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SILENCED WOMEN IN HISTORY:

A FEMINIST-REVISIONIST STUDY OF CARYL CHURCHILL'S VINEGAR TOM (1976) & SARAH DANIELS' BYRTHRITE (1986)

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Abstract:

This paper presents a feminist-revisionist study of Caryl Churchill's Vinegar Tom (1976) and Sarah Daniels' Byrthrite (1986). The two plays are "history plays." In fact, the two feminist dramatists represent the history of the witchcraft trials in the 17th century England from a very feminist perspective. The current research paper offers a new understanding of the history of that era which could form an alternative kind of history to the "official" male-made one. Significantly, this paper attempts to analyze the two plays in terms of form and content. Interestingly, the two playwrights represent a revolutionary content in a very innovative form. Their main objective is to focus on the female subjectivity through their theatrical representation and to establish a new female- gaze to replace the male one. The content of the two plays deal with very controversial issues including, women's oppression within a patriarchal system, reproductive rights, gender construction, sexuality, queer identities and sexual orientations. These provocative subjects are represented through the use of many innovative devices and techniques. Most of the devices employed by Churchill and Daniels are Brechtian including, historicization, cross-dressing, doubling, monologues, music, and songs. All in all, this research paper re-explores the dramatic and theatrical representation of history in both Churchill's Vinegar Tom and Daniels' Byrthrite. It compares between the two playwrights, one is identified as a socialist feminist and the other one is radical, in terms of their different dramatic techniques of approaching the revision of history.

Keywords: Feminism, history, revisionism, theatrical representation, patriarchy, oppression, gender construction, sexuality.

ملخص البحث:

تتناول هذة الورقة البحثية دراسة نسوية تنقيحية لمسرحيتي فينجر توم للكاتبة المسرحية النسوية الإنجليزية لكاريل تشيرشل وكذلك حق بالميلاد للكاتبة المسرحية النسوية الإنجليزية سارة دانيالز. تتعرض هذة الورقة للعرض الدرامي والمسرحي للتاريخ في العملين السابق ذكرهما. وتتناول علي وجه التحديد الحدث التاريخي المعروف بإسم محاكمات السحر والساحرات في القرن السابع عشر بإنجلترا. تركز الورقة البحثية الحالية علي كل من المضمون والشكل للعملين موضع الدراسة. فيتضح أن المضمون يعد بمثابة ثورة في تاريخ المسرح الإنجليزي نظرا للتعرض بجرأة شديدة لقضايا وموضوعات لم تكن مطروحه من قبل بل كان ينظر إليها علي أنها من المحرمات الغير قابله للتداول والنقاش كالقهر الجندري الناتج عن السلطوية الأبوية والقمع المجتمعي الناتج عن الذكورية المفرطه سواء في الماضي او في الحاضر. كما أن هناك إشكا ليات وقضايا أخري كحق الإنجاب، البناء الجندري، الهوية الجندرية، الجنسانية، وكذلك الهوية الجنسية. كان لابد للشكل أن يكون مبتكر ليلائم هذا المضمون. ولذلك تتناول هذة الورقة البحثية التقنيات المسرحية المستحدثة من قبل الكاتبتان كما تقوم بتحليل العرض المسرحي لديهما والمبني إلي حد كبير علي تقنيات ووسائل العرض المستخدمة بالمسرح الملحمي للكاتب المسرحي الألماني بيرتولت بريخت.

كلمات مفتاحية: *النسوية، التاريخ، تنقيحية، عرض مسرحي، الأبوية، الذكورية، البناء الجندري ، والجنسانية.*

Vinegar Tom (1976)

History pre-occupies the minds of the feminist scholars and playwrights. One of the most important sites to be re-examined, re-read and even re-vised is "Historiography." Historiography is defined as the theory of historical methodologies and strategies. In other words, it refers to the process of making history. Janelle Reinelt refers to the Second-Wave Feminist scholars' involvement in the process of making history in her article, "On Feminist and Sexual Politics" by saying, "…At Oxford…women formed a group and challenged male hegemony with regard to the production of history" (21). This challenge of the male-account of history includes the act of re-vision of history itself. These scholars go even further to reject the term "history" in order to embrace the other term of "herstory." This "herstory" term is found out to be very inspiring for the feminist playwrights including Caryl Churchill(1938) and Sarah Daniels(1957). Again, Reinelt refers to the significance of the term "herstory" by stating that it is, "One of the buzz-words of the time, 'herstory' ,[which] emphasized the exclusions from history of the agency of women and the importance of their roles, the neglect of research on ordinary women and the dearth of material about their everyday life, and the significance of sex and gender differences to the conceptualization of socio-political life in any era"(21). However, the feminist historians do not focus only on the public sphere and the historical accounts on women public figures,

but they extend their narratives to include the domestic lives of women, their private life experiences proving the entire movement's slogan, "The personal is political." In the words of Reinelt, "Personal, subjective experiences, domestic sphere activities and practices of reproduction and kinship systems [are] central to historical investigation" (21).

Churchill's work, for instance, reflects the different aspects of the feminist historiographical scholarship one way or another. *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976) are good examples to be mentioned here. In these plays Churchill depicts the construction of identity for women during the moments of conflicts and crises in the 17th century England. Here, Churchill does not represent historical figures, but ordinary women, very ordinary ones. Similarly, during the 80s Daniels shifted her focus to the "forgotten" women from history. Her drama is much more interested in giving women's voices opportunities to be heard. Her *Byrthrite* (1986) and *The Gut Girls* (1988) are two good examples to be examined here. Significantly, the two plays re-explore the history of 17th century England and question the authenticity, or to be more precise, the credibility of the male account of it.

Both Churchill and Daniels get their dramaturgy involved in re-examining history for a certain purpose. This purpose is demonstrated in Helene Keyssar's book *Feminist Theatre* (1984) where she argues that the two playwrights tend to "challenge perceptions of rigid distinctions between men and women" (178). Both challenge the male-driven assumptions that women cannot or do not write history. This is quite evident in the encounter that takes place between Helen and her husband the Parson in Daniels' *Byrthrite* where she offers to help in the process of writing his diary to which he simply declines her offer claiming, "A woman cannot write, for even if she has the mind to understand the lines on paper, her emotions get in the way of truth. (Pointing to his diary) This is plain statement of fact so it will not be questioned as to its accuracy in the future" (Daniels 381). However, Helen does not give up, and she keeps trying to do it under his guidance. Due to her persistence, the Parson becomes more emphatic, "Don't be foolish, women don't make history"(Daniels 381). The use of the verb "make" here is quite significant. It is men who "make" wars, revolutions, social and legal rules governing institutions, which turn out to be history at the end. On the contrary, women do not participate in any of these events that is why they never get credit for them. This is from the Parson's male-biased point of view.

Churchill gets inspired by Cristopher Hill's revisionist account of 17th century England, *The World Turned Upside Down* (1975). She uses it for the material of her two plays *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Light Shining in Buchinghamshire* (1986). However, Churchill goes even beyond Hill's class-based account of history to make ordinary women the center of history itself. In her two plays she dramatizes how ordinary women are persecuted and punished by a male-dominated legal system, and how they revolt against this system by resisting it. Furthermore, she depicts the coalition formed between the religion and the state in order to reinforce oppression and persecution against these women. She even shows how this results in women forming a very weak companionship amongst themselves despite their sordid conditions and helpless situations. Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and Daniels' *Byrthrite*, in particular, are the subject of this paper. However, there are other examples of history plays by Churchill such as, Fen (1983), which is an oral history play based on the interviews collection of *Fenwomen* by Mary Chamberlain. *Cloud Nine* (1979) is another example in which she depicts the history of colonization and its consequences of gender

and sexual oppression in the contemporary world. *Cloud Nine* is the subject of the fourth paper of this current dissertation, but it is analyzed from a gender perspective not a historical one. *Top Girls* (1982) is considered as a history play by Churchill relating the past to the present in order to criticize the regime of Margaret Thatcher and her capitalist policies as well as individualism. This part is referred to already in paper one of this dissertation.

Keyssar describes Churchill's dramaturgy as an "accelerating project to revise the history of the past and the present" (100), through this "she makes a new kind of history-of the theatre and of society- appear not just possible but necessary"(100-101). This new kind of history is represented in Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* (1976) and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* (1976). Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire* as well as Daniels' *Byrthrite* and *The Gut Girls* are classified as history plays which are concerned with examining women's positions within history. These plays which derive their themes from the past, tend to draw comparisons with the present focusing on women's gender roles as reproducers one way or another. This paper is dedicated to the analysis of Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and Daniels' *Byrthrite.* Much focus is given to the similarities and differences between the two plays in terms of their subject matters and techniques.

Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* is set in the 17th century England in general. However, Daniels' *Byrthrite* is set in the era of the English civil war in the 1640s in particular. It is quite obvious that the two dramatists have contemporary social and political issues that they like to represent to their contemporary spectators through referring back to history. The two playwrights, just like many other femininist playwrights who get involved in the process of historical revision, are deeply influenced by Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956) and the concept of "historicization" invented for his epic theatre. Bertolt Brecht in his *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of Aesthetic*(1964), translated by John Willet, makes this point clear of dramatizing history as follows:

> Historical incidents are unique, transitory incidents associated with particular periods. The conduct of persons involved in them is not fixed and 'universally human' ; it includes elements that have been or may be overtaken by the course of history, and is subject to criticism from the immediately following period's point of view. The conduct of those born before us is alienated from us by incessant evolution. It is up to the actor to treat present-day events and modes of behavior with the same detachment as the historian adopts with regard to those of the past. (140)

What Brecht attempts to explain here is that the representation of history facilitates the process of re-vising, and hence criticizing it. This representation creates a space where the audience members become detached from the events taking place on the stage, and they begin to reflect on their current situation, and in women's case, they begin to reflect on their own position in society one way or another. By focusing through the representation of history on women, again this contributes to the feminist creation of the female-gaze. Accordingly, through the structure of her history plays, Churchill is able to connect her women audience members to their present.

Writing *Vinegar Tom* with the Monstrous Regiment is considered by many critics as a turning point in Churchill's Career as a playwright. Commenting on collaborating with the Monstrous Regiment, Churchill excitedly refers to this experience in her introduction to the play and says, "Though I still want to write a lone

sometimes, my attitude to myself, my work and others had been basically and permanently changed" (Churchill 131). Through the theatrical representation of marginalized women from history, Churchill pinpoints the present struggle of contemporary women and how it is the direct result of their turbulent history. This is what Zahra Khozaei Ravari attempts to explain in her research paper, "Investigating Voice and Agency in Caryl Churchill's Selected Plays" published in the *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences* (2015) as she says, "The blatant abuse of women in male dominated societies had resulted in a continuous struggle by women throughout history who fought and are still fighting for equal opportunities as they attempt to improve their positions in the society they live in" (409).

In fact, Vinegar Tom is considered as Churchill's first collaborative work with the feminist theatre-the Monstrous Regiment in 1976. It is also regarded as the Monstrous Regiment's second production since its first foundation. The action of the play takes place in the 17th century around the witch-hunting incidents which led to the loss of many innocent people's lives, most of them were women at that time. In her introduction to the play Churchill points out, "Early in 1976 I met some of the Monstrous Regiment, who were thinking they would like to do a play about witches; so was I … I think I had already read *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* by Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English. Certainly, it had a strong influence on the play I finally wrote" (Churchill 129). However, the play is not documentary. The characterization and dialogue are Churchill's, except for the last scene of the play where the dialogue is taken from *Malleus Maleficarum* or in English: *The Hammer of Witches* by both Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger. After reading the above-mentioned texts, a shift in theory took place in Churchill's mind as she argues, "I rapidly left aside the interesting theory that witchcraft had existed as a survival of suppressed Pre-Christian religions and went instead for the theory that witchcraft existed in the minds of its persecutors, that 'witches' were a scapegoat in times of stress like Jews and blacks" (Churchill 129). Churchill refers to "witchcraft" here as if it were just a myth created in the minds of its persecutors. She even goes further to draw a comparison between witches and women. She believes that women are the contemporary "witches" of patriarchy. Moreover, she "discovered for the first time the extent of Christian teaching against women and saw the connections between medieval attitudes to witches and the continuing attitudes to women in general" (Churchill 129).

In this way Churchill uses history in order to reflect her contemporary women's social situation. Like what is mentioned before, the action of the play is set in the 17th century England. However, the play is not built on any specific historical events. This is what the playwright herself asserts when she says that she "didn't base the play on any precise historical events, but set it rather loosely in the seventeenth century, partly because it was the time of the last major English witch-hunts and partly because the social upheavals, class changes, rising professionalism and great hardship among the poor were the context of the kind of witch-hunt [she] wanted to write about…" (Churchill 130). As with regard to the argument whether the play is historical or purely fictional, many critics view it as historical because it is based on an event from history.

The play also shows Churchill's creativity with regard to form and structure. It is made up of twenty one scenes. They are all set in the 17th century England except for the twenty-first, very last, scene as it is set in the 15th century. There are also seven songs performed by performers wearing modern dress. Therefore, Churchill's approach of portraying history is quite

unique and very different in this play. In this regard Gillian Hanna illustrates in her article, "Feminism and Theatre" published in *Theatre Papers 2.8* (1978), the reason for employing such a new drama structure, "We had a very real feeling that we didn't want to allow the audience to get off the hook by regarding it as a period piece, a piece of very interesting history. Now a lot of people felt their intelligence was affronted by that … [however] I believe that the simple telling of the historical story, say, is not enough" (10). Again, this is simply Churchill's reaction against realism and the concept of a well-made play.

Vinegar Tom shows Churchill's creativity in combining the theme of gender and power in the 17th century England in one play. The play is an interesting account of the marginalization of women throughout history. Consequently, it is not about the women of yesterday, but it is about the women of today as well. Essentially, it is viewed as a stark scream against gender prejudices during the 1970sin Great Britain. The repression and suppression of women throughout ages becomes central to the stage through Churchill's representation of witchcraft trials during the 17th century England. In this play Churchill launches her attack against patriarchy with all its forms and traditions. Although, the subordination of women is a cultural issue, it is also context specific, at least the degree of it, it is very universal and it seems to be everlasting. This universality of suffering and oppression lies in the comparison Churchill makes between the 17th century women and the women of England in the 1970s. At this point, Churchill says, "The women accused of witchcraft were often those on the edges of society, old, poor, single, sexually unconventional; the old herbal medical tradition of the cunning woman was suppressed by the rising professionalism of the male doctor" (Churchill 130). Churchill's intention in this play is to get into a process of deconstructing the subordination of women to men while focusing on class-based issues. In fact, she is the mistress of manipulating timeframe through her innovative structure as referred to above. Through this manipulation of time, she manages of establishing her women characters as subjects, not only this, but she creates for them different identities or subjectivities to be more precise.

In *Vinegar Tom* women are referred to as witches simply because they go against patriarch by rejecting to follow its rules. These women suffer from the lack of everything; money, wealth, proper education, property, etc. Their poverty victimizes them one way or another. Primarily, their financial circumstances and economic conditions play crucial roles in their oppression and subjugation. Within the course of action four women get persecuted, namely two of them get hanged, for their poverty, marital status, age, and non-traditional sexuality. The relevance of the four alleged witches to the women of England of the 1970s is quite evident in the last song, "Lament for the Witches," sung after scene twenty. The song is addressed to the audience members to:

> Look in the mirror tonight.
> Would they have hanged you then?
> As how they are stopping you now.
> Where have the witches gone?
> Who are the witches now?
> Ask how they are stopping you now.
> Here we are. (Churchill 176)

This song, in particular, urges the women audience members to consider for a while the issues that face them in 1970s England. These issues are the ones that the Second-Wave Feminism deals with in detail including, the ownership of property, the unpaid domestic activities, motherhood, the gender roles of women as carers and not breadwinners, education, the invasion of the labor market, legal rights of birth control and abortion, etc. Women's health in general and the female body, in particular,

are the central issues to the Second-Wave Feminism. This is what Reinelt refers to in her article "On Feminist and Sexual Politics," as she states, "In the 1960s, innovations in contraception and the right to legal abortion(1967 Britain) led to the recognition that , as Juliet Mitchel put it in 1966, 'once childbearing becomes totally voluntary…its significance is fundamentally different. It needs no longer be the sole or ultimate vocation of woman: it becomes an option among others'"(22). These feminist ideas might sound out-of-date to the contemporary audience members of our time, however, they pushy the contemporary audience members to reconsider their current situation and power relations which have to do with either their ability or inability to control their bodies. If the theatrical representation of plays such as *Vinegar Tom* opens up new spaces for women where they can share their own experiences with regard to their own bodies and sexuality, then this is, of course, an act of empowerment. This could be the main objective of the feminist theatre as a whole. More specifically, the play fits very well within the framework of the RC(Raising Consciousness) Project of the feminist theatre.

Meenakshi Ponnuswami in her article "The Public Forum: Feminist History in Contemporary British Theater" published in *Women and Performance: A Journal of Feminist Theory 7:2-8:1*(1995), refers to *Vinegar Tom* emerging as part of the project of the New Left theaters to "[develop] a particularly concentrated analysis of the manufacture and control of revolutionary consciousness" (294). This revolutionary consciousness has to do with women's bodies and sexuality. The play is simply regarded as a "universalist and transhistorical narrative of the persecution of women…" (294). It is transhistorical and universal in a sense that it represents the struggles of women throughout history till the present day. Although the action of the play is set in the 17th century England, the seven modern songs make it quite relevant to the contemporary audience members. Put differently, the play brings together the past and the present in one piece with one specific purpose in the mind of its playwright. Reinelt comments on this combination of the past and the present when she states, "As do many of Churchill's work, this play juxtaposes the past with the present to enable spectators to see both change and continuities" (23). In such a Brechtian manner, the Monstrous' actress Susan Todd argues, "We didn't want to allow the audience to ever get completely immersed in the stories of women in the play. We wanted to make them continually aware of our presence, of our relationship to the material, which was combative, anguished" (qtd.in Reinelt 23). The above-mentioned is the Brechtian act of "defamiliarization" where the audience members are reminded most of the time that the actor is not the character played on the stage. This is to achieve one end which is of "detachment." Hence, it gives the audience members the opportunity to participate actively in the performance through an act of critical thinking and reflection into their own present situation. According to Brecht, it is only then that a change can take place in the outside community. As a result, the playwright can achieve her end which is to make theatre function and operate as a political tool for causing a change.

The action of *Vinegar Tom* goes around a bourgeois farmer's wife, Margery, who tends to oppress an old unmarried woman with the name of Joan. However, the farmer himself, Jack, likes Alice, Joan's daughter. Alice, is represented as a single mother in the play. Betty, is another woman character in Churchill's drama who rejects the idea of getting married. For rejecting the idea of marriage, she is looked at as someone "abnormal" suffering from a certain kind of illness. Consequently, she is represented as tied to a chair bleeding in the

very early scenes of the play. Shockingly, this violent image is represented as an act of treatment, but in fact, it gives the audience members the impression that the girl is persecuted and punished for resisting the social norms of the time. Another woman character is that of Susan, Alice's friend. She gets pregnant several times and also encounters many miscarriages. Thence, she goes to Ellen, the "cunning woman," asking for help. The "cunning woman" offers her a certain kind of herb to get rid of her current pregnancy. Only then, Susan regrets ever doing that and she turns against Ellen, supports her neighbors in considering Ellen as a "witch" and finally charging her with "witchcraft." The two old women in the play, Joan and Ellen, are hanged for being referred to as "witches" by their local community. The two other younger girls' safety, Alice and Susan, is threatened and their future is quite uncertain. Besides, Betty is to go back home and submit to her parents' will of getting married. Clearly, Joan and Ellen do nothing at all except for rejecting the social norms and attempting to live without them. Thereupon, this act of rejection itself is an act of resistance against patriarchy. Nevertheless, patriarchy and its well-established institutions including medicine and the church will never approve of such a thing as it threatens their own existence. According to Reinelt, *Vinegar Tom*, "shows how class and fear divide the women and prevent them from supporting each other and how ruling institutions, such as medicine and the church, legitimated oppression" (24). This fear is embodied in the relationship between Alice and Susan. For fear of being bewitched and above all for fear of God, Susan puts her friend's life at risk. She calls her a witch who happens to meet with the devil who asks for her body and soul. This grave confession on Susan's part, imprisons both her friend and herself. Out of fear, she breaks the bond of sisterhood existed between them for years. Alice is not a witch, neither she nor her mother, Joan, is.

The play is about witchcraft, but none of the women characters is a witch herself. This is emphasized by Churchill in her introduction to the play as she says that *Vinegar Tom* is a play about witchcraft "with no witches in it; a play not about evil, hysteria and possession by the devil but about poverty, humiliation and prejudice and how the women accused of witchcraft saw themselves" (Churchill 130). Many critics view the play as a "realist" one in which Churchill's capacity of innovation is not that clear yet. However, the songs which interfere between scenes to link the audience members to the present time is not realistic by any means. Being compared to *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire, Vinegar Tom* could be referred to as more realistic than it. Other than that, it does not fit within the category of a well-made play. The twenty-one scenes, which make up the structure of the play, could be referred to as realistic in a sense that each scene is built on the previous one. However, the last scene which is set in the 15th century England based on the *Malleus Maleficarum*, or *The Hammer of Witches* by Kramer and Sprenger takes the form of a Brechtian tradition of going back to history. Also, the seven modern songs make it difficult for the play to fall into the category of realism.

Throughout the play the audience members encounter the living experiences of the seven major characters. But then, they encounter four new characters in the very few last scenes of the play. The plot goes around Margery and her espouse, Jack. Both work as farmers and they seem to represent the bourgeois class in the play. Their neighbors are Joan and Alice who are oppressed by the farmer and his wife because they are very poor and have nothing to help them even living. Susan is Alice's friend who has three children, and she is pregnant at the very beginning of the play. Another woman character is the

landowner's daughter with the name of Betty, a young woman who does not want to get married. The seventh character is Ellen or the "cunning woman" who cures people and heal their pains her own way. She is neither a doctor nor associated with the profession of medicine at all. All these characters are represented several times throughout the scenes. The daily encounters between these women reflect the major themes of the play which is: coming to terms with the term "woman." The characters do not exactly know how the term woman can be defined or identified especially in a society which does not accept the true identity of a woman. Certainly, this confusion of living in a modern world is Brechtian in nature. Like Brecht, Churchill is pre-occupied with economic and political issues. This could explain her use of songs interrupting and interfering in the action of the play. At this point Janelle Reinelt in her article, "Beyond Brecht: Britain's New Feminist Drama" published in *Theatre Journal 38* (1986), explains how Churchill borrows from Brecht the "notion of historicizing the narrative" (161) and also she "employs Brecht's episodic play structure in which each scene is isolated and has a crucial turning point…. In each case, intervention could have changed the particular instance, but the isolation of the women from one another made such collective action impossible" (161-62).

Applying the Brechtian model is always effective in the political theater, or even in a feminist theatre with a political agenda like Churchill's. The political agenda of Churchill's is that of revolting against patriarchy and the order of its ruling society. Helene Keyssar in her book *Feminist Theatre* illustrates what kind of crimes these 17th century women are accused of and how these crimes are the crimes of the contemporary women as well. Keyssar states, "The women accused in *Vinegar Tom* are 'guilty' of healing, choosing to live without men, aborting a fetus and taking pleasure in sexual intercourse. For these crimes they are first shunned and made objects to horror in the community; later, they are tortured to provoke confessions and finally hanged" (90). All these issues are the issues discussed in Women's Health Movement in the 60s and the 70s. Notably, the Women's Health Movement was first organized in the U.S during the 60s and 70s as a result of the Second-Wave Feminism in both Great Britain and the U.S. The movement called for the women's birth control rights, safe abortion, and also legalized abortion, sexual freedom for women, etc. The main objective of the entire movement, as expressed by Maries Kind H. in her article, "The Women's Health Movement" published in the International Journal of Health Services (1975), is embodied in "[the] demand for improved health care for all women and an end to sexism in the health system"(219).

So, a good reference to be made her is to Our Bodies, Our Selves. It is a name of a conference which was held in Boston in the U.S. This conference has resulted in *Women's Health Book Collective*. Susan Wells in her article "Our Bodies, Ourselves: Reading the Written Body" clarifies, "Our Bodies, Ourselves juxtaposed many discourses, each of which constructed its own version of the female body….while many early feminists brought to the movement the New Left's rejection of science, the collective worked carefully to develop a critical, thoughtful appropriation of conventional medicine" (697-98). In fact, this movement as well as the collective make it easier for women to understand their bodies and their own sexuality. It is in the mind of Churchill while attempting to represent her women characters in *Vinegar Tom* or anywhere else in most of her feminist dramatic representations. All these female health issues are both personal and political. Thus, their representation in *Vinegar Tom* shows Churchill's

commitment to the movement's slogan of "The personal is political."

Churchill's commitment to dramatizing "The personal is political" is the main motive beyond using the Brechtian techniques of "distanciation" or "detachment." Although she resists representing a "realistic" play, the need to represent "the personal" sometimes pushes her in that direction___ a direction, which includes in Reinelt's words, "techniques of traditional bourgeois realism" (162-63). In general, in the first six scenes of the play the audience members can view Churchill's intention of combining old techniques with new innovative ones. Specifically, in the very first scene of the play, the audience members encounter two characters, namely, Alice and Man. It is noticed that Alice's lover does not have a name, but he refers to himself as the "devil." This could give a hint at their sexual affair one way or another. In the following exchange the audience members get to know more about Alice's "devil," "I'm the devil: Man in black, they say, they always say, a man in black met me in the night, took me into the thicket and made me commit uncleanness unspeakable" (Churchill 135). This is a statement of his "uncleanness" love affair with Alice, to which she responds, "I've seen men in black that's no devils unless clergy and gentlemen are devils" (Churchill 135). In this case, the "uncleanness," "unspeakable" referred to above dramatizes how the society looks at women's sexual freedom. Their sexual affairs, especially those out of wedlock, are always viewed as dirty and shameful that no one can speak about. Here, Alice, the mouthpiece of Churchill if one can assume that, expresses her resentment at religious men, the "clergymen are devils," and this is a resentment against religion itself. Moreover, this confusion with regard to religion is highlighted again in the following exchange between Alice and Man. Specifically, he lover asks "So you think it no sin we did?" (Churchill 135). This question hints at their sexual affair and it claims that they are both sinners, against which Alice protests, "If it was, I don't care" (Churchill 136). Although she knows that it is not good to declare something like this, Alice has her own excuses, "You'd say worse living here. Anytime I'm happy someone says it's a sin" (Churchill 136). The Man seems to be confused. He knows that his sexual deed with the young woman is not the right thing to do religiously speaking. Yet, he does it, but he cares to define it as a sin. Alice, on the contrary, does not have the same way of thinking, and even if it was a sin, she does not care. On top of that another point is, it is as if Alice here is a representative of the women's community she belongs to. There are so many restrictions with regard to women's bodies and sexuality. Above all, women are not allowed to enjoy their bodies and be happy, because whatever they do to cheer themselves up is identified by their "patriarchal" society as sinful or wrong.

In spite of Alice's anger which is obvious in her previous exchange with her Man, she realizes her position as a woman belonging to the lower class in society quite well. Due to her realization of her social status, she finds salvation in escaping her gender and the sordid conditions of her class by going away with her lover. Here intentions become apparent when her lover asks, "Will you do everything I say, like a witch the devil her master?" (Churchill 136), to which she responds, "I'll do like a wife with a husband her master, and that's enough for man or devil" (Churchill 136). The reference Alice makes here to a husband as a devil might be relevant to the contemporary audience members living in the patriarchal society of England in the 70s. Comparing her to a witch and himself to a devil, Alice's lover is quite aware of the power relations that prevail over their relationship. It is not an equal relationship by any means. However, it is more like a relationship between a master and a slave.

Unfortunately, Alice, on the other hand, does not have any other choices. She is either to accept to be enslaved by her husband or to be enslaved by society itself. This is according to the teachings of her religion which are very oppressive and judgmental for a woman her age. Alice has to choose either to be victimized by her love, Man, or by the farmer, Jack and his wife, Margery. Nothing happens where she lives and this could be enough reason for her to go away. All she asks for is a change. But, in such an oppressive community where she lives, where the gap between classes is as wide as the gap between sexes, resistance is dangerous and not preferable at all. That is why Alice's urge to leave is so strong to the extent that the violent action of torturing and burning witches is nothing for her to fear. Here Churchill attempts to highlight the violent life that this young woman lives. She is subject to violence and abuse on a daily basis, so an account about some violent acts here and there would be of no use to frighten her more.

