

# Class Distinction and the Objectification of Women's Body in Lucy Kirkwood's *NSFW*

Kirkwood's *NSFW* Adlı Eserinde Sınıf Ayırımı ve Kadın Bedeninin Metalaştırılması

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## Abstract

Throughout history, some problems have never been solved, and gender discrimination is one of them. While this problem is extremely serious and does not allow women to breathe in some parts of the world, it is also a reality that gender discrimination still continues in developed countries. It cannot be denied that European women had to struggle for equal payment and circumstances even in the 1980s. The cooperation between the capitalist world order and the patriarchal system results in many troubles in women's social and economic life. Social class primarily creates a big gap with regard to the quality of women's lives and it results in inequality. In that regard, women in the lower class not only have to endure hard living and working conditions but they also get degenerated and betray their sisters. They are also abused in various ways and the objectification of their bodies is one of the most common forms of abuse they are exposed to. In *NSFW*, written by Lucy Kirkwood in 2012, these problems and more are brought to attention and dealt with. This study aims to explore class distinction and the objectification of women's body in different ways from the abuse of women's bodies to the established and imposed standards for bodily perfection under the influence of the class system in the capitalist economic order.

**Keywords:** class distinction, objectification of women's body, Lucy Kirkwood, *NSFW*, bodily perfection

## Öz

Bazı sorunlar tarih boyunca çözülememiştir ve cinsiyet ayrımı bunlardan birisidir. Bu sorun bazı ülkelerde oldukça ileri düzeydeyken ve özellikle tüm kadın vatandaşları baskı altında tutan İran gibi Asya ve Afrika ülkelerinde kadınların nefes almasına izin verilmezken, cinsiyet ayrımının gelişmiş ülkelerde dahi devam ettiği bir gerçektir. Avrupalı kadınların eşit maaş ve eşit koşullar için 1980'lerde hala çaba gösterdikleri inkâr edilemez. Kapitalist dünya düzeni ve ataerkil sistemin iş birliği kadınların toplumsal ve ekonomik hayatında pek çok soruna yol açar. Öncelikle sosyal sınıf kadının yaşam kalitesinde büyük bir boşluğa sebep olur ve eşitsizliği beraberinde getirir. Bu bağlamda, alt sınıfa mensup kadınlar sadece kötü hayat ve çalışma koşullarına katlanmakla kalmaz, zamanla yozlaşır ve hemcinslerine ihanet ederler. Bununla birlikte, çeşitli şekillerde istismar edilirler ve bedenlerinin metalaşması en yaygın görülen istismar yöntemlerinden biridir. Lucy Kirkwood tarafından yazılan *NSFW* adlı oyunda bu sorunlar ve daha fazlasına dikkat çekilmekte ve eleştirilmektedir. Bu çalışma kapitalist ekonomik düzene ait sınıfsal yapının ve sınıf farkının etkisiyle kadın bedeninin istismarından mükelleştirilmesine kadar çeşitli şekillerde metalaştırılmasını incelemeyi hedefler.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** sınıf ayrımı, kadın bedeninin metalaştırılması, Lucy Kirkwood, *NSFW*, bedensel mükemmellik

## Introduction

Economic system of each country in the world is emphasised to be fairly significant since it determines the main dynamics in people's lives from education and health to job opportunities and working conditions. Although Karl Marx is criticised as workers have

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not achieved in uniting and banishing the capitalist economic system with a revolution, his observations on the influence of the economic system are accepted to be true. As Marxist critic Louis Althusser points out, the base, the economic system, determines the superstructure of every country. Hence, every institution of a country works according to the rules of the economic system. For instance, the youth of the country is educated in the way the economic system wants them to be shaped and the existing system is supported by other institutions of the superstructure from religion to entertainment. The economic system, which is dominant in most countries in the world, the capitalist economic system, approximately always protects males and gives privileges to them. Even in the developed countries in Europe, women had to struggle a lot to obtain equal payment and equal job opportunities with men for decades. In England, women did not want to go back home after working hard throughout the Second World War and struggled a lot to be active members of the economic life. Nevertheless, it was not an easy process for them as they were not accepted as equals of men by the male-oriented economic system, which tried to exclude them by lower salaries, part-time jobs and fewer opportunities than men. Thus, the capitalist system goes hand in hand with patriarchy, for both of which men are the privileged half of society. Last but not least, the class system of capitalism also aggravates the circumstances for a large group of women in the lower class, who are doubly oppressed due to not only their gender but also their social status. In consequence, the capitalist economic system both dominates every moment of women's lives and suppresses them in every sphere of society from daily life to work life. The aim of this study is to examine the objectification of women's bodies with regard to the class distinction and patriarchy in the capitalist economic system in Lucy Kirkwood's play *NSFW*, standing for *Not Safe for Work*. The capitalist economic order is of great significance for this study as it catalyses the abuse of a woman's body for the lower class and the imposition of several standards on women from every social class for bodily perfection. In consequence, this order and its class system objectify human beings and this study focuses on its abuse of women's bodies in different ways.

