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Appropriation of Churchill's *Owners* and *Top Girls* against Capitalism in Lucy Kirkwood's *Tinderbox* and *NSFW*



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Abstract

Caryl Churchill is a distinguished playwright of the twentieth and twenty-first-century English theatre, and with her *oeuvre*, it is very difficult to describe her with the words she deserves since her contribution by means of the critiques in her plays is of immeasurable importance. One of her junior contemporaries, Lucy Kirkwood, has a similar understanding and practice to Churchill in her works. Both playwrights have an apparent reaction against the capitalist economic system, the patriarchal system and their harmful oppression of people. Churchill has always been an anti-capitalist throughout her career, as it is in *Owners*, a play written in the early years of her career as a professional playwright, and she emphasizes the significance of socialism for feminism as it is in *Top Girls*, a milestone for English drama. In her plays *Tinderbox* and *NSFW*, which stands for *Not Safe for Work*, Kirkwood employs appropriation as a technique that leads the audience and readers to make a connection with Churchill's critical attitude towards capitalism in *Owners* and *Top Girls*. She stresses that the same problems emerging from the capitalist system have been continuing for more than fifty years. This study aims to analyze Kirkwood's *Tinderbox* and *NSFW* in terms of her appropriation from Churchill's aforementioned plays with an analysis of the impacts of capitalism on people in the twenty-first century owing to the increasing effect of the system, which has gained power since the 1970s.

Keywords


Appropriation • capitalist system • consumerism • Caryl Churchill • Lucy Kirkwood



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Introduction

Culture is one of the most significant components of life, and it cannot be ruled out by the influence of the economic system and the superstructure working for the base (Marx, 1904, p. 11). Particularly, after the Second World War, the socio-political influences of capitalism along with its climbing economic dominance become stronger. In the late twentieth century, globalization and mass production bring about mass consumption, all of which have resulted in a ripple effect on the vicious cycle of producing and consuming more around the world. In Baudrillard's words, "All societies have always wasted, squandered, expended and consumed beyond what is strictly necessary for the simple reason that it is in the consumption of a surplus, of a superfluity that the individual - and society - feel not merely that they exist, but that they are alive" (1998, p. 43). Capitalist culture, making people accustomed to purchasing whatever they wish on the condition that they have enough money, has transformed human beings and their characteristics. Although each person needs to be accepted as unique and valuable as an individual, the capitalist culture has modified this criterion. People are evaluated according to their outfits, the amount of money and property they possess or the district where they live these days. This changing standpoint is an outcome of the capitalist system, the exchange value of which is capital. As Baudrillard points out, "As a process of signification and communication, based on a code into which consumption practices fit and from which they derive their meaning. Consumption here is a system of exchange, and the equivalent of a language" (1998, p. 60). Likewise, the mentality and characteristics of ordinary people have deteriorated. Capital and profit have been the focus of life for a long time, which makes people greedier and self-centered in their lives and relationships. There is also cruelty against animals and nature in the present because of capitalist culture centering on self and gain, making everyone antagonists against each other and every creature we share this world with. What is more, consumerism has emerged from the capitalist culture, transforming everybody into greedy purchasers all around the world. Consumerism causes the urge to buy and consume limitlessly without any evaluation of need or cost of the earth. This culture has also caused perfectionism, especially for women, resulting in them applying new kinds of cosmetic products and wearing an increasing variety of garments and shoes. Nevertheless, the drive to look perfect is not satisfied by them and cosmetic surgery is also involved and has become popular these days. Consequently, capitalist and consumerist culture has caused severe erosion in the mentality and characteristics of human beings since the post-war period, and its severity has gradually increased in the twenty-first century.

One of the outstanding contemporary playwrights of English drama, Churchill's success and the fame of her *oeuvre* surpass the borders of England. When her first professional work, *Owners*, is analyzed, the clues of her career as a playwright who meticulously observes the world, detects its problems, and criticises them in her plays, demonstrate themselves. In this work, written in 1972, she critiques the capitalist culture of her period, dominated by Keynesian economic policies, and the devastating effects on human beings, especially with the characters Clegg and Marion, the greedy couple of the play. Likewise, in *Top Girls*, one of the landmarks of feminist drama, she criticises late-stage capitalism again ten years later. This time she reveals with the protagonist Marlene, who both ignores and sacrifices her female body and her motherhood as well as her daughter and family members for success in her career, how capitalism leaks into the brains of human beings and changes their attitudes in their lives.

