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THE INTERSECTION OF PATRIARCHY AND CAPITALISM: AN ANALYSIS OF CARYL CHURCHILL'S 'TOP GIRLS' THROUGH THE LENS OF NANCY FRASER'S THEORIES

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ABSTRACT

Using the theoretical framework by feminist theorist Nancy Fraser, this study delves into the complex relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in the groundbreaking play 'Top Girls' by Caryl Churchill. Famous for its scathing analysis of gender and social dynamics, Churchill's narrative provides a robust framework for analyzing how capitalist systems sustain patriarchal oppression. The study supports Fraser's claim that capitalism does more than exploit workers; it also maintains gender hierarchies by examining the characters' experiences within their socioeconomic circumstances. The article delves into how these systems interact with one another to affect women's autonomy, sense of self, and unity, illuminating the complex challenges faced by female protagonists in a capitalist society that is predominantly male. This research highlights the importance of a comprehensive critique that tackles economic and gender injustices, calling for a radical change to attain genuine social justice.

KEYWORDS: Theoretical framework, patriarchal oppression, gender injustices.

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INTRODUCTION

Language It is widely acknowledged that modernism starts with the re-evaluation of Western institutions, particularly Western middle-class institutions. As modern drama is traditionally middle-class theatre, far from being revolutionary or overtly subversive, modern drama should at least be considered as a middle-class art form, or in other words, a potentiality inherent in middle-class organizations. This inherent potentiality is immediately identified, recognized, and consumed by one of the most important parts of modernism, which is actually the woman. This consumerist aspect of modernism turns over, constructs, and creates a modern woman who ultimately participates in the modernization process. Modern drama is able to give her a voice and actually supplies the woman with reflection, allowing her to see herself as an entity. The woman actually consumes the potentiality, which is actually a kind of equality, regardless of the result of the modernization.

Patriarchy and capitalism seem to come into conflict. On the one hand, patriarchy is understood as a kind of gender issue, leading to personal assertiveness, social privilege, and asymmetry of power between men and women. On the other hand, capitalism seems to be absolutely neutral, or it is better to say, primarily a kind of class phenomenon. Thus, it is clear that employees, in very general terms, are all alike and not observed for their sexual preferences. The classical Marxist discourse embraces an implicit idea: women belong on the left-hand side of the labor market by nature and are not to be taken for granted in the scientific economic analysis, especially in industry where productivity can be measured more accurately. White-collared jobs are preferred in debating class struggle, and wages can be distributed realistically. Women should raise their hands and complain if they are not satisfied. Any form of regulation to erase wage gaps and working hour differences is not necessary if women like the salary, and they are not as poor as social or political fights claim. Women, in the case they work regularly or provide some working hours, are employed not only by new industries but by industry (even if hetero dressed in black or white) only because their labor is marginal, peculiar, or heterogeneous. This implies their willingness to work at an inferior price, below the average for men, without complaining. Women are happy with these job conditions together.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review - The analysis presented in this paper is grounded in three primary works. The selected theoretical framework is that of Nancy Fraser, which hinges on three key components: redistribution, recognition, and representation. In "From Hegemonic Masculinity to the Hegemony of Men," R.W. Connell disassembles the concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and deems it insufficient to represent all modern men; his subsequent work on masculinities further redefines hegemony as an extremely complex and polymorphous process. Joni Lovenduski's "Women and European Politics" presents a transformation of declining patriarchy in political life and her conception of new policy. The crumbling of conventional male dominance in leading nations around the globe was noticed and proclaimed by the authors of "The Crisis of the Modern World System." Caryl Churchill's work both directly and indirectly contributes to the intersectional study of the presented issue, as exemplified by her theatrical piece "Top Girls." The play presents a direct revelation of the elements of mythical, institutional, and customary representation of power which obtain for women in the world of man.