### **Historical Background of Gender Discrimination and Women's Struggle**

To understand the reaction of working-class women against the harsh working conditions today, it is essential to go back to the 1960s and the following decades till the millennium. Women in England had to suffer a lot after World War Two in order to keep their jobs and obtain equal payment as well as equal opportunities with men. The male-centred economic system firstly tried to send working women back home after the end of the war as the real owners of the jobs returned to work. Thus, women had to struggle a lot to continue working despite a number of obstacles. As George Joseph observes in *Women in Britain since 1945*:

The typical woman worker at the turn of the century was ... a city dweller, a widow or spinster aged 25 years, employed as a domestic servant or in a textile factory. By the seventies, the typical female worker, aged 40 years, is married, has returned to work after some years of economic inactivity, and works part time in a clerical job. (qtd. in Lewis, 1992, p. 66)

In the immediate post-war years, the number of working married women was pretty low due to a number of obstructions they needed to overcome under the name of a 'marriage bar', implying that a married woman's first duty is to be engaged in her family and in her house rather than having a paid employment (Lewis, 1992, p. 71). Women were also offered part-time jobs because of the same biased reasons, resulting from gender discrimination and gender roles, undermining their capacities and subordinating them. However, women did not accept this significant hindrance this time and the number of

married women in the economic field gradually increased as they had experienced the personal and economic benefits of working during the war. Although they were deprived of the help of their husbands in terms of housework and the support of the state with regard to childcare for a long time, marriage was redefined “as a relationship in which the partners negotiated their roles in accordance with personal preferences rather than externally imposed expectations,” which also provides the change in the image of women for the patriarchal society (Summerfield, 1994, p. 58).

Another problem that women had to fight against for a long time was “particularly marked” working areas such as “white-collar employment” and “the service industries” (Royle, 1994, p. 14). It took a long time for women to overcome the prejudices of the male-dominant working area both in the state and in the private sector. In Lewis’ words, “The Women’s Liberation Movement ... argued that the family was as much a source of women’s subordination in society as discrimination in the public sphere and women’s absence from well-paying high-status jobs and public office” (1992, p. 34-35). Women were “confined for the most part to low paid, low status work” for a long time after World War Two despite their improving education (Lewis, 1992, p. 69). Along with the prejudices of male employers, the lack of nursery schools also prevented women from continuing their work, so each child stole between five and seven years from their working experiences. Only after the 1970s and 1980s, could women take shorter breaks after childbirth. Even though they successfully carried out a variety of jobs throughout the war in the absence of men and removed the barriers separating men’s work from women’s work, caring jobs were assumed to be suitable for them for a few more decades (Addison, 2005, p. 9). What is more, manual jobs were expected to be performed by women while non-manual ones were spared for men, a bias continuing for nearly forty years (Crompton, 1994, p. 99). Thus, women were not accepted for “administrative and managerial work” as male employers subordinated them and, in the meanwhile, they supported the male career by this choice (Crompton, 1994, p. 105-106). Even though they do the same job as men, unequal pay for equal work is one further and a very common trouble for women in that period. The male-dominated economic area “avoided paying women equal rates by insisting that they needed male help to tune or adjust their machines, or that they were actually employed on ‘women’s work’” (Lewis, 1992, p. 79). Employers mostly preferred women so as to pay them lower wages for the same work as men, showing again the gender discrimination in the male-dominant society. Not until the late 1970s, were women able to overcome this gender segregation in the economic field step by step. On the demand side, “the distinction between men and women’s work has been greatly reduced” as well as the rate of women desiring to work and have their economic independence on the supply side (Law, 1994, p. 86). In the 1980s, the rank of women who were either employers or proprietors increased to twenty-four per cent and the rate of female manual workers was twenty-nine per cent (Crompton, 1994, p. 99). Although there are better circumstances for women, the problems and gender discrimination discussed above are still experienced by women in the economic field today.