More than four decades have passed since these plays were created and the problems emerging from the capitalist system, transforming into neoliberalism led primarily by globalization and financialization, and capitalist culture, have been continuing, not to mention the deterioration in the characteristics of human beings. Kirkwood, one of the young and brilliant playwrights of English drama, has a similar attitude to Churchill in her career and proves that she is also concerned with the socio-economic and socio-political

troubles of people in her society. In her dystopic play *Tinderbox*, she critiques the impacts of capitalist culture on people by her characters Saul and his wife Vanessa. Particularly, with Saul's greed and extreme brutality, Kirkwood demonstrates how much a human being becomes inhumane against not only his wife but also other people around him. In *NSFW*, which stands for *Not Safe for Work*, she criticises another aspect of the capitalist system, consumerism and its negative impacts on people. Miranda, the manager of a women's magazine, *Electra*, is a symbol of perfectionism and consumerism in today's world. In that sense, this study aims to explore Kirkwood's plays *Tinderbox* and *NSFW* as an appropriation of Churchill's plays *Owners* and *Top Girls*, regarding the difference in historical and socio-economic conditions between the 1970s and the 2000s and later examine the effects of capitalism and consumerism on people in the twenty-first century as a consequence of the evolving impacts of the capitalist system from the 1970s to the new millennium.

Capitalism and Consumerism as a Catalyst for the Deterioration of People's Characteristics

With regard to the period when Churchill's plays *Owners* and *Top Girls* were written, it is significant to remember the socio-economic conditions of the 1970s and 1980s, along with the 2000s, when Kirkwood created *Tinderbox* and *NSFW*. A long-term economic crisis dominates the 1970s, during which stagflation, including "a skyrocketing inflation and unemployment," is accompanied by a variety of strikes, power cuts and emergency states (Porion, 2016, p. 302). A series of troubles such as the oil crisis in 1973 and the danger of bankruptcy in 1976 oblige the English government to borrow a loan from the IMF (Porion, 2016, p. 302). Despite the reforms of the Labor government, including several progressive measures dominated by Keynesian economic policies in the late 1960s, the British people cannot be saved from suffering throughout the 1970s (Porion, 2016, pp. 303–304). Whereas British politicians utilize and practice Keynesian policies, supporting "government intervention through public policies that aim to achieve full employment and price stability" after the Second World War, the stagflation in the 1970s cannot be solved by its policies and 'monetarism' starts to dominate the economy, followed by late-stage capitalism in the 1980s (Jahan et. al, 2014, p. 5).

British people experiencing the deep recession of the 1970s, "the period of high declinism, [... the] combination of high inflation, high unemployment and comparatively low growth," elect and start the long period of Margaret Thatcher, with the promise of 'reversing decline' in 1979 (English & Kenny, 2000, pp. 294–295). Through the shift to monetarism, the Conservative government does not aim to keep employment and prices stable by means of "demand management and incomes policy" but rather focuses on the control of inflation (Pemberton, 2005, p. 184). Another shift during the 11-year-long governance of Thatcher occurs radically from public ownership to 'privatization', the range of which becomes wider (Pemberton, 2005, p. 185). In parallel with privatization, in Collette and Laybourne's sentences, "The political consensus that once existed around the maintenance of the welfare state has gone; political attitudes within the Conservative and Labour parties have changed fundamentally; socialist and Marxist parties have collapsed or gone into decline; trade unions have diminished in power and influence" (2003, p. 1). The consequences of her politics are not only limited to the economic field, such as the dramatic fall in the manufacturing capacities of national factories, but "state funding for the arts" and any kind of cultural activities are also cut severely, whereas they have been accepted as the main contribution to "the national morale and self-consciousness" before (Davies, 2000, p. 141). Another outcome of Thatcherism impacting socio-economic life is the rising unemployment during her long-standing governance. The number of unemployed people jumps over three million people until 1983 and continues at this high point in the following three years, whereas it is over two million by the year 1980s (Morgan, 2000, p. 80). These high unemployment rates unsurprisingly bring about strikes, demonstrations and riots in a variety of cities during the 1980s (Morgan, 2000, p. 83).

