victims of the period since sisterly solidarity is defeated by Thatcherism via its stress on individuality and harsh competitiveness without the recognition of others, which, in fact, makes women perceive one another as enemies. A woman who does not lack the skills, which are required by Thatcherism, has a chance to become recognized and successful and even more powerful than men, provided she abandons solidarity to other women who lack the skills for achievements or who choose different way of life. Therefore, such a woman, through the denial of sisterly solidarity, becomes disloyal to feminist ideals; however, as Churchill seems to stress, there is no other option offered by Thatcher's policy when considering the fact that such a woman wants to achieve another feminist aim, which is a recognition and success in a public sphere.

Via the criticism of Marlene and other harsh 'top girls' and their way to the top without noticing others, even the closest ones, Churchill seems to agree with Bunch that:

Feminism *is* and *must* be a transformational politics which address every aspect of life. It is not simply a laundry list of so-called women's issues such as childcare and equal pay. While these issues are important, feminism is not a new ghetto where women are confined, to be concerned about only a select list of topics separated from the overall social and economic context of our lives. Similarly, feminism is not just an 'add women and stir' into existing institutions, ideologies, or political parties as they are. (Segal 204)

Therefore, through the recognition of and stress on the importance of restructuring and questioning old and still current orders, Churchill stresses in *Top Girls* that "[i]t is not the individuals but the system itself that is being indicted, and the loss of humanity is everyone's loss." (Brown 129) Moreover, the play *Top Girls* refusing Thatcher's harsh conservative policy propagating among its other values individual skills, monetarism, authoritarianism and hierarchy seems to articulate of what feminists started to be aware: "[W]omen's subordination is not a result of a conscious conspiracy by men, or at least not *only* of a conscious conspiracy by men, but is rather embedded in all the social institutions and ideologies of our society." (Segal 231) Thus, as Segal further claims, "the lives of women and men can be as much determined by class, ethnic, regional and national issues as by their sex." (Segal 231) Therefore, Churchill in *Top Girls* articulates the necessity of what feminists, especially after the reelection of the Conservative Party and Margaret Thatcher as the Prime Minister in 1983, realized and what those years in Great Britain brought; a strong belief in and a return to socialist feminism whose importance was prevailed in the late 1970s by a radical feminism stressing patriarchal oppression. The dramatic surge of feminism was followed at the beginning of Thatcher's administration by a short period of "the collapse of [feminist] groups", which was "[a] part of the more general withering away of many campaigns and organizations around welfare, housing and opposition to government cutbacks as political optimism departed along with the seventies." (Segal 56) Hence, because of these consequences and because of the urgency of the mobilization of feminist power, as the play *Top Girls* suggests, socialist feminism and feminist activism stood for the outcome and the recognition of the seriousness of women's situation at the beginning of 1980s.

The shift of the artistic discourse following the changes British women underwent, which this essay proved to be apparent in plays *Cloud Nine* and *Top Girls*, seems to stress that sisterly solidarity represents an important attribute of feminism and that feminist victory cannot be constituted without women's applying that quality in all the aspects of life and without remembering others when becoming recognized and powerful.

## Resumé

Hry *Cloud Nine* (1979) a *Top Girls* (1982) od současné britské autorky Caryl Churchill jsou považovány za její nejlepší hry pro experimentaci s formou a jazykem a pro četná témata sledující změny, které britské ženy podstoupily na konci sedmdesátých a na začátku osmdesátých let. Hra *Cloud Nine* spadá do období dramatického vzednutí britského feminismu, jehož důležitou myšlenkou byla víra v ženskou solidaritu, jež reprezentovala nezbytnou součást ženského osvobození. Hra *Top Girls* byla napsána v nejkritičtějším letech ministerského předsednictví Margaret Thatcher, která, mimo jiné, kladla důraz na individuální dovednosti, individuální postup v kariéře, patriarchální rodinu a tradiční roli žen v centru jejich rodin. Tato práce se zaměřila na prokázání posunu uměleckého diskursu od výše zmíněné solidarity mezi ženami k důrazu na individuální úspěch bez ohledu na jiné, jakkoli blízké ženy.