The relationship between patriarchy and the capitalist economic system is, thus, analysed by especially Marxist feminist critics and they make an analogy between ‘free’ labour of the working class and women (Sears, 2017, p. 175). As the working class is to sell “their laboring capacities to those who do,” Marxist feminists indicate that women also do not have the control over their bodies in a relationship of compulsion (Sears, 2017, p. 176). As Federici observes, women’s deprivation of the “control over their bodies” results in enchainning problems for them, namely turning into free labourers of reproduction and falling into “a new sexual division of labor subjugating women’s labor and women’s reproductive function to the reproduction of the work-force” (qtd. in Sears, 2017, p. 178).

Thus, patriarchal relations, as Marxist feminists McDonough and Harrison argue, are mainly shaped by major relations of production (qtd. in Sangari, 2015, p. 263). Relations of production and relations of reproduction are closely interrelated, which proves that “capitalism and patriarchy ... [are] both interlocking and separate” (Sangari, 2015, p. 262-263). The patriarchal order not only subordinated women to men by excluding them from waged work but it also devalued them in “certain categories of human and certain kinds of work” (Sears, 2017, p. 178). Working-class women unsurprisingly are “dispossessed both as members of the working class and as reproductive workers” (Sears, 2017, p. 179). Their reproductive labour is not paid, and their wage-labour is depreciated. Hence, what happens in the microcosm of the domestic sphere similarly happens in the macrocosm of the economic sphere (Madsen, 2000, p. 66). Consequently, the capitalist system exploits women both economically and sexually and the main reason is the capitalist patriarchy.

Along with being downgraded in domestic and economic spheres, women are also devalued by being reduced to body only, which is claimed to be inferior to its biological processes, like menstruation and gestation, when compared and contrasted with the male mind (Carson, 2006, p. 94). Although such theorists as Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault rejected “the traditional Cartesian dualism which subordinates body to mind”, it is not simple to change and annihilate discrimination even in the twenty-first century (Carson, 2006, p. 94). The ways in which a woman's body is controlled in the patriarchal system are studied by feminism, including not only the regulations of “women's access to such services as contraception and abortion” but also the imposition of “idealised forms of their bodies” and their objectification by a variety of means (Carson, 2006, p. 94). While the negative representation of women “as stereotypes and objects of male gaze” was discussed by the second wave feminist movement in the 1970s, the problem in the representation of women focusing on their body still continues today with regard to the ideal body form and its abuse in these terms (Carson, 2006, p. 95). In *The Beauty Myth*, Naomi Wolf observes that “the more legal and material hindrances women have broken through, the more strictly and heavily and cruelly images of female beauty have come to weigh upon us” (qtd. in Carson, 2006, p. 95). Thus, physical beauty fitting the imposed standards has transformed into an obsession and it is fairly obvious in social media, fashion and the cosmetics sector. It is also apparent in our play *NSFW*, including two magazines, *Doghhouse* and *Electra*. In both of them, a woman's body is objectified in different ways. For instance, while the nude body of a fourteen-year-old girl is objectified by *Doghhouse*, there is no space for any kind of fault in women's bodies in *Electra*. In his *Ways of Seeing*, John Berger argues that “Men act and women appear. Women watch themselves being looked at” (qtd. in Carson, 2006, p. 97). In consequence, with or without nudity, a woman's body is both idealised and objectified by the male gaze today. The capitalist order, which both dominates and controls people's minds and lives in a variety of ways, brings about class distinction and women's objectification under the strong influence of the class system (Carson, 2006, p. 97).

