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## TRANSGRESSING GENDER ROLES IN CARYL CHURCHILL'S PLAY OWNERS

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### Abstract

This study discusses Caryl Churchill's play Owners in terms of confusion of gender roles and capitalistic concerns through a socialist feminist criticism. The play is based on motherhood, social control, possession and material concerns. Marion's wish for an excessive possession and power brings greed and violence through subverting her feminine identity to quest gender roles. Male characters are submissive in contrast to Marion. Buddhist and Taoist philosophy in contrast to Western culture is expressed through the character Alec's passivity by exceeding his masculine roles. The depiction of the character Marion subverts the conventional patriarchal norms, still bringing no improvement for women in collectives. Marion achieves an individualistic material success when she exceeds her boundaries as a female and represses another woman. At this point analysing the play through the socialist feminist lens becomes meaningful in Churchill's depicting the egoistical figures like Marion that brings no improvement in women's social position.

**Keywords:** Socialist feminism, Owners, Possession and power, Transgressing gender roles.

## CARYL CHURCHILL'İN OWNERS ADLI OYUNUNDA CİNSİYET ROLLERİNİN İHLAL EDİLMESİ

### Özet

Bu çalışma, Caryl Churchill'in Owners adlı oyununu cinsiyet rollerindeki karmaşa ve kapitalist endişeler terimlerini sosyalist feminizm eleştirisi yoluyla tartışır. Oyun, annelik, sosyal kontrol, sahiplik ve maddi kaygılar üzerine kuruludur. Marion'nun aşırı sahip olma ve güç isteği, hırs ve şiddeti getirerek onun feminen kimliğini alt üst etme yoluyla cinsiyet rollerini sorgular. Erkek karakterler, Marion'nun tersine itaatkardır. Batı kültürünün tersine Budist ve Taoizm felsefesi Alec karakterinin kendi eril rollerini aşması yoluyla ifade edilir. Marion karakterinin tasviri geleneksel ataerkil normlarını çökertir, gene de kadınlar açısından toplu bir ilerleme sağlanamaz. Marion, bir kadın olarak sınırlarını aştığında ve diğer kadını baskıladığında bireysel bir başarı elde eder. Bu noktada oyunu sosyalist feminist bir gözle eleştirmek Churchill'in Marion gibi egoist tiplerin ortaya çıkarmasında kadınların sosyal durumlarına hiçbir gelişme sağlamayacak olduğunu vurgulamak açısından anlamlı olur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Sosyalist feminizm, Sahipler, Sahiplik ve güç, Cinsiyet rollerini aşmak.

The purpose of this study is to discuss Caryl Churchill's play Owners in terms of transgressing gender roles and capitalistic concerns through a socialist feminist criticism. Transgression in gender roles of both sexes is highly emphasized in the play with a greed for excessive wish of power that brings material concerns in the play. The play turns upside down the gender roles through representation of the major character Marion that is an outcome of the policy of Margaret Thatcher bringing socialist feminist criticism into question. Caryl Churchill

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is the most successful and best-known socialist-feminist playwright to have emerged from the Second Wave feminism of the 1960s. She has provoked the most important feminist thinking about the theatre since coming to attention in the mid 1970s whose works have been included to the canon. Caryl Churchill's works in the 1970s blend a strong commitment to both socialism and feminism which combine an analysis of gender and economic oppression in contemporary Britain – for instance *Owners* (1972), *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976), *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Cloud Nine* (1978). Churchill gave a message that the world should change for a better one. She introduced the properties of the society that she longed for in her speech:

[I know] quite well what kind of society I would like: decentralized, non-authoritarian, communist, non-sexist – a society in which people can be in touch with their feelings and control of their lives. But it always sounds both ridiculous and unattainable when you put it into words. (Aston, 1997: 3)

In the play *Owners* there is a quest for such a well-defined society since everything is upside down by the reversal of gender roles and thus the social life is full of chaos. The play emphasizes theatre as a model for change. The play *Owners* (1972) is Churchill's first full-length play for the London stage, which is about a strong-minded real estate agent Marion who refuses to be confined by her husband. The play was first produced at the Royal Court Theatre Upstairs in 1972 and it can be considered as "*schematic and conventional*" (Solomon, 1981: 50) which leans on Churchill's "*socialist and feminist concern*" (Solomon, 1981: 50). Though *Owners* has the characteristics of melodrama, it is defined as "*terrifyingly dark comedy*" (Keyssar, 1984: 80) which expresses "*anti-social motivations and desires*" (Innes, 1996: 460). Churchill acknowledges both social (the idea of ownership controlled by female power) and philosophical (the contrast between Western aggressiveness and Eastern passivity) issues in the play.