Lucy Kirkwood writes her plays in the twenty-first century, the socio-economic dynamics of which are different from the 1970s and 1980s. Neo-liberalism dominates this new millennium with its focus on “economic liberalisation, political liberalisation, privatisation, the restructuring of Capitalist industry and Capitalist society, free markets, and the rapid expansion of Capitalism itself” (Morgan, 2000, p. 76). It dates to the end of the Cold War, and it is accepted as a means of supporting capitalism against the economic crisis in the 1970s. Along with neo-liberalism, industrial capitalism also dominates most capitalist countries of the world for a long period of time (Morgan, 2000, p. 80). Capitalist culture emerging from industrial capitalism has been dominant since the 1950s, particularly by means of “mass production, mass consumerism, mass consumption”, which also directly influences socio-cultural dynamics and art now (Morgan, 2000, p. 80). Therefore, it can be concluded that contemporary culture is under the impact of industrial capitalism and neo-liberalism, the dynamics of which are intertwined and with a cycle of “industrial production and industrial consumption of culture” in our contemporary world (Morgan, 2000, p. 80).

The capitalist economic system controls not only the economic sphere but also the socio-cultural structure in most countries of the world. Thus, capitalist culture monopolizes the social life of millions of people in a variety of societies. Inhumanity, one of the main features of capitalist culture, which evolves with the capitalist economic system, has been a serious problem for human beings. Consumerism both emerges from the capitalist culture and increases its negative impacts on people, so it is one of the components of capitalism, on which the system depends now. The industrial capitalist system, having been established on production and consumption in factories centuries ago, has been experiencing mass production and mass consumption for a long time after numerous technological improvements. Whereas people were rapacious to gain more money and save more property in the previous decades, that ambition has turned into the main target for some, which means inhumane greed, for which these people can do anything. In Schutz's words,

The material affluence brought about by the ever-progressive technological development of the advanced market societies has led to a nearly universal consumerism, a quasi-addiction of the individual to the continual purchase of an ever-expanding stream of personal commodities as a way of self-fulfillment and of the construction of self-identity. (2011, p. 133)

Under the impacts of satisfying themselves by producing goods, motivating them to work and earn more, people have forgotten about the main features of humanity such as caring about others and having humane relationships with people, like friendship and kinship. As Adiseshiah and Lepage suggest, “[Our] neoliberal ... condition [is] unacceptable and dehumanizing” (2016, p. 4). Hence, capitalism and consumerism make people become alienated from society and transform into self-centered beings, who are only interested in themselves and their profits. This mentality also commodifies everything and everyone as much as possible. People even accept human beings as objects to be bought or sold in many areas, which proves the inhumanity this culture generates for people.

Consumerism, dominated by mass production and mass consumption, compels people to buy and consume more while mass production pushes the limits of nature and causes fatal problems, like global warming, the outcomes of which are experienced by means of extreme weather conditions, drought and famine. As Boström and Klintman argue, “Mass consumption is apparently not an ahistorical concept. To the contrary, mass consumption is apt for describing the extensive and often globalized circulation of goods and services in late modern times, which causes both welfare and socioecological destruction” (2019, p. 855). It results from the evolution in culture and the mindset of human beings, particularly directed by consumerism. According to Boström and Klintman, “By using the term ‘mass consumption,’ the discussion here refers to the comprehensive cultural norm of consumption, consumers, consumption practices, outlets, advertisements, branding, shopping, fashion, and spending in contemporary societies” (2019, p.

856). Especially after some developments around the world, namely “globalisation, individualisation, and modernisation,” mass consumption has spread to most countries of the world dominated by the neoliberal system (2019, p. 855). The lives of people are, thus, surrounded by the agents of consumption, such as advertisements, fashion, and promotions of various products. As Bauman argues, “To increase their capacity for consumption, consumers must never be given rest. They need to be constantly exposed to new temptations in order to be kept in a state of constantly seething, never wilting excitation and, indeed, in a state of suspicion and disaffection” (2005, p. 26). In that regard, they have to be conscious of the system that tries to involve them in the craziness of mass consumption, particularly in this globalized and extremely individualized world.