Accordingly, when the Man's first tactics of slavery and violence seem not to push Alice away, he rejects her vehemently. He insults her for not being married, not being a widow, and yet has a child. Moreover, he keeps asking about her true identity, if not a wife or a widow, then "What are you then? What name would you put to yourself? You're not a wife or a widow. You're not a virgin. Tell me a name for what you are" (Churchill 137). His confusion, however, does not last for so long. In fact, his questioning stops all of a sudden and he make a clear statement, "Devil, take you whore, whore, damned strumpet succubus, witch" (Churchill 137)! Just as Alice represents her community of women, Man represents the entire "masculine" society now and how this society views a young unmarried woman with a child such as Alice. Alice, is "stigmatized" for being a single mother. It is society along with its patriarchal system which stigmatizes women such as Alice. Miserably, she has to accept this act of stigmatization to secure her own survival. The abuse of women by men is quite acceptable in a society like this one, because it is upon which their survival depends. The same idea recurs again in the encounter between Alice and her mother Joan in the third scene of the play. In this encounter between the mother and her daughter, the mother asks if there is some man in her daughter's life. She justifies her question by claiming that Alice's life would have been better, if there had been a man in her life. Obviously, this declaration made by Joan provokes Alice's anger and she reminds her mother of how ugly her father was, "You weren't better off, mum. You've told me often you're glad he's dead. Think how he used to beat you"(141). But, beating does not seem to bother Joan as much as hunger and she tells her daughter emphatically, "We'd have more to eat, that's one thing" (Churchill 141).

The same theme of men who own and women who are owned is explicit in the fifth scene, in the encounter between Alice and her friend, Susan. Women's relationship to men and the correlated concept of power relations are again at work hers. Susan has given birth to three kids. She has gone though many miscarriages, and does not really want to have a new baby. However, only because she is owned by her husband, she cannot decide for herself. This themes of ownership is previously tackled in Churchill's *Owners* (1972). In the words of Reinelt, *Owners* is "a critique of capitalist ideas of ownership and within its real estate subject matter [Churchill] interwove a critique of possessiveness relative to other humans such as lovers and children" (19). This idea of possession takes place again in *Vinegar Tom*, namely in Susan's relationship with her husband. But here it is a possession of a woman's body and her sexuality no more no less. Unlike Alice who is quite aware of her own situation and the

oppression she suffers from and how it is male-driven, Susan is unaware of all this. She takes full responsibility for all her previous miscarriages and thinks of herself as someone "sinful" like her mother Eve who brought sin to all human beings on earth, especially women. Susan desperately says, "They do say the pain is what's sent to a woman for her sins. I complained last time after churching, and he said I must think of Eve who brought the sin into the world that got me pregnant" (Churchill 146). It is not due to lack of planning on part of her and her husband as well, but due to the sinful nature of women according to her own point of view. She even goes further believing that getting pregnant is a woman's punishment for seducing her man. Moreover, she does not have the right to abortion, because if she does, then she goes against the will of God, "I must think on how woman tempts man, and how she pays God with her pain having the baby. So if we try to get round the pain we're going against God" (Churchill 146).

Susan here refers to the idea of the "original sin." The "original sin" is a doctrine, pretty much common in both the Christian and Jewish theology. This doctrine has to do with the nature of Man and the justice of God. Samuel S. Cohon explains this Christian doctrine in his article "Original Sin," "Christianity, following certain trends in Judaism, advanced the view that the moral taint which mars human nature is that in reality the work of God, but the result of a tragic error committed by the first parents of the race…. [This] view was crystalized into the doctrine of the Fall and Original Sin…" (276). This point of view is exactly what Susan expresses above. Significantly, Churchill seems to reject the Christian world's view that Susan represents here. For the playwright it is not just society that possesses women, but culture and religion. Susan's position here triggers all the feminist questions with regard to religion in general, and Christianity, in particular. In fact, the Second-Wave Feminism is quite suspicious of Christianity and asks a lot of questions with regard to a religion, whose prominent figures are all men who worship a male-God. So, it is quite troubling for those feminists who believe in equality between man and women. Even religion itself is re-vised and re-explored only to find many examples of women's submission to their husbands and their subordination, a bitter reality which reinforces patriarchy with all its values and oppressive traditions. This evokes Naomi R. Goldenberg's view expressed in her book *Changing of the Gods: Feminism and the End of Traditional Religions* (1979) which illustrates the feminists' calls for a revolution within religion itself as part of their efforts for the reproduction of culture. The feminist activists and theologians get involved in this process of re-vising the Bible and the Old Testament. Here Goldenberg argues, "Women engaged in the formal study of religion are more directly involved in the religious revolution that feminism is accomplishing. Some of these women are advocating the complete abandonment of Judaism and Christianity" (10). This "abandonment" means losing many supporters and might result in stigmatizing the entire feminist movement as being anti-religion. Nonetheless, Churchill is not into "abandonment" of religion, the same way she is not into a social revolution. However, she prefers a reform either within the interpretation of religious teachings or within society as a whole. This could justify her materialist feminist position. Goldenberg moves further illustration this point, "Others are trying to save Judaism and Christianity by reform of the sexist practices in their traditions" (10). Interestingly, this could justify the existence of the anti-abandonment movements as is the case with the Christian Feminism, Islamic Feminism, and other feminist movements based on religious beliefs.

Not only religion which is put under scrutiny in *Vinegar Tom*, but Biology as

well. This is very clear in Alice's comment on the nature of her body. She is quite resentful of the menstruation period which makes her feel ugly and gross. This is a direct reference of Churchill to the patriarchal misogyny targeting women, their gender and sexuality. This is embodied in Alice's declaration, "I hate my body…. Blood every month, and no way out of that but to be sick and swell up, and no way out of that but pain" (Churchill 146). Clearly, patriarchy makes of women's physiology nothing to be proud of. It always a site of shame and embarrassment. Whereas, the physiology of men's bodies is always a source of pride for them and everyone around. Again, Churchill put patriarchy under attack in the words of Alice here. As a matter of fact, patriarchy does not only shame women's bodies, but their also their age. Women and their bodies are more ashamed when they grow older. This is what Alice says referring to Joan her old mother, "No way out of all that till we're old and that's worse. I can't bear to see my mother if she changes her clothes" (Churchill 146). The patriarchal society's image of a woman, or the perfect model of womanhood is implied here. This society, which despises women's physiology, is the same society which sets out standards for their beauty, and who to be accepted within this framework and who to be excluded. Here the contemporary audience member is quite aware of Churchill's position. The 60s and the 70s were periods of both cultural and political explosions in both Great Britain and the U.S. The consciousness raising with regard to the female body and the patriarchal standards of beauty reached a crucial point in 1968 with protests against the Miss America Contest. Theatre itself was very active at that time. Keyssar describes this period of the feminist movement's history and argues as follows:

> When, in the autumn of 1968, a number of women's group produced a theatrical protest using street-theatre conventions against the sexism of the Miss America Pageant, it was an event coherent with the collusion of theatre and politics in other concerns of society. It was also, however, the first instance in which the resurgent women's movement had achieved significant public acknowledgment. Two years later, women in Britain would protest against the Miss World event in a similar theatrical demonstration. Feminist theatre had been born. (17-18)

The objectification of women, treating them like a commodity that can be exchanged for value is what inspired theses protests and urged the feminist movement to be formed as a whole. This is also implied in Alice's statement mentioned above. In a very demeaning manner, this commodity has a certain age, so when a woman grows older such as Joan, she becomes of no use anymore. Being aware of oppression extends to an understanding of the body, sexuality, subjectivity, and even ethics itself. Joseph Marohl in his essay "De-realized Women: Performance and Identity in *Top Girls,*" published in *Modern Drama, 30* (1987), refers to Churchill's interests that make their own way to her drama including, "the proprietary family, the oppression of sexual variety through compulsory heterosexuality… ageism and ethnocentricism"(376). "Ageism" is embodied in the character of Joan and, of course, Ellen, the "cunning woman."

Vinegar Tom is considered by critics as the most straightforward feminist representation by Churchill. This is quite true to a certain extent. The feminist issues and concerns, especially those of the Second-Wave Feminism are all identified in this play. Marriage as a patriarchal institution is again put under scrutiny by Churchill. The domestic sphere and how restrictive it is for women runs throughout the play. This is obvious in Alice's view of

marriage and Betty's resistance of getting married. Alice tells Susan frankly, "I don't want to get married. Look at you. Who would want to be you?...Three babies and what, two, three times miscarried, and wonderful he doesn't beat you" (Churchill 147). Susan, however, replies to Alice's claims by asking, "What's wrong with me? Better than you" (Churchill 147). The only merit Alice can envy her friend about is being able to eat and living off her husband's money. Keyssar in her critique of the play demonstrates, "Women are victims of male oppression, scapegoats for failures and impotencies that men cannot acknowledge as their own. The best chance women have, one woman in the play advises another, is to 'marry' a rich man, because it's part of his honour to have a wife who does nothing" (91). This means that marriage becomes the best chance for women living in patriarchal societies. They do not have any other options of climbing the ladder of social classes. Unlike Betty, the landowner's daughter who is more empowered to say no due to her social class, the poverty of these women makes them even more helpless and cannot say no to marriage. There is always a price that women such as Alice and Susan have to pay. Sadly, they are far away from freedom of choice. Specifically, this is the theme of the song "If You Float," which says:

You may be a mother, child or a whore.
If you complain you're a witch
Or you're lame you're a witch
Any marks or deviations count for more.
Got big tits you're a witch
Fall to bits you're a witch
He likes them young, concupiscent and poor.
Fingers are pointed, a knock at the door,
They're coming to get you, do you know what for? (Churchill 170)

The two young women, Alice and Susan, are mothers as well. The theme of motherhood runs throughout Churchill's work. The relationship between feminism and motherhood is quite complicated. For feminism motherhood is a choice. This urges them to call for legalizing abortion and making it safe for women. Alicia Tycer comments on this in her book *Caryl Churchill's Top Girls* as she states as follows:

> In *Top Girls*, Churchill explored the complexities of motherhood, a theme that can be traced throughout her body of work…. *The Skriker*['s] plot focuses on two teenage mothers: a young mother who has killed her baby and been confined to a mental hospital, and another pregnant runaway. While *The Skriker* depicts a world that is inhospitable to young mothers, *A Number*(2002) depicts a world devoid of mothering. (11)

As revealed in the theoretical background in paper one, motherhood is not the concern of Churchill alone, but one of all other feminist playwrights. Daniels, for instance, is among them, but she is more concerned with lesbian mothers as in her play *Neaptide* (1986) which is the subject of the third paper of this current dissertation. The question of motherhood has always been controversial even among feminists themselves. The conflict of who has the right to speak about it is very severe between real feminist mothers and young activists. This is what Ann Snitow explains in her article "Feminism and Motherhood: An American Reading" in which she argues:

Women with children and women without them have been bristling at each other for years over the question of authenticity. The fight over the Equal Rights Amendment was a national example of this kind of warfare, but even inside feminism there's no particularly friendly entry point for this discussion. Which speaker has the necessary experience, hence the authority, to speak? Mothers can say they've seen both sides, can make judgments about what motherhood is like. Initiates, they are the

ones who can measure the true dimensions of the choice. (33)

Churchill was quite aware of this conflict between mothers and non-mothers when she first wrote the play. However, the question of "authenticity" does not apply to her case, because she is a mother of three kids herself. So, she knows perfectly well what it is to be a mother confined to the domestic activities in a patriarchal society. However, feminism as a movement, in the words of Snitow, "set[s] out to break both taboos__ those surrounding the experiences of mothers and of the non-mothers…" (3). Nevertheless, the abandonment of motherhood for radical feminists can be paralleled with their abandonment of religion itself like what is mentioned before. Thus, it could be implied that Churchill does not call directly for the abandonment of the Christian religion altogether, but she draws her audience members' minds to the fact that men, in general, receive their authority and power from religion. So, religion has become a means of subjugation from Churchill's point of view.

Another "subjugated" woman character is Margery, the wife of the farmer_ Jack. She is as sexually oppressed as the other poor women characters in the play. Her happiness with her husband depends on how harder she works for the development of their farm. She represents the bourgeois women who work hard along with their men, but get nothing at the end out of this work. She oppresses her neighbor, Joan, and rejects to give her some yeast. She could be a kind person, but she represses this kindness in order to please her husband. Her conflict with Joan is embodied as a conflict between classes, between those who have and those who do not have. Oppression tackled by Churchill here is class-based not gender-based. Joan gets really provoked and she starts cursing Margery and her entire wealth, "Devil take you and your man and your fields and your cows and your butter and your yeast and your beer and your bread and your cider and your cold face…" (Churchill 145). This war between classes is one of Churchill's interests as a materialist feminist. It runs throughout her drama in different occasions. In fact, Margery does not care about her poor neighbor who used to be a good one in the past. However, she cares more about a capital profit. The lack of profit makes her suffer a lot. Her domestic sphere gets upside down. Things are not the same as they used to be before. The "butter" does not come, her livestock stops thriving. Even her husband becomes "impotent" and he keeps chasing Alice hoping that he might get well afterwards. Notably, Margery cares a lot about her marriage. Moreover, she knows that her marriage depends on how much material gain she makes, neither on love nor on any other human feelings of any kind. That is why, a character like Margery might fit very well within a capitalist system, but this can never be the case within a socialist system, for instance. Churchill is aware of this fact and makes it clear in her representation. The material loss, "The claves are shaking and they've a terrible stench, … They will die like the red cow…(Churchill 151), makes her very frustrated stating, "Everything dying on us" (Churchill 151). Everything dies in their life, however, not due to their misdeeds, but due to others'. Margery does not blame either herself or her husband for anything. She looks outside her "happy" marriage life for a scapegoat. The scapegoat this time is her poor neighbor, Joan. She jumps to the conclusion that God cannot punish them for being sinless, however, the devil can through his servants. She believes, "If [they]'re bewitched… that explains all" (Churchill 152). It is Joan who bewitches them from Margery's point of view.

What is even worse is the fact that Jack abuses his wife's feelings. He never talks about her as his partner. However, he always blames and looks down at her. Margery is his inferior. He can just talk

about himself. He owns everything, the farm, the livestock, the crops, and above all his wife. His self-centeredness is quite evident in his use of the "I" pronoun most of the time. He never uses "we." Nonetheless, the responsibility for any mistakes or lack of production falls upon his wife. He asks, "How can I bear it" (Churchill 152)? referring to the misery of their current situation. His wife, on the contrary, always includes him in her conversation. She proposes to "Burn an animal alive, don't we? Or bury it alive. That takes witchcraft off the rest" (Churchill 153). Despite this, Jack shows some respect towards his wife, only when she proposes something that would outgrow his wealth and increase his profit. Other than that, she is nothing for him.

Joan used to be a good neighbor of Margery's. This is what she admits in the opening scenes of the play. However, Margery is ready to accuse her of witchcraft in order to save her marriage, and in return, herself. The feminist concepts of bonding and sisterhood do not work here in this context. This is the reason why the action ends in a tragic way. Churchill attempts to focus on how beneficent it is to have some sort of being amongst women, especially if they all suffer from oppression. It is this bonding which can liberate them from the patriarchal yoke and subjugation. That is why a collective action is quite important in communities like these. In *Vinegar Tom*, Margery turns on Joan, the same way Susan turns on Alice. Both turn on their friends only to save their marriages, and hence themselves. Survival can take place only through men, a belief which prevails in both western and eastern communities till now. The same idea recurs again in the encounter between Margery and Betty who decides to run away from home only because she does not want to get married. Ironically, although she is not happy in her marriage, Margery states that any woman can be happy only if she is married, "Hadn't you better have him, Betty, and be happy? Everybody hopes so. Everybody loves a wedding" (Churchill 140). All these statements about marriage and happiness are quite familiar not only to the 17th century women in England, but also to women of the 70s and even to the contemporary women of our most recent time. The juxtaposition between the present and the past is quite obvious here. Marriage is a key word and it works like magic in solving many problems. It is a cure for illness from Betty's doctor's point of view. Surprisingly, it is not an easy thing to get still. Betty has to bleed first and to be purified in order to be ready for marriage. This is what her doctor says, "After bleeding you must be purged. Tonight you will be blistered. You will soon be well enough to be married" (Churchill 149).

There is an advocacy for submission running throughout the play. It is not just the male characters who advocate for submission, but also the female ones. It is a patriarchal invitation for women to be helpless, voiceless, and good for nothing except for marriage. Even Ellen, the cunning woman, offers to do Betty a spell in order for her to "love [her] man" (Churchill 156). Moreover, that cunning woman discourages Betty from harming her suitor. Instead, she offers her something to sleep in order to wake up feeling better the next day. The entire situation is quite ironic here. Ellen herself does not conform to the traditions or norms of the society she lives in. Despite this fact, she urges the young woman to conform to them one way or another. Significantly, sleeping here is quite symbolic. It symbolizes passivity and helplessness. This is what a woman with supernatural power like a witch can help her fellow woman with. Similarly, she gives the same offer to Alice who wants her lover back, "I'll give you these herbs to boil up in water and drink at night. Give you a sound sleep and think less of him" (Churchill 155). Therefore, it is obvious that Ellen prefers the strategy of escape to the one of

confrontation. She would rather not be involved in any action of hurting somebody. A third example is of Susan's who seeks abortion, but is quite afraid. In her case, Ellen tells her, "Only you know what you want" (Churchill 154). This embodies Churchill's technique of revision. The history of the 17th century England portrays these witches as very cunning and wicked, they simply deserve death for the sake of saving humanity. Nevertheless, Churchill's representation of witches is totally different. She represents them, either Ellen or Joan, who are accused of witchcraft, as ordinary women who mind their own business and they refrain from causing any harm to anybody. They are quite oppressed by a society which judges them not according to their deeds or even true selves, but according to its own arbitrary standards of judgment. This technique of revision is explained more by the end of this paper. Even later on, When Jack and Margery go to seek help from Ellen to know for sure if Joan is a witch or not, Ellen is not affirmative about that. However, she tells them frankly speaking, "Not for me to say one's a witch or not a witch" (Churchill 158).

Churchill builds the action of the play in a certain manner. She dedicates the first two-thirds of action to portraying and dramatizing the circumstances and the social conditions surrounding the main seven characters in the play. She attempts through this representation to highlight why they are unhappy and dissatisfied with their lives. This takes place precisely in the first six scenes of the play. In the next scenes from eight to eleven, all the characters visit the "cunning woman" seeking help for their dissatisfaction in life. Nevertheless, the "cunning woman" avoids any prejudice in her judgment of their different situations. There is an action taking place in scenes seven and thirteen. After this dramatization of feelings, the characters need to act. In scene seven Margery and Jack reach the conclusion that there is a spell on them, in other words, they are bewitched and they need to do something about it. Also, in scene thirteen Alice reaches the conclusion that she has to take revenge from her lover who left her behind like a piece of trash, "I'd sooner kill him. If I could get at him. If thoughts could get at him he's feel it…. Like if I had something of his, I could bring him. Or harm him" (Churchill 162). These two scenes, in particular, affect the action of the play dramatically afterwards. Everything turns upside down for the main characters of the play.

The two women friends meet again in scene thirteen where Susan is angry of her abortion and Alice is mad at her lover. The two women are very disappointed. Susan blames herself and Alice for her abortion. She thinks of herself as a "wicked" woman and of her friend as "wicked" (Churchill 162) as well. In the mid of their frustration, Alice attempts to invoke the power of witchcraft as she creates a puppet made of mud, in Susan's words, it is "Little clay puppet like a tiny baby not big enough to live and we crumble it away" (Churchill 163). Susan compares the puppet to her own unborn baby. Alice makes a shape of a man, "This is the man. We know who though we don't know his name. Now here's a pin, let's prick him. Where shall I prick him? Between the legs first so he can't get on his lady" (Churchill 162). But Alice is not a witch by any means. She plays this game to cheer her friend, Susan, up. However, Susan believes Alice is a witch. Moreover, she blames her for the death of her kid. To Susan's accusations, Alice responds, "No, I did nothing. I never do anything. Might be better if I did" (Churchill 163). Susan, on the other hand, regrets ever having abortion and killing her unborn baby. The unborn baby is not welcome at all to come to the world. The mother has already three kids and cannot afford their living. A new baby is a new load, and other stuff she cannot afford with her husband. But the fact is, this

does not bother her as much as the idea of being in charge of her body. This idea terrifies her the most and even worse it motivates her to accuse her friend of things she does not commit. To illustrate, abortion for Susan seems to be an "unnatural" behavior. It is not only "unnatural" but even worse enough it is against the will of God. Going against the will of God deserves severe punishment and this is what she is subject to with her friend a few scenes later on. Susan cannot bear the responsibility for her actions, so she has got on one to blame except her intimate friend, Alice.

Jack is convinced that Alice is responsible for his impotence. He follows her and almost hurts her to treat him of his current illness__ impotence. Alice has nothing to do with it but pretends that she is able to cure him. Only then he believes, for sure, that she is a witch, while in fact, she is not. Also, Susan believes Alice to be a witch. Suddenly, she asks her, "Don't touch me. I'll not be touched by a witch" (Churchill 164). The puppet's joke that Alice invents and conforming to Jack's request in order not to harm her, make of her a witch in her community. Only because she does not act the same way people act, they perceive her as different. Being different is an act of witchcraft. Therefore, Alice forms a threat to all those who do not accept differences or simply do not approve of them. People such as Alice have to pay the price for everything. Jack likes Alice, but he likes himself more. A married man like him cannot express his admiration towards another woman because this is an act of cheating. Although Alice has nothing to do with his admiration, she has to be punished because he likes her but she does not like him back. Even Susan, Alice's best friend goes against her because of her abortion as well as the death of her daughter due to some disease. Alice does not encourage Susan to have an abortion. She is neither responsible for the death of Susan's daughter. But Susan has no one to blame except her friend. The two incidents that Alice has nothing to do with, justify it for Susan to tell Packer, the witch finder, that Alice is a witch. She reveals the entire story in her encounter with him, "She met with the devil, she told me, like a man in black she met him in the night and did uncleanness with him, and never after she was not herself but wanted to be with the devil again. She took me to a cunning woman and they made me take a foul potion to destroy the baby in my womb and it was destroyed" (Churchill 167). The worst part of the story is the one where Susan believes that Alice causes her daughter's death. She thinks that the puppet is her daughter and that is why she dies the next morning, "She's a witch and the cunning woman gave her something to call the devil, and she tried to call him, and she made a puppet, and stuck pins in, and tried to make me believe that was my baby girl… and she died" (Churchill 167).

The action reaches its climax in scene fourteen when the Packer makes an appearance. He listens to both Jack and Margery about what happens between them and Joan, their neighbor and her daughter Alice. Then he hears from Susan and how sure she is that Alice is a witch. Packer is very proud of his ability of finding witches and he brags about it, "God in his mercy has called me and shown me a wonderful way of finding out witches, which is finding the place on the body of the witch made insensitive to pain by the devil. So that if you prick that place with a pin no blood comes out and the witch feels nothing at all" (Churchill 165). This act of "pricking" is Packer's technique of finding out or discovering witches. The following scenes represent this act of pricking. Churchill changes the stage directions from scene fourteen onward. Here, the stage directions say, "[Packer and Goody take Joan, and Goody holds her, while Packer pulls up her skirts and pricks her legs. Joan curses and screams throughout. Packer and Goody

abuse her: a short sharp moment of great noise and confusion]" (Churchill 165).

With regard to this act of holding Joan and then pulling her skirt to prick her legs, Churchill comments in her introduction to the play, "The pricking scene is one of humiliation rather than torture and Packer is an efficient professional not a sadistic maniac" (Churchill 134). Accordingly, the contemporary women audience members can perceive it as an act of humiliation and they might be offended as well. This dramatization makes the audience members move from the dramatization of the circumstances or the conditions that surround each one of the seven characters in the play to a representation of an unjustifiable, inhumane action performed by Packer and Goody who are quite the outsiders in the play. This "professionalism" referred to by Churchill gives Packer authority and power. People around are pretty much sure of what he does. They do not even question his behavior or even protest against it. He knows all one needs to know about witchcraft. However, his "professionalism" costs other people a lot of money. Margery and Jack, for instance, have to pay him a big amount of money in order to do his job. This piece of information makes the audience members think deeply about the reason why these women are persecuted. In fact, the reasons are both economic and political. Jack owns a farm and makes a lot of profit out of it. In order to maintain that profit, he has to maintain other stuff as well including superstition and the persecution of women. In addition, the witch finder, Packer and his assistant, Goody, make their living out of witch finding. While talking about their witch finding business, Goody says, "He's well worth the twenty shilling a time, and I get the same…" (Churchill 168). Afterwards, Goody tries to justify for herself as well as for others her involvement in such a dirty work of witch-hunting. She takes the lives of innocent women, accusing them of crimes they never commit. Joan, for instance, feels the pain and cries very much. But Goody does not believe her tears and calls her a liar. Only because she does not bleed that much, Packer accuses her of witchcraft. Alice, however, does not cry at all, and Goody claims that she too does not feel the pain. But because she bleeds, Packer decides to wait and to accuse her of anything for the time being.

Soon after, Susan attacks Alice and speaks negatively about her. She refers to Alice as a witch who kills her unborn baby and her daughter too. But Packer blames her for going to Ellen too. He believes that even if Ellen is a good witch, she deserves death, "Yes, all witches deserve death, but especially good witches" (Churchill 167). In fact, Ellen's existence threatens people such as Packer and Goody as well as their witch finding business. This is the real reason why Packer thinks she should be killed as well. Undoubtedly, Ellen must be accused of something too in order for these two men to make money out of it. In scene sixteen, in the exchange between Ellen and Betty, Ellen knows about Packer's bad intentions for her. She starts thinking of any trick that might keep her alive. Swimming is a trick. According to the traditions, if a witch swims, she floats because water does not carry witches. But if she sinks, then she is saved. Ellen cannot sink without drowning. That is why she rejects the idea altogether, "No, why should I ask to be half drowned? I've done nothing. I'll explain to them what I do. It's healing, not harm. There's no devil in it…" (Churchill 169-70). Ellen, mistakenly, thinks she can get away with healing. Even if healing has nothing to do with witchcraft, it has a lot to do with patriarchy and its male-institutionalized medicine. This could even be a worse crime.

Alice is reluctant to confess being a witch. Her resistance to confess what she is not and the deeds she is not involved in leads to her torture at the hands of Packer and Goody. Moreover, they even take her

baby boy away from her. All these are different forms of pressure they practice in order to get her hanged and thus to show all the townspeople how much professional they are. One evidence of Packer's professionalism is that he has "watched plenty of witches and hanged them all" (Churchill 172). In scene eighteen, Goody shaves the women's bodies in order to check and see any mark or sign of witchcraft. Yet, she does not find any "devil's mark" with Susan. In reference to Joan, however, Goody argues, "No need to shave the other for she has three bigs in her privates almost an inch long like a great teats where the devil sucks her and a bloody place on her side where she can't deny she cut a lump off herself so I wouldn't find it" (Churchill 173). Being accused of witchcraft and announced guilty, Joan confesses to be a witch. She cites all the misdeeds that she has been involved in against Margery and Jack. This brave act of defiance most probably soothes her pain, although it does not save her life at the end. In the following scene, scene nineteen, Joan and Ellen get hanged in public.

This hanging trial makes everyone around sure of these women's misbehaviors even if they were innocent and oppressed. Now, everyone is convinced even Susan herself. Susan is convinced that she is a witch and she has never known about it. She has to accept her fate in order not to be damned in hell afterwards. She confesses, "I was a witch and never knew it. I killed my babies. I never meant it. I didn't know I was so wicked. I didn't know I had a mark on me. I'm so wicked…" (Churchill 174). For those who watch it on the stage, it sounds more like a dark comedy. It is as if Susan was unaware of her true self. Moreover, it is as if she was unconscious of her situation. Ridiculously enough, she asks Alice to join her in her prayers for God to forgive her for something she has not actually don, "Alice, let's pray to God we won't be damned. If we're hanged, we're saved, Alice, so we must be frightened. It's done to help us" (Churchill 174). Certainly, Susan's perception and her realization of her own situation arouse pity and fear among the audience members. But her situation also arouses contempt for the society which persecutes women to the extent that they internalize their sense of guilt till they become convinced that they deserve punishment for it.

Alice, on the other hand refuses to confess something she has never done before, but she wishes if she had been able to do it. She wishes if she had been a witch. She declares undoubtedly, "If I could live I'd be a witch now after what they've done…" (Churchill 175). Churchill here shows her audience members how oppression can make an oppressor of the oppressed. This violent male aggression against a peaceful female submission leads to Alice's transformation at the end of the play. Significantly, power relations are at work in the huge gap between dominance and submission embodied in the scene of trial. The violation of these women's bodies previously, and therefore their humiliation, is an example of power relations.

In order to avoid the women audience members' identification with the female victim, Churchill intends to transform both Joan's and Alice's characters by the end of the play. Moreover, in order not to reinforce the binary opposition between the masculine and the absolute power of the feminine ultimate passivity, Churchill makes Alice wishes to be a witch to "make wax men and melt them on a slow fire…. [to] kill their animals and blast their crops and make such storms, [to] wreck their ships all over the world…" (Churchill 175).