The play is written in two acts; the first has six scenes, the second has eight, taking place in a developing part of North London. *Owners* begins when Marion, a successful property developer, buys the house in which Lisa, Alec, their two children and Alec's senile mother, rent the third-floor apartment. Marion buys and sells several apartments to make money out of it. Marion intends to sell the house that Lisa and Alec live and assigns her employee Worsley to vacant possession of the house. Worsley threatens and bribes, but Lisa and Alec are resistant to moving. Marion has had a past affair with Alec and still attracted by him. The situation gets complex Lisa finds Marion and Alec in the bed as she goes into labor with her third child. She offers the child to Marion, who produced no child, in anger. She accepts it and makes Lisa sign adoption documents which Lisa later regrets. Marion's husband Clegg, a butcher, takes care of the baby and dreams of having a chain of Clegg & Son butcher shop. Cleg also dreams of murdering Marion because she has relationship with Alec. Worsley whose own suicide attempts go in vain agrees to help Clegg. Clegg sexually exploits Lisa and under that condition he lets her to see the baby. Marion sends Worsley to set fire to the house. In the final scene, Worsley in bandage returns the forgotten baby in the carrier to Lisa. Then he starts the fire, but wanted to save Lisa and the baby, and shouted a warning upstairs. The entire family escaped, but Alec re-entered the burning house to save the child downstairs. He and that child died. Upon hearing the news Marion is not sorry she says: "*I'm just beginning to find out what's possible*" (Churchill, 1985: 67). Worsley places a gun against his temple, fires, and misses.

As its title suggests, the play concerns the proprietary influences of Western society which focuses on the desire to possess people and properties. According to Wandor the play embodies both the idea of ownership and control as a manifestation of socialism and the subject of motherhood and personal relationships as feminism. Both socialism and feminism overlap which produces "*mesh in macabre, surreal story*" about some group of people who are stuck in "*helpless relationships*" (Wandor, 2000: 61). There is not much constructive relationship among the characters emphasizing the negative upbringing of capitalism. Everyone in the play seems too engaged within himself/herself and trying to cope with the harsh system by ignoring values like virtue, conscience, and morals. Churchill once interviewed by John Hall in "Close Up" states her interest in the tranquillity of Taoism which will turn upside down the negative effects of capitalism and excessive pride of ownership.

The owners of the title are concerned with various types of ownership. There's ownership of property and things, extended into the idea of owning and controlling people. Really it goes back to the whole idea of Western individualism, and capitalism and progress, as opposed to the more passive Eastern idea of simply being. I'm concerned with the whole idea of individualism that developed with Christianity, and the puritan idea of work as a virtue, and aggressive achievement, . . . Against this background I include a character who is completely passive. He's there really because of an interest I had in the Taoist Chinese idea of being: of

not actually doing or achieving anything, but just being. I'm not proposing this as a marvellous answer, but by putting it alongside the other system, I hope that each will question the other. (Hall, 12 Dec. 1972)

Churchill, as she states in the interview, addresses to the positive effects of Zen Buddhism that she favoured in her young ages. She proposes that excessive desire for possession could only be balanced by adopting Zen Buddhism. This is the only way to diminish such destructive life brought by the Western idea of capitalism.

*Owners* presents alternatives to Western patriarchy through Taoism. The philosophical contrast between the Western ideal of individual achievement and the Eastern ideal of passive acceptance points out wish for a balanced life. The playwright draws attention to the negative effects of Christian ideology of achievement producing exploitation and violence. There is an obsession to own by opposing forces which is presented as the epigraph in the very beginning of the play.

Onward Christian Soldiers,

Marching as to war.

Christian hymn

Sitting quietly, doing nothing.

Spring comes and the grass grows by itself.

Zen poem (Churchill, 1985: 3)

Two opposing forces are presented in the very beginning of the play through those poems: Aggression and passivity, the Christian work ethic and Buddhist tranquillity, destruction and creation. Churchill contrasts Western to Eastern attitudes. According to the Western view, the West is the center and Western attitude is associated with masculinity; on the contrary, the East is the 'other' and it is associated with femininity. For instance, in the play *Owners* the West and the East is presented to reverse the gender roles. The Western attitude is presented by Marion who performs masculine attitude, whereas Alec performs Eastern attitude mostly passive and feminized. In a note written before the play starts in 1985 edition, Churchill states that she contrasted Western aggressiveness to Eastern passive attitudes in Zen poem to express gender issues. Churchill centers her play through these contrasting sets to turn upside down the traditional gender stereotypes: the active force is a woman (Marion) and the passive factor is a man (Alec). Both characters are supported by the other characters in the play.