In this capitalist and consumerist world, dominated by the neoliberal economy, the concept of the body has also undergone a transformation, and it has turned into “a symbol of value and identity which is largely performed and developed via the purchase of products” (Phipps, 2014, p. 9). People assume that they need to purchase a variety of products so as to ‘add value’ to themselves, which is one of the main features of consumerism in the present. Additionally, an obsession with the perfect body has been created and stimulated by this system by means of the concept of the elevated and prestigious body (2014, p. 9). Obsession and dissatisfaction with the body, including body weight and shape, starts at a very early age in childhood now (Urla and Swedlund, 2000, p. 397). Thus, mostly women are targeted by consumerism and its agents to have them feel ashamed by their bodies and they are promoted to buy new clothes, shoes, cosmetic products and even undergo cosmetic surgeries to compensate for their “spoiled identity” (Dolezal, 2015, pp. 131–132). As Urla and Swedlund point out, “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). In consequence, to look perfect has become one of the necessities of most women’s lives in the consumerist world of the twenty-first century, and they are always promoted to look and feel as ideal women in the most beautiful outfits, shoes and make-up along with periodical cosmetic surgeries, aiming to create a perfect body.

Appropriation

Umberto Eco states in his world-wide-known novel, *The Name of the Rose*, that “I discovered what writers have always known (and have told us again and again): books always speak of other books, and every story tells a story that has already been told” (qtd. in Hutcheon, 1988, p. 128). In *The Poetics of Postmodernism*, on intertextuality, Hutcheon emphasizes the network between literary works created previously and points out that “the intertextual echoing simultaneously works to affirm—textually and hermeneutically—the connection with the past” (1988, p. 125). Thus, literary works become bridges between the past and present, between different time periods and socio-cultural circumstances. As Leitch puts it, “Intertextuality posits both an uncentered historical enclosure and an abysmal decentered foundation for language and textuality; in so doing, it exposes all contextualizations as limited and limiting, arbitrary and confining, self-serving and authoritarian, theological and political” (qtd. in Hutcheon, 1988, p. 127). In the appropriation of a work, there is also an intertextual relationship, although it is not as explicit as it is in the adaptation (Sanders, 2006, p. 2). One of the most significant aspects of appropriation is the writer’s “political or ethical commitment [that] shapes a writer’s, director’s, or performer’s decision to re-interpret a source text” (Sanders, 2006, p. 2). In particular, along with its miscellaneous adaptations, transforming his famous plays into exhilarating movies and pieces of musical or opera, Shakespeare’s plays have been appropriated by a number of playwrights. It is also known that appropriating the works of particularly Latin and Roman writers and poets is “a celebrated form of artistic creation” not only at grammar schools in the Elizabethan period but also before that time (Loftis, 2013, p. xv). One of the most successful appropriations of Shakespeare’s plays is *Dunsinane* by David

Greig, who defines his work as a sequel to *Macbeth*. The reason behind his appropriation is historicopolitical since Greig has some historical points to correct and some contemporary political issues, which disturb him severely, to bring forward. As Julie Sanders also stresses in her well-known work *Adaptation and Appropriation*, “[A]ppropriation frequently affects a more decisive journey away from the informing source into a wholly new cultural product and domain. This may or may not involve a generic shift, and it may still require the intellectual juxtaposition of (at least) one text against another that we have suggested is central to the reading and spectating experience of adaptations” (Sanders, 2006, p. 26). Kirkwood also has socio-economic concerns, emerging from the capitalist economic system, and appropriation is utilized as a technique in her plays *Tinderbox* and *NSFW* in order to unveil the negative outcomes of capitalist culture. It may be difficult to recognize the appropriation of *Owners* and *Top Girls* by Churchill in *Tinderbox* and *NSFW* by Kirkwood, but what is obvious in her plays is that this technique supports her criticism of the neoliberal system and boosts the influence of the plays on readers and viewers.