Přestože se začátek druhé vlny feminismu ve Velké Británii pojí s rokem 1970 a s konferencí na univerzitě v Oxfordu, feministickému hnutí předcházely důležité události, které vedly k organizaci konference a k hnutí samotnému. Jednou z těchto událostí bylo vydání dříve zakázané knihy *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, uzákonění potratů, zpřístupnění antikoncepce či reforma rozvodového řízení. Wilsonovy reformy a celkové rozvolnění atmosféry konce šedesátých let vedly k většímu zrovnoprávnění žen, demystifikaci ženské sexuality a rozeznání nutnosti dalších postupů. Vláda labouristického ministerského předsedy Harolda Wilsona (1964-1970, 1974-1976) zklamala očekávání mnohých žen, které též rozeznaly naléhavost zjištění, že další překážkou k rovnosti jsou podmínky uvnitř domácností. Ženy vystoupily a artikulací myšlenky, že 'osobní je politické', se začaly angažovat v hnutí.

Cílem ženského osvobozenického hnutí bylo informovat širokou veřejnost o nejpálčivějších problémech a na základě ženské solidarity pomoci zrovnoprávnit a změnit život ostatních žen. I když britský feminismus inklinuje k feminismu socialistickému, který nechápal muže jako jediného utiskovatele žen a zdůrazňoval útlak třídní, rasový a kulturní, konec sedmdesátých let s sebou přinesl energické vzednutí feminismu, inklinaci k feminismu radikálnímu a k jeho myšlence, že patriarchální pouta jsou ta, která zabraňují ženám v osvobození.

Jak už bylo dříve zmíněno, druhé dějství hry *Cloud Nine* spadá do tohoto období dramatického vzednutí britského feminismu. Jednou z jeho myšlenek je víra v sesterskou solidaritu, která tvoří nezbytnou součást ženského osvobození od patriarchálních pout. Ženská solidarita a sdílení se tak stává východiskem pro postavy vymaňující se z patriarchálních předsudků a uspořádání.

Tato práce poukázala na to, že Lin, mladá rozvedená matka, může být chápána jako lesbička, která se díky rozvolněné a otevřené atmosféře dané doby spojené s pokroky ženského osvobozenického hnutí ztotožnila s procesem otevřeného vystoupení na veřejnost a tímto způsobem se identifikovala. Nicméně, pro Viktorii, mladou ženu svázanou patriarchálními pouty, byl proces absolutního vyvázání mnohem obtížnější, zvláště uváží-li se její heterosexuální orientace a přijetí patriarchálních uspořádání bez dřívějšího pochybování. Viktoria je žena, kterou rovněž ovlivnila dynamika dané doby, četná feministická literatura zpochybňující staré pořádky, solidarita ostatních žen a hlavně otevřenost a nespoutanost Lin. Po četných úvahách a rozkolech v jejím manželství Victoria nakonec přijímá za svou myšlenku, se kterou se tolikrát setkala v literatuře, že ženská soběstačnost, identifikace s ostatními ženami a ženská společenství bez mužů vedou k osvobození. Tímto posunem práce ukázala, že Victoria reprezentuje mnohé britské ženy, které se nechały ovlivnit dobovou diskusí o politickém lesbismu a ženské soběstačnosti, která nachází krajní výraz v lesbickém separatismu.

Dalším osvobozujícím faktorem, který napomohl Viktorii začít toužit po vymanění se z patriarchálních pout a pořádků, byl feministický zájem o objevování ženské literární tradice, typický zejména pro druhou vlnu feminismu. Jak už bylo naznačeno výše, Victoria je žena, která se osvobodila nejdříve v mysli, na základě přečtených knih a teorie, a teprve poté, také díky Lin, změnila svůj život. Osvobození její mysli napomohla nejen otevřená atmosféra dané doby, ale také právě solidarita feministek, které začaly objevovat ženskou literární tradici a historii, studovaly a zpochybňovaly černobílou a zkreslenou reprezentaci žen v literatuře psané muži a v literárních kritikách.