. . . one character with the active, achieving attitude of 'Onward Christian soldiers', the other the 'sitting quietly, doing nothing' of the Zen poem. The active one had to be a woman, the passive one a man, for their attitudes to show up clearly as what they believed rather than as conventional male and female behaviour. So Marion and Alec developed from that train of thought. (Churchill, 1985: 4)

Marion and Alec represent figures in Christian Hymn and Zen poem. Contrary to our expectation, Marion is associated to the Hymn and Alec with the Zen poem. Brown (1989) explains Alec's passivity as follows: "*Alec's desirelessness, his yin passivity, is a personality trait foreign to Western culture*" (38). Alec's passive and submissive attitudes are plausibly a reaction to the dominant patriarchal order. He refuses such an order and draws attention to an alternative order by turning upside down the gender roles in which the masculine is not in power. Helene Keyssar (1983) interprets Alec as an alternative to the dominant patriarchal culture:

Alec is the antithesis not only of Marion but of ant available male types. Educated and a skilled glazier, he holds no salaried job, not because he is unable to find outside work, but because he prefers to stay at home . . . He is a man with perfect absence of desire either for property or to wield control over others. . . Alec retains his moral autonomy while rejecting all obligations to social convention. (204-205)

Marion's "yin", on the other hand, is a challenge to the assumptions of the Western tradition. Churchill not only contrasts the Christian work ethic with Buddhist tranquillity, but also transgresses the gender roles in the very beginning. It is only Alec who has no desire to own anything. Lisa complains of Alec's passivity: "*He hasn't been at work for six months. He don't remember to eat if I don't make him.*" (24) Even though Clegg teases Alec in Act

Two Scene Six of having sex with his wife, Clegg pretends calm and does not give any reaction: *"I wouldn't want to waste myself on something as second rate as your wife. She was quite useful. A handy receptacle. But quite disposable after"* (36) Clegg continues to tease Alec when he talks to Worsley *"... when I was having intercourse with his wife"* (56). Alec's answer is only *"Yes"* (56) and even Worsley is much bewildered: *"Lisa? You?"* (56). Alec's passivity in this case seems unreal, as for Keyssar (1984), he rejects *"all obligations to social convention"* (83) which can be interpreted as protest of gender roles established by social convention. There is a contrast in the final scene where Alec takes up a heroic action to save another's baby in the burning house which causes death of his own and the baby. His only action apart from causing the death of his senile mother by disconnecting the drip at the hospital in Act Two Scene Three is an attempt to save the baby he does not know. Plausibly, that is why Alec does not take up an action because it brings disaster consequently. Keyssar (1984) interprets Alec's case as *"a new kind of hero is fragile creation"* (84) and thus by reversing gender roles in society in which *"the prison of sexism can only be eliminated by radical changes in men as well as in women"* (Keyssar, 1984: 84).

Men and women are also presented as opposite figures; for instance, Marion is a woman who is obsessed with power and owning whereas Lisa represents a domestic traditional woman figure. Similarly, Alec is a passive male who does nothing and Clegg has a fantasy to dominate his wife sexually eventually only finds dominating Alec's wife Lisa. Clegg is a misogynistic man who plans to murder his wife to get rid of the power of Marion.

According to the codes of patriarchal society men should be categorized as active and powerful whereas women should be categorized as submissive and powerless. Traditional gender roles are reversed within this capitalistic desire to possess either a good or a human being. For instance, Clegg is submissive and less powerful than his wife Marion. Marion acts like a male type who has the power to own anything she likes and in contrast Alec is passive and he does not even act when a thief enters his house. Lisa complains of Alec's doing nothing even in this case. He tells Lisa she may call the police if she likes: *"If you want police go and get some. If you don't let's forget it"* (14). Lisa pronounces her resentment as *"Any other man would get the police himself"* (14). Nothing worries Alec because his motto is *"Sitting here quietly. Doing nothing. The day goes by itself"* (14). On the other hand, Worsley has no dexterity in anything. He cannot even be successful in committing suicide. Lisa, more feminine character, even acts like masculine who takes the responsibility of the family on her shoulders. Lisa is not domestic like Alec, she has to deal with the problems outside her domestic life. She tries to call the police upon the incident of theft in her house and get the money Marion gives under condition they move out of Marion's house. Lisa signs the contract of adoption of her own baby without knowing the consequences. Her frail nature as a woman is always active in her deeds. She is unable to give any proper decisions and left alone.