Appropriation of *Owners* in *Tinderbox* against Capitalist Culture

Caryl Churchill observes the world regarding socio-economic problems and burdens on people, mainly emerging from the capitalist economic system and the patriarchal order, so in her plays, she invites viewers and readers to “see the damaging effects of a contemporary world disfigured by capitalism” (Aston, 2014, p. 202). In *Owners*, she criticises the devastating impacts of capitalist culture on people in the 1970s by means of her couple Marion and Clegg, who breathe with a strong capitalist urge in their private and professional lives and who commodify not only objects but also human beings around them with this urge. Churchill, who “condemns the capitalist principle of private ownership” in this play, implies that their capitalist drives are closely connected with the aforementioned features of the 1970s, such as the end of nationalization in terms of Keynesian policies and the start of a new era focusing on private property (Gobert, 2014, p. 44). Clegg earns his life as a butcher by slaughtering animals and transforming them into commercial “saleable objects” (p. 49). Moreover, his expectation of having a son is another capitalist element since he wants to have an heir for his butcher: “Clegg and Son. Pork butcher. Clegg and Son. Family butcher” (Churchill, 1986, p. 11). Meanwhile, this desire commodifies his future son, and he even announces that he does not need to have a son anymore once he loses his business. What is worse, he believes that his wife Marion belongs to him, and he intends to punish her violently on the condition that she betrays him: “If I thought for a moment she had dishonoured me, then without hesitation or a thought of the police – [He plunges knife into meat.] And also into the heart of the thief. ... She is legally mine. And one day she will die knowing it” (Churchill, 1986, pp. 10-11). Clegg imagines murdering his wife and tells these sentences in rage and with the desire for revenge, intertwined with his capitalist urge of ownership of his wife.

Full of capitalist drives, like her husband, Marion works as a zealous estate agent. She has a very assertive personality and is obsessed with the desire to own more money and property. In Botham's words, “Like Marlene [in *Top Girls*], who abandons her daughter to pursue a career in London, Marion doesn't recognise a biological maternal instinct” (p. 107). Thus, she only focuses on her job and possessions with her vigor and determination for success: “There's no limit. It's finding where to start. Before I started on property I just had no idea of myself. You don't know what you're capable of till you suddenly find yourself doing it” (Churchill, 1986, p. 45). It is obvious that her existence depends on her belongings, and she desires to gain more as a significant feature of capitalist culture. As Adiseshiah argues, “Ultimately, however – and tragically for the Left – it is a story of how traditional forms of resistance and opposition have been defeated by an aggressive neoliberalism, which bankrupts human cultures and economies through the processes of globalisation, consumerism, and marketisation” (p. 214). In that regard, Churchill gives an impressive representation of the erosion in the morality of people owing to the multifaceted ascendancy of capitalism

over society. Deprived of any value, Marion pushes the limits of owning more and buys the flat where her ex-lover lives with his family to seduce and own Alec back. In this sense, she starts to reduce a human being to a commodity and states, "If you love someone you want to keep them. I want to" (Churchill, 1986, p. 28). In her dialogue with him, her capitalist mentality is underlined once more: "You were mine then and you always will be" (Churchill, 1986, p. 31). Additionally, she commodifies Alec and his wife Lisa's baby by adopting it by force and not giving it back. She assumes that the baby is one of her belongings and never gives them to anyone else. Marion highlights that "I will keep what's mine. The more you want it the more it's worth keeping" (Churchill, 1986, p. 63). Her mercilessness here easily turns into cruelty with her order for her assistant Worsely to set fire to Alec's house to kill them when she understands that she is not going to keep either Alec or the baby. As Gobert puts it, "The play ... reveals the inescapability of property's logic – its subordination of human interests to acquisitive values – buoyed as it is by Britain's political and judicial systems" (2014, p. 47). Churchill, thus, severely criticises the "whole idea of Western individualism, and capitalism, and progress" in this play since she is conscious of the influences of this aggressive economic system and its culture on human beings, who are degenerated step by step (Gobert, 2014, p. 47).