Viktoriina matka Betty reprezentuje ženu, pro kterou bylo nalezení sesterské solidarity a osvobození se od patriarchálních pořádků nejtěžší. Bettina nedůvěra

k ženám, jejich schopnostem a samostatnosti pramení právě z absolutního vlivu muže, jeho moci uplatňované ve všech sférách života žen a z jeho moci nejen ženy ovládat, například skrz politický systém, literaturu, patriarchální jednotku rodiny, ale také jim vnucovat zkreslený názor na sebe sama a ženy ostatní. Přestože se i Betty v druhém dějství nechává ovlivnit dynamikou ženského hnutí, rozvede se, najde si svůj byt, práci a začne vydělávat své vlastní peníze, její identifikace s ostatními ženami a identifikace se sesterskou solidaritou se vyvíjí mnohem pomaleji. Nicméně, Betty objeví svou vlastní hodnotu a hodnotu ostatních žen, rozezná sílu skupinové dynamiky a skrz novou identifikaci sebe sama, seberealizaci, osvobození a nově získanou nezávislost nezanevře na muže, naopak, nevylučuje možnost nového partnera.

Postavy v díle *Top Girls* jsou již zcela osvobozené a neprojednávají vymanění se z patriarchálních pout. Hlavní hrdinkou je úspěšná Marlene, která dosáhla povýšení v *Top Girls* agentuře zprostředkovávající zaměstnání jiným ženám. Přestože povolání Marlene a jejích spolupracovnic evokuje ve čtenáři očekávání dalšího projevu sdílení mezi ženami a sesterské solidarity, Marlene svým nezájmem o ostatní, důrazem na tvrdošijnost, bezohlednost, dravost, individuální schopnosti a odhodlanost naopak zužuje vyhlídky žen, které hledají její pomoc a které zrovna nedisponují výše zmíněnými vlastnostmi. Během pohovorů Marlene neprojevuje osobní zájem, opravdovou touhu pomoci, naopak ženám, které nejsou stejně dravé, nedává šanci uspět a svými dotazy je diskriminuje stejně jako muži.

Marlene je matkou šestnáctileté frustrované a ne příliš inteligentní Angie, kterou ve svých sedmnácti letech dala do péče své sestře Joyce. Přestože si Angie svou 'tetu' Marlene idealizuje a obdivuje její úspěchy, Marlene jí příliš pozornosti nevěnuje a navštěvuje ji jednou za pět až šest let, ještě na pozvání od samotné Angie. Při návštěvě své rodné vesnice, Joyce a Angie, Marlene během rozhovoru prokazuje, jak málo jí záleží na ostatních ženách, jakkoli blízkých, a jak málo je pro ně ochotná udělat. O rok později Angie potají utíká z domova a jede do Londýna Marlene navštívit s přáním u ní zůstat. Nicméně Marlene ignoruje osobní pouta a chová se k Angie stejně chladně a odmítavě jako k ostatním ženám. Angiiny vyhlídky odmítá a hodnotí ji jako někoho, kdo nemá šanci uspět, jako někoho, kdo je 'směšný' a 'hloupý'.

Během rozhovoru Joyce a Marlene ukazují, jak moc jsou rozdílné. Marlene se dokázala vymanit z pracovní třídy, kterou nenávidí, a tvrdí, že vlastně ani neexistuje, opustila své rodiště a odešla za lepším životem do Londýna. Zatrpklá Joyce se s pracovní třídou identifikuje, pohrdá Marleniným úspěchem a způsobem, kterým ho dosáhla, a věří, že osmdesátá léta pro většinu lidí nic nezmění. Jejich hádka vrcholí, když sestry začnou mluvit o první ministerské předsedkyni Velké Británie, Margaret Thatcher, kterou Marlene velmi obdivuje a s níž sdílí společné charakteristiky. Stejně jako Thatcher i Marlene postavila svůj úspěch na pilířích výdobytků ženských hnutí, stejně jako Thatcher i Marlene po dosažení uznání ve veřejné sféře přičítá tyto úspěchy výhradně svým schopnostem. A co víc, stejně jako Thatcher i Marlene se distancuje od ženské otázky a opomíjí ostatní ženy, kterým nehodlá pomoci, nemají-li dravého ducha.