Since the time of ancient Greece, the world of dramatic art, by the introduction of classical myths, has been connected with the ideological reference of society in various eras for the approval, consolidation, and maintenance of dominance for certain privileged areas or categories of humans. The analysis presented in this paper specifies the status of a category of such "privileged" humans: a man in the world today and through the context of "Top Girls" allegedly tries to detect and reveal the factuality and the intensity with which this dominance has decreased over time both in terms of social life and language. Hence, regardless of the thought prevailing on the type and purposes of dramatic art, one

can consider and assert its inherent value of reflecting society in terms of human interaction. Dubbed "the ancient mother of all arts," the dramatic genre, in whichever form it is expressed, has a multilayered, complex connection with society: as a mirror it reflects social strengths, weaknesses, and instincts. As a reflection, dramatic art is closely related to the human condition both through dramatic, confrontational action as well as through narrative with dramatic argumentation.

Key Concepts: Patriarchy and Capitalism

Feminist theory and critiques Patriarchy is a form of culture and society that has systematically been established and maintained to benefit the power and privileges of those in dominant positions. Historically, these positions are held by a system of society that has sought to raise the status and improve the position of those identified as male or with masculine characteristics by devaluing anything feminine. More specifically, patriarchy can also be characterized by male dominance expressed through male hierarchy (men hold positions of social power: that is, legal authority, moral leadership, and control of property; men have rights) and men's control and ownership of property, and men's control of women (as primary property). These characteristics then translate into social arrangements that include heterosexuality, monogamy, male-headed families, and some form of worship of gods and deities. Finally, and to summarize, these various social aspects of patriarchy relate to each other in a variety of ways. In general, they are mutually reinforcing, although the degree of coherence or complementarity between them is variable.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This paper introduces a theoretical framework considering Nancy Fraser's 'Women, Welfare and the Politics of Need Interpretation' as its foundation by suggesting a feminist critique of capitalism is incomplete without an analysis of the patriarchy-capitalism nexus. The paper analyses Caryl Churchill's play 'Top Girls' to elaborate Nancy Fraser's arguments. The play enlightens the key components defining two major themes of Nancy Fraser's works. Through Thatcherite period settings and development of characters, the play forms a strong base to apply Fraser's groundbreaking ideas.

2. Theoretical Framework 2.1. Interdependent Concepts - An Attempt to Differentiate Patriarchy and Capitalism Before going deeper, it is indispensable to trace the distinction between capitalism and patriarchy. A brief differentiation of concepts is vital because in today's world, at institutional levels, it is quite common that feminist concerns unravel under the umbrella of gender-neutral universal rights and any attempt to criticize capitalism is linked with a criticism of the gender-neutral universal rights model. Finally, not distinguishing between these concepts at the institutional level leads to a situation where the demands are called 'equal rights' liberation of women and not as an apprehension against subordination rooted in a social structure: patriarchy. The present research, therefore, aims to critically examine the theoretical framework analyzing the consequences of gender neutrality.

Nancy Fraser's Theory of Capitalism and Patriarchy

In stage one of Fraser's analysis, she presents us with a conventional left-wing theory which gives priority to exploitation within capitalist relations. This approach focuses on class but fails to drive home the special forms of exploitation that establish and maintain subordination within the family and intimate relationships. Fraser argues that Marx didn't really assume that gender subordination simply disappears when private property is abolished. Capitalism doesn't really explain why women are subordinated in the family, but it does show how capitalism benefits from this subordination. Patriarchy is the key factor in the institution of the family that explains women's subordination within their own private lives. Both the functionalist and Marx's arguments are non-contradictory according to Fraser, for they are focused on entirely different levels of society.

The second stage in Fraser's argument is based on analysts who believe that capitalism cannot exist without this "cultural support." They argue that if male supremacy were eliminated, the whole capitalist economy would crumble. It would appear that it is impossible to liberate women from oppression without dismantling the capitalist system. However, feminist and socialist theories on their own don't

really explain the connection between the two. In her final stage, Fraser presents us with a more complex theory of how the different forms of oppression interact with each other - without doing away with either. She proposes a threefold way in which both feminism and socialism can understand their respective non-contradictions within capitalism and patriarchy.