The representation of a helpless woman's image victimized by a male-oppressor is not what Churchill aims for. However, Churchill sends a message home which is: violence begets nothing but violence. Also, oppression leads directly to violence. This is What Tim Hamilton and

Satish Sharma refer to in their article, "Power, Power Relations, and Oppression: A Perspective for Balancing the Power Relations," where they argue, "Violence in societies, often grounded in oppressive circumstances, is caused by imbalances in power relations and wrong conceptions and application of power" (21). Packer is much more powerful than the four women accused of witchcraft in the play. First, he is a man and this gives him privileges in a male-dominated society such as the 17th century England as well as England of the 70s. Second, he claims to have knowledge. This adds more to his authority which he does not want to lose ever, and to keep it he has to oppress those who are weaker than him or more inferior to him in terms of gender and class. This is what people call the abuse of power. Consequently, Churchill's objective of such a representation is to show her audience members how "ideologies of the past have been one important factor in the socialization of individuals and social groups into present power relations, and breaking away from the old habits is difficult task" (21). This means that the act of "demonizing" women at the present time is the direct result of accusing them of witchcraft and misdeeds in the past. This emphasizes the fact that the past forms people's present and it shapes their future. But what if this past is questioned, challenged and even altered. This means that the present becomes different as well as the future. Not allowing the women audience members to identify with the victim is much more like preventing this act of victimization to form their present or to continue with them till it shapes their future. The transformation that takes place on the part of both Alice and Joan is an act of empowerment itself for those who watch in the theatre. Alice is more than ready to ally with the devil rather than being oppressed and victimized, "Oh if I could meet with the devil now I'd give him anything if he'd give me power. There's no way for us except by the devil…" (Churchill 175).

Power is the key word here as elsewhere. It is the means by which those women are oppressed, and the only way for their survival. However, it is quite clear for the audience members that, in the words of Hamilton and Sharma, "Many problems, which present themselves in breaking away from current power relations, include historical values, traditions, customs, precedents, habits, lack of general will to fight injustices and non-caring attitudes" (21). The audience members are quite aware of all these obstacles. But it is part of the CR(Consciousness Raising) feminist project to make them think about and re-consider their present situation. This is exactly what Churchill's feminist theatre does.

The power relations between the oppressor and the oppressed develop a certain kind of "psychic pathology"(78) according to Pedro Alexis Tabensky in his article "The Oppressor's Pathology." Tabensky gives examples of the anti-semitic oppressors as well as the white supremacist oppressors. But his two models can easily be applied to gender-based oppression, or to be more precise men's oppression of women. Tabensky refers to Jean-Paul Sartre's book, *Anti-Semite and Jew: An Exploration of the Etiology of Hat* in which Sartre says, "This [Anti-Semitism] is nothing but passion. Only a strong emotional bias can give a lightinglike certainty; it alone can hold reason in leash; it alone can remain impervious to experience and last for a whole lifetime" (qtd.in Tabensky 77). What Sartre refers to here is what Frantz Fanon calls in his book Black Skin, White Masks, "psycho-existential complex." Fanon argues:

I believe that the fact of the juxtaposition of the white and the black races has created a psychoexistential complex. I hope to analyze it to destroy it… This book is a clinical study. Those who recognize themselves in it, I think, will have made a

step forward. I seriously hope to persuade my brother whether black or white, to tear off with all his strength the shameful livery put together by centuries of incomprehension. (qtd.in Tabensky 77)

Tabensky makes an analysis is his article of Fanon's "psycho-existential complex." According to Fanon's theory, the psycho-existential complex of the black oppressed is attached to and dependent on the psycho-existential complex of the white oppressor. The two complexes become institutionalized by both social and economic injustice. This means that the very existence of the oppressor depends on the existence of the oppressed. It is the oppressed's existence which gives power and privileges to the oppressor. Here Tabensky gives a very interesting definition of the oppressor as follows:

> By 'oppressor' I mean anyone who is on the winning side of injustice, whether actively or passively contributing to perpetuating regimes of oppression and domination, even if only by virtue of the lifestyles they have because of the position in society into which they happen to be born. If my analysis is correct, then oppressors have very powerful personal reasons for working to undo their status as oppressors, which is something that Fanon thought could only or typically be done by revolutionary means. (78)

This oppressor- oppressed power relation can be applied to gender relations as well. The male characters in the play, the Man, Jack, Packer, even the absent ones that the audience members only hear about but never see such as, Alice's father, the father of her child, Joan's husband, Susan's husband, Betty's fiancé, Betty's father, oppress the female characters, Alice, Margery, Joan, Ellen, Susan, and Betty one way or another. The oppression of the women characters on the stage and the women audience members in theatre is quite obvious in the trial scene. All those male-oppressors are on the "winning side" like how Tabensky calls it and they are not ready to lose by any means. Churchill is quite aware of these imbalances and this could be the reason why she changes action and transforms the oppressed characters such as Joan and Alice into oppressors or more precisely potential oppressors as in the case of Alice. This could be a step forward to encourage the audience members to get rid of their "psycho-existential complex." That is why, this is absolutely an act of empowerment with no regard whatsoever to the ethics or embedded morality in this final scene of the play. Churchill shows the women victims how to gain agency by becoming the perpetrators themselves.

The trial scene is followed by Margery's prayer:

Dear God, thank you for saving us. Let's live safe now. I have scrubbed the diary out. You have shown your power in destroying the wicked, and show it in blessing the good. You have helped me in my struggle against the witches, help me in my daily struggle. Help me work harder and our good harvest will be to your glory. Bless Miss Betty's marriage and let her live happy. Bless Jack and keep him safe from evil and let him love me and give us the land, amen. (Churchill 174)

Margery prays for the good of her, her husband and above all their property. She thanks God for punishing the "wicked" and she asks him to reward the "good." But rewarding the "good" should be in capitalist terms __ "good harvest"__ not anything else. The "wicked" women seem to be a dangerous threat for the "good harvest," namely the capitalist gain, but since they are removed, the production will get increased from Margery's point of view. This prayer, in particular, reminds the audience members again of Churchill's *Owners*. In this prayer, as in *Owners*, production and money turn into a lust for its owner. At this point, Jeane Howard argues in her essay, "On Owning

and Owing: Caryl Churchill and the Nightmare of Capital," "Throughout her theatre career, Churchill returns to the pathologies induced by money-lust and to the suffering caused by the dreadful disparities capitalism creates between those who own and those who owe, between the titans of the earth and those whose lives and energies are drained away by poverty and debt" (36). Those who own here are Margery and Jack and their survival depends on the destruction of those who owe. This is exactly what happens. The women are accused of witchcraft and get hanged, although they do no harm to anybody. The harm caused to the farm and the livestock has to be justified by any means. The landowners do not find anyone to blame but their poor neighbors whose existence does not add much profit to their capital.

Throughout the play Churchill portrays different forms of imprisonment for women. This is her technique of highlighting oppression and to show her audience members the interdependence and interrelationships between these different forms upon which patriarchy is well-established and thrives. The playwright pinpoints the different aspects of discrimination, humiliation, and the marginalization of different women. All these mechanisms of oppression are not gender-constructed only but also class-constructed. In this respect, domination is maintained by violence. In fact, violence runs throughout the play. Moreover, it takes different forms, verbal, non-verbal or physical, and also sexual. Violence is not depicted in the trial scene alone, but from scene one onward. It is there in Jack's relationship with his wife, Margery, as he keeps insulting her for being lazy and not doing her work. It is also there in Alice's relationship to her lover, Man, who always curses her calling her out names such as "wicked" and "whore." It is even there in Betty's relationship to her doctor who ties her to a chair and leaves her bleeding in order to be cured. Comparably, it is there in her relationship with her father, the landowner, who wants her to get married to a man that he has chosen for her. It is also there in Joan's relationship with her husband who used to beat her when he was a live. It is there in Joan's relationship with her neighbor, Margery, who refuses to give her yeast and kicks her out for no reason while trying to borrow some stuff from her. Significantly, it is there in Jack's relationship with Alice who chases her and harasses her claiming that it is out of love. Likewise, it is there in Susan's relationship with her husband who despises her for getting through miscarriages and having an abortion recently. Most importantly, it is there in Goody's act of pulling up the women's skirts looking for the devil's marks. It is there in the scene where Packer tortures Alice and takes away her baby from her in order to practice pressure upon her to confess something she has never done before and knows nothing about at all.

In such a patriarchal society where violence speaks louder than anything else, men's knowledge and endeavors are given more value than women's. This results in silencing those women and confining them to marginalized positions one way or another. The misinterpretation of religion and religious teachings reinforces the oppression of women in societies like these. Religion plays a vital role in shaping the consciousness of individuals. In patriarchal societies where men dominate, they abuse religion in order to achieve personal gains and to maintain their power. Men maintain their superiority by using religion as a pretext for the excessive use of power and oppression. In the 17th century England, the timeframe of action in *Vinegar Tom*, the church would sentence anyone to death by hanging, if she is believed to practice witchcraft. Correspondingly, Churchill has it in her mind to represent religion as a tool used by patriarchy to oppress and suppress women. In her introduction to the play,

Churchill points out, "I discovered for the first time the extent of Christian teaching against women and saw the connection between medieval attitudes to witches and continuing attitudes to women in general" (Churchill 129).

The last song, "Lament for the Witches," reflects how hypocritical society is. The song is set in modern time not in the 17th century England. There are no witches, as they do not actually exist. However, they are used for the perpetuation of manipulating women and exploiting them. It is more like imposing a certain identity on a woman only to shut her up. Therefore, it is viewed as a mere justification to silence and oppress women. This "fake," "male-made" identity is to legitimize the demonization of women. This legitimization of oppression is very dangerous for both men and women. Both men and women get into a process of internalization of these unjust gender roles and then they act accordingly. Not surprisingly, no one views this as dangerous or that it might cause severe problems to oneself or to society, simply it becomes "normalized." I is perceived as something normal or natural and cannot be challenged or changed. Consequently, a man perceives his supremacy as a gender-based privilege, and a woman perceives her submission as also gender-based fate or destiny. This process of internalization defies any form of opposition. A woman does oppose being oppressed because she is not aware that this is oppression. She accepts humiliation and mal-treatment of any man because she mistakenly identifies this as an expression of his superiority and the "normal" result of her own inferiority. In fact, this socialization with misconceptions and beliefs does not acknowledge her any of her human rights. On the contrary, it deprives her of living as a complete equal human being. What Churchill emphasizes here is that any attempt on the woman's part to call for or advocate for her rights would render her as evil and a witch. Accordingly, she deserves to be punished and even more excluded from the human community altogether. Commenting on the reality of oppression, Isaac Prilleltensk and Lev Gonick argue in their article, "Polities Change, Oppression Remains: On the Psychology and Politics of Oppression," illustrate what follows:

The reality of oppression may be understood from various levels of analysis, from the macrolevel of global economic and political structures to the microlevel of internalized psychological images of inferiority. A comprehensive analysis of oppression will emerge only from an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the political with the psychological. Otherwise, efforts to reduce conditions of oppression will be inhibited by limited perspectives that neglect either the internal or external domains. (128)

The internalization of oppression hinted at by Prilleltensk and Gonick in what Churchill implies through her portrayal of the oppressed characters, especially Susan. Besides criticizing the social and economic conditions of both the 17th century England and England of the 1970s, Churchill refers to the importance of taking such a psychological factor into consideration. Further, there are different psychological mechanisms of oppression which Prilletltensk and Gonick explore together in their before mentioned article. These mechanisms include, "Learned helplessness, surplus powerlessness, internalization of hegemonic self-rejecting views, and obedience to authority" (128). In fact, all these mechanisms make up the character of Susan in Churchill's play. Janelle Reinelt in her essay "Beyond Brecht: Britain's New Feminist Drama" published in *Feminisms, Performing; Theatre, Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*, discusses the idea of "unconsciously" oppressed women as she illustrates as follows:

> In her conflation of economic and moral codes, Susan shows how women can remain unconscious of

> their oppression and can victimize themselves and others. The only escape from punishments of torture and death is Betty, the landowner's daughter. However, while she escapes class oppression, she pays the price of sexual submission: she agrees to marry and become the thing she dreads, 'a good wife.' (157)

Power structures are at work everywhere in the play. They prevail the different human relationships represented by the dramatist. They even play roles in shaping their destiny. Interestingly enough, the oppressed women characters are replaced by the writers of *Malleus Maleficarum,* Kramer and Sprenger. Churchill insists that these two male characters, in particular, should be played by women actresses. In the production note to the play, Churchill says, "Kramer and Sprenger should be played by women. Originally they were played by Chris Bowler and Mary McCusker who, as Ellen and Joan, had just been hanged, which seems to be an ideal doubling…" (Churchill 134).

Some critics refer to *Vinegar Tom* as the least innovative of Churchill's plays. They believe that the play is very realistic except for its very last scene. This could be true to a certain extent, but also the seven modern songs are inspired by the Brechtian innovation. In this scene, the audience members encounter two women in men's clothes uttering very misogynist ideas and concepts which could be very shocking to whoever sees or hears them. Both justify the big number of witches among women. They ask the question, "Why is a greater number of witches found in the fragile feminine sex than in men" (Churchill 176-77)? Then, they list a number of misogynist reasons, "Here are three reasons, first because … woman is more credulous and since the aim of the devil is to corrupt faith he attacks them. Second because … women are more impressionable. Third because … women have slippery tongues and cannot conceal from other women what by their evil art they know…. Women are feebler in both body and mind so it's not surprising" (Churchill 177). All the above-mentioned reasons justify why the majority of witches are women from Kramer and Sprenger's point of view. They even go further and the language they use in describing women is not less misogynist than the one used above. Referring to a woman, she is, "… more carnal than a man… as may be seen from her many carnal abominations….She was formed from a bent rib…. and so is an imperfect animal…. fe mina, female, that is fe faith minus without…. So cannot keep faith…. A defect of inordinate passions…. They brood on vengeance…. wherefore it is no wonder they are witches" (Churchill 177). The language used here could put its users in trouble. However, the discourse of misogyny is persistent till today. R. Howard Bloch emphasizes this idea in his article, "Medieval Misogyny: Woman as Riot," where he states, "such terms still govern (consciously or not) the ways in which the question of woman is conceived by women as well as men" (1). Perhaps, the last scene of the play is set in the 15th century England, but the contemporary audience member can identify herself with what she sees represented on the stage. This confrontation with the historical origins of women's oppression and their impact on how women perceive themselves in the 70s or even today is quite shocking. Churchill, breaks her audience members' engagement with the oppressed women on the stage intentionally. She tends to give her audience members the opportunity to explore the broader context of oppression which is culturally based.

The two professors of theology are performed by women, because according to Keyssar this is "… a gesture that at once satirizes and publicizes absurd convictions about women's 'nature' propagated by figures of authority. The device amuses as a coda… (92). Although Churchill intends to

relieve her audience members from the hanging scene, and although this very last scene could arouse laughter, it is still very intense. It represents ideas and beliefs still pre-occupy the minds of Western and also Eastern communities one way or another. Through the representation of this scene set in the 15th century England as well as the seven songs representing the modern time, Churchill is determined to relate the present to the past. Some critics, however, do not like the idea of integrating these songs into the action of the play. They believe them to sound more like "didactic," but not dramatic. They are presented in a Brechtian tradition in order to distance the audience members from the main action of the play. They are very challenging for the contemporary audience members who watch and listen to them on the stage. Therefore, the audience members are forced to think about the oppression of women in the contemporary England. They also urge the women audience members to look for the female subject. They simply reinforce subjectivity for the women characters as well as the women audience members one way or another. This could be the main purpose of their intervention throughout the play.

The seven songs go around the idea of female subjectivity and the different stages that form it from the women's lives. The first song, "Nobody Sings," for instance, represents the different stages women get through in their lives. The song says as follows:

I woke up in the morning,
Blood was on the sheet,
I looked at all the women
When I passed them in the street.
Nobody sings about it
But it happens all the time. (Churchill 141)

Here Churchill refers to the physiology of women's body and the menstruation period that marks the first stage of exploring their sexuality. Then a woman grows up and her fears of losing her femininity grows up with her. This is because it is the only thing that people appreciate her for. Churchill goes on asking as follows:

Do you want your skin to wrinkle
And your cunt get sore and dry?
And they say it's just your hormones
If you cry and cry and cry.
Oh nobody sings about it,
But it happens all the time. (Churchill 142)

Since women are treated like objects, when they grow up and lose their beauty according to the standards set out for them by the patriarchal culture and society, they feel worthless and they become less valuable or influential in society. The objectification of women is what the entire movement of feminism is against. This objectification limits their chances for a better life and confines them only to the domestic sphere. For a materialist feminist such as Churchill, she views women the same way Marxists would view or analyze a commodity, namely something which is put for trade and profit. For Churchill it is Capitalism which commodifies everything and turns the living humans into non-living objects. Willow Verkerk in her essay, "Reification, Sexual Objectification and Feminist Activism" published in the book *The Spell of Capital: Reification and Spectacle* by Samir Gandesha and John F. Hartle (2017), clarifies how "Capitalism normalizes the objectification of human subjects and interpersonal relationships and reduces human attributes to potential market value" (149). Verkerk's statement on Capitalism resonates in Churchill's song, "Nobody Sings." Old age within a capitalist system is of no value the same as women who do not conform to the capitalist standards defined by the demand of the market. Significantly, Verkerk refers to George Lukacs' terminology of "commodity fetishism" (149). Verkerk attempts to explain concepts such as reification and

sexual objectification in order to explore the spaces available for women who search for subjectivity within a capitalist system. Lukacs defines reification or what he calls "commodity fetishism" by referring to the state of the individual within a capitalist system, "[His] qualities and abilities are no longer an organic part of his personality, they are things he can 'own' or 'dispose of' like the various objects of the external world. And there is no natural form in which human relations can be cast, no way in which man can bring his physical and psychic 'qualities' into play without their being subjected increasingly to this reifying process" (qtd.in Verkerk 150).What Lukacs attempts to raise awareness to here is to what extent can this commodity exchange transform or influence both the internal and external sides of society. The fact is that, within Capitalism the human way of being is re-constructed socially according to his or her "production of value" (150). The same way, Churchill's women characters' humanity is analyzed and evaluated according to their production of value. This could be the reason why when they become old or different they lose their humanity only because they do not produce a value according to the market's standards. Therefore, Churchill gives the conclusion by the end of the song as follows:

Nobody ever saw me,
She whispered in a rage.
They were blinded by my beauty, now
They're blinded by my age.
Oh nobody sings about it,
But it happens all the time. (Churchill 142)

In either cases, it is a state of "blindness." This, certainly, emphasizes the dehumanization of women when they are looked at as objects or commodities.

In fact, the songs were written by both Churchill and Helen Glavin from the Monstrous Regiment. These songs were intended to provide comments on the action that takes place on the stage. Most probably, this is the main reason why some critics do not like them and view them as less dramatic. Interestingly, the songs are addressed to the audience members directly. Their objective is to relate the events of the past to the present. The "Lament for the Witches," for instance, invites the audience members to stop for a while and view themselves in relation to the hanged women on the stage. They are required not only to look but also to wonder what could be the difference between them and Joan or Ellen. They also need to think how similar they could be to these women victims. Identification is the main theme of this song. This means that the song turns the audience members from passive viewers or listeners into active participants in action. It urges them to check their presence in theater and in their own contemporary society as a whole. They hate to:

Look in the mirror tonight.
Would they have hanged you then?
Ask how they're stopping you now.
Where have the witches gone?
Who are the witches now?
Ask how they're stopping you now.
Here we are. (Churchill 176)

This is a self-reflection moment for women. It is also a moment of identification for them. The song that follows, however, "Evil Women," is self-reflective for men. It represents how men might feel towards women. It is also intended for women to stop and re-consider how they are perceived by men. The song ends the play and follows the misogynist encounter between Kramer and Sprenger. This song, in particular, is a representation of culture's perception of women. It simply addresses women as "evil" asking a few rhetorical questions as follows:

Evil women
Is that what you want?
Is that what you want to see
In your movie dream
Do they scream and scream?

Evil women
Evil women
Women. (Churchill 179)

The play ends here. This song seems to form an appropriate ending of the play. This end makes it clear that this play is both about and for women. Keyssar approves of this as she says, "Implicitly throughout the play and explicitly in its final song, addressed, sardonically, to 'evil women', *Vinegar Tom* is not only about women but is addressed to women" (93).

Vinegar Tom depicts the violent exclusion of women from society only because they reject to conform to its norms and traditions. These women whose social roles do not match with the roles society expects them to perform are called "witches." In return, they become outlaws or criminals who deserve the death sentence as their proper punishment. That is why, this society fits only for two types of women, Margery, the obedient housewife who helps in increasing production, and Betty, the landowner's daughter whose class always saves her and this time marriage guarantees to keep her alive. Whereas, it does not fit for other women, a single mother, a mother with abortion, two old poor women. Therefore, they are condemned as witches and their death is a must in order for the livestock to thrive again and the harvest to be increased in Jack's farm.

As with regard to representing witchcraft again in England of the 70s, Churchill re-vises history as part of the revision project conducted by the radical feminists in the 60s and 70s. Radical feminism decides to replace the male-dominant culture with a female dominant one. To do so, like what is explained in detail in paper one, is to reproduce a cultural heritage through revision. Witchcraft is one of the subjects that the feminist dramatists find themselves entitled to re-vise. The witch-hunts began in 1645 in England. During that period of time any woman accused of witchcraft got persecuted and hanged to death. Priests and religious men used to bring biblical verses in order to legalize the persecution and murder of witches. This witchcraft "hysteria" started in Europe in the 14th century and it lasted till 1650. Nachman Ben-Yehuda depicts in his paper article, "The European Witch Craze of the 14th and 17th Centuries: A Sociologist's Perspective," why women, in particular, were persecuted for the crime of witchcraft in Europe for around two centuries and even more. He offers answers to questions such as why the phenomenon of witchcraft hysteria broke out at that time, why it became popular at all, why it ended in the 17th century, etc. as follows:

> From the early decades of the 14th century until 1650 continental Europeans executed between 200,000 and 500,000 witches, 85% or more of whom were women. The character and timing of these executions and the persecutions which preceded them were determined in part by changed objectives of the Inquisition, as well as by a differentiation process within medieval society. The witch craze answered the need for a redefinition of moral boundaries, as a result of the profound changes in the medieval social order. The fact that these executions and the accompanying demonological theories enjoyed widespread and popular acceptance can be explained through the anomie which permeated society at the time. While these conditions provided the intellectual, cognitive background for the witch-hunts, economic and demographic changes, together with the emotional need for a target, explain why the witch-hunts were directed at women.(1)

Whatever the historical reasoning could be for these crimes of witch-hunts, Churchill makes up her mind, among other feminist

playwrights, to create her own version of what happened. This is very much evident in *Vinegar Tom*. The "evil" women are not "evil" but victims of society. Sue-Ellen Case refers to *Vinegar Tom* as part of the radical feminist project of re-vising history in her book *Feminism and Theater* as she states, "Many plays reflect this re-vision of witches, but perhaps the most familiar example is Caryl Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* (1976)… In its class analysis, the play incorporates some elements of a feminist materialist analysis along with those of radical feminism" (74). This is clarified in Churchill's representation of the gap between classes and how the class structure plays a big role in oppressing these women. Case moves on to emphasize the fact that, "The women are not depicted as witches, but as women who threaten the patriarchal class system in various ways. It is simply useful to destroy them" (74). The survival of this patriarchal society is based on the destruction of these women. Again, Jane Thomas, argues in her essay, "The plays of Caryl Churchill: Essays in Refusal," published in *The Death of the Playwright?: Modern British Drama and Literary Theory* edited by Adrian Page, "Churchill's plays favor a transhistorical approach to their subject matter in which the truth of a previous episteme is contrasted with that of the present. *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, *Vinegar Tom* and *Serious Money* view the rationale of the twentieth century through a seventeenth-century lens" (162). However, Churchill does not only view the present through the past, but also she questions that past and challenges its credibility in case of creating a misogynist discriminatory present. She gets in a very tiring, but also rewarding process of "reassessing" history. Sanja Bahun-Radunovic in her article, "History in Postmodern Theatre: Heiner Muller, Caryl Churchill, and Susan- Lori Parks," illustrates, "History becomes a human history only to the extent that it involves the human, that it is accentuated by and refigured through human activity; … In theatre, one may extend this line of thought, history, becomes 'humanized' and 'workable' by/in the very act of performance" (446). The revision of history in theatre adds much to this process of humanization in its persistence to represent the truth. Nilay Erdem Ayyildiz in her article, "Women from Witch Hunting in the Seventeenth Century to the Twentieth Century: A Socialist Feminist Criticism of Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*," grabs to attention the socio-political factor that might have contributed to the persecution of women in the 17th century England. Ayyildiz states, "Some studies of the seventeenth century witch hunting revealed socio-political and economic relationship between accusers and accused people. (Roper 1969, Keickhefer 1976, Macfarlane 1970)" (110). This is a truth that Churchill attempts to shed the light on through her representation of witchcraft hunting in *Vinegar Tom*. Moreover, Ayyildiz moves further to declare, "Witch-hunting was, in fact, woman-hunting. The witch referred to the opposite of a good profile of woman, wife, and mother. It may be considered to be a warning for women as to what would happen when they behaved as subversive in the patriarchal society" (110). Transferrin this to the contemporary women audience members is an act of empowerment in itself. It is much more like creating a new collective consciousness among women about the true reason for their submission and oppression. The ruling system itself has not changed since the 17th century and it will never work for the good of women. Working for the good of women would definitely mean losing or more precisely giving up its power. That is why Ayyildiz analyses the situation, "This indicates that the persecution of witches was, in fact, a kind of control mechanism with regard to women's sexual behavior"(110). The gender roles assigned to them define what they

should do in life, namely acting as wives and mothers no more no less.

Vinegar Tom is pre-occupied with women's oppression throughout history. Through the representation of history Churchill hints at the abuse of power from the 17th century England till the very present day. At this point, Ayyildiz argues as follows:

> Influenced from the ideas of the French philosopher Michel Foucault(1926-1984) considerably, as a socialist feminist, Churchill interrogates the political aspects of gender discrimination on the basis of the reciprocal relationships among power, discourse and knowledge because, for Foucault, '[t]he exercise of power perpetually creates knowledge and, conversely, knowledge constantly induces effects of power…. It is not possible for power to be exercised without knowledge, it is impossible for knowledge not to engender power' (1980, 51-52).' Accordingly, to exercise power, patriarchy made use of discourse and knowledge. In this context, institutions such as family, school and church have been home to justify and perpetuate patriarchal ideology in a society for centuries. *Vinegar Tom*, by overlapping centuries back to the seventeenth-century England, Churchill draws an institutionalized means that reinforces patriarchy and maintains it throughout the history. (113) This means that even history itself helps in the process of the institutionalization of gender-based oppression and discrimination. So, to approach history form a different perspective, mainly a feminist one, is to create a new understanding which can be institutionalized the same way but this time to put an end to oppression and discrimination practiced against women, in particular.

While re-vising history, Churchill employs many Brechtian techniques in order to highlight the relationship between the personal oppression of individual women and the broader socio-political context with its invisible power structures which are the main reason for this oppression. Churchill draws the audience members' attention to the economic and sexual exploitation of women due to patriarchy. Epic theatre's nature of engaging with politics, makes of it a very convenient medium for Churchill and other socialist feminist playwrights. Besides the shift in time and the episodic structure, Churchill also uses the Brechtian social gestus and songs in order to raise up the audience members' awareness with regard to the women's conditions in a contemporary world but, from a socialist feminist standpoint. In *Vinegar Tom* as well as other plays such as *Light Shining in Buckinghamshire*, Churchill represents different forms of oppressive power in order to make her audience members more conscious of them. It is only through this process of consciousness raising, that women can re-consider their present situation, through this process of mental re-consideration, they can reject and resist. It is through their rejection or resistance that a change can take place. The moment of re-consideration is a moment of recognition through revision. Recognition might lead to a re-construction of history where women are more empowered and influential in the process of decision-making either privately or publically.

Interestingly, the political essence of the epic theatre make it quite attractive to the socialist feminist playwrights such as Churchill. This could be the reason why she uses many of its techniques throughout the play. The cross-casting in the very final scene of the play where the women actresses play the roles of the two men of theology, Kramer and Sprenger, is a good example to

be mentioned here. In addition to, the seven modern songs which interrupt the action of the play to bring the audience members to the present time are another example. In his *A Short Organum for the Theatre*, Brecht illustrates the important role played by songs in distancing the audience members and achieving the "alienation effect," which he always aims at through his theatrical representations. Brecht states it as follows:

> It emphasizes the general gest of showing which always underlies that which is being shown , when the audience is musically addressed by means of songs. Because of this, the actors ought not to drop into song, but should clearly mark it off from the rest of the text: and this is best reinforced by a few theatrical methods such as changing the lighting or inserting a title. For its part, the music must strongly resist the smooth incorporation which is generally expected of it and turns it into an unthinking slavery. Music does not 'accompany' except in the form of comment. (203)

Brecht's instruction for actors not to "drop into songs" is reaffirmed by Churchill in her production note on the play as she explains, "The songs, which are contemporary, should if possible be sung by actors in modern dress. They are not part of the action and not sung by the characters in the scenes before them….it is essential that the actors are not in character when they sing the songs" (133). This innovation on part of Churchill is intended in order to interrupt the smooth sequence of events and to alienate the audience members for a while. Churchill's purpose of relating the past to the present is cannot take place without this interruption. It is also an interruption of their expectation of watching something conventional or realistic. What really reinforces this moment of unexpectedness is the cross-dressing on the part of the women performers who play the roles of the two men, Kramer and Sprenger in the last scene of the play. These interventions by songs and the cross-dressing of the characters reflect Churchill's commitment to the concept of anti-realism or anti- the well-made play.