Margaret Thatcher a její politika označovaná 'thatcherismus' se vyznačují neúprosným důrazem na podnikavost jedince, zodpovědnost jedinců za sebe sama, za své rodiny, na víru v autoritu státu a v oslabení moci unií a lokálních vlád, monetarismus, patriotismus a liberalismus. Její důraz na tradiční hodnoty, patriarchální rodinu a ženy v centru domácnosti doplnila její opatření zpátečnická vůči feministickým výdobytkům předešlých dvou desetiletí. Thatcher se tak distancovala od ženského hnutí, a tak její postupy zhoršily kvalitu života většiny žen ve Velké Británii.

Churchill ve hře *Top Girls* zdůrazňuje, že absence ženské solidarity a důraz na individuální schopnosti a úspěchy bez ohleduplnosti k ostatním ženám necharakterizují vítězství feminismu. Ženy v *Top Girls* odmítly přijmout to, čemu ženy v *Cloud Nine* porozuměly, a sice že nejen respekt k sobě samým, ale i k ostatním ženám je důležitý. Pracovní pozice Marlene a jejích spolupracovnic jim umožňuje kladně ovlivnit vyhlídky ostatních žen, nicméně tyto 'top girls' omezují šance ostatních a odmítají pomoci ženám, které nejsou dravé či těm, které pomoc potřebují; obětem systému Margaret Thatcher. A tak ženy nakonec patří mezi poražené, jelikož ženská solidarita, atribut ženského osvobozenického hnutí, prohrává v boji s politikou Margaret Thatcher, která důrazem na individualitu dělá z žen nepřítel. Žena, která má nutné schopnosti vyžadované thatcherismem, má možnost uspět a být uznávaná ve veřejné sféře, nicméně za předpokladu, že se vzdá sesterské solidarity k ostatním ženám, které se rozhodly pro jiný způsob života či k těm ženám, které postrádají schopnosti

k úspěchu. Tato žena se zpronevřuje feministickým ideálům, bohužel nemá na výběr, chce-li dosáhnout jiného feministického cíle, a to úspěchu v zaměstnání.



## Bibliography

- BEAUVOIR DE, Simone. *The Second Sex*. London : David Campbell, 1993. 786 s. ISBN 1-85715-137-2.
- BROWN, Janet. Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* Catches the Next Wave. In Randall, Phyllis R. *Caryl Churchill : A Casebook on Modern Dramatists 3*. New York : Garland, 1989. s. 117 – 129. ISBN 0-82405-841-0.
- CHURCHILL, Caryl. *Cloud Nine*. In Churchill, Caryl. *Plays One*. London : Methuen, 1985. s. 251 – 320. ISBN 0-41356-670-6.
- CHURCHILL, Caryl. *Top Girls*. London : Methuen, 1991. 87 s.
- COUSIN, Geraldine. *Churchill the Playwright*. London : Methuen, 1989. 135 s. ISBN 0-41314-790-8.
- FADERMAN, Lillian. *Surpassing the Love of Men*. London : The Women's Press, 1991. 496 s. ISBN 0-7043-3977-3.
- FIGES, Eva. *Patriarchal Attitudes*. New York : Fawcett World Library, 1970. 192 s. ISBN 449-00515-095.
- FITZSIMMONS, Linda. *File on Churchill*. London : Methuen, 1989. s. 40 – 63.
- FRIEDAN, Betty. *The Second Stage*. Revised edition. New York : Summit Books, 1986. 366 s. ISBN 0-671-63064-4.
- GELB, Joyce. *Feminism and Politics : A Comparative Perspective*. Berkeley : University of California Press, 1989. 267 s. ISBN 0-520-07184-0.
- KRITZER, Amelia Howe. *Labour and Capital*. In Kritzer, Amelia Howe. *The Plays of Caryl Churchill : Theatre of Empowerment*. 1st edition. London : Macmillan, 1991. s. 138 – 150. ISBN 0-333-52248-6.
- LOVENDUSKI, Joni, RANDALL, Vicky. *Contemporary Feminist Politics : Women and Power in Britain*. Oxford : Oxford University Press, 1995. 388 s. ISBN 0-19-878069-9.
- MARWICK, Arthur. *British Society since 1945*. 1st edition. Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1982. 303 s.
- MILLETT, Kate. *Sexual Politics*. New York : Avon Books, 1971. 393 s. ISBN 380-00100-295.
- MORRIS, Pam. *Literatura a feminismus*. 1st edition. Brno : Host, 2000. 232 s. ISBN 80-86055-90-6.