ANALYZING CARYL CHURCHILL'S 'TOP GIRLS'

Analyzing of Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* through Fraser's theories and focuses on how both capitalist and patriarchal systems are fundamentally unjust and can reinforce one another to create further imbalance within society. Michelle McDonald states that when both systems operate together, it creates a significant void in freedom and thus revolutionary action. Democracy and an abolition of capitalism are then seen as necessary to break the cycle of exploitation that is managed through segregation and patriarchy. Fraser sees injustice handled as through a distribution of equal rights and equates this to the idea of economic freedom, where democracy grants economic freedom to those who possess capital, then assumes that social freedom will ultimately lead to political freedom. Capitalists could not be both market makers and public authorities.

Each model has a weakness for Fraser. The construction of the first attributes of equal rights as a type of economic freedom. Fraser points out that even if it were true that the granting of equal rights was enough to create political freedom, it is still the case that social freedom did not automatically become an open society. Furthermore, political freedom possesses an order, an open society, and with political power, it has an economic one. Through exploitation in both the public and private sectors, democratic principles could be violated and become accomplices to shareholder-centered business models and what undermines the middle class. As a result, a conception of democracy as a counterbalance of various freedoms is required.

Overview of the Play

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* is a play set in the early 1980s about Marlene, a London career woman recently promoted to Managing Director at the employment agency where she works. Marlene's achievement is an exception in her society, and her career depends on her singular commitment to work and her rejection of conventional female roles: mother, wife.

The first act, in which Marlene and several other women at the very top of the business firmament hold a dinner party, is usually stunningly successful. As the conversation unfolds, it appears that the central theme of the act is how these women cope with their historical inaccuracy.

The second act takes place in Marlene's firm and focuses more explicitly on these issues. In both acts, Churchill mixes real and literary women, including Pope Joan, a ninth-century German who disguised herself as a man to study and rise in the church. She ultimately held the papal title for two years before giving birth and being killed as a result of testing her womanhood in public.

Throughout the play, both classical and folk mythic stories of women unsure or unable to keep their roles have prominent positions.

Themes of Patriarchy and Capitalism

4.2.1. Margaret Thatcher and Company: Thatcherism and Lean In

The 1980s were the period in which Margaret Thatcher flourished politically. Her election in the 1979 general elections on the promise of instituting neoliberal policies gave proof of the fact that this was the period in which misogyny in politics was being slowly eroded: the decision of the UK population to vote a woman into the role of Prime Minister did have symbolic power and it did inspire women. However, to what extent was Thatcher a feminist icon? She represented a negative stereotype of women and her 'achievement' was not connected to the liberation and the aspirations of other women. It was achieved by adopting a 'masculine' discourse, enforcing a hierarchical socio-political system, and disadvantaging the interests of the weakest members in society. The interviews and the conversations held by the journalist Jan Ravens in the political television program *My week as a politician* seem to have given one piece of the puzzle.

APPLICATION OF NANCY FRASER'S THEORIES

Caryl Churchill's feminist play, *Top Girls*, issues a gender challenge in addition to its criticism of prevailing society. The play narrates the story of the life of Marlene, a top girl who advances to a leading position in the 'Top Girls Employment Agency' through her bellicose efforts to suppress male dominance. Before her successful transformation to the hierarchical structure of female working women, Marlene gives a dinner reception to women who have already achieved success in the labor market. At the table with Marlene are Pope Joan, Patient Griselda, Isabella Bird, and so on. In the middle of the first act, Lady Nijo and Dull Gret appear, and Angie, Marlene's niece, is the final guest. In order to present the story of Marlene, Churchill inserts these figures into the play. The meaning of the appearance of these characters is that at the moment when Marlene reached the top girls' establishment with her own strength and ability, she saw her soul form, the time of forty-three-year-old Marlene on a life-scale. It is a method of expressing a comparison of struggles and labor between modern women through a deep story.

In this play, Churchill has fully captured societal women, specifically in the jobs women have settled up to now, and embodied them in various personifications. The paradox is that in one voice, Churchill speaks to each woman's story substantially, precisely, and truthfully. Far more than in a book or any other art form, outlined research does not provide as direct an opportunity to evoke emotions and spirituality directly. However, Churchill portrays the powerful symbolism before us that the profound narrative's manifestation transmits private life's sufferings and answers so convincingly that such information cannot be obtained by any other means. Included in these contemporary women, with the complexities and variety of all their forms, Churchill initiates and interweaves a spectrum of social, emotional, and psychological responses. By presenting their individual viewpoints, positions, and arbitrary images, Churchill underscores the paradoxes. In the play, Churchill leads us to the following conclusion: "Nonetheless, we are women, second-class citizens, and subjugated periodically." In the nonconforming life of gregariously choosing luckless souls, she is contrasting the struggle of professional women seeking a top-ranking position. In the long run, at least Churchill did, and yet came to no firm conclusions about what the end is, which is why the play's concluding remarks leave an idea as daunting as the final question.