The play can be analyzed through socialist/Marxist feminism which emphasizes the idea that individual success does not improve the position of women in collectives. In other words, individual success of a woman does not help the rest of all classes of women. There is no feminism unless it includes collectives (Aston, 2003: 20). The basis of socialist feminism expresses the futility of individual solutions. Women should act collectively in order to be liberated from the patriarchal oppression. The play points out the lack of socialist feminism which is valid for all classes of women. There is much criticism of Churchill's character called Marion that stands for all feminists; an egoistic upper-class woman who does nothing for the other classes of women. The play also criticizes women's adaptation of stereotypical male ways of getting ahead by denying the traditional domestic woman image. This new unconventional woman image is the product of Margaret Thatcher's policy.

Thatcherite politics gives much credit for private enterprises which defends women like Marion. Since Marion is the embodiment of upward mobility (a privileged position for only upper-class women) in Western capitalist world, she adopts a masculine attitude for power through denying her being a *"woman identified woman"*. Marion does not liberate herself from dominant patriarchal values causing her *"to acquire dehumanize[d]"* (Merrill, 1988: 74) values. Dworkin states that *"There is no freedom or justice or even common sense in developing a male sexual sensibility. . . which is aggressive, competitive, objectifying . . . to contribute to the oppression of one's sister"* (Dworkin, 1981: 12). Churchill criticizes the existence of Thatcher-like figure, through socialist/Marxist feminist perspective when she creates a new woman image apart from a conventional woman image like her protagonist called Marlene in *Top Girls*. In this sense, the play points out the dangers of feminism without socialism (Aston, 2003: 20).

The play also depicts *"the bourgeois interpretation of feminism which had become prevalent under Thatcher"* (Reinelt 1996: 179). *"Personal is political"* feminism also draws reader's attention, because the personal problems of women are the cause of political reasons. According to *"personal is political"* view, *"It captured the insight"*

that many of what were thought to be personal problems possessed social and political causes, were widely shared among women, and could only be resolved by social and political change" (Mandle, 2016). Then, why does Marion adopt masculine characteristic traits? The answer lies in the definition of "personal is political" feminism. Power and ownership could only be achieved by confirming capitalist and patriarchal order, which seems as consequence of social and political issues. Under the light of this perspective feminism clashing with capitalism seems problematic for women who lack solidarity and sisterhood thus creates egoist figures like Marion.

Churchill leaves no space for the male gaze, on the contrary, she adopts a strong feminist outlook in the play. Men are not presented as traditionally strong figures for this reason the play rejects the male viewpoint. For instance, Worsley is a damaged male, Clegg is "threatened by a woman's power, and emasculated by it" (Wandor, 1987: 119), Marion who has economic and social power "stolen Clegg's gender role" (Wandor, 1987: 120). Marion's role as a woman is reversed: she has no capacity for motherhood and does not produce a child. Clegg thinks that she is sterile. Still she is not totally a strong figure because she has been mentally unstable. Excessive power in a woman is not natural so we learn through Clegg and Worsley's speech that Marion has been hospitalized because of mental illness. Marion confesses that she "has been in a mental hospital [herself]" (Churchill, 1985: 31) in a conversation with Alec in Act One Scene five. Marion's power is shadowed by her mental destabilization which depicts the woman in power is not still accepted in a patriarchal dominant society. Marion is matched by her husband Clegg who is murderous and Worsley who is suicidal in both cases they are ineffective. The men talk but do not achieve anything. This means they are unable to take up an action. Marion, Worsley, and Clegg in Scene Three go to a striptease night club to celebrate Marion's purchase. Clegg watches a female stripper and his sexual desire are made fun of not only by Marion but also by the audience. Clegg becomes the object of audience's gaze as he pants and gasps uncontrollably. This situation demonstrates that there is a tendency to turn upside down the "male gaze" on women. Instead of emphasizing the male gaze on the strip-teasers, it is Clegg who has been the target on the act of gazing. It is a man not woman who becomes the target of the gaze in that night-club. It is for sure that everyone is making fun of Clegg. Marion takes advantage of this situation by saying: "If you want a girl, Clegg, I'll buy you one" (20). Marion has real economic power and Clegg is dependant to Marion which demonstrates that their gender roles are reversed. Likewise, Clegg functions as a "housewife" when Marion adopts Lisa's baby. The traditional roles again reverse when Clegg looks after the baby and internalize a domestic life. It is women who are expected to nurture the baby and be domestic. Everything is upside down; Lisa sees the baby even as a commodity which emphasizes the consequence of the obsession to own. In Act Two Scene Six, Marion takes the baby as a possession and demonstration of her power. When Lisa begs to take her baby back, Marion answers in a most cruel way:

MARION. Leave me if you like but you won't get the baby. I will keep what's mine. The more you want it the more it's worth keeping. I haven't paid you to go. Every one of you thinks I will give in. Because I'm a woman, is it? I'm meant to be kind. I'm meant to understand a woman's feelings wanting her baby back. I don't. I won't. I can be as terrible as anyone. (Churchill, 1985: 63)

Marion is never interested in the baby; however, possession of the baby is important for her since it is an indication of her power on the other people around her. In this quotation Marion reverses the expectation of patriarchal society from a woman; she rejects acting according to her gender. She reverses gender roles and adopts a masculine identity by rejecting traditionally defined feminine roles. As a woman she rejects to be "kind" and "understand a woman's feeling", because she adopts a masculine identity. Moreover, Marion forgets the baby in a carriage, which is an indication of her seeing the baby not as a human being but only as any object she owns. Likewise, Lisa the biological mother of the baby wants to possess the baby because she thinks that it inherently belongs to her. The desire to "own" continues even in the dialogue between Lisa and Alec. Lisa says that the baby belongs to them: "I don't see that signing a bit of paper makes him hers. He is mine. His blood and everything he was born with, what he's like. Is yours and mine." (Churchill, 1985: 52). Need to own and control is inclusive to the female characters not male characters as it is generally accepted as a male characteristic features.

Marion wants to possess not only the baby but also a former lover Alec. To have control over him, Marion buys the house where Alec is a tenant and threatens to raise the rent. Marion talks to Alec: "You were mine then and always will be" (31). Marion exceeds her limits when Alec turns her off. She has great desire to own even an abstract thing like love. She wants to control even Alec's feelings under the name of love in a most imperative way. Marion declares her desire for Alec in terms of ownership: ". . . I'm yours whether you want me or not. Have all the money and stay here too if that's what you want. Empires have been lost for love. Worlds well lost. We men

of destiny get what we're after even if we're destroyed by it. . . Onward. Love me". (31) This also reminds us of the Christian hymn in the very beginning of the play. Marion commends as "onward" and sees love affair as means to control and a dynamic thing that never accords with the passive Alec. She represents herself in an oppressive and masculine discourse. There is a reversal of gender roles in which Marion acts like a male counterpart and calls herself as "*we men of destiny*". According to Kritzer (1991) Marion reverses conventional sex roles by "*pursu[ing] her desires with an aggressive singlemindedness that precludes preserving, nurturing, or caring*" (65-66). Kritzer (1991) interprets the case as Churchill "*cross-cuts the issues of property ownership with that of gender*" (65). Although Alec is momentarily sexually engaged with Marion, still he cannot be owned. Marion also requests to run away with Alec. She tries to persuade him with the idea of elopement: "*She's not your equal and I am. I love you more than she does . . . And you know yourself you love me more than her*" (46-7). There is also reversal of the traditional patriarchal gender roles in which the man plans everything and is dominant in the elopement. Marion does not receive a positive answer and Alec continues to be passive and submissive which is associated with women's characteristic trait. Marion's passion for Alec is regularly frustrated, like Marlene in *Top Girls* that is the price she pays for being a successful career woman who is on the top but alone. Like Marlene, Marion is the embodiment of an upwardly mobile capitalist and an "owner". Career woman is always alone in most of Churchill's plays emphasizing the idea that women still must pay for their success and the impossibility of balancing family life with career life. Marion has no family or child connection; however, she has a passion to possess an unrequited love. Roberts suggests that Marion's work ethic comes from her childhood as a girl (48). She works hard to be successful which means "owning". For instance, she buys the house only for the profit she would make money out of it. She possesses the baby and not even bothered to look after it. She lacks emotions since success becomes the main factor in her being brought up:

MARION: Everything I was taught – be clean, be quick, be top, be best, you may not succeed, Marion, but what matters is to try your hardest. To push on. Onward Christian soldiers, marching as to the war . . . Marion tries hard. I work like a dog. Most women are fleas but I'm the dog" (30)