In fact, the well-made play is an Aristotelian dramatic tradition. Breaking away from that tradition is a Brechtian one. William E. Gruber in his essay, "Non-Aristotelian Theatre: Brecht's and Plato's Theories of Artistic Imitation," published in *Comparative Drama 21.3* (1987) emphasizes Brecht's influential position in theatrical tradition by arguing, "Before Brecht…., the term 'Aristotelian' had no contrary" (200). The socialist feminist playwrights would agree with what Gurber mentions and they owe Brecht such a big debt for inspiring the construction of their performances and dramatic texts. Generally speaking, Brecht's theatrical tradition comes to terms with the Aristotelian one in terms of the main purpose of drama for Aristotle, the purpose of drama is to teach and delight. Significantly, Brecht emphasizes the importance of "didacticism" as the main function of any theatrical representation. However, Brecht is some sort of critical of Aristotle's element of "catharsis" as is explained in his *Poetics*. The Aristotelian catharsis is a mechanism or a theatrical device which increases the audience members' identification with the characters on the stage. This results in emotional involvement with these characters and the arousing of the emotions of pity and fear among them. That is why Brecht's "distanciation" runs counter to the Aristotelian "Catharsis." Again, Brecht comments on the "alienation effect" technique in his *A Short Organum for the Theatre* by clarifying, "The kind of acting that was tried out… between the First and the Second World Wars… is based on the 'alienation effect'(A-effect). A representation that alienates is one which allows us to recognize its subjects, but at the

same time, makes it seem unfamiliar" (191). This act of "defamiliarization" is referred to in German language as "verfremdungseffekt"which means "estrangement." This estrangement effect creates a distance between the audience members and the characters on the stage. It is intentional as it creates a space for the audience members where they can use their intellectuality and think about the action taking place on the stage from both critical and analytical perspectives. Only then a change can take place. Brecht's purpose is to cause a change within the social structures through theatre. Certainly, this change can happen only if the audience members who are a large group of people can be educated about their present status quo through a theatrical representation. By comprehending the motives beyond the characters' actions on the stage, the audience members can think about other possibilities which could be transformative at a certain point. Brecht repeats it in different situations where the dramatist uses this alienation technique only to remind her audience members that they are watching a theatrical performance or a play. Accordingly, the dramatist succeeds in making the audience members avoid any kind of identification with the play's characters or to be emotionally engaged and involved with them by any means. However, Brecht is not 100% against the emotional involvement of the audience members. They can be emotionally involved but without ruining the dramatic representation's instructional strategy.

Brecht's "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," written in his refuge years in Moscow in 1935, is considered a legacy for feminist playwrights and, of course, Churchill is among them. Carol Martin in her article, "Brecht, Feminism, and Chinese Theatre" refers to the feminist theatre's debt to Brecht, "Bertolt Brecht's theatrical techniques are commonly cited as a useful means for feminist revisions of theatrical realism" (77). Churchill's anti-realistic tendencies are quite evident in *Vinegar Tom*. The Brechtian "historicization" of events prevails her entire drama. Similar to Brecht and his objectives, as are explained at length in his "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" (1957), Churchill's purpose of dramatizing history is to "show the incident as a unique historical one….[and] to demonstrate a custom which leads to conclusions about the entire structure of a society at a particular time" (98). In Vinegar Tom, Churchill re-explores the history of 17th century England's witch-hunting from a socialist feminist point of view. Rachel Blau Duplessis in her essay, "Perceiving the Other-Side of Everything: Tactics of Revisionary Mythopoesis," published in *Writing Beyond the Ending: Narrative Strategies of Twentieth Century Writers* (1985), refers to Churchill's adaptation of history and myth in her plays as an act of awareness, "that stories are ideologies that shape our sense of reality" (112). Churchill's persistence to reconstruct these "ideologies" marks the beginning of walking in the right direction towards causing a real radical social change.

Besides, the revision of history in *Vinegar Tom* and Churchill's employment of more epic devices such as songs and cross-dressing, she believes in theatre as a political instrument that can be used for causing a social change. In believing so, she innovates new distancing techniques in order to give her audience members the opportunity to look critically at the events taking place on the stage and thus participate actively in action. The link that the seven modern songs establish between the present and the past declares that these acts of misogyny of the 17th century England still happen even today. Patriarchy is just the same throughout history and nothing is repeated more than the mal-treatment of women. Drama, just like any other form of cultural production, reinforces stigmatized, gender-based stereotypes. That

is why, Churchill prefers the integration of modern songs into the action of the play in order to be able to provide a materialist critique of society through her dramatic representation of these epic songs. Specifically, these songs inform the audience members of stereotypes they are already familiar with. In "If You Float" song, for instance, there seems to be no way out of stereotyping women and stigmatizing them as evil or "witches." The song says, "If you float you're a witch/…/ If you sink you're dead anyway" (Churchill 170). Women are either, "mother[s], child[ren] or whore[s]" (Churchill 170). All these stereotypes, however, are patriarchal ones. Moreover, women are always judged and misunderstood by men. They prefer to be silent than to talk because they can never bear the consequences of their talking because if they:

Deny it [they] are bad
Admit it[they]'re mad
Say nothing at all
They'll dam [them] to hell. (Churchill 170)

Churchill shows how awful it is always the case for women. Their speech is perceived in a patriarchal society as either "bad" or "mad." Even if women resort to silence, patriarchy "damns them to hell" and destroys them altogether. They are condemned in all ways, whether they have a voice or are voiceless. This act of "damnation" on part of patriarchy is an act of "marginalization" or an act of "displacement" as how Duplessis puts it. Duplessis defines "displacement and its consequences, "Displacement is a committed identification with Otherness__ a participant observer's investigation of the claims of those parts of culture and personality that are taboo, despised, marginalized" (108). Churchill, however, gives a voice to those who have always been silent or to be more precise silenced throughout history, in order to be heard by those who silenced them one way or another. In this way, Churchill not only gives them a voice, but also agency and subjectivity for the first time in their entire history. Women, as subjects, become the site where she re-explores with her audience members and even re-examines the patriarchal values and claims. In fact, those values and claims have resulted in the silencing of these women throughout history. So, now it is time for them to speak up and be listened to by the committed audience members who pay their tickets for such an act of listening. After giving voice to the "muted" women, many possibilities of causing a change emerge automatically. The seven modern songs add an element of universality to the play. So, instead of representing the story of 17th century England, Churchill represents the story of women everywhere and anywhere within the patriarchal capitalist systems.

The song is immediately followed by the "cunning woman's" monologue in which she asserts her innocence that she does nothing but healing, no hurt or harm of any kind is there, "I've done nothing. I'll explain to them what I do. It's healing, not harm. There's no devil in it" (Churchill 169-70). Even "healing" referred to above threatens the male authority. It threatens one of the very powerful patriarchal institutions which is, medicine. Therefore, the power they use for healing is the worst of them all for patriarchy. They go against the binary opposition set out by patriarchy between empowered men and disempowered women. This case cannot go on because if it continues, it will spread like an infection among the entire population which is dangerous for the ruling system. This is what Packer says when he argues, "These cunning women are the worst of all. Everyone hates witches who do harm but good witches they go to for help and come into the devil's power without knowing it" (Churchill 167). Ellen, however, shows the power of healing as well as of reason and rationale. Even men go asking for her consultation. The very obvious case in the

play is that of Jack. Barbara Ehrenreich and Deirdre English provide an explanation in their book *Witches, Midwives and Nurses* (1973) about why the women healers pose such a threat to patriarchy, "The witch-healer's methods were as great a threat (to the Catholic church if not the Protestant) as her results, for the witch was one of the first empiricists: she relied on her senses rather than on faith or doctrine, she believed in trial and error, cause and effect. Her attitude was not religiously passive but actively inquiring" (14). Ellen is a perfect example of an "actively inquiring" spirit. Her logical reasoning is very powerless in the face of the oppressive power of patriarchy. She gets prosecuted and her prosecution is an embodiment of what critics call "gynophobic" bias and hysteria.

Inherent is the Brechtian tradition of representing the past as a reminder to the audience members of their current situation, in Churchill's determination to remind her audience members of the male-dominated institution of medicine and their deep attachment to it. This is quite evident in Betty's relationship to her doctor who promises to "save" her. Due to the doctor's authority embodied in his knowledge, Betty becomes convinced that she is ill. Again, the idea of internalization is at work here. The doctor's gender as a male in a male-dominated society makes his judgment quite biased and not objective at all. Michel Foucault, the French philosopher in his book *The History of Sexuality* (1978) explains how the female biology and body have become the subjects of medicine from the 18th century onward, "whereby it was integrated into the sphere of medical practices, by reason of a pathology intrinsic to it" (104). This means that the female body is ill by "nature" and needs examination most of the time by medicine. Not to mention, there is a psychoanalytical bias practiced against women throughout history. Even Psychiatry itself establishes such a relationship between madness and the gender of women. At this point, Shoshana Felman in "Women and Madness: The Critical Phallacy," published in *Diacritics* (1975) asks a logical question, "Is it by chance that even today, between women and madness, sociological statistics establish a privileged relation and a definite correlation" (2)?

The song, "Oh Doctor," that follows the scene of Betty being tied to a chair bleeding, is a Brechtian song in its willingness to instruct the audience members. The role played by this song here is to achieve the Brechtian principle of "didacticism." Through highlighting the abusive practice of Betty's doctor, namely the 17th century doctor, Churchill hints at the abusive practices of the contemporary doctors as well as follows:

Where are you taking my skin?
Where are you putting my bones?
I shut my eyes and I opened wide,
But why is my heart on the other side?
Why are you putting my brain in my cunt?
You're putting me back all back to front. (Churchill 150)

Besides this unjustifiable physical abuse, Betty's doctor implies her suffering from "madness" only because she revolts against the social norms. Elaine Showalter refers to the relationship that patriarchy tries to establish between women and madness in her book *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1930-1980* (1987). Showalter observes as follows:

> Contemporary feminist philosophers, literary critics, and social theorists have been the first to call attention to the existence of a fundamental alliance between 'women' and 'madness'. They have shown how women, within our dualistic systems of language and representation, are typically situated on the side of irrationality, silence, nature, and body, while men are situated on the side of reason, discourse, culture, and mind. (3-4)

Women and madness is a recurrent theme in the feminist theatres. Daniels also shows her interest in this theme in some of her plays including, *Beside Herself* (1990), *Head-Rot Holiday* and *The Madness of Esme and Shaz* (1994).

Again, the song, "Nobody Sings," criticizes the medical misrepresentation of the female reproductivity, going through the different stages of the menstruation period, to the menopause, and finally aging. Through this song, Churchill creates a space for the contemporary women audience members to re-consider their middle-age problems and fears. The element of "didacticism" is at work here too. Connecting the song to Joan and Alice, Churchill tries to connect the 17th century witch-hunting to the contemporary problem of ageism and discrimination resulting from it.

"Lamet for the Witches" song is addressed directly to the women audience members. The song reflects the oppression faced by the contemporary women while commenting on Susan's oppression of the 17th century England. To the opening questions of, "Where have the witches gone?/Who are the witches now" (Churchill 175)? the singers in modern dress answer, "Here we are" (Churchill 175). This definitely reinforces the idea that oppression is universal and transhistorical to the extent that even the contemporary women in modern dress are oppressed. The direct address to the audience members, "Ask how they are stopping you know" (Churchill 176), is intended to encourage the audience members to think about the contemporary methods by which they are subjugated and oppressed. This is, of course, an act of empowerment which is very Brechtian as well.

The final cross-dressing or the cross-casting of scene twenty-one is Brechtian also. It is quite significant for operating a couple of functions here. First, it implies women's involvement and participation in bringing about their own oppression or reinforcing the oppression of other women. Second, it shocks the audience members into a consciousness of the invisible misogyny hidden there in the patriarchal power structures. According to Duplessis, there is always an act of "denial of victimhood, or the naming of fate or nature as its cause" (112). Brecht also expresses his refusal of this act of "denial" in his "A Short Organum for the Theatre" (1949) as he demonstrates, "the historical conditions must of course not to be imagined (nor will they be so constructed) as mysterious powers (in the background); on the contrary, they are created and maintained by men (and will in due course be altered by them)" (190). In this last scene, however, Kramer and Sprenger attempt to prove their claims by citing a number of religious authorities including the "Holy Scripture" and the "Lives of Saints and Martyrs" which are considered as the basis of misogynist culture in the West. Churchill's inclusion of these historical figures from the 15th century into the action of the play which takes place in the 17th century England and reflects the conditions of the 20th century England is for the purpose of emphasizing the continuity of the act of "denial of victimhood" throughout history. The scene is followed by the song, "Evil Women" addressed this time to the men audience members. It is rather to challenge them and to hint at their own sexual importance by often times projecting evil on women for no good reason at all. This idea of their sexual inability is expressed in the part which says as follows:

> Do you ever get afraid
> You don't do it right?
> Does your lady demand it
> Three times a night?
> If we don't say you're big
> Do you start to shrink? (Churchill 178)

Evil women are constructed by men. The female sexuality as depicted by Christianity and Judaism leads to a masculinity complex

and a sense of insecurity. This complex is referred to in Psychoanalysis and Freud as a castration complex which might result in an anxiety. This anxiety absolutely increases the male potential violence against women. The "wet dream" turns into a "movie dream" where the female partner or "victim" "scream[s] and scream[s]" (Churchill 179). This is an indirect reference to pornography. Churchill here tries to explore the "androcentric" sexuality and violence practiced against women in society as a result of the religious teachings cited by Kramer and Sprenger. It is as if Churchill would like to relate the phenomenon of pornography which reinforces violence against and the objectification of women to the misogynist statements uttered by Kramer and Sprenger.

Through the use of history, songs, cross-dressing, cross-casting, as well as other Brechtian epic theatre's devices, Churchill constructs her play in such a way which allows her to explore the oppression of women in terms of gender, class, age, and sexuality. Both Churchill and Brecht have one aim in common which they try to achieve through their theatrical representations. This aim is referred to by Ammelia Howe Kritzer in her book *The Plays of Caryl Churchill: Theatre of Empowerment* (1991) as, "to empower audiences against oppression rather than encourage serene acceptance of an apparently inevitable fate" (3). In short, the Brechtian influence is central to the feminist and political theatres in both Great Britain and the U.S. till today.

Byrthrite (1986) by Sarah Daniels

Similar to Churchill, Daniels is very keen on giving voices to the voiceless. Her *Byrthrite* (1986) is referred to by critics as a "history play." In this play, Daniels attempts to re-explore history itself and to represent a different vision of it. In fact, the purpose of employing revision here is to challenge the traditional male-account of history. However, Daniels is not the first feminist playwright to get involved in this process of historical revision. Caryl Churchill (1938), Pam Gems (1925-2011), Megan Terry (1932), and others are also examples of feminist playwrights who are pre-occupied with the representation of historical subjects in their drama.

Byrthrite's action is set during the 17th century England, namely during the English Civil War. Daniels' writing about history in this play simply deconstructs any mythical assumption that history is the "profession" of men. Intentionally, she represents women's lives central to the stage. Interestingly, the play investigates the origins of a female writing tradition in theatre. It focuses mainly on women who are considered as playwrights at a time in history when women were not allowed at all either to write or to produce theatrical performances. Undoubtedly, this "subversion" characterizes Daniels' plays. In fact, "subversion" is the direct result of "revision" and the feminist intention of creating an alternative account of history by any possible means and instruments. Again, *Byrthrite*, just like *Vinegar Tom*, is an example of the feminist playwrights' revolt against the concept of a well-made play. Similar to Churchill, Daniels employs many Brechtian techniques, chief among them is the "alienation effect" which is again achieved through the innovative use of songs and the time shift between the present and the past.

Before writing *Byrthrite*, Daniels got involved in a long process of research about this era of history in Great Britain. She attempts to represent real historical events. Certainly, her purpose beyond such a representation is not just to focus on women in history, but to represent them making it one way or another. As with regard to the structure of the play, it is divided into two parts. The main action of the play takes place in the past, while it is interrupted by songs representing the modern time of the contemporary audience members. This is a

Brechtian tradition which Churchill also follows in *Vinegar Tom*. Similar to *Vinegar Tom*, *Byrthrite* does not have one singular protagonist, however, it represents the life experiences of a group of women. Moreover, the action in this play is also episodic in nature like the action of *Vinegar Tom*'s. It moves from the individual to the collective action of the represented women. The inclusion of modern songs, similar to Churchill's, helps the audience members to relate what takes place in the past__ in 17th century England__ to what takes place in modern times including the scientific and technological abuse of women's bodies.

Byrthrite is concerned with reclaiming the lost voices of the forgotten women in history, the economic circumstances surrounding their lives, the wars between classes, and their education, how they develop solidarity and strength among themselves, etc. In this play, in particular, Daniels is pre-occupied with women's oppression throughout history. However, she is also interested in their ability to liberate themselves and how their collaboration and collective efforts can result in establishing new movements and shaping the perception of society at any time. Daniels herself points out in her introduction to the play, *Sarah Daniels Plays:1*, that it is mainly about "the implications and dangers of reproductive technology for women" (xii). The playwright is quite annoyed at medicine and the new medical surgeries which can help "infertile" mothers to give birth to babies. In her forward to the play, Jalna Hanmer explains the main focus of the play by stating it as follows:

> *Byrthrite* is set in the seventeenth century, the time when control over women's reproductive processes began to change hands from women to women. The changeover began with the introduction of new technology by male doctors, the use of forceps in childbirth. The process continued, and gathered momentum, over the following three centuries through the progressive introduction of technological interventions derived from science and medicine organized to exclude women from significant positions within it. (331)

The exclusion of women from the reproductive realm and replacing them with modern technology lies at the heart of the play. This is expressed by Hanmer in the concluding remarks of her forward to the play in which she demonstrates what follows:

The use of medicine and science controlled by men to challenge the independence and subjectivity of women continue as does the challenge to it by women. The prize is total control over women's reproductive processes and the reproduction of future generations. Women may at last become the vessel, the carrier, if used at all, for the male creation. In *Byrthrite* we return to the origin of this struggle (332).

However, the idea of excluding women from the reproductive realm and replacing them by technology is not the only theme represented by Daniels in her play. In fact, *Byrthrite* discusses a wide variety of issues including, the process of producing plays, poverty, witch-hunting, and lesbianism. So, the play is not just a critique of science. It deals with so many social issues as well.

Byrthrite is referred to by many critics as a very complicated play. Daniels herself refers to it in an interview as too "ambitious" and quite "unworkable." The complexity of the play lies in its representation of two centuries, the integration of so many characters and plots, the use of the 17th century accent in terms of language, the depiction and representation of many issues including the history of the civil war, witch-hunting, religion, medicine, class-war, etc.

The structure of the play is made up of two parts like what is mentioned earlier in this paper. Part One is made up of eight

scenes. Whereas, Part Two is made up of ten scenes. The action of the play is set within the 17th century England. It takes place during the civil war. Notably, the setting of action itself is quite significant as it has so many resemblances with England in the 1980s. Similar to Churchill's *Vinegar Tom*, the play does not confine itself to the witch trials of 17th century England. However, the action itself extends to include a good variety of ideas and themes. There are references throughout the play to the hanging of witches, but unlike *Vinegar Tom*, this kind of persecution does not occur to the main characters of the play. Some of the major characters such as Rose, Jane, and Bridget are cross-dressers. They go in disguise, not to hide themselves or to escape punishment, but to explore more their sexual orientation. Namely, Daniels' intention here is to focus on the idea that gender is socially-based, and it is culturally-constructed no more no less.

The major theme of *Byrthrite* is the one expressed by Churchill in *Vinegar Tom.* Specifically, Daniels focuses in her play on women's oppression and their exploitation by men. Gabriel Griffin points out in her essay "Violence, Abuse, and Gender Relations in the Plays of Sarah Daniels," published in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* edited by Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt that, "The notion of any form of 'extremism' on the part of women, 'extremism' here meaning simply a critique of women's domination by men, has always been a source of recrimination against women" (194). *Byrthrite* is an example of men's domination over women as it "centers on women's persecution in the seventeenth century. Daniels herself has not escaped this fate. It is to her credit that this has not deterred her from addressing what remain abidingly serious issues: the oppression of women and their exploitation by men" (194). Similar to Churchill's theatre which has been referred to by critics as a theatre of ideas, Daniels' is an "issue-based" theatre. However, again like Churchill's, Daniels' theatre has witnessed a shift to a more "formal innovation, a theatre of style and physical theatre" (195). For both Daniels and Churchill, form is as important as the content itself. Since the content is quite revolutionary, they the form is also revolutionary. *Vinegar Tom* is characterized by using epic devices and techniques as some sort of revolt against the conventional way of writing. Daniels does the same thing especially with regard to the use of songs to interrupt the sequence of events and this is a point of discussion later on in this paper.

As for the content, there is a number of key issues which Griffin tackles in her essay and it could be useful to refer to here: first, it is the issue of "the oppressed housewife, [which is] a key figure in Daniels's work" (195). The second issue, however, is of the "female bonding as a means of countering female oppression" (195). The third issue is apparent in the "representation of violence against women" (195). Finally, the last issue lies in the "problem of the endings of Daniels's plays" (195). Concerning the second issue that Griffin mentions here is quite central to the action of the play. The "female bonding" which is the source of power and solidarity among women is represented through the meetings the group of women characters holds between now and then. These women characters are, Grace, Rose, Helen, Jane, Ann, Mary as the main characters in the play. Then other women appear and accompany them such as, Lady. H, Bridget, Ursula, Ursula's Mother, and the Pricker's Mother.

In fact, this "female bonding" resembles the feminist bonding of the 60s and the 70s. Through the representation of the major characters' ideas with regard to different subjects, Daniels represents the plurality of the feminist movement(s). Daniels believes, among other feminist playwrights, that there are plural feminisms,

not a singular feminism. She herself identifies as a radical feminist. In spite of this fact, she is not biased at all or reluctant to represent the different tendencies within the feminist movement itself. Accordingly, the debates among the women characters throughout the play represent the modern debates of feminists belonging to different ideologies and ways of thinking. Again, like Churchill, Daniels is very keen on linking the past to the present. Another good example of relating the present to the past is to be found in the final scene of the play where Rose manages to bury a play she spends a good amount of time writing. Significantly, this act of burying the play in order for the next generation to find it is exactly what takes place in the 60s and the 70s during the feminist movement. The feminist playwrights dedicate part of their work to revitalizing the writings of "forgotten" or "lost" women playwrights. So, Daniels attempts through this final action on Rose's part to remind the audience members of the wide project of feminism for theatre. Not only do the arguments and debates of the women characters in the play reflect the present reality of conflict and tension amongst feminists themselves, but also does the argument between Grace and Rose about the latter's play. This argument reminds the audience members of the ongoing debate between feminist playwrights and the mainstream playwrights as with regard to realism and anti-realism in theatre. Daniels' dramaturgy itself is referred to by Carina Bartleet in her article, "Sarah Daniels: Feminist Enque(e)ry Within the Mainstream," as "realist." However, it goes against the traditional realist tradition through re-vision. Bartleet explains how "through her predominantly realist dramaturgy, Daniels explores issues such as homophobia and the lack of rights accorded to lesbian and gay people in a multitude of settings, including the legal and mental health systems as the gendered dynamics and division of labour in families" (158). Even if Daniels' drama is considered by some critics as a realistic one, it is a non-conventional realistic drama. The structure of her plays does not prove otherwise.

In Part One of the play, the audience members are confronted with a group of women from different social backgrounds, and they express their fears of and plans to run away from the Pricker who persecutes witches. They meet at Grace's place regularly as they form a theatre group. They meet to talk and discuss different issues of concern for other women. In the first few scenes of Part One, the audience members are introduced to the women characters of the play. Notably, they are not introduced individually, but together. In the following scenes, however, they are either introduced individually or in tandem. The action of the play represents the oppression as embodied in the character of the Pricker. Yet, this oppression is not of an individual, but of society as a whole. That is why, the entire action goes around these women's trials to escape persecution practiced against them by different male oppressors. Consequently, they try to find out alternatives together on how they can survive. Economically speaking, they are independent. Grace and Rose are single women having no male guardians in their lives to support them financially. While, Helen is very much dependent upon her husband the village Parson as she does not make a penny on her own. Ann and Mary work as maids at Lady. H's place, and they do not mind being enslaved by her because they cannot do without her money. Specifically, these poor, dependent, working women are portrayed quite similarly to Churchill's Ellen, Joan, Alice, and Susan. Each one of them owes her freedom and financial support to a male partner. The only character who is quite free and independent in *Byrthrite* is Jane. Jane is introduced in Scene Two, the stage directions say, "She (Helen) stops abruptly as the door opens revealing Jane, a woman disguised as a soldier" (Daniels 339). When

Jane makes an entrance nobody recognizes her as a women, neither the other women characters on the stage nor the audience members. In her own surprise to find a man in their women's meeting Helen says immediately, "This is a devotional meeting, sir. For women alone" (Daniels 339). After they make sure of Jane's woman identity and female sex, Jane justifies her cross-dressing by stating that she is a women "In truth. Doing a man's job for a man's wage" (Daniels 340). Considering this, Daniels wants to deliver a message here, that only men can make money. Even if women work, they never make money as equally as men. Equal pay is a very strong argument within the feminist communities in the West till today. This means that women have to give up their true identity if they want to pursue a career and make money. This argument, however, is similar to the argument of the conflict between classes and the sexual division of labor which dominates the action of *Vinegar Tom*. It is quite interesting to notice here that although Daniels is a radical feminist, she represents class as an issue in her plays. Similarly, although Churchill is a socialist feminist, she represents the gender-based oppression in her plays. In fact, the two playwrights believe in the existence of different mechanisms of oppression even if they concentrate their focus on only one of them.

For Daniels, just as for Churchill, the financial independence is crucial for women's liberation and freedom. Daniels depicts this by the end of Part One where Grace, Rose, and Jane manage to get rid of the Pricker and confiscate all of his money. Then, the women friends, Grace, Rose, Jane, Helen, Ann, and Mary divide the amount of money among themselves and decide to meet again in two years after achieving their dreams. In Part Two, however, Daniels portrays changes within the main characters' lives. She depicts what happens to each one of them till the death of Grace and her funeral's scene which ends the play. Within this primary plot, there are other secondary plots represented in the narratives of other characters and through their encounters with each other. Through this representation, Daniels succeeds to a certain extent in describing the female experience in the 17th century England. Therefore, she succeeds in making history in contrast to what Helen's husband says, the Parson of the village, that women "don't make history" (Daniels 381).

The play might look like a bit of a mystery in the very beginning. But after the first few scenes which introduce the many major characters of the play, the audience members begin to realize how the characters are related and what kind of action taking place in front of them on the stage. Through her representation of the different narratives of these characters, Daniels intends to tackle the different forms of oppression reinforced by patriarchy. These different forms include, economic oppression, social oppression, sexual oppression, medical oppression, religious oppression, and also the oppression of the military institution. In spite of the variety of the different forms of oppression, Daniels focuses more on both the medical and the religious forms of oppression. The violence, Daniels tries to portray in the profession of medicine is quite shocking. Through her representation of medicine, Daniels questions the physical abuse of doctors as the only means of treatment. Examples are so many. The encounter between Rose and the Doctor in Scene Six in Part Two is full of violence and both verbal and physical abuse. After stating that Grace "[has] a fever" (Daniels 398), the stage directions say, "He opens his bag and produces a knife" (Daniels 398). Rose, however, asks him to put the knife away. But he rejects explaining, "If she is to be cured [he is] to bleed her and let the badness drain out" (Daniels 398). The Doctor even protests to Rose's suggestion of using any of "nature's remedies for this sickness…" (Daniels 398). Ridiculously, he believes that violence as embodied in his medicine is "far

advanced from the rubbish spouted by old crones" (Daniels 398). If he is to save the woman's life, he has to "cut her" (Daniels 399). This excessive use of violence in this male-dominated profession of medicine gives it its power and it is an act of survival throughout ages. The fear of being replaced by a natural or an alternative form of medicine increases the doctors' use of violence from Daniels' perspective in the play. When Rose rejects the Doctor's abuse of Grace's body, he calls it "obstinacy [that] hampers [his] work" (Daniels 399). He goes even further to call himself and his fellow doctors as the "saviours of mankind" (Daniels 399). The way he brags about his power is quite annoying to the contemporary audience members as it reflects nothing but male supremacy and power. Moreover, he is so proud that, "It is within [his] power to right the ills plaguing both these females and [her] belief in [him] will cause [her] to be grateful for the service [he is] about to perform" (Daniels 399). The pride this Doctor sees in his profession and what he does is pretty much a masculine pride. Medicine is one institution of patriarchy, a very well-organized and well-established one, and this could justify his position of power. Again, this Doctor's claim of knowledge is similar to the Packer's claim of knowledge in *Vinegar Tom*. In fact, knowledge is power in the two cases and provides an absolute authority to those who own it. The Doctor's knowledge here condemns the witches and their belief in natural medicine, "Most likely their faith in the old hocus-pocus herb medicine that has landed them in this state of ill-health" (Daniels 399). By the same token, Packer's knowledge in *Vinegar Tom* urges him to accuse the "cunning women" who claim to do no harm and to cure illness, of being the worst of them all. According to the knowledge he has, he makes it clear, "The infection will spread through the whole country if [they] don't stop it. Yes, all witches deserve death, and the good witch even more than the bad one" (Churchill 167). Primarily, if the Doctor receives much of his power from science and the intellectuals or thinkers who view him as one of the "saviours of mankind" (Daniels 399), Packer receives in from God, "For God in his mercy has called me and shown me a wonderful way of finding out witches, which is finding the place on the body of the witch made insensitive to pain by the devil" (Churchill 165). Both the Doctor and Packer represent two different hierarchies, medicine and religion, rejected by feminism.