Fraser's Critique of Capitalism and Patriarchy in 'Top Girls'

Top Girls is a prime example of Caryl Churchill's use of the family as a metaphor in her feminist plays. It also exemplifies several approaches from two theorists who have been particularly influential in contemporary criticism—Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. But I want to look at the play through a lens proposed by Nancy Fraser in her remarkable book, *Unruly Practices*. Fraser, a political philosopher, critiques radical feminist theory, as Derrida and Foucault critique other movements.

Fraser finds that radical feminism is fully justified in critiquing the public/private split and many injustices created by the position of women in the family. But she goes on to show that the patriarchal ethic of care is expressed in the womb as well as the home; we find it in multinational corporations and in the upper echelons of government. She shows the inadequacy of a politics that focuses only on "no exit" solutions, challenging the ways in which radical feminism fails to address "how to exit" patriarchal/capitalistic subordination. I want to look at how Fraser helps question the representations of motherhood, career and power within Churchill's family metaphor. Since Churchill shows a strong link between power and class via employment, we are focusing specifically on the relationship of patriarchy to capitalism as Caryl Churchill has defined them for us in *Top Girls*.

Intersectionality in 'Top Girls'

Caryl Churchill tackles the issue of intersectionality quite decisively in *Top Girls*. Churchill's portrayal of a wide range of social and economic issues through varied characters that are distinctively set in gender tells us how these issues intersect with gender inequality and how they trade off, thereby making these characters face dilemmas that arise through such distinctions. The women in the play come from varied realms too, traditional upholders of subordination or active agents of change, bring out problematic

issues of real distinction among them within the gender domain.

When Marlene interviews Joyce, the craftswoman, she comments, "I don't understand. How does your son George know he wants to be a woman and not just a homosexual?" Joyce answers, "Cos George is it. How does some people know they're famous or gone broody? It's not special." (7) While Mrs. Kiddie had brought "tidings of the finger that has been raised by God on high and the state of grace." (1) Winn who said, "There are no kinds of bad woman; there are just bad women." (7) and Win who said, "I'm a rotten mother," (13) womanhood with woman nature, for Joyce either has unique knowledge of what defines individuality or has defined womanhood to match her underdeveloped thought. What she highlights here is that sexual orientation and identity or motherhood have least to do with something which is inherently a part of womanhood. As such, Joyce defines womanhood in such a way that it matches her underdeveloped thought.

The meeting and dialogues around the meeting suggest two things. One, the relationship between different categories of the marginalized. Joyce posits that "I don't like Scotch girls. All they ever think about is sex or the mines." (4) and Lou says, "Joyce! That's quite enough." (4) Therefore, it is precisely sexual differences stemming from subaltern identity that the group negates in an effort to undermine wealthy middle-class women who indulge in celebrating their successes. As a result, sexual difference becomes a taboo topic among the other-rooting socialists. Therefore, although it may seem strange that sex difference would be the elephant in the room, it rather acts as a predefined line limiting what is and not acceptable, thereby insulating the significantly oppressed group from greater liberation. The question that arises here is why cis privilege be kept on a pedestal, rather than striving to understand, accept, and respect the differences.

Race and Class in Addition to Gender

In theorizing on whether the public realm framework can account for the struggles of black women and other women of color, Collins stresses the need to attend to the compound and interactive effects of race, class, and gender. "Those theoretical works that account for this interplay have the advantage over those accounts that look exclusively at racial, gender or class-based oppression" (1987, 88). Michael Omi and Howard Winant echo these calls from a racial and political economy standpoint, viewing the "construction of the color line" and the structure of racial capitalism as the relationships between racialized groups as people-seeking systems, thereby calling attention to considerations of the structure and functioning of capitalism rather than attributing racial relations to individual racism.