### **Outcomes of Class Distinction in *NSFW***

Lucy Kirkwood, whose work *NSFW*, standing for *Not Safe for Work*, will be analysed in this study, is one of the outstanding young playwrights of English literature. *Grady Hot Potato*, *Guns or Butter* and *Tinderbox* are some of her well-known plays. *NSFW* was written and premiered at the Royal Court Theatre in 2012. In this play, social class has great significance and its influence along with its being a major determinant in women's lives is clearly observed. The first point to be examined is women's degeneration due to the class distinction causing their hard living and working circumstances in the capitalist society and betraying their sisters by acting according to the rules of the economic system. To Aston, “[T]he meteoric rise of neoliberalism driven by a free market economy and

individualism” dominates our time in the twenty-first century (2016, p. 24). The character Charlotte, working for *Doghhouse*, a weekly magazine for men, is a lower middle-class girl of twenty-five. She has to work in a male-dominated place, with a “masculinist culture,” which contains a pool table, a dartboard and a cricket bat as well as topless or nude photo shoots of women, totally interesting for men (Aston, 2016, p. 27). Moreover, she has to bear dirty language around as her workmates and boss are men who are not kind and thoughtful enough. The first scene also establishes “the hierarchical, competitive, and masculinist ethos of the workplace inhabited by a young team of journalists” (Aston, 2016, p. 27). Since *Doghhouse* is a magazine for men, she has to discuss which photo of the nude girls can encourage men to buy the magazine. In “the sexist *Doghhouse*,” there is a link “to women complicit in the production of sexualized, commercialized femininity” (Aston, 2016, p. 27). Hence, she has to be a part of this working area in spite of all the disturbing and offending behaviour she witnesses or bears. Nevertheless, Charlotte does not prefer to work in such an environment, but she has to:

CHARLOTTE. When I first came down to London I couldn't get arrested. I did three years of unpaid work placements and internships before I came here and that's ... shit. Slave labour. And then I spent three months getting screamed at by Trinny and Susannah because I didn't know what a gilet was and then I came here, which, ... it's not like my dream or anything but it's on my CV and I can pay my rent. (Kirkwood, 2016, I. p. 186)

It is understood that the economic conditions of the capitalist system for her social class forces her to work in *Doghhouse*, with better payment. In Adishesiah and Lepage's words, “[Our] neoliberal ... condition [is] unacceptable and dehumanizing” (2016, p. 4). In this system, Charlotte's condition is not surprising or extraordinary as most people in the lower class are in a similar condition. Nonetheless, she lies to the women's group, a part of which she is, about her work and tells that she works as an estate agent as she is aware of the fact that *Doghhouse* is a magazine objectifying women by showing their nude bodies for the male gaze on its pages. What is more, she keeps her silence when it is learned that a fourteen-year-old girl Carry Bradshaw's nude photo shoots were published without her consent in the magazine. Even though she should have been reacting while Aidan, the boss, was bullying and blackmailing Mr. Bradshaw, Carry's father, Charlotte just indirectly backed her boss with her silence. The capitalist system, thus, transforms women into beings supporting the system by betraying their sisters abused or oppressed by the male-centred system. As Kirkwood also observes in her interview in *The Guardian*, “In different ways, both men and women betray women” (Adams, 2012). The social class also determines people's viewpoints, and way of life as well as their jobs and attitudes in the work life. As a result, “free-market capitalism” catalyses “today's ruthless individualism” and prevents the capacity for an “individual revolt” (Aston, 2016, p. 25). Charlotte, for instance, behaves as she is expected to keep her job. She even closes her eyes to being seduced by the boss and keeps her eyes and mouth close despite witnessing child abuse and bullying in her workplace.

### **Objectification of Women's Body in NSFW**

The main problem of this dark comedy *NSFW* is publishing Carry Bradshaw's nude photographs in *Doghhouse* although she is just fourteen, which means child abuse in the meanwhile. As a media print, *Doghhouse* also objectifies women's body by publishing their nude photos. Aidan, Rupert, Sam and Charlotte try to choose the most attractive photo to publish as they need more readers for the magazine. The more women's bodies are vulgarly nude, the more readers it means for them. The female body is exhibited “as a symbol of objectified female beauty” and it becomes an object of the male gaze at