Looking for alternatives or at least highlighting them is a means by which those feminist playwrights deconstruct the patriarchal authority and power. The idea of how social roles, and in this case here gender roles, play a great part in the institutionalization of oppression and widening the gap between power structures is explained explicitly in the book *Exploring 'Unseen' Social Capital in Community Participation: Everyday Lives of Poor Mainland Chinese Migrants in Hong Kong* by Sam Wong. In Paper Six of the book "Rethinking Authority and Power in the Structures of Relations," Wong refers to how a good definition for the structure of authority can be formed by demonstrating that, "A perceived need for a clearly defined structure of authority lies in the monitoring and co-ordination failures in controlling the free-riding behavior of individuals. Developing tight contractual relations and structures of governance shapes the behavior of individuals and regulates social exchange" (148). Then, Wong goes further to illustrate, "… social roles, rules, and sanctions are considered the basis of the normative regulating mechanisms since rules 'create and recreate the general patterns of authority in a society' (Ostrom and Ahn 2003:xxiii)" (148). Applying this to the patriarchal authority, social roles or to be more precise gender roles form the normative mechanisms referred to above by Wong. These mechanisms are the

foundation upon which oppression is built. Not only this, however, it becomes normalized and naturalized that anyone who opposes it gets excluded from community as an outlaw or a witch.

Many of the female narratives and songs in the play discuss the idea of reproduction and how the patriarchal institution of medicine decides to deprive women of their reproductive rights. The setting of the play in the 17th century England is quite significant here. The witch trials is not the only inspiring incident for feminist playwrights such as Daniels and Churchill. Also, the advances in the field of medicine, in particular, are quite inspiring. Medicine and the field of Gynecology, in particular, have replaced the midwives' role of delivery. Previously, only women used to be consulted for healing illness and diseases, but in the 17th century doctors replaced them for this job. This is referred to in Hanmer's foreword to the play. Hanmer not only refers to the introduction of "forceps" and how it affected the job of the midwives in the 17th century. However, she refers to modern advances in science and medicine and how they are threatening to women today as they were three or even four centuries ago. Moreover, Hanmer illustrates, "The organization and development of medicine, particularly obstetrics and gynecology, and science, particularly human genetics, is fundamental to the institution we find ourselves in today" (331). This means that Daniels attempts to remind her audience members of their current situation and to urge them to re-think and re-consider when and how this kind of displacement and state of denial have taken place. The setting of the play itself is looked at by Daniels as a "metaphor" of the twentieth century England and an indication that everything around changes throughout history except for women's reproductive rights and their control over their bodies. It could be quite surprising and annoying for the contemporary audience members to feel that history repeats itself. Even today in the twenty-first century, a very little or no progress at all has taken place within this field of women's rights. The questions has always been the reproductive justice and how it could be achieved for women. Even more, woman's rights to privacy, equality or even bodily integrity are eradicated altogether once she gets pregnant. Immediately, these rights get replaced by the "fetus'" right to life. In fact, the reproductive health issues have always been central to the feminist debates and they are central to *Byrthrite* as well. Abortion, in particular, constitutes a moral dilemma for everyone involved in this debate. It is an ethical dilemma for the pregnant woman herself, her husband, the doctor, and of course society as a whole. Religion plays a vital role in restricting the reproductive freedom of women throughout history. Even after safe abortion is legalized in different parts of the globe, the religious stand remains as it is and it seems like it is very unlikely to change.

As a matter of fact, contraception, abortion, and even the New Reproductive Technologies often times referred to as "NRT" are three urgent problems for women. These problems have been tackled both legally and culturally throughout history. Theatre has always participated in representing the ongoing debate over these three crucial issues. Primarily, the conflict has always been on who is and who should be in control of reproduction. Obviously, *Byrthrite* is pretty much about this conflict. Historically speaking, with regard to contraception, it was legalized in England in 1967. Around eight years later in 1975, the British law legalized abortion. However, in 1990 a new law passed with regard to the use of New Reproductive Technology. This has taken place due to the mobilization of the feminist movement. In fact, the feminist movement focused much on policies, and it set out its own priorities. Feminists took into consideration the law provisions and how

limited they were. Then, through their efforts, mobilization, and institutional agreements with parties and bodies that support women's rights, they managed to legalize the reproductive rights for all women. This process of institutionalization which led to the legalization of reproductive rights is referred to by Jack Hayward in his essay "Mobilising Private Interests in the Service of Public Ambitions: The Salient Element in the Dual French Policy Style," published in the book of *Policy Styles in Western Europe* edited by Jeremy Richardson et al., as "a dual policy style" that "mobilises private interests in the service of public ambitions" (137).

In spite of the laws that passed to legalize women's reproductive rights, Daniels is very concerned with the use of modern technology especially in giving birth to babies and treating infertility which sometimes includes determining the sex of the newborn baby. In most cases, the parents prefer males to females. This is another form of violence practiced against women. Around three out of six of the play's songs go around this theme of modern medicine and the reproductive rights of women. Like Churchill's integration of songs in *Vinegar Tom*, Daniels' purpose here is quite similar to Churchill's which is to realize the Brechtian "alienation effect" referred to earlier in this paper. But unlike Churchill who prefers different actors or characters to perform these songs, in Byrthrite they are performed by the same characters and actors or actresses in the play. Owing to this purpose, the audience members are requested to get detached from the main action of the play and to reflect on their own reality. They are reminded most of the time that what they are watching is fictional not real and they need to focus more on their own reality. In Part Two, Scene Six Lady. H recalls the death of her sister last week and how her "babe was torn limb from limb in the name of their science with these barbarous instruments…. There, that is their substitute for the midwife's hands of flesh" (Daniels 402). What happens to Lady. H's sister motivates her to avenge on the doctor who killed her with his instrument, "After he committed foul deed I whopped him one over the skull with a poker, such was my temperament. 'T was a blow from which he didn't recover" (Daniels 402). Ridiculously, she justifies this murder from a religious perspective, "Doesn't the good book say an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth? Should be made to think afore he wields his authority in such a murderous manner" (Daniels 402). This confession of murdering a doctor while doing his job because he "mistakenly" causes the death of another human being could be shocking to the contemporary audience members. But this could be one of Daniels' strategies in representation.

The use of violence itself is quite popular in Daniels' theatre. Commenting on this, Elaine Aston in her book *Feminist Views on the English Stage Women Playwrights(1990-2000)* states, "In staging the 'unspeakable', Daniels uses theatre as a forum for a feminist 'speak out'. This explains why dramaturgically she concentrates on the dramatization of abuse as a political rather than a personal issue" (43). The abuse of women's bodies at the hands of male-doctors is referred to here in Lady. H's encounter with Rose. So, violence could be the only suitable response by women to the physical abuse as what is referred to in the story of Lady. H's sister's death. This encounter is followed immediately by the song "From a Dish to a Dish" sung by both Lady. H and the Doctor. The song begins with the Doctor defying Lady. H and her wish to get rid of doctors and their medicine as follows:

We're here to stay, no more witches and midwives

With Potions and herbs and wasting of lives.

We're gaining control and refining our tools

Creating a science replacing these fools. (Daniels 404)

The first part of the song sung by the Doctor shows how women are quite excluded from the profession because they are "fools." However, Lady. H replies in such a way that shows how much threatening this exclusion could be for all women, even women of the next generations. She goes further saying what follows:

Three centuries ago they started with hooks,

But the medicine man will next control our looks.

For they have moved on from bleeding out our life

To creating the next generation of perfect wife. (Daniels 404)

The perfect wife referred to above is the fertile one. In other words, she is the one who can give birth to babies and become a wife and a mother. Here, Daniels launches her attack against the male-made science and how it plays a vital role in reinforcing gender roles and gender-based stereotypes. This means that women who cannot give birth to babies or those who cannot have male children are not perfect. However, the modern science and medicine can make it up for their imperfection. The Doctor responds to Lady. H's claims, but his response is a satire on part of the playwright launched against patriarchy and its male-dominated institution of science and medicine. However, his response serves as an alert about how this institution of science and medicine could be of disastrous consequences for both women and society as a whole. The Doctor claims as follows:

…the doctor, father of the future…

……

Have mastered techniques of in vitro fertilization,

Surrogacy, ectogenesis and superovulation,

Won't stop now, intrauterine surgery will enrich our lives,

And cloning will ensure that males outnumber wives. (Daniels 405)

The last line in this part reflects how much medicine is misogynistic as its main purpose is to work hard to increase the number of males compare to females. Again, the idea of violence in defining the sex of the newly born baby is at work here. The Doctor's real intention, or the intention of the medical institution as a whole, gets more exposed when he says, "We're in charge of the future, the future perfect generation/ We're in charge of women's bodies, and isn't she a sensation" (Daniels 405).

Through her representation of such a misogynist declaration, Daniels urges her women audience members to question the core values of the "new science" and to try to open their eyes on its own interests. Through this representation it becomes quite clear for women that patriarchal science serves the interests of men and men only. Women and what is best for their bodies are excluded from such an argument. It is also a reminder to the women audience members that everything is politicized even the privacy of their own bodies. The feminist slogan of "The Personal is Political" is also at work here. Nevertheless, women are aware of men of science's opportunist and pragmatic strategy and this is embodied in Lady. H's response to what the Doctor previously says as follows:

From witches and midwives, they raped us with hooks,

Created their science, wrote us out of their books,

And now they're in charge of more than our looks__

Our future's in the hands of their reproductive technology.

And there's more at stake now than the right to children and gynaecology. (Daniels 405)

Raping witches and midwives of knowledge is a metaphor which emphasizes depriving them from the only source of power they have. The song reflects the feminist

argument with regard to creating a new feminist body of knowledge and epistemology. It represents the core of radical feminism which is "separatism." So, here Lady. H can be the mouthpiece of the playwright and a representative of the entire tendency of radical feminism one way or another.

However, Daniels does not want to represent one singular feminist perspective, even if the radical is the strongest one throughout the play. In Part One, Scene Eight, Rose criticizes Helen for deciding to spend her sum of money on medical treatment to have a child. She even accuses her of collaborating with doctors in physically abusing women, "You would willingly give them power over us by offering yourself up for their butchery" (Daniels 370). This is a very radical perspective and it is very loud throughout the play. But Daniels could not support the idea of depriving women of their freedom of choice. That is why Rose's view is followed by Grace's who argues, "(Sternly.) Is all right for you rose. You do not entertain thought of having children, but it be a severe mistake to dismiss them what do" (Daniels 370). This means that the new reproductive technology cannot be dismissed altogether, because it might be for the good of some women.

Earlier in Part One, Scene Six, Grace offers to teach Rose how to become a midwife. But Rose rejects the idea altogether emphasizing, "Oh no Grace! I don't want to know none of that. I am best not knowing. I have plenty more preference for making a play not a child. Be the worst thing that could happen to me, and I would rather be on perish, or in stocks than tend women in labour__ yeuk, how could you suggest such a thing" (Daniels 360)? After showing resentment of becoming a midwife, the encounter between Grace and Rose is followed by the Doctor singing the song "God and the Technodoc" in which he compares medicine to religion. Moreover, he calls it the "new religion" of his age as follows:

What is life but for creating
Other life to carry on,
Churches and religion taught us
We are made to marry one
Who like God can create babies
Embryos of human form,
Where is life and science going
Who decides the foetal form?
Medicine is a new religion
Opium to the childless pair
Who can judge when what's on offer
Gives to them an equal share
……
Join the doctors and the medics,
Scientists of the human life
Babies are essential for them
To sustain the perfect wife.
Science has at its disposal
Power to reproduce the race.
All the kindly interventions
Are the subtle saving face
Of other side of medicine.
Interference is the plan.
Making life by experimentation
Women's bodies controlled by man. (Daniels 361-62)

In this song Daniels represents how medicine reinforces the traditional form of a heterosexual family consisting of a heterosexual married couple with children. If the heterosexual family does not have children, then immediately there is something missing. To complete this "normative" image imposed upon them by society and patriarchy, they seek help from science and medicine. Science and medicine are bestowed with power given to them by the authority of their knowledge__ it is only them who know nobody else knows what they know.

In this respect, Daniels makes it clear that they can keep power, which is a privilege in itself, only by controlling women's bodies. The Doctor here, or Daniels to be more precise, compares medicine to religion. She hints at the hierarchy which is constituted by

knowledge. This means that medicine, like religion, is not to be questioned by anybody whosoever. It has an absolute power. Getting to know more about Rose's sexual orientation and how she is a homosexual woman who gets interested in other women, the song reflects the society's position or perspective on homosexuality in the twentieth century. This is quite obvious in the Doctor's statement, "We are made to marry one/Who like God can create babies" (Daniels 361).

A society like the one portrayed here is a homophobic society which can never conform to a sexuality that would go against the "compulsory heterosexuality" by any means. This means that like religion, medicine does not accept but the heterosexual family which can guarantee its existence and preservation of power. In fact, this is another form of oppression. Women are sexually oppressed due to their different sexual orientation. It is as if medicine collaborates with religion to subjugate women and eradicate any possible freedom of their bodies. Oppression lies in the fact that the same-sex couples do not have the choice of parenthood like the heterosexual couples. This is what Daniels hints at throughout the play. Daniels wrote the play in 1986, and this was quite an issue. Not surprisingly that a very recent paper in 2018 discusses the same issue of how much complicated and socially unacceptable is it to have same-sex couples as parents. The research paper is "Same-Sex Relationship Experiences and Expectations Regarding Partnership and Parenthood" by Karsten Hank and Martin Wetzel (2018). According to this paper, same-sex marriage is less frequent than expected especially after legalizing it in the U.S and some parts of Europe. Also, parenthood is less than expected among the same-sex couples. Hank and Martin view the "Institutional and biological constraints on G&Ls forming a family are an obvious and important driver of these behavioral differences" (702). Due to these "institutional" and "biological" restrictions, the same-sex couples reject the idea as a whole. Women such as Rose, Jane, Bridget, internalize their inferiority and lack of ability to become mother in a homosexual family. Again, the idea of internalization of oppression is at work here. They are most probably convinced by the two biggest patriarchal institutions, namely religion and medicine, that they can never make "perfect wives" and in turn cannot be "good mothers." This means that even the contemporary audience members can still watch the play and have the same questions that pre-occupied the minds of the audience members in the 80s. So, the act of revision here does not only work for the 17th century England, but for England of all ages and periods of time. The play as a whole is considered by Carina Bartleet in her article "Sarah Daniels: Feminist Enque(e)ry Within the Mainstream," as an "exploration of lesbian existence" (150). This means that Daniels uses history to explore contemporary issues.

Helen's right of choosing to be a mother resembles Susan in *Vinegar Tom* and her right to have an abortion. However, the two characters are different in their approaches towards their rights. Helen does not give up trying and she is ready to pay all what she has of money in order to get a baby. In Part One, Scene Six, Helen expresses her desire of having babies, but she dismisses the idea that her husband, the Parson, could be impotent, "I have always wanted children but it was not to be. Even Grace cannot tell me why and it can't be his fault for men of the cloth are not prone to pox" (Daniels 370). However, in her speech she seems to be convinced that there is nothing wrong with him being a man of religion. Again, the idea of internalization is at work here. It is as if as long as she is a woman, then she has a medical issue that needs to be dealt with, and of course the husband can never have any medical issues preventing him from becoming a father.

Similarly, Susan in *Vinegar Tom* keeps blaming herself for aborting a baby she does not want. She internalizes blame and oppression to the extent that she ends up believing that she is a witch because she causes the death of her unborn baby, "I was a witch and never knew it. I didn't know I was so wicked. I didn't know I had that mark on me" (Churchill 174). The idea of victim-blaming is applicable to the two cases here of Helen and Susan. Helen is a victim of the idea that men can never be "prone to pox" (Daniels 370), not following the right path for a right medical treatment, if there is any, in order to be able to give birth to children. Whereas, Susan is a victim of the idea that a woman is not free to choose whether she wants to have babies or not, it is not her will, but God's. She has to repent asking for forgiveness, and she prefers being hanged than being damned in hell afterwards. Consequently, women should always bear responsibility either for their impotence or fertility because everything has to do with their bodies and sexuality. This is one of the major themes in Byrthrite. Bartleet refers to this in her article by illustration that the play "lays claim to be an interrogation of the male usurpation and intervention into human reproduction through technology and the increasing medicalization of the female body" (150-51). The "male usurpation" of women's rights referred to by Bartleet here runs throughout the play and it is quite obvious in Daniels' representation of medicine, religion, and of course the legal system.

The third song which attacks the male- made science and medicine is "And a Man Named Armstrong Walked Upon the Moon" in Part One, Scene Three. The song follows the encounter between the group of women meeting at Grace's and Jane, the woman in soldier's outfit who tells them about her experience in the war. In this song, these four characters warn the women audience members that science would eliminate the race of womankind altogether from earth. With the use of modern technology, especially with regard to reproduction, women would become worthless and not needed anymore. They address the women audience members as follows:

There's a warning here, sister, let's take heed of this,
That man on the moon came to earth:
And fucking and love may start with a kiss
And you may control your kids' birth
But not for long now, they're taking our place.
Fashioning star wars in labs. Winning the race
To eradicate us and give birth by men
Fashioning new wombs inside of them
So don't laugh at the technological joke
Of scientists' long-reaching poke
The are doing the same thing with their reproductive technology
And Neil Armstrong gives the Man in the Moon no apology. (Daniels 350)

The entire play is full of warnings of the eradication of women's race. Daniels compares the patriarchal subordination of women to men to the elimination of the entire race on earth. The issue of women's control of their bodies or being in charge of reproduction dominates the action of the play.

In Part One, Scene One of *Byrthrite* the audience members are introduced to a group of women characters getting together and waiting to hear from a friend of theirs, Ann, who is supposed to give birth to a child. Rose and Helen wait for Grace, the midwife, to come with the news. When they receive the news about the baby girl, they address the audience members and sing

together "The Birthing Song" in which they say the following:

Unto you a child is born
Unto you a daughter given
From this time forth go and to all women tell;
That the daughter's inheritance shall pass
Through you all, to be kept forever
Women's rite, women's rite for choice in birth. (Daniels 335)

This very first song highlights the significance of the title of the play itself. Bartleet explains the significance of the title as follows:

> The play's title, Byrthrite, is an allusion to the biblical story, in Genesis 25, of Esau selling his birthright to his brother, Jacob. The reference to this story suggests that, like Esau, the women in the play will be supplanted by their own kin. The allusion invites parallels with, and provides the link for, two of the play's central themes, the persecution of women as witches and late- twentieth- century reproductive technology. Allusively, both can be read as a selling of women's birthright. (151)

The persecution of women as witches goes in tandem with the theme of the usurpation of women's rights and the role the reproduction technology plays in this process.

Scenes Two and Three reveal the women characters to their audience members more. The setting of these scenes is the meeting room where the women get together to discuss issues that concern them all. These meeting scenes representing women as a collective group recur a lot in feminist drama. They resemble the opening scene of Churchill's *Top Girls* (1982), for instance. In the opening scenes of *Byrthrite*, the women get together for rehearsals. They discuss the performance of a play written by Rose and there are some hints that it is forbidden for women either to write or to perform a play, "…singing, dancing, players, enjoyment of any kind is going against the law" (Daniels 337). This implies that men also monopoly creativity and writing. Drama, medicine, science, religion, are all male professions and women do not dare ever thinking of sharing them what they do. Otherwise, they might get condemned with witchcraft and get hanged for something they did not commit. The only justification for this justifiable act is that "man not only wants power over woman but over life. His attraction for lust, power and violence is fatally entwined" (Daniels 338). Daniels, here, represents a reverse image of man. Here, it is implied that man is evil by nature not women. This could be the only logical reason of the persecution of women labelling them witches to get rid of them.

Later on, Rose, Helen and Mary are joined by Jane and Grace. Like what is mentioned before, the opening scene of Churchill's *Top Girls* seems to be quite inspiring for Daniels. The two plays open with a representation of a group of women talking about their own life experiences, sufferings, struggles, and anger. The only difference between the two representations is that here Daniels focuses more on the silenced or the marginalized women from history__ women accused of witchcraft in the 17th century England. However, Churchill in *Top Girls* focuses more on historical figures and she mixes ordinary characters with historical ones in a scene that has been referred to by critics as a fantasy or a surrealist scene. *Top Girls* opens with Marlene who gets promoted to a position of managing director and she decides to celebrate by hosting a big dinner party and inviting five historical women figures to join her party. In this respect, Janelle Reinelt in her essay "Caryl Churchill and the Politics of style," published in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* edited by Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt, comments on the

opening scene of *Top Girls*, "Churchill begins with an image of the transhistorical price of certain kinds of fame and distinction. Each culture and time exacted its own methods of control and punishment for unruly female behavior" (180).The control and punishment referred to by Reinelt here is the same destiny of Daniels' women characters in *Byrthrite*. But this time it is not fame and distinction they have to pay the price for, however, resistance. Resistance, here, means not conforming to gender roles or social norms. Grace is a midwife and a cunning woman who is quite involved in healing and curing people's illness by the use of herbs. Rose, is a young playwright, lesbian, joins the army disguised as a man to be able to fight in the civil war. Jane is another lesbian woman and a soldier. Helen is a "Quaker" who rejects Catholicism to join a religion that believes more in the equality of all human beings. Mary and Ann are working-class women who get accused among other of witchcraft and hanged for it. According to Helen's account in Part Two, Scene Four, "There has been one hundred hung… and … double that number swam and drowned unrecorded" (Daniels 390).

This feminist tradition of representing a group of women collectively is usually aimed at creating an alternative hegemony as opposed to the male-dominated one. According to this tradition, there should be multiple voices, not a singular voice, representing the playwright's point of view. Susan Sniader Lanser clarifies this point in her *Fictions of Authority: women Writers and Narrative Voice* (1992), "Perhaps the very communality of such a narrative project means that certain values and norms may end up constituting their own hegemony. That is, while all narration is of course limited to and by the voices who tell it, this limitation may be obscured in communal narrative situations precisely by narrative plurality;… (266). Here, Lanser talks about the oral history narratives. But it is quite applicable also to Daniels' representation of women collectively throughout the scenes of her play. It sounds more like an alternative community and culture set against the dominant one.

Another good example of a group of women talking about their experience of oppression collectively is Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues* (1996). The play represents the gender of woman as a community and it employs oral history for its representation to serve a very radical ideology one way or another. It tackles different forms of violence against women globally, whether it is verbal, non-verbal, physical, sexual, or even symbolic. Ensler draws her material from interviewing college students in the 1990s and most of her interviews focus on these young women's experiences with their own vaginas. The subjects of her interviews differ according to their age, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and even nationality. The play tours the U.S. campuses till today in V.Day, 14th of February every year celebrating the emergence of the One Billion Rising Movement globally. According to this movement, one woman out of four women is subject to one degree of violence in her lifetime starting from verbal violence reaching the highest degree of violence which is sexual assault and rape. The total number of these women around the globe is one billion, and that is why women on V.Day raise up to stop violence against women altogether and immediately everywhere. The monologues form what has been referred to by critics as a "communal subjectivity," It is the same "communal subjectivity" created by Daniels in *Byrthrite*. Most probably, this "communal subjectivity" is missing in *Vinegar Tom*, except for the trial scene, but Churchill establishes it somewhere else in her drama. In the case of communal construction such as *Byrthrite* and *Vagina Monologues*, all voices are supposed to be represented

equally. But at a certain point, the playwright's voice gets louder through one of the characters. In *Byrthrite* it is Rose who represents the voice of the playwright. In *Vinegar Tom*, however, it is Alice's voice which represents Churchill's to a certain extent. The silence of the past is broken through the construction of the female subject and concentrating more on its voice as a subject. This means that the body has become the speaking voice telling the women audience members what they have never known before about their own female identity and how it is culturally constructed. In this case the body becomes more humanized having a voice of its own. But if the before-mentioned playwrights, Churchill and Daniels, or even Ensler identify silence and the objectification of women's bodies as the main cause of oppression and violence, then giving a voice to their bodies, and in some cases, such as Ensler's, to some parts of their bodies, namely their "Vaginas," constructs a community of bodies or vaginas where the sign "woman" is no longer there being replaced by the signifier "body" or "vagina" which might denote "woman" on both the individual and collective bases.

Besides her representation of gender-based oppression, Daniels, represents another form of oppression in terms of sexuality. The play portrays the issue of lesbianism and cross-dressing quite obviously. When Jane joins the ladies in Part One, Scene Two, they all mistaken her for a man. Nobody recognizes her true identity. Commenting on why she is disguised as a soldier, Jane says, "Doing a man's job for a man's wage" (Daniels 340). It is implied here that only men make good money. Class as a fundamental factor for oppression is more widely expressed by Churchill than Daniels. Daniels, as a radical feminist, focuses much more on gender-based oppression, while Churchill as a socialist feminist focuses on both class and gender-based oppression. But here Jane is not only dressed up as a man because she wants to make good money, however, it is because she wants to be herself to a certain extent. It is patriarchy and its "compulsory heterosexuality" which practices pressure on women such as Rose and Jane to remain in disguise. For Daniels what really shakes this "compulsory heterosexuality" and questions it is lesbianism or what Sue-Ellen Case terms in her *Feminism and Theatre*, "lesbian existence" (75). Case refers to the importance of Adrienne Rich's "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence" as a very important document for radical feminists and theatre practitioners. Case illustrates how "Rich places lesbianism in the context of patriarchal oppression rather than in the bi-gender context of homosexuality. The lesbian, she suggests, performs an act of resistance to the patriarchal assumption that men have the right of access to women" (75). This means that Daniels' purpose of representing lesbian characters in her plays is to resist the patriarchal norms and the gender roles imposed upon women by the male-dominated society they live in. Moreover, this representation is meant to do without the "male-gaze." This is what Case goes even further to illustrate when she says, "Within radical feminism, the lesbian is a woman-identified women because her primary relationships are with women, while the heterosexual woman is male-identified because she privileges her relationships with men" (75-76). This is exactly what Monique Witting explains while calling for the portrayal of lesbian characters in feminist theatre in order for the feminist playwrights to be able to replace the male-gaze with a female one. Significantly, this woman-woman identification can definitely produce an alternative matriarchal culture rather than a patriarchal one. Alison Jaggar and Paula Rothenberg in their book *Feminist Frameworks* argue, "Heterosexuality separates women from each other; it makes women define themselves through men; it forces women to compete against each other

for men and the privilege that comes through men and their social standing" (156). If what Jaggar and Rothenberg say here is analyzed deeply, it reminds its readers of *Vinegar Tom* and how Margarey betrays her fellow sisters only to please her husband. Fear and need embodied in poverty result in lack of solidarity and support among women throughout the play. On the contrary, *Byrthrite* shows a lot of good examples of solidarity and support among women, especially Rose and Grace. Witches and lesbians, according to Case, "experience both the height of patriarchal misogyny and the height of female power" (76). Both *Byrthrite* and *Vinegar Tom* represent witches. *Byrthrite* represents many lesbian characters, whereas *Vinegar Tom* does not make an explicit representation of lesbian characters. But both Alice and Betty could be ones in disguise. Alice, for instance, "hates her body," and Betty rejects the idea of getting married. She could be heterosexual and also rejecting marriage, but her rejection is embodied as some sort of illness, that is why this could be a hint at her sexual orientation. Case states that either a witch or a lesbian does the following:

…invokes the hatred of men, who often regard her as 'not a woman'. She has been the victim of job discrimination, social discrimination and psychological discrimination because of her sexual preference for women. The lesbian refuses to be the sexual object of male desire while daring to appropriate his sexual territory. On the other hand, the lesbian can remain outside of the internal dynamics of patriarchal sexuality. (76)

Most of Daniels' characters are lesbians either here or in her other plays such as *Ripen Our Darkness* (1981) and *Neaptide* (1982), which is the subject of the upcoming paper as well as many others.

In Scene Three at Grace's house, again Grace does not recognize Jane as a woman. Moreover, she asks her to leave, "Do this look like a place stuffed with Royals. Be off with you" (Daniels 342). Interestingly, other women are very proud of Jane, they identify themselves with her, especially Rose who shares the same sexual orientation of Jane's. Rose, so proudly illustrates, "A female, soldier, wager you'd not thought you'd live to see the day" (Daniels 342). Rose herself joins the army during the civil war in England in Part Two. Then, she is joined by a third female lesbian warrior with the name of Bridget. The three lesbian women are represented by Daniels as "independent from the legal and economic dependencies of heterosexual marriage and [have] access to the intimate support of other women. [They] are empowered by the woman-identified culture" (Case 76). However, the problem with women taking such a position is that they reject inclusion, especially of married women. Case, goes even further to state, "One wing of this position became separatists, maintaining that the feminist social experiment could not take Place within patriarchy. This separatism sometimes included the rejection of heterosexual women" (76). This means that Daniels intends Rose to be a separatist and makes her be judged by Grace who is less radical than her like what is mentioned earlier in the analysis of this play.