Lucy Kirkwood, who also observes her society and is aware of the serious problems that capitalist culture causes, criticises neoliberalism in the twenty-first century as the main reason for this order. As Wallace observes, "Kirkwood is recognisably an engaged playwright seeking theatrical modes of reflecting on the struggles and antagonisms of the present" (2022, p. 25). In *Tinderbox*, the focus of her appropriation of Churchill's play, *Owners*, remains on the neoliberal system, which has become vulgar and has made people more individualist, self-centered, and cruel. As Sanders remarks, "Appropriation then, as with adaptation, shades in important ways into the discursive domains of other disciplines, in particular here the legal discourse surrounding the controversial areas of land and property rights" (2006, p. 30). A dystopic play, *Tinderbox*, the setting of which is Bradford in an undefined future, also has a couple, Saul and Vanessa. Saul is a butcher, like Clegg in *Owners*, and his wife Vanessa is generally meek, unlike Marion in *Owners*, although she is Saul's accomplice in a number of crimes he has committed. Kirkwood criticises the vulgar capitalist system with this couple and their ruthless and cold-blooded crimes, committed together. The negative effects of the economic system permeate the whole society in most countries of the world in the new millennium, especially by means of globalism and the extreme individualism which always stimulate people to be more self-centered and remorseless each passing year. As Huang and Rivlin emphasize, "Precisely because appropriation carries strong overtones of agency, potentially for the appropriated as well as for the appropriator, it can convey political, cultural, and in our contention, ethical advocacy" (2014, p. 2). Thus, Kirkwood appropriates *Owners* as a piece of her criticism regarding the capitalist system and its crushing influences with its transforming socio-economic aspects from the 1970s to the 2000s. Both *Owners* and *Tinderbox* start with their focus on the butchers of the plays, Clegg and Saul. Like Clegg, Saul's butcher's shop is a crucial part of his life, and he even defines it as his empire: "An Englishman's home is his castle, but an Englishman's shop is his Empire" (Kirkwood, 2016, p. 11). Additionally, he accuses his wife Vanessa of not giving him an heir to bequeath his butcher's shop, like Clegg again, since their children were killed during the attacks on Stratford in 2012. In this sense, the capitalist economic system depends upon a male-centered socio-economic structure despite the differences between the two periods. While Clegg becomes more ruthless through the end of the play and even rapes Alec's wife Lisa, Saul is also a very cruel character whose wife escapes from him in the first scene of the play so as not to be beaten or killed. He also announces that everybody has to obey his rules in his empire, including his wife and his workers or any intruders (Kirkwood, 2016, p. 18). Vanessa, thus, does not seem gratified to be his wife and has to bear his insulting language and behavior towards her. As Vanessa was an actress in second-rate pornographic movies in the past, Saul insults her in front of Perchik, a stranger in the beginning: "Never kiss a bought woman.

All your food will start tasting like pennies" (Kirkwood, 2016, p. 19). He even tortures her physically and psychologically in various ways and compels her to cry helplessly. This aspect of Saul again reminds us how Clegg desires and plans to murder his wife. Throughout the play, the butcher's shop is like a tinderbox, which can set fire at any time, Saul is the person who holds the matches. Consequently, Saul is the threat risk in the play, like Marion in *Owners*, who never cares about anyone except for herself. Nevertheless, Saul does not content himself with threatening people around him, but he murders them brutally as a butcher.

Throughout the play, it is inferred that Saul has murdered several young men before Perchik, the runaway Scottish boy desperately needing a shelter, arrives. Frankie, a young boy working for him, is the one who is first mentioned to fall into the cement mixer by accident, but later deduced to be pushed by Saul, the coldblooded murderer, deliberately:

VANESSA. But – you said that it was an accident. You said he *fell*.

SAUL. He did fall.

VANESSA. But ... you pushed him.

SAUL. I ... manipulated his centre of gravity, yes. Accidentally. (Kirkwood, 2016, p. 30)

However, Saul's violence is not restricted to murdering Frankie. While they are talking about Frankie's murder, he suddenly attacks Perchik by stabbing a fork into his leg. This is an act of intimidation for both Perchik and Vanessa to keep their silence about Frankie. Menace always exists in the play, but Saul is the main person who sheds blood ruthlessly and Perchik also seems to be under threat at any time. What is more, Saul does not have a limit to attack people when he feels under threat. To illustrate, he kills Detective Prawn, who searches his butcher's shop for a dangerous painter, with a cricket bat. His techniques to kill people callously show the extent of his brutality in the meantime. Shortly after he murders the detective, he intends to murder Perchik, most probably so as to efface the evidence of his last murder. However, Saul is not the only person who does not care about anyone. All the main characters continue talking about ordinary topics after the detective's murder as though nothing had happened a few minutes ago. Kirkwood elaborates on the value of human beings for the three characters in the twenty-first century, which also reminds us of Marion's remorseless order for the murder of Alec. In the Second Act, readers learn that Saul has killed seven or eight young men in total before the detective and their murder is generally because of their seducing Vanessa:

VANESSA. How many has it been now? Is it seven? Or eight?

SAUL. You just can't get the staff.