whatever age the woman is as it is obvious in the case of Carry Bradshaw (Carson, 2006, p. 96). Even if they have the consent of women or most of the time the consent of their boyfriends, which is more problematic, it does not mean what they do is acceptable as it is "the production and consumption of representations of women" (Carson, 2006, p. 98). It shows how media reduces woman to body first and then commodifies woman's body and gains money by exhibiting it. It is known how common it is now after the internet has started to be used for it on various platforms and the abuse of woman's and what is worse children's body has been normalised by a number of websites. As Kirkwood states in her interview, "People keep saying to me, 'Isn't it good timing?' ... But we are always talking about these things, aren't we? The play wouldn't have been written if we didn't live in a culture where those anxieties didn't have a natural end point" (Adams, 2012). Thus, the capitalist system consumes women by initially objectifying their bodies on a variety of platforms such as printed media, social media and digital media and then, by commodifying them as if their bodies were consumption goods. Media, thus, is one of the means this economic system utilises in order to consume woman's body. Aidan, the boss of the men's magazine *Doghhouse*, unsurprisingly never regrets as they have published a child's nude photos, but he is only concerned that there is no consent for it, which means he is only anxious about politically correctness, which means an ethical problem at the same time. There is also a "representation of the professional middle classes struggling to survive in the dog-eat-dog world of the media market" (Aston, 2016, p. 26). In other words, it is obvious that the capitalist order not only stimulates but also forces the managers of the business world to do anything for profit regardless of its being ethical or humane. As a result, it is not surprising for Aidan to ignore objectifying a child's body since her body and her vulgarly nude pictures are only commodities for him to sell the magazine more.

Another and more important point about the objectification of woman's body is the negotiation between Aidan and Mr. Bradshaw. Whereas Carry's father Mr. Bradshaw came to *Doghhouse* both to express his anger for the publication of his daughter's naked photos and want Aidan to collect the volume of the magazine, his visit turns into a negotiation over time. Aidan, firstly, offers the out-of-work father twenty-five thousand pounds when Mr. Bradshaw says that he is planning to take the magazine to court so as to make everyone learn that *Doghhouse* "broke the law" (Kirkwood, 2016, II. p. 200). This offer objectifies Carry's body once more, but it is not limited with Aidan's offer unfortunately. In a short time, Aidan starts to bully and blackmail the father with his annoying and threatening sentences. He first tells that his lawyers are very qualified and it will be an ordinary case for them and they will certainly win. Moreover, he holds against Mr. Bradshaw the fact that he is also the buyer of *Doghhouse*, which proves that he saw the picture of his daughter while he was looking at the nude women's photos as it is a men's magazine:

AIDAN. I'm not suggesting anything except that you, like all of us here, appreciate certain types of images, that happen to be of beautiful girls in a state of undress. ... But eighteen, nineteen, twenty. Young compared to us old codgers, eh, Mr Bradshaw! (Kirkwood, 2016, II. p. 203)

Mr. Bradshaw's being one of the consumers of the magazine also indicates the objectification of young women's bodies and their being consumed by even middle-aged and old men. When the girl's being fourteen, which means legally she is still a child, is thought, everything becomes more severe. As Aidan reminds, the issue is that "[a] man's hands on her body. And other men, like [Mr. Bradshaw], looking at her" (Kirkwood, 2016, II. p. 205). At every step, Aidan tries to make Mr. Bradshaw feel guiltier by referring to his being divorced from Carry's mother, his being away from his daughter, so her feeling

deprived of his protection and getting mature earlier. Another reality of Mr. Bradshaw's class is his being without a job and being deprived of enough money to support his daughter. The main reason of this problem for Mr. Bradshaw seems to be the class issue and being a member of the lower class and losing the control of life for his daughter along with himself. As Marx argues, people's economic class influences their definition and experience of the body (Bordo, 1995, p. 16). Neither Mr. Bradshaw nor Carry's mother, as lower-class people who are deprived of the essential education and the consciousness of raising a child and who mostly fight economic difficulties to survive, have been able to help Carry learn the value of her body and the uniqueness of herself. Additionally, Mr. Bradshaw has not been close enough to his daughter to protect her from objectifying her body as they see each other only for a few hours twice a month. What is worse, at the end of the Second Act, Mr. Bradshaw surprisingly starts the negotiation this time and tries to increase the offer, but he could not be successful and takes twenty-five thousand pounds. He leaves his honour behind after negotiating on his daughter's body and accepts the money to keep his silence. It is clearly seen that male-oriented society not only objectifies but also commodifies woman's body in various ways and publishing nude photo shoots is one of these ways. They can even be a topic of negotiation and an object to be exchanged and sold financially.