Later on, the women try to figure out what to do if the Pricker comes to Grace's house accusing her of witchcraft. Grace's plan, however, is to laugh. She believes that, "Takes courage beyond man to carry out duties amidst raucous ridicule" (Daniels 344). The Pricker's Apprentice comes disguised like a devil to scare her. However, her plan goes successfully well and once he hears the women laughing from above the tree, he runs away. In his encounter with Grace, she shows contempt for him and his other fellow men by stating, "So maybe you think you are. Delusions of this nature, especially of men believing themselves to be a character from the Bible are not uncommon" (Daniels 346). Here is a

criticism of religion itself. A woman cannot pretend to be a character from the Bible, simply because it does not have any women figures from Daniels' point of view. This encounter taking place right after Jane's arrival drives the audience members to draw comparisons between and Churchill's Pope Joan in *Top Girls*. Descripting the character of Pope Joan, Alicia Tycer points out in her book *Caryl Churchill's Top Girls*, "She reveals that she lived as a man from the age of 12 in order to continue her education. She eventually rose through the church establishment and became a pope. Meanwhile, she also had an affair with one of her chamberlains, and became pregnant. She gave birth to the child unexpectedly during a procession and, exposed as a woman, she was stoned to death" (24). Pope Joan gets in disguise only to continue her education and also because she aspires a higher position within the church. The same way, Jane, gets in disguise as a man because she wants to join the army and fight alongside her fellow male citizens and above all to earn good money. Through the representation of these two women in two different plays, the audience members recognize how religion, the military, and even worse medicine are all male professions. However, Grace's reference, here, to male "delusions" and how much "common" they are, brilliantly deconstructs these gender roles imposed upon women by patriarchy. The idea of "denaturalizing" the "naturalized" is an act of conscious awakening. It could be interesting here to refer to Monique Wittig and her criticism of "naturalizing" womanhood in her article "One Is Not Born A Woman," where she demonstrates what follows:

Not only do we naturalize history, but also consequently naturalize the social phenomena which express our oppression, making change impossible. For example, instead of seeing giving birth as a forced social production, we see it as a 'natural', 'biological' process, forgetting that in our societies births are planned (demography), forgetting that we ourselves are programmed to produce children, while this is the only social activity 'short of war' that presents such a great danger of death. (104)

Therefore, the "naturalization" of the "unnatural," that men are the ones who suffer from "delusions" not women, is Daniels' technique of a reverse representation where all the social norms are deconstructed in an indication that new ones are on their own way to be constructed.

The encounter between Grace and the Apprentice who pretends to be the devil is similar to the women's encounter with Goody, the woman who assists the pricker, Packer, in his work in *Vinegar Tom*. But here Grace is more confident than Joan who admits doing something that she did not actually do. Daniels' portrayal of women here is not as victims as Churchill's portrayal. Women here are more like rebels and very revolutionaries right from the very beginning till the very end of the play. Due to her courage and with her comrades' help, Grace succeeds in frightening the Apprentice and keeping him away, "The pricker's Apprentice turns tail and swiftly exits" (Daniels 347). In the following encounter between the women and Jane they explain to her the reason of their meeting, "We're trying to put some words together so we can perform them" (Daniels 347). This process of putting some words together for performance surprises Jane who says astonishingly, "I've not heard of women doing that" (Daniels 347). Creativity is as weird as cross-dressing. This is what Rose implies when she says, "We'd not heard of women passing as men till today" (Daniels 347). Daniels here takes the stand of radical feminists that literature is a male-literary canon. It is again one of the patriarchal institutions that needs to be questioned and challenged. The comparison which the audience members might draw here is between the 17th century English Literature and how women were not allowed to take

part in literature and theatre and the twentieth- century England where the situation has not changed significantly: theatre is still dominated by men playwrights and their representation of women is to fulfil the male-gaze no more no less.

The group of women gets together during a "lying-in" time because it "[is] the only time women are allowed to be together," so that they "can feel less afraid of these evil times against [their] sex" (Daniels 347). This statement about fear and the inability to be together for fear of persecution urges Jane to ask a question to which the women audience members can relate, "How can it be women of our time are stronger than ever before and yet persecuted worse at the same time" (Daniels 347)? The question raised up here is Daniels' question. Certainly, this is a direct attack against Margaret Thatcher and her policies. The ongoing controversy since Thatcher came to power was whether this could be considered as a big success and a great advancement in women's rights or not. Churchill herself comments on this in one of her interviews where she states, "Thatcher had just become prime minister; there was talk about whether it was an advance to have a woman prime minister if it was someone with policies like hers: she may be a sister but she isn't a comrade. And, in fact, things have got much worse for women under Thatcher" (qtd.in Tycer 19). Daniels, like Churchill, believes that the absence of the strong, well-organized movement of feminism gives way to the emergence of individualism as embodied in Thatcher and her policies. This is what Elaine Aston and Janelle Reinelt refer to in their essay "A Century in View: From Suffrage to the 1990s," published in their book *The Cambridge Companion to Modern British Women Playwrights* when they point out, "While the formal organization and energy of the earlier movements dissipated, even self-identified feminists tended to lean towards concern with the personal, the domestic, and the 'feminine'. The problem of the 'dual sphere' reasserts itself as the, 'two-career problem' for women, and in the resurgent backlash against feminism the fear of the 'bad mother' makes a strong reappearance" (14). In fact, it is more like "history repeats itself." This is what Margaret Barraclough expresses by the end of the 80s when she says, "…everywhere you look, history repeats itself. It's happening now__ Thacherite police is about getting women back into the home" (qtd.in Aston and Reinelt 14). This means that the fear the Daniels represents here as of the 17th century British women is the same one of the twentieth-century British women even with the rise of a woman to ultimate power and the highest state position.

Nevertheless, a big change has taken place with regard to women's perception of their own social role and their cultural situation. Aston and Reinelt goes even further, "Margaret Thatcher's success at what Stuart Hall termed 'Authoritarian populism' combined a nostalgia for the imperial past with 'privatisation' and a regressive desire for the patriarchal family, while using the rhetoric of free markets and personal freedom as part of the appeal" (14). This might explain why the concept itself of "personal choice" has taken over within the feminist movement itself. This could be what Daniels regrets, here, as the main reason for women's persecution in the twentieth-century England. Justifying why they hold their meetings secretively, Grace demonstrates, "when those who are accumbred kick back, the oppressor kicks harder" (Daniels 347). Again, the power relation which governs the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed is at work here. But, here, Daniels seems not to recommend resistance, while in *Vinegar Tom* Churchill make it clear that the only way out is through revolt and resistance. This resistance is embodied in Joan's rejection of the role of the victim declaring

and confessing what she did not really commit in order to look powerful and strong to her community members as well as the audience members. Moreover, she expresses her delight in meeting with the devil, "And I'll be glad to see him. I been a witch these ten years" (Churchill 173). Resistance is also embodied in Alice's reaction by the end of the play as she really wishes she could be a witch, "Oh if I could meet with the devil now I'd give him anything if he'd give me power" (Churchill 175). Power is what Alice aspires for and what Grace fears the most. Grace even moves forward to explain the different sources of power such as, "…some have power, such as they see it in health and advice over women's bodies, particularly in childbearing. And they want power over that" (Daniels 348). She refers again to the everlasting conflict between medicine and healing. "New inventions and persecution step together, in time" (Daniels 348). Here, Daniels draws an interesting comparison between doctors and prickers. Both want to control and dominate women's bodies. In addition, both want to persecute women one way or another. In fact, women's bodies are the sites where they can practice their profession and make money, other than that they are worthless and without value at all. This is why, they will never ever give up persecuting women, because to give up doing this is to give up the privileges they have and from which they receive their power. For Rose, the doctors are even worse than prickers, "At least they're[prickers] not hypocrites and do call themselves doctors" (Daniels 348).

In this encounter women have different institutions to blame. Rose, as is clear above, blames medicine and doctors. While, Grace earlier blames "patriarchy" and the "oppressor [who] kicks harder" (Daniels 347). Later on, Jane blames religion, namely the church. Talking about the experience of war in France, Jane mentions, "In their history they did burn four hundred women in town square, in one hour, all over country and many low countries besides. Whole villages left with one women. Just one alive. Was not the doctors' doing, was the church" (Daniels 349). Daniels shares the same point of view expressed by Churchill in *Vinegar Tom.* Notably, religion plays a big role in women's oppression in the two plays. In her introduction to *Vinegar Tom*, Churchill is so daring to declare that she "… discovered for the first time the extent of Christian teaching against women and saw the connections between medieval attitudes to witches and continuing attitudes to women in general" (Churchill 129). The two playwrights emphasize this oppression imposed by religion throughout their plays. In Part Two, Scene Two of *Byrthrite*, Helen rejects her husband's religion and decides to revolt against him by following a new one. The encounter between them is set in the church. The stage directions in this scene say, "Helen's husband a Parson, is sitting in the pulpit making notes, Helen enters, pausing to give the inside of the font a wipe. She walks down the aisle towards the pulpit" (Daniels 380). After seeing her, the Parson says immediately, "Women are not allowed in the pulpit. Take thy foot off from that step" (Daniels 381). Helen, quickly, "obeys"(Daniels 381).The first "misogynist" request not to get near the pulpit is followed by the Parson's declaration of "writing history" (Daniels 381). Moreover, he dismisses Helen's offer to help him because "[a] woman cannot write, for even if she has a mind to understand the lines on paper, her emotions get in the way of truth" (Daniels 381). While his own history, or in other words men's history "is plain statement of fact so it will not be questioned as to its accuracy in the future" (Daniels 381). The Parson's scene, here, is similar to the last scene of *Vinegar Tom*. The last encounter between Kramer and Sprenger, the authors of *Malleus Maleficarum* is a confrontation with the audience members representing them with the worst images and examples of

Christian misogyny. The two men simply portray Churchill's absolute dissatisfaction with and resentment of the Christian religion. Therefore, the two men are similar to the Doctor in Daniels' play, but instead of using science and medicine to treat women of their evil souls, they use religion. In addition, they share the Parson's point of view with regard to the emotional as well as the wicked nature of women. For them, women are "more credulous," "more impressionable," and they do have "slippery tongues" (Churchill 177). The Parson thinks the same of women. That is why, he states "Women don't make history" (Daniels 381). For both Daniels and Churchill religion, history as well as literature and creativity are confined to men only and this makes them quite exclusionary of women.

Witch-hunts and the Christian hysteria of the 17th century is quite significant in this encounter between Helen and the Parson as well as the last encounter between Kramer and Sprenger. Here, the Parson expresses his gratitude of getting rid of women witches, "The war has rid us of many evils not least of the evil embodied in some of the female sex who were weighed in the balance and found wanting. Suitably dealt with through rigorous court procedures and brought to justice either swum or hung" (Daniels 382). The Parson's gratitude, here, for getting rid of the witches has a lot in common with Kramer's and Sprenger's thankful attitudes at the end of *Vinegar Tome*, "And blessed be the Most High, which has so far preserved the male sex from so great a crime" (Churchill 178). The crime referred to here is that of witchcraft as "It is no wonder there are more women than men found infected with the heresy of witchcraft" (Churchill 178). Regarding this, both Daniles and Churchill consider Catholicism along with its ideals and main principles as quite resistant to the new feminist ideology. Siep Suurman in his essay "The Soul Has No Sex: Feminism and Catholicism in Early-Modern Europe," published in *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* edited by Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor makes it clear, "No historian will deny that the Catholic church has, for the most part, been a determined opponent of feminist ideas and practices" (416). Undoubtedly, Daniels and Churchill are quite aware of this fact. Their inclusion of religion as one of the oppressive mechanisms that patriarchy knows how to exploit for its own interests is quite evident through their theatrical representations. Nella Van den Brandt in her article "Secular Feminisms and Attitudes towards Religion in the Context of a West-European Society__ Flanders, Belgium," states, "The relationship between feminism and religion in the West-European context can be at best regarded as an ambivalent one (Aunne, 2011; Braidotti, 2008). Both in academia and political and popular debates, religion is often regarded to be on the side of women's oppression. At the same time, mainstream feminism is known and imagined as secular" (35). In fact, for radical feminists such as Daniels and to a certain extent Churchill, religion is unquestionably the main source of women's oppression. This secular tendency referred to above by Brandt "forced [feminists] to rethink their standpoint about religion…leading to heated feminist debates about 'religion', 'culture', and women's 'agency' or 'emancipation'…" (35). This issue of having an agency is represented through Helen's conversion to the "new religion" of "Quakerism." Namely, the Parson's demeaning reference to women and his description of them as evil because " 'Tis part of women's nature since life began with Eve" (Daniels 382), provoke Helen's anger. Then, she angrily protests, "I have heard that so many times the words form wax and block my ears" (Daniels 382). Feeling threatened to be deprived of her own agency because, "God's word writ since time began. Is not for mortals to meddle with" (Daniels 382), Helen, goes mad. The stage directions describe her

anger, "Wild with rage, sweeps the bible from the lectern to the floor, smashes her fists on the lectern and jumping and down shouting" (Daniels 382). Then, she explodes hysterically asking the Parson, "Why can't you change? Why can't you change" (Daniels 382)? Only because Helen is aware that for a religious man a change is not even possible when it comes to religion, she decides to change and gain her own freedom of choice.

What Daniels represents, here, are the barriers to human agency and autonomy. Religion is among these barriers and since reform can never take place, then a feminist revolution should take over. Daniels, like Churchill or any other feminist playwright represents the negativity that dominates any feminist debate with regard to religion. Phyllis Mack, however, in her essay "Religion, Feminism, and the Problem of Agency: Reflections on Eighteenth-Century Quakerism" explains how the feminist theorists keep silent with regard to religion when they discuss the issues of agency and autonomy. Religion is always absent from these debates because of its irrelevance from their own perspective. Referring to this absence or irrelevance, Mack elaborates, "This negativity about religion is also implied by the almost total silence of feminist theorists on the subject of religion and agency. Since the 1980s, many feminist writers have reflected on agency in untraditional ways, but no theorist I know of has broadened the concept so far as to imagine the agentive individual as a being with a soul" (435). Helen is quite aware of how important "autonomy" is for all human beings. This kind of autonomy is referred to by theorists as "relational autonomy." Mack defines this "relational autonomy" as a need for "certain qualities in order to achieve 'autonomy competency': a sense of self-worth, the capacity for moral judgment, the ability to be understood. All of these require a condition of social connectedness, and they may be impaired by conditions of social oppression" (436). In order for Helen to acquire such qualities that have a lot to do with who she is and her true identity as a free human being, she has to revolt against the different causes of her being oppressed, chief among them is religion. For her, autonomy is "an individual matter, involving the exercise of choice, the satisfaction of individual preferences, and the capacity for rational self-government" (Mack 436). All these qualities, however, can never be achieved if she stays with her husband, the true representative of oppressive patriarchy. Her husband, the Parson, does not use gender roles or social norms as instruments for oppression alone, but he also uses religion. Moreover, he uses religion to silence his wife and to keep her subordinated to him forever. Although she can keep her agency while being with him, because, according to Mack, "a person's capacity to be a free agent may be generated in the context of relationships, of conditions of dependency, or out of the individual's subjection to external power…" (436), she prefers to leave and to be on her own. This is also justified by Mack, "agency itself is defined as the individual's ability to act according to her own best interests and to resist oppressive power relationships" (436). This is exactly what Helen does, she resists the "oppressive power relationship" with her husband. She bluntly confesses being a "Quaker" and since her husband is not, she declares "Then I cannot stay married to you" (Daniels 384).

In Part One, Scene Five, namely the "Pond Scene" is quite crucial to the action of the play. The Pricker brings women suspected of witchcraft and he asks them to swim. If they float, then this means that they are witches. While, if they sink, then they are innocent. This scene is similar to Scene Sixteen in *Vinegar Tom* followed by the song "If You Float." The setting of the scene here is quite annoying. It is quite similar to the hanging scene in *Vinegar Tom*. The stage directions describe the

setting, "Grace, Rose, Helen and Mary stand on the edge of a large crowd. All that can be seen is the cross-bar of the gallows with the top of the rope hanging from it. At the moment the box is kicked away they turn and face outwards, eyes down, unable to look at each other, isolated by a sense of powerlessness and grief" (Daniels 351). This sense of "powerlessness and grief" urges Rose and Jane to think of how they could get rid of the Pricker. They bring a dancing bear and take it with them to frighten the Pricker away and make him leave forever. This is what happens and the stage directions in Scene Six say that the Pricker "jumps through the window and runs, without looking behind, until he is out of sight" (Daniels 356). By the end of Scene Seven, the women are sure that they are free after the Pricker flees away. In Scene Eight, the women get together again in their meeting room. Ultimately, the meeting proves that each one of them holds a different point of view. Helen does not like the idea that Jane and Rose manage to get rid of the Pricker. She believes, "He'll only be more vengeful than afore "(Daniels 367). She goes even further to blame Rose and accuse her of "plac[ing] the rest of [their] lives in jeopardy" (Daniels 367). This accusation, however, loses Rose her temper and she replies defensively, "Don't you go putting her under. You a fine one to say such things yourself. No one cam looking for you, being married as you are. I am cam to accept that I would never get a pat on the head or back from you, but you never open your mouth except to drench other's suggestions" (Daniels 367). Most importantly, the conflict between the two represents the conflict between radical feminists. Rose represents the radical "separatists." That is why, she cannot stand the idea that Helen is a married women. Moreover, she cannot stand her going to doctors and seeking help from the male-made medicine in order to be able to give birth to babies. In fact, marriage is an issue for radical feminists, and Daniels is one of them. Helen herself does not seem to be happy with her marriage. She says "pathetically," "I cannot help being married. Is difficult to shake off accumbrements of Parson" (Daniels 368). Significantly, the women bring class in their argument again and how it plays a vital role even in marriage. Mary tells Helen that she "should have said no" (Daniels 368) to the Parson when he proposed to get married to her. Her reasoning is that Helen is not "a lady of wealth enough to have it arranged for [her]" (Daniels 368). Daniels is a radical feminist who believes gender to be the main factor of oppression. However, she also agrees with Churchill that class has a role to play too.

Jane returns back by the end of Scene Eight to catch up with the meeting. She tells them about finding some money at the Pricker's house. The women decide to divide it equally amongst themselves. Then, each one of them makes up her mind on what to do with the money. Mary and Ann want to go to London and join the protests there. Helen wants to see a doctor and have a child. Rose, however, decides to "buy some men's clothes" (Daniels 371). She wants to join the army and to "find Jane and fight alongside in the war" (Daniels 371). Grace's plan is quite different from theirs. She wants them to stay together and they can form a group of performers who would arrange tours from one place to another raising women's awareness about their health and the nature of their bodies. Grace goes on, "I wanted us to remain together and form a band of traveling players to go from country to country entertaining women… Making them laugh, dispelling myths and superstitions and fears so that life and health and well-being were no longer mysteries but understood by one and all" (Daniels 371). Grace represents the feminist belief that the entire strength of the feminist movement lies in solidarity and in the establishment of a well-organized movement. To such a feminist stand, the plural feminisms are the

immediate cause of the entire movement's collapse and loss of ideology. What Grace aims at here is the reproduction of culture as opposed to the male dominated culture. At this point, Sue-Ellen Case illustrates in her *Feminism and Theatre*, "The radical-feminist emphasis on the patriarchy produced another major of category of analysis and practice: the notion of women's culture, different and separate from the patriarchal culture of men. Many radical feminists participate in this women's culture, a 'grass-roots' movement concerned with providing feminist alternatives in literature, music, spirituality, health services, sexuality, employment and technology" (64). Accordingly, Grace represents the radical feminist project of having an alternative culture, an alternative theatre and literature in order to raise women's awareness about issues that might be of great interests for them. While Grace thinks of the process of establishing an alternative culture, Rose thinks of equality. She wants to join the army because she wants "to be equal. Treated the same" (Daniels 371). At this point, Rose represents the liberal feminist stand of demanding equality and a reform from within the system itself not from without it. Finally, the women decide to leave, but to meet again in two years. So, Part One ends with the return of the Pricker again. But this time he looks for Grace.

Part Two, Scene One starts with Rose, the soldier who is on a watch duty. In this scene the love affair between the two women, Rose and Jane, becomes more apparent. The stage directions here say, "Jane enters, bounds over to Rose and slaps an arm around her. Rose looks up surprised and pleased and then looks around her nervously" (Daniels 372). Significantly, Daniels' theatre is referred to by many critics as a "lesbian" theatre. It is one of those theatres which, according to Case, "were specifically for, by and about lesbians" (76). Moreover, "many [many of these theatres] played only to all women audiences" (Daniels 372). That is why, these theatres and their representations are referred to as "separatist." Case elaborates, "Generally, these productions were aimed at dramatizing positive images of lesbians" (76). Apparently, Daniels represents a very positive image of Rose, for instance, throughout the play. She is very knowledgeable, well-educated, and brave. Besides, she is the one who plots for getting rid of the Pricker. She is also the one who believes in solidarity and the strong ties of womanhood. Furthermore, she is the one who believes strongly in equality and decides to join the army to find a cause worth fighting for and to prove that she is not less loyal than her fellow male citizens. At the end of the play, Rose is the one who attempts to rescue Grace. Moreover, she is the one who is creative and talented. As she strongly believes in her talents, she want to bequeath them to the next generations of writers.

Besides representing positive lesbian images, Daniels represents what Jeffrey Weeks refers to in his essay "The Paradoxes of Identity" published in *The Routledge Reader in Politics and Performance* edited by Lizbeth Goodman with Jane de Gay as "sexual persona" (164). He defines it as "… like the whole personality, is … a social practice seen from 'the perspective of the life history', and the sources of that personal history are inevitably cultural" (164). He even goes further adding to the culturally constructed "sexual persona" and elaborating that the sexual identity is a fiction created by history no more no less. He emphasizes the idea that, "Sexual identities are historical inventions, which change in complex histories. They are imagined in contingent circumstances. They can be taken up and abandoned. To put it polemically, they are fictions" (166). Daniels is quite aware of this fictional sexual identity. This is quite obvious in Jane's assertion that in the army the men

soldiers "are always slapping arms round each other" (Daniels 372). This is an indication that sexual orientations are identities that human beings "adopt, inhibit, and adapt to work in so far as they order and give meaning to individual needs and desires, but they are not emanations of those needs and desires"(Weeks 164). Consequently, these soldiers that Daniels refers to, adopt certain sexual identities when they are in the army, and these sexual identities change when they get outside. This emphasizes Week's assumption that sexual identity is a "historical fiction" (166). Referring to sexual identity as historical can be looked at as follows:

> is simply to recognize that we cannot escape our histories, and that we need means to challenge their apparently iron laws and inexorabilities by constructing narratives of the past in order to imagine the present and future. Oppositional sexual identities, in particular, provide such means and alternatives, fictions that provide sources of comfort and support, a sense of belonging, a focus for opposition, a strategy for survival and cultural and political challenge. (Weeks 166)

These alternatives are provided through Daniels' representation of queer identities in her plays. This representation of queer identities has a role to play in the process of consciousness raising or the reproduction of culture in which radical feminists are involved. Again, according to Weeks, "It [denaturalizes] identities, revealing the coils of power that entangle them…. It makes human agency not only possible, but also essential. For if sexual identities are made in history, and in relations to power, they can also be remade" (166). In fact, the reconstruction of sexual identity is a common theme in Daniels' drama. Rose's decision of joining the army is motivated by her need to feel equal on one hand. On the other hand, it is motivated by her need to assert her sexual identity and to give it a free expression through masculinity which is one of the chief characteristic features of the military. It is not a coincidence that Daniels explores both history and sexual orientation in her play. Significantly, the two are very much related and such an awareness of their relation is very important for the reconstruction of sexual orientation. The idea of gender itself as a myth is explained at length by Judith Butler in her *Gender Trouble*(1990) and *Bodies That Matter*(1995) which is the subject of the fourth paper of this current dissertation. As with regard to the reconstruction of gender itself, the idea is emphasized throughout Part Two, either in the exchanges between Jane and Rose or even in the stage directions themselves. Later on, by the end of Scene One in Part Two, a soldier enters while Jane and Rose hug each other and the stage directions say, "Rose and Jane's body language and posture change in front of him. They 'act' and talk like men" (Daniels 376).

In the following encounter between Rose and Jane, they try to find out again why the female power might be bothering for its male counterpart. The importance of this argument lies in the hints it reveals with regard to the main cause of women's persecution by men. Earlier in Part One, Grace relates it to the women's potential for resistance, "When those who are accumbred kick back the oppressor kicks harder" (Daniels 347). Religion, like what is mentioned before, could be one of the main causes of oppression. In addition to this, this group of women believes that giving birth is another cause of oppression and persecution by men. This is what Jane illustrates in her encounter with Rose after joining the army, "so then, I've been thinking on this, maybe is compensation for their inabilities. Alarmed that they cannot give life they do find glory in death. Surely that serves as an explanation enough as to why they oft set themselves dangerous tasks for no other

purpose than to prove themselves__ 'tis envy of birth" (Daniels 375). What Jane says, here, could also justify men's lust for power and violence like what Grace attempts to illustrate earlier in Part One. Grace also emphasizes the same idea of how giving birth to babies forms a great threat to men and their power later on when she says, "Our sex with its single power to give birth, pose a threat to men's power over whole order of villages, towns, counties and countries. That control depends on women cur-tailing to men's ideals of how they should behave" (Daniels 410). By employing women's bodies as the main sources of power, Daniels highlights men's urgent need to overcome this power throughout history either by war(death) or science(technology and medicine). This is quite evident in her representation of the torture and killing of the witches and also the replacement of midwives and their profession by medicine and doctors. Certainly, Daniels delivers a certain message to her women audience members which is, "not [to] rest until [they] have won back [their] bodies for [themselves]" (Daniels 408).

The play does not only focus on restoring women's control over their bodies, but also over their voices. This process of restoring control over their voices or at least finding ways in order for their voices to be heard is an act of empowerment which is pretty much common in Daniels' plays. Both Daniels and Churchill give voices to the voiceless in their drama. This is very clear in their portrayal of ordinary women from history and making them central to their stage. Believing that these voices would shape the lives of many other women, they give them enough space to express themselves freely and to be loud enough to be heard. Significantly, all the women voices in either Daniels' or Churchill's plays are "personal" voices not "public" ones. That is why, they are feminist voices. Nancy Owen Nelson clarifies this point of "personal voices" in her book *Introduction to Private Voices, Public Lives: Women Speak on the Literary Life* by stating that there is always an urgent need to "break out of masculanist modes of communication, and in breaking free, to explore the deepest parts of ourselves as we relate to the texts which have shaped our lives" (xvii). Moreover, the personal voice is always looked at as an authentic voice. Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz in her article "Personal Voice/Feminist Voice" elaborates on Nelson's view by demonstrating that, "The personal voice appears to derive from the speaker's 'deep' experience; it both depends on and confers a form of authenticity" (192). Besides being authentic, the women's voices in Daniels' and Churchill's drama are quite revolutionary. In *Byrthrite*, just as in *Vinegar Tom* to a certain extent, women develop new mechanisms and alternatives to the patriarchal rule and power. They organize protests collectively just like the ones Mary and Ann participate in during their stay in London. This could be one form of revolt and resistance. Moreover, each one of the other women characters decides to have her own way and demand liberation for herself from all the social restrictions imposed upon her by the patriarchal-based gender roles. However, this is not that easy and the play delivers a message home to its women audience members that they have to pay the price for their own liberty and freedom. This is exactly what Helen refers to in Scene Four after Rose returns back from the war. Soon after her arrival, Rose knows about the death of Mary and Ann who protest against violence in London. Helen explains to her how dreadful the situation is for women who resist. Through her explanation, the women audience members get an idea about how the surrounding environment would never ever welcome Women's resistance. Helen angrily says the following:

And what would you know of what's been done? There has been one hundred hung since you've been gone and to my reckoning double that number swam and drowned unrecorded. And you demand of me what has been done when women live in fear of drawing next breath for it bringing the noose closer to their windpipe. When women take to practicing holding their breath in hope they might sink and be then dragged from the water alive…. And you ask me what has been done in this place where we dare not even look at one another or, God forbid, converse for that be deemed conspiracy enough. And you will tell me the old story that love is as strong as death? For in these times, to my mind, life all but holds a weak flame to fear. (Daniels 390-91)

This intimidating environment of the 17th century reminds the audience members of how intimidating it is even in the 70s and 80s of the twentieth-century. This was the period where lesbians and gays came out after spending so much time in the closet. This happened throughout the Western countries receiving that same non-accepting reaction. Australia is an example of a Western country where activism took place in the 70s in order to support the existence and acknowledgement of same-sex couples. This was also the case in England and the U.S. Commenting on this, Leigh Boucher in his essay "Discomforting Politics: 1970s Activism and the Spectre of Sex in Public," published in *Everyday Revolutions: Remaking Gender, Sexuality and Culture in 1970s Australia* by Michelle Arrow and Angela Wollacott, illustrates, "In both scholary histories and public memory, the 1970s are understood as a decade in which gays and lesbians 'came out' in Australian social, political and cultural life…. a visible and increasingly confident social movement directed towards the 'liberation' of some dissident sexualities and practices from legal prohibition and social and legal prejudice took shape" (183). These young activists in Europe, the U.S., and even Australia created a space where they could discuss the issues of their private lives which were considered as inappropriate or shameful by the surrounding community. Commenting historically on the emergence of homosexuality Jeffrey Weeks points out in his book *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (1977), "Homosexuality has existed throughout history, in all types of society, among all social classes and peoples, and it has survived qualified approval, indifference and the most vicious persecution" (2). The same fear of persecution has existed throughout history. It is the fear that Helenmentions in her exchange with Rose and the fear that the contemporary audience members would definitely be familiar with.