- PUGH, Martin. *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain: 1914 - 1999*. 2nd edition. Basingstoke : Macmillan Press, 2000. 387 s. ISBN 0-33373-265-0.
- Radicalesbians : The Woman Identified Woman. In Nicholson, Linda. *The Second Wave : A Reader in Feminist Theory*. London ; New York : Routledge, 1997. s. 153 – 157. ISBN 0-415-91761-1
- ROVNÁ, Lenka. *Premiérka jejího veličenstva*. 1st edition. Praha : Evropský kulturní klub, 1991. 179 s. ISBN 80-85212-18-8.
- ROWBOTHAM, Sheila. The Beginnings of Women's Liberation in Britain. In Wandor, Michelene. *Once a Feminist : Stories of a Generation / Interviews by Michelene Wandor*. London : Vigaro Press, 1990. s. 14 – 27. ISBN 1-85381-000-2.
- ROWBOTHAM, Sheila. *Women in Movement : Feminism and Social Action*. 1st edition. New York ; London : Routledge, 1992. 370 s. ISBN 0-415-90652-0.
- SEGAL, Lynne. *Is the Future Female? : Troubled Thoughts on Contemporary Feminism*. 2nd edition. London : Vigaro Press, 1987. 272 s. ISBN 1-85382-090-3.
- SHOWALTER, Elaine. Pokus o feministickou poetiku. In Oates-Indruchová, Libora. *Dívčí Válka s Ideologií*. 1st edition. Praha : Sociologické nakladatelství, 1998. s. 210 – 234. ISBN 80-85850-67-2.
- WANDOR, Michelene. Introduction. In Wandor, Michelene. *Once a Feminist : Stories of a Generation / Interviews by Michelene Wandor*. London : Vigaro Press, 1990. s. 1 – 9. ISBN 1-85381-000-2.
- WANDOR, Michelene. Existencial Women. In Wandor, Michelene. *Look Back in Gender : Sexuality and the Family in Post-war British Drama*. London ; New York : Methuen, 1987. s. 119 – 125. ISBN 0-41356-730-3.
- WOOLF, Virginia. *A Room of One's Own*. New York : Harcourt, Brace & World, 1957. 117 s. ISBN 0-15-678732-6.
- WOOLF, Virginia. Tři guineje. In Woolf, Virginia. *Tři guineje / Vlastní pokoj*. [Praha] : One Woman Press, 2000. s. 9 – 214. ISBN 80-86356-02-7.

Internet source:

- — —. *Caryl Churchill* [online]. Critical Survey of Drama. 2nd Revised Edition, January 2003. ISBN 1-58765-102-5 [viewed 27 December 2007]. [Accessible in]EBSCOhost:  
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=ufh&AN=MOL0130000040&site=ehost-live>. [in text marked as Internet 1]

## Appendix 1

### Drama and Caryl Churchill

The development of post war British theatre, according to many critics, can be divided into three periods due to watershed years of 1956 (a year when John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* was staged), 1968 and 1979 (the watersheds also remarkable for the Women's Liberation Movement and political climate in Great Britain).

The overall open climate of the late 1960s, which opened the "roads to freedom" (Marwick 188), was also marked by the abolition of theatre censorship in 1968 applied in Great Britain for more than two hundred years. The changing atmosphere in drama world opened much more to the influence of such playwrights as Antonin Artaud or Bertolt Brecht, the theatre of the absurd and the idea of a collective improvisation. Not only did the abolition of censorship give rise to many new groups and touring companies producing various, mostly alternative plays classified as 'political' theatre, which generally pronounced socialist views criticizing current political issues, 'fringe' or 'alternative' theatre, but it also helped to disconnect performance with the theatre building itself. Thus, the plays started to be widely linked with pubs, private places, streets or with new stages designed for intimate new pieces; both of these phenomena became significant support for the Women's Liberation Movement and the development of women's playwriting, which was, as will be further suggested, rather a new tradition.