Indeed, the intersectionalist framework has been applied not merely to race, class, and gender, but to other axes of social division. The oppression of disabled women is said to operate in intersectional ways due to the interaction and synergy of ableism, sexism, and paternalism, which are implicated in the construction and dissemination of social meanings about people with disabilities. Various types of sexual minorities also face different forms of oppression and social relations. In this instance, lesbian women of color notes Crenshaw, are "subject to multiple, as well as marginalizing, differences – rooted in race, gender, and sexual orientation – which can shape their views on homosexual teachings". And the privilege of whiteness may be both a blessing and a curse for lesbians of color, "whiteness can both shield whites from potential harm, and whites that 'no one else takes priority' in future lesbian endeavors".

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

One possible way to read the dramatization of the allegedly conflicting priorities and fragmented identities of women under social, legal, and economic regimes, which disagree on what women need and have in common, is to read the play through Nancy Fraser's re-articulation of feminist questions within debates about the relation of capitalism and patriarchy, or, as she similarly puts it, the tension between redistribution and recognition as criteria for justice. Thus, to what extent does the feminist realization represented in the play reinstall and reinscribe the foundation of capitalism and thereby attempt to ignore this tension and shun efforts to reallocate the material benefits and power of the

capitalist market and wage labor away from capitalist employers? How do the material benefits of capitalist societies, inscribed in difference as well as in the wage labor model, benefit some women yet collude with the interests of other women whose primary power remains personal or sexual?

Comparison with Other Feminist Plays

Wartenberg has illustrated that many pieces of literature, in their discussion of the unique oppression of women, reveal some stereotypes and take for granted a particular form of doing and being a woman. However, as Nancy Chodorow argues, the paper of women and their sufferings should not be viewed or spoken about from a super-liberal point of view. Feminist theories are not being used in this paper as assumptions made and argued by super-liberals but similarly back-stage views of the liberal feminist. Modern feminist politics are used openly, and therefore the novels and theories about the problems women suffer are transparent and indeed able to understand. "Top Girls" is a novel about women, and is therefore able to be analyzed and structured into theories about women and their problems. Wartenberg, in addition, signifies that a broadened range of women (those who are represented in literature and philosophy) will increase the role and importance of diverse feminist politics in Westernized democracies.

However, both women-centered literatures should be judged with some caution. Each literature is not constituted to a factual reality, and each provides an argument or a moral to be learned, as "no strand of this literature holds any sort of empirical or analytical monopoly". It should not be forgotten that any movement of literature in relationship to feminist theories needs to be systematically grounded on concrete research. Wartenberg continues to say that it must also be noted that all such theories and claims are socio-political philosophy. They discuss which social inequalities in relation to women merit political redress and which inequalities should be recognized within private spheres. They also provide vigorous general views on women. As a result, they are structured to feminist questions; one cannot presume them to provide a philosophical approach to feminism and women.

CONCLUSION

An old adage haunts the dreams of would-be revolutionaries: "The more things change, the more they remain the same." This is particularly true in this age of late capitalism. Many feminist utopian goals seem part of a distant era, a time believed to have disappeared despite our yearnings at this temporal juncture. The dream of total equality between the sexes has been derailed. In the dual role of worker and breadwinner, women are told how they will be liberated. They are part of the workforce under the same conditions as men. The "unisex" myth blends asexualism with sexual symmetry. Women have become "disjointed," she says, and it is illusory to believe that women can escape oppression through participation in market relations, as advocated by those who support liberal feminism.

Nevertheless, in recent decades, important feminist movements have recognized that exploitation and oppression of women are linked to the politico-economic model – the ways of production and commodity relationships. The changing position of women with regard to production is relevant from feminist criticism to accept the connections between the different oppressions suffered by women. Intertwined with the expansion of capitalist relations and the deepening of the conditions of social vulnerability, neoliberal thought has re-signed the critical reflections of feminist movements. As the economic environment becomes more competitive and aggressive, capitalist logic of production is reinventing production models and management methods, where economic logic links philanthropic values to shape of work, for the good of society, contrary to the principles and basic objectives of feminism, or more specifically, the principles of social emancipation.

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