The unnatural level of repression as embodied in the unbelievable account narrated by Helen about what happened to women protesters can be justified from a dictatorship or authoritarian perspective. Jerry F. Hough in his article "Lessons from Revolutions: Development Takes Time" clarifies this point as follows:

> The major explanation for the unusual level of repression was that the rulers had an ideological drive to transform society in an 'unnatural' way. If rulers had an obsession with creating a radically pure society or with transforming human nature so that people would act in the way assumed by Karl Marx's goal of a communist society, then their control had to be far more intrusive than that needed by a traditional status quo dictator. It had to extend to the level of the individual citizen. If the ideology insisted that a perfect society was possible, then this possibility justified the payment of an extremely high price to achieve that society. (208)

If one considers patriarchy as the ideology which urges the rulers of the British society

to keep their hold on the subjugation of women, then the killing of innocent protesters is quite justifiable to both this kind of society and to the women audience members who watch critically and think about the action of *Byrthrite*. Moreover, this could simply justify the environment of fear and indifference Helen refers to in her previous exchange with Rose.

However, this horrible environment creates a certain kind of solidarity among its women. This solidarity is embodied in the feminist concept of "sisterhood." Tingting Qi in the essay of "Transforming Sisterhood to an All-Relational Solidarity" refers to the reason why the radical feminist sisterhood is supposed to be powerful by stating, "By stressing the similarities among women, traditionally, sisterhood has taken two different directions. In one, the alliance of all women highlights the loyalty to other women. Thus, sisterhood is viewed as a unifying force to accommodate significant differences among women. A second, women have been treated as the unity opposite to men based on the assumption that all women have shared experiences and common interests" (328). Rose's strong belief in this concept of sisterhood and her unquestionable loyalty to other women are what really upset her while receiving the news of Ann and Mary's death. What is even worse for her to realize along with Helen, and the other women audience members is that women get punished for "the crime of being descendant of Eve__ which be but a misspelling of Evil to their minds" (Daniels 391). That is why, "they have all but bled [their] village dry of [their] sex" (Daniels 391). These unjustifiable crimes against women encourage them to be tied together more by their sisterhood bond. However, the danger of this radical concept lies in what Qi refers to as "Obviously, the concept of sisterhood highlights a universal gender identity for all women as a unified group. However, it is problematic to build women's coalition on this universal fixed gender identity" (328). In spite of how this universal gender identity is unrealistic and limited, Daniels insists on representing it throughout the play. However, Churchill's awareness of its limitation prevents her from representing it throughout the action of *Vinegar Tom*. Daniels' insistence on sisterhood secures the survival of the remaining women by the end of the play. Whereas, Churchill's giving up on the idea altogether and her assertion of differences among women themselves, especially with regard to age and class, leads to the destruction of all the characters by the end of the play. The two feminist dramatists represent different viewpoints with regard to the concept of sisterhood and the singular movement of feminism. For Daniels the singular movement can guarantee strength and sustainability. While for Churchill, the singular movement is quite exclusionary and unrealistic.

Solidarity is employed by the women characters in the play as a means of objecting to patriarchy. It is one of their mechanisms to counter male- oppression. It is viewed as a practice regulated by all the women characters in the play. The first one to initiate such a practice is Grace who forms the women's theatre group where they can all get together and not being threatened by "these evil times against [their] sex" (Daniels 347). Given the horrible circumstances of women in this village where they "dare not even look at one another…" (Daniels 390), their meeting itself is an act of solidarity and support which they provide to each other. The reason why they get together itself which is to hold rehearsals for performing plays in such an era of history when "Singing, dancing, players, enjoyment of any kind is going against the law"(Daniels 337) is an act of solidarity in resistance and revolting against the unjust legal system itself. Besides performing plays, the group creates a space where women can express themselves freely, talk about their fears,

their dreams, even their "different" illegal sexual orientation with no fear of judgment or persecution. This group of women which is based on solidarity represents an alternative society, a society which is quite matriarchal by nature and well-established on female values and principles. Grace is the one who attempts to create such an alternative. Whereas Rose, being very liberal as she seems to be, is the guardian of this alternative throughout the play. Grace might represent radical feminism as embodied in her initiative of sisterhood. But Rose as well as Jane represent liberal feminism to a certain extent. They are not very liberal, however, as they also believe in the strength provided by their sisters. Therefore, the integration of the twentieth-century feminist debates into the action of the play is intentional. Daniels, like Churchill, tends to link the present to the past and vice versa. Definitely, this is a Brechtian technique which distances the audience members from what takes place on the stage and gives them the opportunity to think and reflect. The prevailing debates in the 70s and 80s go around whether to use peaceful methods for protests or to resort to violence. The same debate is back to the stage in this play.

Back to solidarity, another good example to be mentioned here is that of Rose deciding not to give up on her friend and teacher, Grace. Rose, knows from Helen that Grace is kept in jail where she is "too well kept and her brain is worse scrambled than a broke egg" (Daniels 391). The jail where Grace is kept is "where hangings are public sport. As the crowd never knows the victim, not a shadow passes through their eyes" (Daniels 391). The encounter between Helen and Rose is followed by Rose's song "Rosie's Song" in which she addresses the audience members directly in a Brechtian manner expressing her grief for what she encounters now with in her hometown and talking about the price she pays since she decides to join the army. In this song, in specific, Rose comments on the killing of other women and how women are deprived of their own freedom and birthright. Through her representation of how she joins the army leaving her sisters behind, the audience members recognize her as a liberal feminist, not as a radical one. Rose is Daniels' embodiment of individualism. Her main focus here is on herself, not on the community of women as a whole. The first major priority for liberal feminists such as Rose is to achieve equality with men. This could be the reason why she joins the army. Throughout the course of action, Rose wants to feel and to be treated as equal to men. In this song, however, she compares between fighting in the civil war with men and returning back home for another fight against them. The fight she refers to here is a gender-based one as follows:

When I was fighting alongside the men
For the freedom they had taken by right,
I wondered if I'd visit my village again
And return to another dear fight
The price I have paid to walk as a man
Has lost me the trust of my kind. (Daniels 391)

Daniels seems to criticize Rose's individualistic behavior of giving up sisterhood for making personal gains. This is very clear in Rose's regret of ever giving up on her sisters and leaving them behind till they become the victims of male-oppression and get killed for crimes they have never been part of. Commenting on liberal or "bourgeois" feminism, Alicia Tycer in her book *Caryl Churchill's Top Girls* illustrates, "… the bourgeois feminists seek equality with men within existing social structures, and minimize the differences between genders" (16). Set against this liberal feminist perspective is the materialist or the socialist one. Daniels seems to be aware of the importance for

feminists to keep a bong amongst each other and to move to action collectively only if they really want to cause a real social change. Thus, Daniels both emphasizes and criticizes Rose's liberal feminist stand, as she makes her say the following:

I fought in their wars, and not with my sisters,
My pay is in shillings and being called mister,
While women have hanged and drowned all the time,
And being a woman's a death-brining crime. (Daniels 392)

Obviously, Daniels takes the radical position against the liberal one embodied by Rose. Commenting on these two different positions of feminism, Jill Dolan in her introduction to her book *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* illustrates what follows:

,Liberal feminists try to make changes from within current social systems, rather than working for their overturn…. Cultural feminists… were considered more radical in the 1980s. They argued against what they saw as explicitly male cultural projects such as waging war, despoiling the earth, letting capitalism run rampant without concern for the poor, and objectifying women in representation. Cultural feminists believed that prizing female-derived ideology would flip the binary__ from war to peace, for instance__ ameliorate inequality, and hasten the progress of beneficial social change for all. (xiv)

It seems like Daniels through her representation of this song, criticizes Rose for taking part in the "male-cultural projects" referred to by Dolan above. The song marks Rose's awareness of these projects and her regret for ever joining them. She regrets giving up her womanhood when she says explicitly the following:

I gave up my woman in wearing a disguise,
Partly by bribery, partly by ties,
And what they have got is a soldier to fight
And one woman less to defend her birthright. (Daniels 392)

This moment of realization of her involvement in the male-cultural projects and how oppressive this could be for other women, Rose declares that the only way out or the only solution for women to get rid of oppression is to "flip the binary" like what Dolan mentions above. Rose decides the following:

The only way through is to stand out and strong,
And not wear disguise in their fight,
But to be with the women here where I belong
And to call on our strength and our might. (Daniels 392)

Again, sisterhood is the keyword for winning this battle between sexes. Rose even goes further to declare war against men as follows:

> But I shall take power and we'll start a war
> Against doctors and soldiers and men
> Who challenge our right and seize at the core
> Of our birthright, our freedom. Fight again! (Daniels 392)

The first thing to do in this war is to set free the innocent women who are kept in men's jail due to their knowledge and awareness of male-oppression. In Part Two, Scene Five, Rose manages to go to jail to release Grace. She manages to set Grace free after bribing the Goaler. She also finds Ursula, the deaf girl and the daughter of a witch who gets hanged and died, so she decides to set her free as well. The scene represents women treated like commodities, their value depends on the exchange rate. The younger Ursula is worth much more than the older Grace. The Goaler is the one who decides value depending on age, "cam te yer sense then, sir, seen the prettier one? Now she's worth a lot more, that one, she is" (Daniels 397). The patriarchal objectification of women is at work here. Rose pretends to be a doctor and signs the documents for the two women's release and

pathetically states, "If all the wrongs men had done to them were counted up and laid doorsteps of where they came, not a man left in the land who not be quaking" (Daniels 397).

In Scene Six, Rose succeeds in taking Grace and Ursula home. Then, she sends for a doctor to come and see Grace. Through their exchange, Daniels again criticizes medicine and its dehumanizing way of treating or even dealing with human beings. The Doctor compares a woman to a livestock. He does not expect to examine Grace first. However, he expects to check up the animals in the house first, and then the wife like what he says. The reason for this is that animals are more important to the householder than his wife, "What 'it's the rhyme you farm people have__ 'If the cow kicks off, mighty cross, if the wife kicks off, no big loss" (Daniels 398). Women are represented as even less than animals. What is even worse is that they are not to be treated equally to them. The dehumanization of women here lies in attributing the characteristic of less-than-human creature to them. The "dehumanizers," however, in this case the male oppressors, know perfectly well the human status of the oppressed. This insistence on keeping women in the dehumanized category takes different forms and runs throughout the action of the play. Daniels makes it clear through her theatrical representation that dehumanization is a patriarchal strategy in itself. It is worthy referring to David Livingstone Smith's article on "Paradoxes of Dehumanization" here as he explains how the "…dehumanizers do not really believe that their victims are subhuman, but use dehumanizing language as a means to demean them or as a deliberate attempt to rationalize acts of abominable cruelty" (417). This is applicable to both Daniels' and Churchill's use of language in their plays. After locating women in a category even less than animals, the Doctor "opens his bag and produces a knife… (Daniels 398). The dehumanizing language he uses in reference to Grace justifies his use of violence afterwards pretending to be curing her. In *Vinegar Tom*, however, the very last scene of the play in which Kramer and Sprenger compare women to "imperfect animal[s]" (Churchill 177) that are "formed from a bent rib" (Churchill 177), the final exchange of comments on women's "anima'' nature is used to justify the violence that takes place before in the previous scenes of the play. This means that both Daniels and Churchill are quite aware of this systematic patriarchal dehumanization and its expected outcome of internalization. As a result, women might reach the point where they believe themselves to be less humans and this means that they will act accordingly in terms of subordination accepting the oppressive status quo. Here lies the greatest danger ever. Nevertheless, Daniels represents Rose as an aware English woman who does not accept to be defeated by patriarchy and its representatives including the Doctor and before him her fellow male soldier in the army. Immediately, Rose rejects the Doctor's offer to "bleed her and let the badness drain out" (Daniels 398). She approaches him saying emphatically, "Her life's blood is not bad, it doesn't warrant flowing away. Leave her be" (Daniels 399). The stage directions say afterwards that Rose threatens to be violent in order to make the Doctor leave, "Rose advances, sword in hand. The Doctor's knife looking quite pathetic by comparison, causing him to make for the door" (Daniels 399). Then, she addresses the audience members asking them astonishingly, "Cut the badness out? With their judgment, soon enough there'd be none left of us" (Daniels 399). Moreover, Rose could not hold her tears asking miserably, "Oh, what they have done to us? What have they done" (Daniels 400)? In spite of serving in the army and being characterized with masculine traits, Rose feels victimized by patriarchy and its

representatives such as the Doctor. It is really hard for an independent woman like her, economically speaking and sexually speaking as well, to be that much helpless and not even ale to save her best friend's life.

The following encounter in this scene is between Rose and Lady H. who comes unexpectedly. Lady H. is not welcome in Grace's house as Rose blames her for giving up on Ann and Mary who used to work for her. Rose's blame here is again for giving up on the concept of sisterhood. She tells Lady H., "If your household is so depleted you'd have been better preventing the deaths of those who so conveniently got knocked off" (Daniels 401). Moreover, replying to Lady H.'s seek for help from Grace, Rose asks resentfully, "Where were you when she needed help" (Daniels 401)? Lady H. has nothing to say to defend her passive reaction towards the violence practiced against her fellow women except saying, "A great pity, for these times are harsh set against my sex" (Daniels 402). Again, through Lady H.'s account of the death of her sister and how she avenges on the doctor who causes her sister's death with his "barbarous instrument" (Daniels 402), by "whopp[ing] him one over the skull with a poker, such was [her] temperament. 'Twas a blow from which he didn't recover" (Daniels 402), the audience members become aware of Daniels' purpose of such a violent representation. In fact, Daniels' strategy is to raise awareness towards the importance of women's use of violence in the face of patriarchal violence simply because, "Doesn't the good book say an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth? Should be made to think afore he wields his authority in such a murderous manner" (Daniels 402). This reflects the radical feminist perspective in dealing with the patriarchal oppression. The only way to deal with patriarchal violence and oppression is through the use of excessive violence. The same ideology on the use of violence is also employed by what Finn Mackay refers to in her article "Reclaiming Revolutionary Feminism" as "Revolutionary Feminism." According to Mackay, both the radical feminism and revolutionary feminism do as follows:

> … do seem to have some standpoints in common: both emphasized the importance of autonomous women-only space and organizing, focused much of their theory and activism on male VAW and identified this as a keystone of women's oppression. In fact, it was arguably these two schools of feminism that pioneered feminist theory on VAW, devising new analyses of patriarchy or male supremacy, and of male violence as a form of social control. (97)

Responding to male-violence cannot take place except by a female-violence practiced against me. The revolutionary feminist standpoint is embodied in Lady H.'s reaction against the male doctor who accompanies her sister for the delivery of her baby. Daniels' main technique throughout the play id to represent the different perspectives and standpoints of feminisms in order to raise her audience members' awareness with regard to the plurality of the feminist movement. Notably, this is something which is absent from Churchill's representation as she focuses more on the materialist feminist perspective.

Being revolutionary as Daniels intends her to be, Lady H. comes to visit Grace in order to ask for the possibility of establishing a school for natural medicine and the profession of midwifery. Unlike liberal feminists who would prefer a reform to take place from within the current regime or system, the revolutionary feminists prefer changing the regime and the entire system replacing it with a new feminist alternative as possibly as it could be. Hence, Lady H. needs Grace's advice, "about setting up schools for midwives. For rumour has it that one man has instrument which is true aid for

difficult births such as were cause of anxiety to best-experienced midwives. But such is the nature of these bastards' code of conduct that he will only pass secret of it on to his son for no one has offered a high enough price" (Daniels 403). In fact, Lady H.'s aim of having a school for midwives is to "get these evil ways stopped before there is neither mother or babe left in the land" (Daniels 403). Lady H., or to be more precise Daniels, recognizes the importance of education for getting rid of male-supremacy and power. It is an act of empowerment which can be used as an alternative to the use of violence in the fight against patriarchy and its oppression and subordination of women. The scene ends with the song "From a Dish to a Dish" sung by the Doctor and Lady H. in a way which reveals the gender war theme which is prevalent throughout the play. Again, the song serves to comment on the scene as a whole and to address the contemporary audience members in a modern way just to keep them aware of the fact that history repeats itself and the war between sexes is a historical one and will never come to an end. The Doctor, representing medicine and science here, is against the idea of establishing a school for midwives as he states what follows:

> We're here to stay, no more witches and midwives
> With potions and herbs and wasting of lives,
> We're gaining control and refining our tools
> Creating a science replacing these fools. (Daniels 404)

The song represents the controversial conflict between men and women on who is entitled to controlling reproduction: is it women? Or is it the male doctors? Lady H., however, replies to the Doctor's insistence on controlling women's bodies by referring back to the emergence of medicine three years ago, how it gets developed and grows to the extent that it dominates the fates of women and even how they look like as follows:

> Three centuries ago they started with hooks,
> But the medicine man will next control our looks__
> For they have moved on from bleeding out our life
> To creating the next generation of perfect wife. (Daniels 404)

It is more like a warning here. The warning is set out against what has been called by Rich as the "compulsory heterosexuality." The perfect family is the heterosexual one, the traditional one where the wife gives birth to babies. This is the "perfect wife" referred to above. Only doctors can create such an image of a perfect wife and in return and perfect family. The new medical technology is quite exclusionary of women and their contributions. It is quite sexist and unjust and this is clearly expressed in Lady H.'s last stanza of the song where she demonstrates the following:

From witches and midwives, they raped us with hooks,
Created their science, wrote us out of their books,
And now they're in charge of more than out looks__
Our future's in the hands of their reproductive technology.
And there's more at stake now than the right to children and gynaecology. (Daniels 405)

Certainly, men take over with their reproductive technology. Moreover, they dominate women's bodies as well as their freedom of choice. Therefore, they dominate everything else about them.

Scene Seven takes place in a pub where Helen talks to a group of women about her new religion. In this new religion, she does not speak of "Holy Ghost…. Nor spooks or superstition, nor the fear of the immortal or invisible but of those who have taken it upon themselves to think they are the God-only -wise" (Daniels 405-6). Helen moves forward to explain who are those she

refers to as "the God-only-wise." She refers to them as "The wreckers of earthly beauty and nature herself" (Daniels 406). Helen, here, represents a radical feminist stand. In the words of Mackay again, "…cultural feminism was associated with the reclamation of Goddess worship and the promotion of environmentalism and New Age beliefs…" (Daniels 97). This new Goddess worship is what Helen preaches here. She argues that the war itself or what she refers to as "The battle of men against men" (Daniels 406) is none of women's business. Women's business now, however, is "the fight women have had for their lives" (Daniels 406). She moves even further to affirm that they "have shaken [men's] opinion of [them] as the weaker sex… (Daniels 406).

Apparently, the entire scene is a meeting between a group of women where Helen talks about her new religion. She even goes further to assert the gains that women have made and there is no turning back by any means, "Now is not the time for slowing down, for our lives swing more lightly in the balance than ever before" (Daniels 406). The revolutionary feminists represented here emphasize the importance of a well-organized movement, otherwise women will lose all what they have got in their battle against men. This well-organized movement is expected to exert a lot of efforts to make sure that these women are "the last generation to bear witness to the wrongs done to [them] in name of science. That [their] daughter's daughter and her daughter too will know what [they] know" (Daniels 407-8). This group of working- class women let Lady H. join them because they seek to have a unified diverse group. Lady H., the wealthy bourgeois woman, is willing to be with her sisters because, "[She is] prepared to forgo [her] privilege in the name of truth" (Daniels 408). The struggle this time is no longer easy. It is to "[win] back [their] bodies for [themselves]" (Daniels 408). The importance of this meeting lies in the fact that Daniels wishes for her arguments and debates on feminism to be more inclusive. She attempts to be as neutral as it could be representing the different feminist perspectives and viewpoints.

The setting of Scene Eight is at Grace's house where she discusses Rose's play after reading it. The play is unique in terms of being the only piece of writing done by a woman. The issue of identity is brought up again and Grace urges Rose, always disguised as a man, to reveal her true identity to Ursula, the daughter of the hanged cunning woman. Grace thinks that "It's not fair to abuse her trust in this way" (Daniels 409). Whereas, Rose also thinks that Ursula abuses trust for hiding her healing knowledge. Through this exchange between Rose and Grace, the audience members get the impression that fear dominates the lives of these women. Both identity or more precisely queer sexual orientation and knowledge are quite of a big deal in both the 17th century England and the 70s. Significantly, the fear is confirmed by Grace's comment on Rose's play. Rose portrays Grace and the other cunning women as very knowledgeable and quite annoying for those in power. However, Grace believes, "They were chosen because they were women not because they were special. When [they] have received foul attentions from lord and from farmhand alike, 'tis because [they] are women. It's a danger to claim it is because [they] are different in some way" (Daniels 410). Rose thinks, however, that women get persecuted only because they are women no more no less, "Who did they start on first, old women, cunning women, women alone, Mary and Ann. They were independent and did not carry on as men wished them to" (Daniels 410). Not only because of their gender that women are persecuted, but also for possessing the power of giving birth to babies. This birth giving is quite threatening to patriarchy and men. This is what Grace means to say, "Our sex with its single power

to give birth, pose a threat to men's power over whole order of villages, towns, counties and countries" (Daniels 410). What Grace refers to here is women's invisible power which men would like to take over through medicine and science.

Through their discussion over Rose's play, the audience members get to know more about the feminist concerns and interests. Rose condemns women who are not willing to free themselves from men's control and make it even harder for other women to gain their freedom. From her own liberal perspective women are the worst enemies to themselves and others in terms of liberation and independence. Rose states, "… happen there was women enough to cause trouble against each other" (Daniels 410). However, Grace believes that it is their financial need that keeps them subordinated to their husbands. As a matter of fact, this is a materialist feminist perspective which Grace represents here which the feminist debates should not miss to focus on by any means. Grace explains her point of view from that perspective as she says, "Because not only are men set against the woman named wicked, but also the woman and children whose livelihood depends on the approval of men" (Daniels 410). The materialist feminist perspective here is the one which dominates *Vinegar Tom*. Margery is a good example to be mentioned here. She is the typical model of a woman whose subordination to her husband results in the reinforcement of subordination throughout the women's community as a whole. However, her livelihood depends mainly on her husband and his property__ the farm and the livestock. Margery is "A woman comfortable off with a fine man and a nice field and five cows and three pigs and plenty of apples that makes a good cider…" (Churchill 143). She can never ever give that up seeking her own liberty or that of others. Conversely, Rose is not convinced because for her, "…the condemned woman is special. She has freed herself as much as possible and will not keep her mouth still about it" (Daniels 411). Whether to blame women or not for being oppressed is a debate that dominated the feminist movement itself for decades. Grace's critique of the play continues throughout the scene and the audience members get the impression that it is a history record not just a play. This idea is emphasized in her comment, "There is too many scenes of hanging and swimming and is not for us to present as entertainment" (Daniels 411). Still, this is not the image that Grace wishes to leave for the future generations. Therefore, she wants Rose to take these scenes more seriously instead of representing them in a humorous way. These are crimes committed against humanity and should be depicted the way they are no more no less.

Again, Grace represents the radical feminist project of having an alternative of both culture and history. The debate between the two women in this scene is a debate on reality and fiction. Rose is more into fiction than history, "Is not s'posed to be a list of facts and dates. There must be other women interested in recording exact history. I cannot do all. Is a story I have written, out of my imagination, to entertain. Not a bible" (Daniels 411). The relationship between history and fiction has always been complicated. Historians always brag about producing pieces of work which are the opposite to "fiction." They claim to represent the truth. On the other hand, those who work in fiction narratives also advocate for representing history through their narratives. Thomas Carlyle in his book *English and Other Critical Essays* argues, "…the Epic poems of old time… were Histories, and understood to be narratives of facts" (70). According to Aristotle, for instance, history's main function is to describe the reality as it is. While poetry, or more broadly fiction, is to describe what might have been or could have been. This is

quite reflected in the debate that takes place between Grace and Rose. Both, however, represent what should be the feminist priority__ is it the citation of facts or the creation of fiction? Also, the question of history versus fiction is dominant throughout the play. Most of the debates concerning this point are characterized by an aggressive competitiveness reflecting the competitiveness that really exists between the different tendencies of feminisms. The debate between Rose and Grace summarizes the ongoing debates in the 70s and the 80s of the twentieth-century with regard to the feminist revision of history as well. While being described as a storyteller, Greg Dening in his essay "Performing Cross-Culturally," published in the book *Manifestos for History* edited by Keith Jenkins, Sue Morgan, and Alun Munslow(2007), emphasizes that he is to be considered as "a teller of true stories" (101). He even goes further claiming, "I do not write fiction" (101). This is the opposite to what Rose considers herself to be doing. What Grace most probably means is that women should get involved in the process of "history making." If this does not happen, women will be more excluded and they will never find a place on the table. In other words, women should take part in eradicating myth by the strong power and force of truth. Myth, here, is not Greek myth, however, it is the myth of women's weaker nature than men. It is the myth which the Parson refers to earlier in Part Two that it is not even possible for women to make history.

In fact, history derives its autonomy from seeking to represent the truth. Peter Gay in his book *Style in History* (1974) argues, "The objects of the historian's inquiry are precisely that, objects, out there in a real and a single past…" (210). For Daniels and Churchill as well as other feminist playwrights concerned with the representation of history in their drama, it should not be a single past by any means. The "other" as embodied in these groups of women, either in *Byrthrite* or *Vinegar Tom*, should also be represented. History represents witchcraft as evil and focuses only on the witch-hunts and trials in the aftermath of the civil war. It does not depict or even represent real witches, therefore there is an absolute absence of their voices. Fiction, in this case drama and theatre, gives them another chance to be heard as well as another chance of survival. This is absolutely the main point of revising history__ giving voices to those who have been silenced by "official" history. Specifically, this is the main purpose of writing plays such as *Byrthrite* and *Vinegar Tom*. If the historian is to make his brain as a "mirror" reflecting with absolute punctuality what took place in the past, the playwright imagines what has not been reflected one way or another. This could be referred to as the "proper business" of the feminist playwright. Grace seeks an alternative to the male-made history. That is why, she urges Rose to do so. Likewise, she seeks an alternative to medicine through healing. History, here, is to be compared to medicine and science in terms of oppression and being the only source of facts shaping the minds and consciousness of the future generations. For instance, Patrick Collinson in *London Review of Books* (2007) refers to Geoffrey Elton and how he believes an evidence should be, it should be "indisputably true", and not invented by the historian. This is a point of view which the feminist playwrights disregard in their historical representations for the theatre. Nevertheless, Arthur Marwick supports this point in his book *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (2001), where he compares between history and fiction by stating that, "A work of history differs totally from a novel or a poem"(215). He moves further to illustrate how historians exert "special efforts… to separate out unambiguously what is securely established from what is basically

speculation" (2015). What is "securely established" here is, of course, by primary evidence, something that cannot be questioned. On the contrary, fiction can sometimes be established as a critique of history. This is what the feminist playwrights such as Daniels and Churchill do through their theatrical representation of history. Interestingly, William Makepeace Thackeray(1811-1863) is the first fiction writer to claim the status of the historian for himself. He is one example of representing a critique of history through fiction. Henry James(1843-1916) is another example who believes that fiction, novel in particular, is "history." Commenting on the main tasks assigned to both a fiction writer and a historian in his essay "The Art of Fiction," James argues, "To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer" (5-6). Although their tasks are similar, James believes that the fiction writer's task is even more difficult because the evidence he or she counts on is not literary by any means.

Grace continues her criticism of Rose's play focusing on a very important point which is, not to focus that much on the oppressor, but on those who resist his oppression, "I believe no quarrel with pricker's character. Though there will always be those who refuse to believe the worse has been done to us. But, Rose, do not give him all the weight. What of the fight back" (Daniels 411)? Rose's defense, however, is that the fight is not over yet to be put into the paly. She clarifies, "But We've not stopped it" (Daniels 411). Yet, Grace protests to the use of the plural pronoun "we." The following exchange between the two women makes it quite clear for the audience members that Rose occupies a liberal feminist position, whereas Grace occupies a radical one. Grace is astonished and quite angrily asks, "We? We've not stopped it? Look at you. What are you still doing in men's clothes" (Daniels 411)? Rose thinks and behaves in a very individualistic manner, and she justifies this for making her living as equal as men as well as protecting herself, "And how else am I to hold down job as shipping clerk and how else are we to be afforded protection" (Daniels 412)?