Drama, a high genre traditionally bound to Aristotelian theory, was exclusively connected with men's writing; and therefore, women's tradition was difficult to be retrieved. However, before the First World War groups of actresses, involved in franchise movement by speaking publicly and by teaching other women to acquire that unusual skill, gradually started to convert to writing mostly suffrage plays, which "message needed to be clear and immediately accessible, politically instructive, and entertaining, which promoted a style of agitprop comic-realism." (Aston, Reinelt 4-5)

The promising and for women golden climate of the late 1960s and 1970s marked the ways leading to "roads to freedom", one of which was changing climate in drama, and helped women to express their sisterly solidarity more easily and openly.

Even though drama itself, in spite of the censorship, had served throughout the history as a means of expressing current strains, the overall change of climate and conditions brought previously unprecedented changes and possibilities, which thus “resulted in the epithet of the ‘new Elizabethan age’ being used by broadsheet reviewers.” (Bassnett 76) Many sources at various points suggested that history had always repeated itself, which can be applied when considering the second wave of feminism and performances. As in suffrage period, street performances and public spectacles of groups of women, which were in many cases officially founded e.g. under the name Women’s Street Theatre Group, depicted short pieces as a part of a demonstration in the streets, especially at the very beginning of the Women’s Liberation Movement. The aim of public performances was to highlight the absurdity of issues connected with the representation of women and their strains, discrimination in current society and in family and to satirize sexual stereotypes. According to Wandor, women’s groups had very much in common with political theatre groups when taking into account its ‘collective’ strategy of working, breaking the traditional social and theatrical hierarchies and emphasizing equally valuable work of all the members; the importance of those groups did not so much lie in the stylistic brilliance, exclusively high standard of performance or pomposity but rather in real life scenes and in the ability to pass the intended message appropriately. (Wandor 124-126) This starting point contributed to moving women liberating their sex further into public awareness, but it also influenced the activity of women’s theatre groups and their formation. It encouraged women to challenge the posts as directors, designers, stage managers and playwrights and to cooperate together. Thus, “all-women groups which formed during the 1970s, were constantly challenged by critics on the basis of their ‘separatism’- a charge which is never laid against either all-male or male-dominated groups, who are the norm.” (Wandor 125)

Finally, the third watershed, rather the gloomy one, apparent not only in the development of the British theatre, was the year 1979 and the election of Margaret Thatcher as the first woman Prime Minister. Thatcher’s policy propagating cuts in public spending influenced tremendously arts and above mentioned political, fringe and alternative theatre groups which did not come under any powerful institutions.

She cut the arts budget, did away with metropolitan authorities (including the Greater London Council), and circulated a major policy document entitled *The Glory Of The Garden*. This report worked on the metaphor of pulling the weeds

and thinning the beds in order that 'excellence' might be cultivated. What this meant, of course, was the cutting of subsidies to many small and touring companies, a new emphasis on financial self-sufficiency, corporate sponsorship, and business planning and marketing. (Aston, Reinelt 15)

Thus, many theatre groups stopped their activities and the "new Elizabethan age" (Bassnett 76) was diminishing. In spite of Thatcher's restrictive proceedings towards theatre, as Mark Lawson, quoted in Neumann, suggested, Margaret Thatcher together with McCarthy could be considered the most influential politicians for drama. Although both of them considered many dramatists, whose number, they believed, should be limited by financial cuts, to belong to the dangerous left, they both influenced the emergence of interesting texts. (Neumann 44)

Caryl Churchill, very often considered to be the most famous and prolific contemporary woman dramatist in Great Britain, and her plays were highly influenced by the second wave of feminism and by political and cultural situation that was already suggested. Born in 1938, Caryl Churchill, like Margaret Thatcher and many women, benefited from the achievements of the first and the very beginning of the second wave of feminism realizing her autonomy via e.g. equal right to vote, quality education at Oxford University, financial independence and greater freedom to act as an individual or via a control over her own body. Moreover, like Margaret Thatcher, she could also be considered a remarkable woman breaking through the barriers never conquered by any woman before, not the barriers of traditionally male political system but the equally impervious barriers of the male-dominated theatre. Caryl Churchill became the first woman playwright enjoying the residency at the Royal Court, which was, as Reinelt claims, "London's premier writers' theatre." (Reinelt 174)