The condition of the other magazine *Electra* is not better than *Doghouse* with regard to class issues and gender. Although it is a women's magazine, under the capitalist living and working conditions, women's body is still objectified by different groups of people in different ways. In Phipps' words,

Although capitalism is not a monolith, it can be said that in western neoliberal economies the body has become a symbol of value and identity which is largely performed and developed via the purchase of products. The drive to consume in order to both express and "add value" to oneself is a key aspect of contemporary consumer culture, which feeds markets that rely on idealized representations of the body and the elevation of particular prestigious bodily forms through advertising. (2014, p. 9)

Hence, the capitalist economic system hails people to be consumers in each sphere of society. Nevertheless, it is a harsh reality that a woman's body also turns into an object with a necessity to look perfect all the time. As Urla and Swedlund observe, "Fueled by the hugely profitable cosmetic, weight-loss, and fashion industries, the beauty myth's glamorized notions of the ideal body reverberate back upon women as 'a dark vein of self hatred, physical obsessions, terror of aging, and dread of lost control'" (2000, p. 397). Not to miss the new products and not to be ashamed of their bodies, most women assume that they have to follow them and purchase new cosmetics and clothes at any cost. Similarly, on the walls of the magazine, women's pictures exist again, but all of them look perfectly beautiful and healthy this time since they have been photoshopped to look perfect. Miranda, the editor of *Electra*, and the women around her, whose voice and laughter are also heard during the act, are businesswomen and their appearance must be perfect like the pictures of women around them. As soon as the Third Act starts, Miranda's sentences remind the reader of Marlene, the protagonist of *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill, in terms of her being not only the manager of the magazine but also a liberal-minded and self-centred woman. Miranda describes herself and other women:

MIRANDA. We're confident, modern, media-literate women between the ages of twenty-five and forty-five who earn upwards of twenty thousand pounds a year, aren't we?  
SAM. Yes.

MIRANDA. We're leaders, thinkers, dreamers, shoppers, upscale ABC1 women with upscale ABC1 purchasing habits. (Kirkwood, 2016, III. p. 229)

After this dialogue, she proves to be an enthusiastic follower of the capitalist system and later, she announces and emphasises that she loves shoes. As Phipps points out, "among the privileged [there is] a dramatic growth in spending on beauty, fitness and fashion, a rise in alternative health practices and in more extreme 'body projects' such as cosmetic surgeries" (2014, p. 9). In particular, the "neoliberal value system" of the twenty-first century, men's and women's bodies turn into products upon which a number of practices and projects are experimented to make them more and more valuable (2014, p. 9). Thus, for women, the significance of shoes and clothes, cosmetics and aesthetic surgeries is apparent not only in social life but also in every sphere of mass media. Miranda's sentences defining her also highlight that she is an upper-class woman living comfortably and shopping is a significant part of her lonely life.

Miranda, like the top girl Marlene, is alone and she proposes Sam, only in his twenties, to go out although she is in her early fifties. Moreover, during her talk with Sam in the Third Act, she usually moisturises her hands and underlines the significance of her mind rather than her body, especially the genitals. It also shows that Miranda, like Marlene, has to leave her womanhood aside to exist and be successful in this male-centred economic world. However, she is not happy deep in her heart. Even if she does not tell it, it can be understood between the lines and in her proposal to Sam. She does not want to continue living alone in the rest of her life and just tries her chance with Sam. In that regard, Miranda has another common point with Marlene in *Top Girls* as Mrs. Kidd tells her, "You're one of these ballbreakers / that's what you are. You'll end up miserable and lonely. You're not natural" (2013, II. ii. pp. 189-190). Leaving her soul and heart as well as her womanhood aside is another unnatural aspect of her life to be a successful woman and have a great status in the economic sphere, which has been dominated by men for centuries and which still has barriers against women who have to struggle and sacrifice a lot to overcome in the present. Additionally, a woman's body is also objectified here in another way. By imposing on women the necessity of being perfect, which means to consume a variety of products to achieve it, Miranda and *Electra* support capitalism again. In Aston's words, "[I]n contrast to second-wave feminism's mantra 'the personal is the political', the personal divorced from the political is what Miranda's post-feminist world of photoshopped femininity dictates, a world in which 'better versions of ourselves' means the pursuit of commodified, self 'perfection'" (2016, p. 28). The sector of cosmetics is, thus, the first area to be supported in this magazine and other sectors selling clothes, shoes and jewellery are just some of them that profit from the obsession of perfection created by the male-oriented capitalist world. Accordingly, it is a culture of "(s)exploitation" experienced in *Doghouse* and *Electra* as well as in the twenty-first-century neoliberal world (Aston, 2016, p. 28). Even though top girl Miranda seems to focus on the mind in her sentences, her actions create a paradox in the play. She is deprived of the idea of "human dignity and social relations" in her life, like most characters of the play working for the two magazines (Aston, 2016, p. 28). Hence, Kirkwood criticises the media and women working in that sector by Miranda and the other women working for *Electra* who continue their lives behind their masks, looking gorgeous and flawless, but having lonely and miserable lives in private. When one of the groundbreaking playwrights of English theatre Caryl Churchill wrote *Top Girls* in 1982, it "seemed a warning to feminists not to mistake material reward for real progress and liberation" (Reinelt, 2009, p. 31). However, it is apparent in the first quarter of the twenty-first century that there still seems to be no hope for change and progress for women under the dehumanising economic and living circumstances of the capitalist system as it