VANESSA. You have such bad luck, don't we, Saul? Either they have to leave. Like Perchik. Or Stavros. Or they have an accident. Like Frankie. Or Klaus. (Kirkwood, 2016, pp. 67-68)

In this play, people are just consumed by Saul one by one like a product. They are usually welcomed to Saul's butcher's shop to stay or work there for some time. However, they cannot get out of it as Saul just butchers them, like the animals he slaughters and sells. As Coveney observes, "Kirkwood's play is like a madcap mixture of Joe Orton's high-spirited blasphemy, Ben Jonson's triangular power play in *The Alchemist*, Martin McDonagh's thud and blunder ..., and the poisoned lyricism of Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. There are gunshots, foul language, smacked bottoms, bloody limbs and sardonic bursts" (2008). Vanessa transforms into an accomplice from a victim wife. Even after Perchik, the searched dangerous painter, murders Saul and starts to manage his shop, she does not yield to him. Although it is not clear, in the end, she most probably kills him and starts a new life by the sea, which she always misses. In consequence, Vanessa is very similar to Marion in *Owners*, in which "the corrupting power of ownership - of

human beings as well as of property - is a persistent concern" (Keyssar, 1985, p. 79). Kirkwood's appropriation of these two characters increases the impact of her critique of neoliberal culture, which poisons human beings and deteriorates their characteristics. People just lose their values of humanity due to the self-centeredness and ruthlessness of capitalist culture, the severity of which climbs year by year. Accordingly, this culture makes people lose their moral values and get deprived of humanity itself, the outcome of which is becoming people, like Saul and Vanessa in *Tinderbox*, much more remorseless than Clegg and Marion in *Owners*. Kirkwood increases the influence of her play on viewers and readers through her appropriation, which provides "enhanced self-awareness and richness of discursive understanding that [is provoked] in the perceiver" (Huang and Rivlin, 2014, p. 9).

Appropriation against Consumerism in *Top Girls* and *NSFW*

The other play in which Lucy Kirkwood utilizes appropriation is *NSFW*, where the character Miranda reminds the audience of the successful businesswoman Marlene, the protagonist of *Top Girls* by Churchill. In *NSFW*, Kirkwood has political motives and critiques not only the media and its abusive order but also consumerism in the last act, which will be analyzed in this study. By appropriating *Top Girls*, Kirkwood boosts the influence of her criticism. Marlene is a "Thatcher-like character," who has just focused on her career and manages her own employment agency (Reinelt, 2000, p. 180). In the second half of the play, it is underlined that the capitalist system compels women to make a choice between their career and private life. So as to be successful in work life, it is imposed that women have to concentrate on merely their jobs and careers and ignore their private life, which means themselves indeed. As the capitalist system always prioritizes men rather than women and protects their rights in the economic sphere, women are just subordinated and advised not to marry if they want to work. It is also clear in the dialogue between Marlene, "who has recently displaced a man to take her place at the top of the capitalist ladder as director of a prominent employment agency," and Jeanine, searching for a job, in Act II (Godiwala, 2003, p. 9):

JEANINE. I am saving to get married.

MARLENE. Does that mean you don't want a long-term job, Jeanine?

JEANINE. I might do. ...

MARLENE. So you won't tell them you're getting married?

JEANINE. Had I better not?

MARLENE. It would probably help. (Churchill, 2013, pp. 172-173)

Even in the 1980s, gender discrimination in the economic life was still a big problem for women, although they struggled a lot to improve their conditions since World War II. They had to hide the truth about getting or being married from their employers to be accepted or to continue working since it means having a child in the near future and having to leave their work to look after their babies. As Marlene is aware of these difficulties and is an ambitious woman who desires to have a status and a good career in business, she just ignores them and leaves her daughter and family members behind. As Aston points out, "The difficulty of combining work and family life is posed as an unresolved problem in *Top Girls*, while the dangers of espousing Marlene's masculinist, capitalist values, oppressive to other women (and men), are signalled in the final line of the play, delivered by Angie: 'Frightening'" (2003, p. 22). She explains the reasons: "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 extremely high-powered lady earning a great deal of money" (Churchill, 2013, p. 222). As she is conscious of the difficulties of a woman who is married with a child, she has left her daughter to her sister Joyce in order to continue her career. However,

to play the game according to the rules of this system serves capitalism again and it creates a vicious cycle, in which women are either excluded or obliged to suppress their womanhood and private life, like Marlene. Thus, Marlene is a woman who also serves the capitalist system and capitalist culture, shaping people and encouraging them to be self-centered without any values.