Churchill started to write plays already at the university, through the 1960s and the early 1970s she was concerned with radio plays that fitted well in her state of caring of her three children. That period of her life was marked by what Betty Friedan depicted in *Feminine Mystique*, a problem without a name, which was the phenomenon of the whole generation of women. Churchill later said about that period of her life:

I didn't feel a part of what was happening in the sixties. During that time I felt isolated. I had small children and was having miscarriages. It was an extremely solitary life. What politicized me was being discontent with my own life – of being a barrister's wife and just being at home. (Internet 2, 1)

Churchill's desire to break through feminine mystique combined with the impact of changes which the early 1970s brought in theatre, cultural and political climate, and women's liberating tendencies led her to engaged activism via participating at demonstrations and marches and via her remarkable playwriting. As Reinelt claims:

[Churchill] began as a solitary writer who only came to consider herself a woman writer belatedly: 'For years and years I thought of myself as a writer before I thought of myself as a woman, but recently [1977] I've found that I would say I was a feminist writer as opposed to other people saying I was'. (Reinelt 174)

The play *Owners*, in which her brilliance starts to be apparent, could be considered the watershed of Churchill's production for it was her first staged play with a professional cast. Moreover, she inclined to work collaboratively with companies like Monstrous Regiment, a feminist company, or Joint Stock, predominantly a socialist company that, as many other companies of this type, represented the "socialist theatre, a non-didactic political theatre [which] has involved the audience directly in judging not only the action but also, to an extent, themselves as part of the society which is being examined dramatically." (Naizmith xxiii) That experience further built on her creative methods of writing, widened the topics depicting real life strains and helped to balance her mainstream preoccupations with the alternative ones. Another watershed in Churchill's career could be connected with her play *Cloud Nine* which did not only make her famous outside Great Britain but it was also awarded a recognized prize in the USA. This success was followed by even the bigger one in 1982 when *Top Girls*, generally considered to be one of the most famous and complex plays written by woman writer in the second half of the twentieth century, was staged.

Even though Caryl Churchill is a playwright who is highly preoccupied with the question of feminism, whose plays depict feminist belief that 'personal is political' and whose plays are based on socialist conviction attacking capitalist system, she opposes to the idea that her work could be anyhow labeled because of the complexity, topic variety and depth of her plays. In his commentary, Naizmith quotes her statement:

If someone says 'a socialist playwright' or 'a feminist playwright' that can suggest to some people something rather narrow which doesn't cover as many things as you might be thinking about. (Naizmith xii)

Therefore, Caryl Churchill is widely recognized female playwright for her ability to bring multiple topics together, to experiment with the form building on the influence of German playwright Bertolt Brecht and his alienation effect, epic drama, historicisation or gestus technique, but also for her skill to develop her own and quite a unique style of writing.

## Appendix 2

### Bibliography Used in Appendix 1

- ASTON, Elaine, REINELT, Janelle. A Century in View : From Suffrage to the 1990s. In Aston, Elaine, Reinelt, Janelle. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*. 1st edition. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000. s. 1 – 19. ISBN 0-52159-422-7.
- BASSNETT, Susan. The Politics of Location. In Aston, Elaine, Reinelt, Janelle. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*. 1st edition. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000. s.73 - 81. ISBN 0-52159-422-7.
- MARWICK, Arthur. *British Society since 1945*. 1st edition. Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1982. 303 s.
- NAIZMITH, Bill. Commentary. In Churchill, Caryl. *Top Girls*. London : Methuen, 1991. ISBN 0-413-64470-7.
- NEUMANN, Julek. Odras světa v roztržitém zrcadle. In Churchill, Caryl. *Prvotřídní ženy (Top Girls)*. Praha : Národní divadlo, 2003. ISBN 80-7285-145-7.
- REINELT, Janelle. Caryl Churchill and the Politics of Style. In Aston, Elaine, Reinelt, Janelle. *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights*. 1st edition. Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 2000. s.174 - 193. ISBN 0-52159-422-7.
- WANDOR, Michelene. *Post-war British Drama : Looking back in Gender*. London : Routledge, 2001. 271 s. ISBN 0-415-13856-6.

#### Internet source:

- — —. *Caryl Churchill* [online]. Adapted from data developed by H. W. Wilson Company. [viewed 12 March 2008]. [Accessible in Literature Online]. [in text marked as Internet 2]