Marion is not a stereotypical dependent and submissive woman like other women. She says that she is "the dog" meaning independent and powerful, not "a flea" that needs protection and dependant on the existence of others. Marion reverses the stereotypical patriarchal power which brings problems. Merrill points out that in Marion's reversal of her gender role Churchill demonstrates "*success by patriarchal, capitalist standards is exploitative, whether the owners and strivers are male or female*" (73). Churchill argues that female sexual power represented by Marion creates a problem in patriarchal social system. Marion is plausibly created as a protagonist to express the playwright's reaction against the repression of the bourgeois women in the play. Churchill breaks the boundaries of patriarchal society by creating such exaggerated character like Marion that turns upside down the traditional roles: "*Were Marion a man, her aggressive authoritarianism would be admired by most of those within the play as well as many in the audience; were Alec a woman, his lack of aggression and contended domesticity would hardly be thought of . . .*" (Keyssar, 1984: 84).

Similarly, Clegg sees Marion as a commodity for his investment and profit. Their relationship depends not on husband-wife relationship but rather a financial security on Clegg's side: "*. . . She is mine. I have invested heavily in Marion and don't intend to lose any part of my profit. She is my flesh. And touching her you touch me. And I will not let myself be touched*" (56). Churchill draws attention to the relationship between Western capitalism and ownership: "*Western capitalism's preoccupation with ownership*" (Aston 1997: 19). Gender-role reversal is parallel with the capitalistic issues of ownership. Churchill dramatizes property-owning childless couple which points out the devastating effects of capitalism in a family. It breaks the family bonds and no one takes the part of traditionally defined gender roles. Capitalism creates monster-like women image who is neither interested in family affairs nor producing a child. Everyone seems to be preoccupied with his/her own life bringing egoism into question. Gender roles reverse: Marion acts like a masculine that has great economic power both on property and her husband; conversely Clegg performs feminine qualities who is dependent on his wife's property. Marion leads an independent life despite her marriage, as opposed to Lisa being a family centred. Marion neither cares about her husband nor the baby: "*. . . Are you going against me, Clegg? It was entirely for you I got the baby. If you don't like arrangements you can go. Clear right off. It would be a delight never to see you again.*" (61) As a matter of fact, Marion's victory depends on her materialist individualism and the misery of the others.

Clegg takes the role of Marion and reverses his gender role as looking after the baby. He is a feminized weak character who is under the control of his wife. Although he internalises the traditional gender roles, he is not

able to get away from his wife's tyranny. "A man can't be expected to stay home and look after the baby. He can do it of course because it's not difficult. Even a woman can do it easily. But it is a waste of real abilities" (54) He knows that looking after a baby and adopting a domestic life is a traditionally defined as a "woman's job". Still, he accepts this role which can be considered as an effect of capitalism. He is financially dependent on his wife. He has a dream of "Clegg and Son" chain of butcher's shops.

CLEGG. I was going to be big myself, you don't seem to realise. That was my intention as a young man . . . I envisaged a chain. Clegg and Son. I was still the son at that time. I would have liked a son myself once I was the Clegg. But now I've no business I don't need a son. Having no son I don't need a business. (Churchill, 1985: 9).

As a traditional man, Clegg's dream consists of some patriarchal ideals: a business passing through father to son which might make him economically independent. Then, he might have power to manipulate his wife as a businessman. Clegg gives up career aspirations because of Marion's thirst for power and climbing to the top alone. Churchill again points out the reversal of gender roles since it is man who is expected to be powerful on business matters. Here it is just the opposite: a man is under the shadow of his wife's power. Clegg's dream will not be realized since he has no son to pass on the business. Clegg adopts patriarchal ideas and feels powerless without a son. Aston (1997) states that lack of a son and heir hinders Clegg fulfilling not only his patriarchal desire but also "the values, needs and ethos of capitalist and patriarchal systems" (20). Plausibly, both patriarchal and capitalist systems might be the reason why he would like to adopt Lisa's son and raise him as his son to realize his dreams of the "Clegg and Son" chain of his butcher's shop. Clegg looks after Lisa's baby, which demonstrates the reversing of gender roles. Clegg's behavior subverts the traditional male roles since looking after a baby is associated to women's duty. In fact, Clegg's whole purpose is to inherit his business. Still, he is unable to realize his dream that emphasizes strengthening male passivity and promoting women's power. Finding difficult to cope with his wife's success on business matters he depicts "male chauvinism and misogyny" (Komporal, 2006: 47). Worsley asks Clegg the reason why he does not leave Marion at the very beginning of the play, as he answers "I tried once. But where would I go? And she didn't mind at all . . . She can stand on her own two feet which is something I abominate in a woman" (Churchill, 1985: 8). This quotation expresses the powerlessness of male figure and powerful woman figure. He rejects this idea since Clegg internalizes traditional patriarchal order. Clegg states:

. . . We are taught to look up to my father. My mother literally worshipped him. I've seen her on her knees . . . she knew how to give a man the right support . . . The tea was hot on the table when he came in. We never made a sound (9).