dominates the basis and determines not only the living and working conditions of society but also the mentality itself. The criticism of Lucy Kirkwood in *NSFW*, written in 2012, shows how the circumstances of the capitalist economic system and the neoliberal consumerist culture become harsher and press women to be top girls who are to look perfect and to be consumers of cosmetics, glorious clothes and shoes along with cosmetic surgery. Carson observes that “The continuing importance of this ideological struggle over representation lies in the powerful relationship between idealised or denigrating images of women in the media and the internalisation of these by female consumers” (Carson, 2006, p. 95). Thus, in *Electra*, a woman’s body is objectified under the cover of perfection which is imposed by the capitalist economic system to oblige women to consume cosmetics and purchase luxurious clothes and jewellery. The beauty industry behind the walls of the magazine obviously stimulates “glamour fashion” and “promotes female beauty icons” (Carson, 2006, p. 95).

### Conclusion

Lucy Kirkwood’s play *NSFW* offers a critique of reducing a woman to body in different ways with an emphasis the role of the class system in the capitalist order in the twenty-first century. Although it can be thought that a number of rights have been achieved for women until now, it is obvious that women in our time still have significant problems which cannot be solved as the economic system determines the basis of our lives and the patriarchy always exists in the background. In both *Doghouse* and *Electra*, the woman’s body is objectified in different ways and women cannot escape from being a part of this objectification since it is impossible to exclude themselves from neither the class system nor the capitalist order. In the men’s magazine *Doghouse*, Charlotte has to bear the dirty language of her male colleagues along with the topless or nude photos of women around her. She has to work in *Doghouse* as she has had worse experiences in her previous workplaces, and she has to pay her rent. Her being rebuked or insulted before, however, does not make her be excused for being silent to the objectification of a woman’s body, child abuse or her being seduced by the boss. In the meanwhile, she lacks the awareness of women’s solidarity, and supports the boss during his meeting with Mr. Bradshaw. Moreover, the reader learns that the nude photos of a fourteen-year-old girl have been published without her consent. It is an obvious example of child abuse and the objectification of a child’s body. What is more, everything becomes worse when her father starts to negotiate for more pay not to go to court. His being a lower-class man shows the reader the circumstances of the capitalist economic system and how it obliges people to have miserable lives once more. Thus, a woman’s body is limitlessly objectified by not only this magazine but also the father. As Kirkwood argues in her interview in *The Guardian*, “A lot of my work dwells on this idea of people buying and selling things that maybe shouldn’t be bought or sold. Things that are private, personal” (Adams, 2012). Thus, the various ways of objectification stressed above mean buying and selling the woman’s body in different ways in the meanwhile. In the last act, Kirkwood surprises the reader by showing the other side of the coin in *Electra* and criticises both women and the capitalist system again. In this women’s magazine, the objectification of women’s bodies occurs under the cover of perfection. On the walls, perfect-looking women’s pictures are hung this time and Miranda, the editor of the magazine, is an unhappy top girl of this play in her expensive clothes. Whereas she emphasises the superiority of her mind to her body in her talk with Sam, she focuses on her body attempting to look perfect and consume expensive cosmetics products in reality as the capitalist economic order forces women to look beautiful and perfect, turning them into one of the objects to be consumed in each product they purchase. As a result, Kirkwood criticises the objectification of women’s bodies in various ways in different places and working areas by emphasising the role of

the capitalist economic system, the base, in this problem along with its power to surround people everywhere they look at and to control their minds.

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