Kirkwood emphasizes in *NSFW* that capitalist culture has become stronger and more dominant on people, through particularly consumerism in twenty-first century Britain. By her appropriation of *Top Girls*, she first reminds the audience that “the criteria for top women achievers in the patriarchal system of 1980s” have not improved (Godiwala, 2003, p. 12). The editor of *Electra*, a weekly women’s magazine, Miranda is a businesswoman like Marlene. She is also self-centered and suppresses her womanhood and female body, so she is lonely in her private life and unhappy inside. In that regard, women still have to sacrifice happiness in their personal life to have a brilliant career in their work life. This capitalist and male-centered system still forces women to make a choice between their life and career. As Brown puts it, “It is not the individuals, but the system itself that is being indicted” (qtd. in Godiwala, 2003, p. 15). Likewise, Miranda never cares about other people’s feelings or lives, but she only focuses on her job, career, and the profits of the magazine she manages. What is more, she represents the consumerist and perfectionist culture of the capitalist system in this play, becoming more vulgar with each passing year. The walls of *Electra* are covered with the pictures of ‘healthy-looking’ women in beautiful clothes and shoes along with heavy makeup. All the women in these pictures look perfect as they have been photoshopped. As Taylor and Saarinen argue, “desire [of consumption] does not desire satisfaction. To the contrary, desire desires desire” (qtd. in Bauman, 2005, p. 25). In this sense, women buying this magazine are stimulated to look more beautiful and purchase more cosmetic products, trendy clothes and shoes. Miranda also seems very trendy in her black dress, and describes the group of women she belongs to: “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? ... We’re leaders, thinkers, dreamers, shoppers, upscale ABC1 women with upscale ABC1 purchasing habits” (Kirkwood, 2016, p. 229). This group of women is the consumer group of society, and not only cosmetic products but also cosmetic surgery are a significant part of their lives to be able to look perfect although their bodies are not perfect, and aging is one of the realities of human beings. As Bauman points out, “in a society of consumers, ... life-projects are built around consumer choice rather than work, professional skills or jobs” (2005, p. 1). Kirkwood stresses that there is now an obsession with consumption for millions of people living in neoliberal societies. Furthermore, Miranda is extremely self-centred and is ready to abuse anyone for the sake of the magazine. For instance, she not only compels Sam to find a fault in his ex-girlfriend’s body to employ him but also abuses Rupert, another journalist, like a guinea pig, by forcing him to apply cosmetic products and undergo cosmetic surgery, like Botox. He is also obliged to walk on Oxford Street in a mini dress for the magazine not to be fired. In Bauman’s words, “Nothing truly lasting could be reasonably hoped to be erected on this kind of shifting sand. Purely and simply, the prospect of constructing a lifelong identity on the foundation of work is, for the great majority of people (except, for the time being at least, the practitioners of a few highly skilled and highly privileged professions), dead and buried” (2005, p. 28). In that regard, the neoliberal system and consumerism transform people into greedy consumers of products, but they are also consumed ruthlessly by this system as its representations are apparent in the play. Accordingly, by her appropriation and the character Miranda, Kirkwood emphasizes the vulgarity of consumerism, which not only encourages people to consume more unnecessarily but also transforms them into consumption products.

Conclusion

The capitalist economic system monopolizes most countries of the world by means of capitalist and consumerist cultures. Human beings are the main target of this system, with the contribution of the superstructure and institutions of each country serving the base, the economic system. It is hard to escape from the impacts of the economic system and the culture it has created, affecting them unconsciously most of the time. In the twenty-first century, the devastating effects of capitalism and consumerism on people are so harsh that they have become as vulgar as the system itself owing to the loss of their values and humanity. Churchill and Kirkwood observe the world around them and criticize this system that oppresses people with not only harsh living conditions but also the psychological battle people have to undergo in this culture. In *Owners* and *Top Girls*, Churchill's critiques of the capitalist system and culture in the 1970s and 1980s, surrounding people at each moment of their lives, are still very meaningful and in effect. Thus, Kirkwood appropriates Churchill's two plays to criticize the disastrous impacts of neoliberalism along with consumerism upon people in the twenty-first century. Using appropriation in her plays *Tinderbox* and *NSFW* makes Kirkwood's critiques more impressive for both spectators and readers. She emphasizes that the capitalist economic system, transforming over time, has been continuing to expand its power and dominion over people, and human beings have lost their values, resulting in the loss of dignity and humanity itself in their extremely self-centered, isolated, and corrupted worlds on the edge of chaos and catastrophe. Accordingly, people must create an alternative system to be able to revolutionize their despondent and inhumane lives.



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