Roberts (2008) points out that Clegg's ideal woman is his mother who "worshipped" his father (47). Clegg defines a perfect traditional woman image: "Comb your hair and take an interest in your husband's work. Find a hobby. . . Creative hobbies are nice for women" (10). However, Clegg is unable to control or have power on his wife because he says that "Everything I had was hers" (Churchill, 1985: 10). His wish for a dominant male patriarchal figure is shattered because of creating a jealous husband who wishes to control his wife as a commodity. Clegg loses his self-confidence and his fancy creates negative stories in which he has been cheated by his wife: "If I thought 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. I am more an Othello than a Hamlet. Out out damned candle! She is legally mine. And one day she will die knowing it . . . it's she who is infertile" (11). Clegg is struggling to keep the patriarchal order which is invalid in the play. Clegg's masculine presence is weakened by the existence of an infertile wife who has capitalistic power. Worsley remarks right after this speech: "But Marion's on the pill. I daresay." (11) This speech also proves Clegg's tendency to trivialize his wife as invalid since he looks down upon Marion who has no baby of her own. Roberts (2008) interprets Clegg's relationship to his wife as "ownership replaces partnership" (47). Clegg is not a philosophical thinker like Hamlet; on the contrary, he internalized Othello's case who is a man of action led into his own destruction by his uncontrollable jealousy. This also depicts the idea that patriarchal power would be destroyed; which is emphasized by the reversal of gender roles. Churchill emphasizes the loss of dominant patriarchal figure in the character Clegg and questions the traditional gender roles through his paternalistic views.

Clegg emphasizes that his expectation from his wife is never fulfilled. Marion rejects the traditional feminine roles: she never obeys her husband and her primary ambition is to possess power. Clegg says: "I look at her sometimes and think I am the one this powerful rich property developer swore before God to honour and obey"

(11) emphasizing his traditional role as a husband and women should obey men in married life. This is not the case in their relationship since neither Clegg represents a masculine power nor Marion represents a feminine submissive wife. Gender roles turn upside down because of an untraditional woman image that has a thirst for possession and power. At this point ownership plays a very important part in the relationship between the husband and the wife: "It's very like having a talking dog . . . that's mine, look, that's my clever dog. But a time comes when you say, Heel. Home. Lie down". (11) Clegg trivializes his relationship to his wife that is a master-dog relationship. He has misogynistic views on women which may disturb most of the women readers. This also depicts the inferior complex of Clegg who has no power or relation to his wife. What Clegg does is to control another man's wife Lisa sexually by exploiting Lisa's wish to see her baby. Although Clegg has a patriarchal mind he is inefficient with the presence of his powerful and greedy wife who does not accord with patriarchal society. The playwright does not criticize Marion's rejecting her feminine roles but draws attention to the consequence of excessive wish for ownership and the effects of women types like Marion as consequence of Margaret Thatcher's policy.

Clegg, who has a traditional dominant perspective, is inactive throughout the play. He objectifies everything still he is less powerful when compared to Marion. The play begins with Clegg's addressing to a woman customer as follows:

CLEGG: Lovely day dear. Been sitting in the park in the sun? I know you ladies. Twelve ounces of mince. And what else? Some nice rump steak dear? You don't keep a man with mince. No? Twenty p, thank you very much. Bye-bye dear, mind how you go. (Churchill, 1985: 7)

Clegg associates everyone with meat which points out sexual implications. Women are associated with "twelve ounces of mince" men are associated with "rump steak". Keyssar (1984) interprets this as "*the conventional paternalism of these lines and the nostalgic familiarity of the butcher shop*" (81). Clegg trivializes gender which is associated with meat. At that point Worsley whose wrist is bandaged enters the butchery and they plan how to kill Marion. Clegg's planning with the man who is unable to kill himself is most sarcastic foreshadowing that he will be unable to realize his plan and that would only be an exaggerated male fantasy. Clegg is powerless thus he can only get rid of his wife's power in his fancy world.

## CONCLUSION

As a result, the play is concluded by Alec's death which underpins economic and social tension drawing attention to the existence of materialist and egoistic woman figure called Marion according to the patriarchal society. Still, there is a space for such women who survive and let it go, which also reverses the traditional mainstream ideals that women are the losers in most of work of art. Individual "success" brings no resolution to the community since it depends on the miseries of the others in the play. Catastrophe end – fire set up by Marion's man Worsley causes the death of Alec and the baby and Lisa is left alone and homeless -- seems as a "success" by Marion. She states "*I'm not sorry at all about Alec. Or about that other baby. Not at all. I never knew I could do a thing like that. I might be capable of anything. I'm just beginning to find out what's possible*" (67). Powerful women tend to destroy men giving a message that excessive power is not associated with femininity because it brings disaster. She announces a new beginning. Alec's adopting the Eastern tranquility is a protest against capitalist Western culture in which men are dominant factors. Alec adopts passivity to get rid of what is imposed by patriarchal power on men. Alec's calm death draws attention to a change in the society that brings equality between sexes and the effects of destructive capitalism in Western societies. This baby represents a new beginning and hope for a more optimistic world waiting the next generation.

Thatcherite politics gives much credit for private enterprises which defends privileged women like Marion. Since Marion is the embodiment of upward mobility in Western capitalist world, she adopts a masculine attitude for power denying perspective of "woman identified woman". This points out the lack of socialist feminism which emphasizes the idea that individual success does not improve the position of women in collectives. Marion as a representative becomes "*the bourgeois interpretation of feminism which had become prevalent under Thatcher*" (Reinelt, 1996: 179). Churchill criticizes the existence of Thatcher-like figure, through Socialist/Marxist feminist perspective when she creates a woman apart from a conventional woman image like her protagonist called Marlene in *Top Girls*. There is much criticism of Churchill's characters called Marlene and Marion (even their names sound the same) that stand for all feminists; egoistic upper-class women who do nothing for the other classes of women. The play also criticizes women's adaptation of stereotypical male ways of getting ahead by



denying the traditional domestic woman image. It is important to note that Churchill adopts a Socialist/Marxist feminist lens to make better the condition of collectives not individuals in the play. Individual success of a woman does not help the rest of all classes of women. There is no feminism unless it includes collectives because the play points out *"the dangers of feminism without socialism"* (Aston, 2003: 20). The basis of socialist feminism, which is also expressed in the play, highlights the futility of individual solutions. Women should act collectively in order to be liberated from the patriarchal oppression. Churchill draws attention to women's problems and Marlene's bourgeois feminist attitude is criticized by socialist feminism. Feminism clashing with capitalism seems problematic for women who lack solidarity and sisterhood.

There is a quest for such a well-defined society since everything is upside down by the reversal of gender roles and thus the social life is full of chaos. Solomon (1981) interprets the end of the play stating that Alec embodies opposition to materialism and an *"alternative to the challenged attitudes"* (50), Kritzer (1991) interprets the burning house metaphorically *"hinting at revolution and rendering moot issue of its ownership"* (67) and points out that *"the future in the infant career remains unresolved"* (67). Wandor (1987) suggests that the personal is *"hooked into the 'political' (power through ownership)"* (122) thus power and the personal problems seem to be incompatible. Keyssar (1984) sees the society presented in the play as *"the prison of sexism can only be eliminated by radical changes in men as well as in women"* (84). Merrill (1988) interprets the end criticizing the negative upbringings of capitalism: *"amorality of their capitalistic standards which unites Clegg and Marion"* (75). Godiwala's (2003) views move further as to draw attention to Marion (in *Owners*) and Marlene (in *Top Girls*) characters who are *"the rigid binary male model of activity"* (40) and adopt violent masculine roles. To conclude, the reversal of gender and creating a masculine woman like Marion is an outcome of Margaret Thatcher's policy which made women adopting male roles to get power and "success" in business life. The personal is inevitably political; however, Marion does not act as a real woman. Having no emotional side or empathy Marion becomes an aggressive and violent woman that does not represent a real woman. Plausibly such an exaggerated fictitious character is a negative product of Thatcherism limiting feminine characteristic traits. Since the "personal" problems arise from the "political" reason, there should be a radical change in all arenas. The problem could only be resolved by social and political change which metaphorically reflects the emergence of a new life upon the ashes of the "owned" burning house.

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