By the end of this scene all the women, grace, rose, Ursula, joined by Jane make their way to the pond where all the other women of that village meet in order to prevent the hanging of other women. During the meeting they have a performance where they design "a model Pricker by stuffing straw into a spare jerkin and a pair of breeches. They perform a 'dumb' show which Ursula narrates in sign language" (Daniels 413). Ursula tells them afterwards how the meeting goes, "We meet the night before. Women from near and far and a very long and angry meeting it was; only one thing was agreed on by all__ that we would meet in the morning and no woman that day would lose her life" (Daniels 413). It seems more like a women's revolution breaks out here. Women are gathered together for the first time to say no to their oppressor__ here it is the Pricker. Daniels uses here the flashback technique where Ursula narrates what has happened to a woman who was supposed to be hanged there. A voice over is made in order to let the audience members hear what she says. It is more like a scene acted out by Grace, Rose, and Jane. After rescuing the woman and saving her life, they discuss what to do with the "man with hanging tree." The hanging man "must be prepared in same detail. Left thumb tied to right toe and right thumb tied to left toe" (Daniels 414). Then, they throw him to the pond. As long as there is no definite authority among these feminist women, Jane asks, "Then who amongst us is agreed that he should complete the course of punishment" (Daniels 414)? Although they mimic to the audience members how the meetings go, especially the last one with the hanging man, it is as if they try to address the audience members directly in a

Brechtian manner for the sake of getting them more engaged and actively involved in the action of the play. Replying to Jane's question, Ursula keeps going and narrating that, "We did not kill him. We are not the same as him. We left him still tied, in the place where women's bodies are left to be claimed by their loved ones at night" (Daniels 414). The show ends here followed by Rose Shouting, "Aye bodies. Bodies of dead women. Deemed then innocent for an invented crime. Dead to be collected and buried! How many of us will have to die while our good natures get the better of us" (Daniels 414)? At this moment Grace changes her attitude completely commanding quietly, "Then take that pistol and shoot him through the head. For is that not what they do to sick animals? And tell him from me, 'tis offer of death more humane than ever he has dealt in" (Daniels 414). The, she shifts and changes up her mind to "let nature deal with him in her own way" (Daniels 415).

Scene Eight introduces the action of Scene Nine. Obviously, Scene Eight depicts a show which the village women perform by the pond during their meeting. The show includes a dummy which represents the Pricker. The women villagers protest and send a warning to the Pricker every time that if he does not stop the hanging of other women, he will be treated like the dummy. In Scene Nine, it is not a mock trial as in the previous scene, however, it is a real trial where the Pricker replaces the dummy, "The dummy has been replaced by the Pricker, tied in the manner described and shivering uncontrollably" (Daniels 415).

Language is a very powerful weapon that Daniels uses in this play and in her other plays as well. It is used as a good alternative to the male weapons of killing and violence. Women in this play get together always to talk, discuss issues of their own concern, and laugh. This is how they resist the male oppressive power. But this is not the only weapon that women use in the play. Lady H., for example, prefers the use of violence rather than the peaceful ways with the doctor who causes her sister's death, justifying her stand from the Old Testament, "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." Moreover, she manages to take his life with a "barbarous" instrument. This is similar to what he does with her sister. Jane also offers to face the Pricker's use of violence and to "…slice his brain-pan off his shoulders" (Daniels 343). Yet, Grace refuses such a method because "'Tis not [their] way" (Daniels 343). These different feminist viewpoints create another level of conflict in the play, namely an internal conflict not an external one. Significantly, these different feminist stands represent the feminist debates of the 70s and 80s. It is not just the use of violence which the feminist characters in the play differ on, it is also the main cause of oppression itself. Moreover, they differ on the sources of their own empowerment. For Grace, for instance, it is their own gender which is the main source of their own empowerment. She asserts the difference between women and men not for anything but for her belief that women are superior creatures or human beings. This is the political ideology of radical feminism. Jill Dolan in her book *The Feminist Spectator as A Critic*, refers to this ideology as it "… is not to abolish gender categories, but to change the established gender hierarchy by situating female values as superior" (7). Throughout the course of action, Grace as well as other women characters refer to women's superiority in terms of their bodies, or to be more precise, the biology of their bodies. The chief example among them is their ability to give birth to babies and how this could be threatening to the male authority. This absolute power of giving birth to babies is set against the doctor's use of technology for reproduction. Alison Jaggar illustrates in her book *Feminist Politics and Human Nature* how the radical feminists are quite aware that, "…technology, especially

reproductive technology, has been used against women and to reinforce male dominance" (93). Certainly, for radical feminists the use of technology for reproduction is an act of violence. But for some women, especially Grace, to face this violence by counter-violence implies equality between sexes which does not exist because woman are superior by nature. On the other hand, Rose and Jane occupying the position of liberal feminist, believe that they should combat violence with violence, so equality is the keyword for everything they do or are involved in.

This internal conflict is represented in a more humorous way throughout the play. However, in Part Two, Scene Eight, Daniels represents it in a more serious way. The performance of the "dumb" show by Ursula, Jane, and Grace is a very powerful representation of how a collective act of resistance should be or look like. The three imitate the action of a group of women gathered together by the pond to get rid of the Pricker and to put an end to his use of violence. After rescuing the life of a woman who has "swum," the women decide to throw the Pricker in the pond. Significantly, the Pricker floats, he does not sink. Accordingly, he is guilty and the women discuss whether to "complete" the course of punishment or not. When Ursula summarizes what happened, "We did not kill him. We are not the same as him" (Daniels 414), Rose objects to such a decision and shouts out, "Aye bodies. Bodies of dead women. Deemed then innocent for an invented crime. Dead to be collected and buried! How many of us will have to die while our good natures get the better of us" (Daniels 414)? To make it even worse and quite extremist, Daniels represents Grace as shifting in attitude and instead of rejecting violence, embracing it as she says, "Then take the pistol and shoot him through the head" (Daniels 414). Only then, Rose makes up her mind and recommends they leave him to meet his fate. By dramatizing this shift of attitudes on part of Grace and Rose, Daniels is very keen on representing her audience members with the truth, which is, it is not quite possible to find definite solutions or to put an end to an ongoing debate especially if it was a feminist debate.

Just as the debate on violent or non-violent means of resistance dominates the action of the play, also does the debate on women's freedom and liberty. Different methods are explored, and also different life experiences are represented, and this reinforces the plurality of the movement itself. Some women in this play gain their freedom through financial independence such as Jane and Rose. Whereas, others are financially independent but not free such as Lady H. She gains her freedom only after her husband's death__ the male oppressor. For someone such as Helen, it is religion that forms a barrier between her and her personal freedom. Once she converts to the new religion, she becomes free and this helps her also to leave her husband who is the major force again of her oppression. In spite of the fact that these women differ in their aims and objectives in life and the means by which they can achieve them, they have one common motivation which is, their need to get rid of oppression with all its different forms and shapes. Specifically, this need causes the radical transformation of most of the characters in the play. Lady H. is a good example to be mentioned here. After her husband's death, she decides to join the meetings with other women. Later on, her main goal is to show solidarity with other women regardless of their class. By the end of the play, she gives up her ladyship status only to feel as being part of the group or one of their true sisters, "H only from this day forth. For I am hoping to have proved myself a lady no longer" (Daniels 417). Daniels focuses on Lady H.'s transformation throughout Part Two. The most obvious example proving this change in her mentality and attitude is her desire to

build a school for midwives. Later on, she joins Helen and her "Quaker" group of women to speak publically on feminism and advocate for women's rights.

Another transformative character is Helen. Similar to Lady H., Helen advocates for a collective rather than an individual liberation for all women. Like all the other women characters in the play, Helen is oppressed. But his time her major source of oppression is religion. That is why, she dedicates her entire life to fighting against this patriarchal institution through preaching a new religion. Previously, an old dream of hers is to give birth to a baby. But after being maltreated at the hands of sexist doctors, she gives up on that dream and this reinforces her hatred of both men and religion. Besides preaching her new religion, she joins peaceful demonstrations and protests. She tells Rose about this experience excitedly, "You've never heard women's voice so strong" (388). Only because she becomes well aware of the importance of women's voices that she decides to have public meetings preaching her new religion__ the Quaker religion. In addition, this new religion provides her with the freedom she has always wanted and dreamt of. It increases her sense of self-confidence especially while talking about women's oppression and their subordination to men due to the hierarchies of the well-established religion. Hence, Helen attempts to transfer this new vision to other women in order to raise their awareness with regard to the main cause of their daily oppression and constant feeling of inferiority. Her speeches at the public meetings with other women are quite powerful and inspiring. In one of her speeches, she claims, "The battle of men against men is not the war of our time but the fight women have had for their lives. We have shaken their opinion of us as the weaker sex…" (Daniels 406). Through her dramatization of these powerful speeches, Daniels reinforces the idea that language can be used as a very effective weapon in women's battle against oppression. But, here, it is used to enlighten other women and raise their awareness about issues of their concern. In fact, women's voices are represented as very powerful tools for liberation throughout the play. However, it is not that easy or even secured to speak freely in a patriarchal community like this one. Women have to be very careful in order not to get persecuted and hanged. Grace is always threatened to lose her life not only for her healing skills, but also for speaking too much. Mary and Ann pay the price for getting their voices heard in London protests. The price this time is their lives as they get hanged on their way back from London.

Rose is another character who pays the price for her sexual freedom and independence. This price Daniels represents as a form of denial of her own sex. She keeps disguised as a man throughout the course of action. She is portrayed as hating her growing into a woman's body. Being harassed by the farmer and the other men, she blames her body for it and starts hating it. Once she finds an opportunity for her freedom, she does not hesitate at all to make the best use of it. What is even more is the fact that she does not mind at all to be disguised in men's clothes forever. Being transformed into the opposite sex does not only mean financial independence for Rose, but it also means having other privileges, chief among them is the equality she has always dreamt of. She wants to be equal, but this is very individualistic and it is set against the collective action taken and emphasized by the other woman characters such as Grace and Helen. In fact, Grace and Helen believe in women's need for an alternative form or structure of power, not just equality to men. Grace makes it clear to Rose before joining the army that she goes to "fight on the other side," leaving behind all the gains women sacrifice their lives to make. She does not want her to throw away everything this way. Rose's reply, however,

is that, "I am throwing nothing away 'cept my servitude" (372). In fact, later on she begins to realize that she has exchanged one kind of servitude with another after joining the army. Like Helen, her departure of the village leads to more divisions among women that they can no longer bear or deal with. Her song "Rosie's Song," discussed before in this paper, reveals the transformation that has taken place in terms of her character development and how regrettable she is for leaving and not staying with her other women fellow women. In spite of showing support and solidarity with other women, Rose insists on keeping her male persona throughout the play. Her justification for this is to keep her stable financial status and to protect other women. However, Daniels' purpose is to reinforce the idea of gender construction and re-construction which the twentieth-century audience members are quite familiar with.

Grace is Daniels' representation of how women should act to reclaim not only their bodies, both sexually and medically, but also their voices. Again, language is what Grace focuses on throughout the action of the play as the most powerful instrument for gaining freedom and liberation. Notably, Daniels uses language as a means of resistance, liberation, and enlightenment. Moreover, language is looked at by theorists as the main pillar upon which the entire feminist project is based. Grace does her best to establish a new or an alternative "feminist order" throughout the action of the play. This alternative order is one of the radical feminist strategies for the emancipation of women. Till the very end of the play, Grace is the one who believes in unity and she does her best to bring the village women together. Moreover, she urges them to develop an alternative language of empowerment for themselves. Her ability to propose and even reproduce an alternative culture lies in the fact that she is a well-educated woman. Grace does not act out the role of a leader as there is no leadership in feminism. But she is like a mentor and a Godmother-like character in relation to the other women characters of the play. Her teachings, which she passes on some of them to Rose, focus on the skills of healing and medicine as well as language. Besides healing women's bodies through the use of herbs and other stuff, Grace tries to heal their minds as well. Thanks to Grace, Rose masters the skills of reading and writing till she becomes a playwright herself. Throughout the play Daniels attempts to represent the women's superiority either through their bodies as birth givers or their minds as creative playwrights. Rose declares in an exchange with Grace that she has "plenty more preference for making a play than a child" (Daniels 360). Interestingly enough, the play begins with giving birth to a baby, a baby girl, and ends with giving birth to a theatre, but this time it is a women's theatre__ a feminist theatre. Daniels wishes for the audience members to get involved in the process of "unearthing" the buried female dramatists and to confer life upon them again through representing their works on the stage. In fact, this is the feminist project for the theatre which was prevalent in the 70s and 80s. This project Grace represents by the end of Part One in the play. It is much more like a feminist dream, "…I wanted us to remain together and form a band of travelling players to go from county to county… entertaining women…. Making them laugh, dispelling myths and superstitions and fears so that life and health and well-being were no longer mysteries but understood by one and all" (Daniels 371).

As a matter of fact, this feminist project which Daniels is part of and Grace introduces to her fellow women is not just only an artistic one, but also educational. This is part of the radical feminist agenda for CR (Consciousness Raising) which dominated the social and political scenes of the 70s and the 80s. Rose tries to realize Grace's dream by writing a play. In Part

Two, Scene Eight, during the encounter between Rose and Grace, Daniels represents her own critique of feminist plays and the constant debates on the main function of these plays whether to teach or to delight, whether to inspire a revolution among women or not, whether to represent history or not, the conflict between reality and fiction, etc. However, Daniels does not represent any ready-made answers to any of these questions. Yet, Daniels delivers a certain message through representing these debates and conflicts to her audience members which is: language is the only possible means to fight against oppression and to document their own achievements to remain for the coming generations to able to know about them and be inspired by them.

Scene Nine in Part Two is more like a metaphor. It is an encounter between the Pricker and his Mother where he asks for her forgiveness and to give him another chance of escaping and living. For this representation, Daniels gives the Pricker the name of Man. This is a technique of Daniels' to make it clear to the audience members that women give life to men, only then they(women) become oppressed by them(men). The scene casts blame on both of them, the Mother and the Man, her son. The Mother is to be blamed for giving birth to such an oppressive human being. Man is to be blamed for oppressing his Mother as well as other mothers or women. This is very clear in the Mother's question, "How many times have you done the same for me, son" (Daniels 415)? Her blame gets deeper as she says, "The cord which once bound us did not even enter your head whilst you hung many cords around my neck" (Daniels 416). The metaphor is quite clear here. The Mother represents all women, and the Pricker represents all me. It is patriarchy which creates this antagonism between a mother and her son. The comparison is emphasized by Ursula's comment by the end of this scene, "… but we never heard of him again and we never spoke of it again. We spoke to her, she was one of us" (Daniels 416).

The final scene of Part Two and the play as a whole is represented as a celebration not only of Grace and what she has achieved throughout her life, but of all the women characters and the status they have reached after hard working and toil. The scene takes place in Grace's garden and it represents her burial. After narrating an eulogy of Grace, each woman talks about her future plans in the alternative matriarchal society Grace has established with them. Helen continues with advocating for her new religion, the religion of "Quakers." Jane and Ursula continue the process of learning and gaining more knowledge. Also, Rose continues her writing of plays, but using her name this time. They also discuss how to maintain the "birthright" for all women through the establishment of a school for midwifery. This moment of women declaring the points of their strength and the achievements they have made in their lives is not confined only to the final scene of the play. However, Daniels represents many moments of strength and achievements all the way through throughout the play. Moreover, it is more like a representation of women's achievements throughout history. That is why Grace is missed and will even more be missed by the women audience members. According to Helen, "We will miss you not only for your vision, Grace, but for your strength and it is in your memory we struggle to arrest the weapons from the master's violent hands" (Daniels 419).

The play as a whole is a celebration of women's potentiality and ability to do many great things. At a time in history when they were not only excluded from the discourse, but completely eliminated, not treated as equal human beings, they got together for solidarity, support, healing, and protecting one another. The moment they got together, they were given the opportunity of getting their voices heard.

Once their voices got heard, the entire history of human beings got changed. Although Daniels does not say for sure if all the incidents of the paly are historically accurate, many critics claim the accuracy of the major events taking place in the play. Cross-dressing, for instance, was common in the 17th century England. Proof of tis are the church's attacks as well as the monarchy's attacks of women dressed like men. The pamphlets that Lady H. reads earlier in Part Two are depicted from real writings for real women in the 17th century England. The "dumb" show performed by Grace, Jane, and Ursula and dominates the action of Scene Eight in Part Two is based on a historical legend Matthew Hopkins (1620-1647) is a witch-hunter who escaped due to the attack of a group of women and followed his brother to Salem afterwards. The Pricker is portrayed after Hopkins. The final historical incident is that of writing plays. Many women used to write plays which appeared again during the era of Restoration England. Women at that time reached a status which they had never reached or known about before. The revival of women's theatre during the Restoration England and the re-emergence of women playwrights is indicated by Jane's suggestion, "I brought this box for copied version to be secured within and buried next to Grace" (Daniels 420). In this way, the play, "… if it doesn't cam to pass in your lifetime one day when you're long gone it'll be uncovered" (Daniels 420). Again, here Daniels represents the feminist project of revitalizing the theatrical works of "lost" or "forgotten" playwrights. The paly will get "unearthed" because Rose is not "… the only woman in the world" (Daniels 420). This means that this woman's writing is not of Rose's concern alone, but of every woman else's concern. Significantly, this process of "unearthing" is a revisionist act as important as the act of revisioning history itself. This is also a means by which the dramatist can create what has been called a "female subjectivity." At this point Susan Carlson in her article "Self and Sexuality: Contemporary Women Playwrights and the Problem of Sexual Identity," published in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism, 3*, (1989), illustrates that in this play, "Daniels maps a way to create female subjectivity where only male subjectivity has before been known" (172).

Byrthrite is a feminist drama accused of the misrepresentation of men. Mark Lawson, for instance, in his article "An Argument for Burying Plays," published in *Independent*, 28the of November (1986), refers to the unfair division of roles on the stage as well as the intentional misrepresentation of men in this performance as a whole as follows:

> It is typical of the writer's approach to characterization that, whereas the women have names__ and often quite nice names like Grace and Rose__ the character played by David Bamber is called only Man. Looking at the cast-list in advance, it seems a little unfair that the male race should be allowed only one emblematic representative but Ms Daniels is not so subtle: the part of Man compromises several men and David Bamber gets to play, among others, a stupid and rapacious soldier, a megalomaniac and rapacious doctor and a cavalier and rapacious hangman. ("An Argument for Burying Plays")

John Peter in his article "Where Have All Our Playwrights Gone?" published in *Sunday Times*, 20th of November (1986), expresses a similar critique as he says, "All the male 'characters' are played by one actor: a device which rams home the point that the enemy is Man, be he priest, doctor, soldier, or merely husband, and that all men are pompous, brutal, lecherous and usually sick" ("Where Have All Our Playwrights Gone?"). Nevertheless, looking at this representation from a radical feminist

perspective makes it quite justifiable. This is part of the radical feminist project of making the female characters central to the stage and excluding the male characters altogether or at least giving them quite minor roles to play. This is one thing. The other thing is Daniels represents the radical feminist standing in this play. According to it, man is the enemy and that is why many of the radical feminists call for a new culture of separatism. On the other hand, other women reviewers refer to how Daniels' treatment of certain ideas does not match with her representation of either sexes on the stage. One example is Daniels' confinement of reproduction only to women, as if men are not to be included in the process. This makes the argument quite weak and irrelevant. This is exactly what Mary Harron means in her article "Review of *Byrthrite,*" published in Observer in the 30th of November (1986), when she says that Daniels "…denies men any share in reproduction, which is a touch unrealistic" ("Review of *Byrthrite*"). Also, Daniels' representation of the same sex relationships or lesbianism in general as the only alternative to "compulsory heterosexuality" needs to be re-considered to a certain extent. Some critics believe that this is a very limited and narrow solution to either gender or sexual oppression that women suffer from due to patriarchy. Susan Carlson in her article "Self and Sexuality: Contemporary Women Playwrights and the Problem of Sexual Identity," published in *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, 3 (1989), argues, "While heterosexual relations, ironically, empower women to bring forth life, they are not part of the play's resolution" (174).

Ultimately, the universality of Daniels' representation of both sexes and the essentialism which is quite apparent in her portrayal of all men as evil and all women as good are major points of criticism among critics. Mariana Warner, for instance, in her interview with Daniels, "The Witch Report on Women," published in *Independent* in 24th of November (1986), illustrates, "The difficulty is that the sexual politics of her type of drama link Matthew Hopkins' gender with his criminal cruelties… The feminine gender, by contrast, engenders only good" (The Witch Report on Women"). In spite of the truth in the above-mentioned critiques against the playwright's bias, she herself does not claim to be neutral or even fair in her representation of both sexes. Right from the very beginning, it is quite obvious and clear that the playwright is preoccupied with representing the victimization of women at the hands of men. The play itself is about the oppression of women by the different patriarchal institutions including, medicine, marriage, religion, the church, the military, etc. That is why, men in this play are represented as symbolic and this is what their names indicate. But they are not to be looked at as humans, however, as symbolic representatives of the patriarchal institutions. Nonetheless, Daniels' representation of this subject of persecution is quite contradictory. She wishes for the establishment of an alternative culture or a matriarchal one as opposed to patriarchy. At the same time, she emphasizes the importance of maintaining the power of birthright by women and even passing it on to their daughters. This means that the power she proposes lies within the heterosexual relationships which could be exclusionary at a certain point as well as oppressive. This is also contradictory with the radical feminist agenda of separatism. Commenting on *The Gut Girls'* message, however, Jeremy Kingston in his article "*The Gut Girls*," published in The Times in the 19th of November(1988), emphasizes the idea that, "The play's acceptable message is that women should be in charge of what happens to their own bodies, yet there seems to be authorial uncertainty as to how men and women can best work together in the real world" ("*The Gut Girls*"). This might be

applicable to *Byrthrite* as well. Many of the male reviewers, however, are not objective at all in their criticism of the play and its dramatist. Conversely, they are very gender-biased. This is quite apparent in John Peter's comment on the play, as he protests that, "Daniels also puts forward the mind-bendingly silly idea that medicine is inherently male and anti-feminist, and that modern genetics is no better than 17th century quackery…. I find this ignorant and bigoted nonsense sinister and dangerous: someone should warn Daniels that all fascist movements, left and right, produce bizarre and nasty pseudo-scientific ideas" ("Where Have All Our Playwrights Gone?"). It is worthy noticing here that this comment is not objective at all, but quite defensive. It is as if the male critics, just like any other males wherever, are quite worried of the feminist ideas discussed in plays such as *Byrthrite*. But even the lack of objectivity on the part of the male critics is illustrated in Daniels' play. After reading Rose's play, Grace advises her saying, "You will have to learn to take criticism with a little more dignity. Do you think they'll not be shouting at you from all sides" (Daniels 412)? Certainly, Daniels is quite aware of this and she manages to transfer her knowledge to her women audience members and fellow feminist playwrights as well.

Both Churchill in *Vinegar Tom* and Daniels in *Byrthrite* manage to represent on the stage the voices of women who were silenced by and forgotten in history. The technique of revisionism employed by the two dramatists is not to re-explore or re-investigate big events in history. But rather it is to bring to question what had really happened to the witches of the 17th century England and to highlight what could have happened if they had not been persecuted by men who believed them to be threatening of their entire existence.

Both Churchill and Daniels use history in *Vinegar Tom* and *Byrthrite* in order to interrogate the everlasting struggle between sexes from a new perspective. This everlasting struggle plays a vital role in reproducing certain forms of power relations in which women occupy the lower or the secondary status always. It is pretty much common that history is written by those who triumph or those who make victory. Nevertheless, both Churchill and Daniels do not sympathize at all with the triumphant. Instead, by re-investigating and re-exploring the "unwritten" part of history, they take the side of the marginalized or to be more precise those who are quite excluded from the official records of history. The "new" history they represent, in the words of Walter Benjamin in his book *Theses on the Philosophy of History*, "calls into question every victory, past and present, of the rulers" (255).

For their portrayal of history in their plays, both Churchill and Daniels employ some Brechtian techniques and traditions. Chief among them is the integration of songs into the actions of the plays. The songs used by the two playwrights are modern songs addressed to the modern audience members of the 70s and the 80s. However, the main difference between the songs used in *Vinegar Tom* and *Byrthrite* is that in *Vinegar Tom*, Churchill intends to separate between the songs and the main characters of the play. This means that the songs are performed by different actors and actresses than those involved in the action throughout the play. On the contrary, in *Byrthrite*, the songs are performed by the same characters taking part in action and Daniels prefers the songs to complete the action by commenting on it through the major characters of the play. Again, the use of songs is a Brechtian technique, its main purpose is to separate the audience members from the action taking place on the stage and to achieve the "alienation effect" or "distanciation" which is very important for causing a change afterwards. Another device used by both Churchill and Daniels to alienate their audience members is cross-

dressing. Churchill does this in the very last scene of the play where she brings actresses to act out the roles of Kramer and Sprenger, the two theology professors of the 15th century England and she asks them to dress up as men. In *Byrthrite*, some of the major characters, especially Rose and Jane remain disguised in men's clothes throughout the action of the play. Besides highlighting the idea of gender construction, Daniels really intends to alienate her audience members. Elin Diamond in her article "Brechtian Theory/ Feminist Theory: Toward a Gestic Feminist Criticism," published in *The Drama Review*, 32 (1988), illustrates what follows:

Feminist practice that seeks to expose or mock the structures of gender usually uses some version of the Brechtian A-effect…. When gender is 'alienated' or foregrounded, the spectator is enabled to see a sign system as a sign system__ the appearance, words, gestures, ideas, attitudes, etc., that compromise the gender lexicon become so many illusionistic trappings to be put on or shed at will. (84-85)

Not only do Jane and Rose in *Byrthrite* wear men's clothes, but also they act, walk, and talk like men. This is what Diamond means here by putting on masculine traits or features wherever needed. The same is applicable to Churchill's very last encounter between Kramer and Sprenger. But this time they are not represented in disguise, however, they are represented as women actresses acting out the roles of men. No matter how different the representation here is, it is for the same purpose of distanciation. Brecht explains in his "Master Treatment of a Model" (1948), that his main objective of employing his alienation technique is that, "… the audience must not be able to think that it has been transported to the scene of the story" (212). That is why, Brecht moves forward to differentiate between two types of audience members, one that is experienced and another one that lacks experience. The experienced audience members are the active ones, namely those who are able to recognize that what they see performed in front of them on the stage is just a performance no more no less. It has nothing to do with their reality and they should not be engaged emotionally with it but intellectually. Only when they get intellectually engaged with the action of the play, they can figure out solutions to their own real problems outside the theatre. Moreover, activism can be inspired by their intellectual engagement. This could be the main reason why Churchill and Daniels employ "dialectical methods" in their drama and theatrical representations. As a matter of fact, the juxtaposition of history and politics necessitates the use of Brechtian techniques in the feminist theatre. Like the Brechtian theatre, the feminist one is quite politicized. Churchill and Daniels, just like any other feminist playwrights, intend to educate their audience members politically. It is only through this kind of education that they are able to rise them to action outside the theatre houses. The embodiment of the feminist slogan of "The personal is political" is a necessity if they feel obliged to representing it throughout their different theatrical representations. In fact, all their representations of the past are recognized by the present audience members, and therefore there is a possibility of a radical social change.

Vinegar Tom and *Byrthrite* are two examples of the feminist re-construction of female subjectivity. Jill Dolan in her book *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* points out, "… the address of the traditional representational theatre apparatus constitutes the subjectivity of male spectators and leaves women unarticulated within its discourse. Feminist performance criticism marks out the boundaries of discourse in which women as historical subjects are nonrepresentable" (99). Both Churchill and Daniels are quite aware of this lack of representation. Their all-women characters represented to all-women

spectators is part of the feminist strategy to do without the male-gaze and replace it with the female-gaze. Teresa de Lauretis in her book *Alice Doesn't: Feminism, Semiotics, Cinema* (1984), comments on the female body as being the territory of male desire as she states, "Woman is then the very ground of representation, both object and support of a desire which, intimately bound up with power and history, is the moving force of culture and history" (13). This means that in traditional theatrical canon a woman makes an appearance as a representation of her own exclusion as well as the territory of her own separation from her own desire. Julia Kristeva comments on this and demonstrates as follows:

> A woman cannot 'be'; it is something which does not even belong in the order of being. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists…. In 'woman' I see something that cannot be represented, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies…. From this point of view it seems that certain feminist demands revive a kind of naive romanticism, a belief in identity (the reverse phallocentricism). (qtd.in Dolan 99)

This "reverse phallocentricism" is the main purpose of portraying all-women characters in both Churchill's and Daniels' drama to all-women audience members. Although Churchill identifies as a materialist feminist and Daniels identifies as a radical one, both have this common purpose in their theatrical representations. Through Daniels' cultural or radical representation of women, the women spectators can identify with the "mirror image" they watch on the stage. However, this representation is quite limited because it is based on the gender identity which is rooted in the idea of sexual difference. Other factors constructing this identity such as class or ethnicity are not regarded at all. As opposed to this cultural feminist representation is what Dolan refers to as an "apparatus-based theory" (83), which is quite influenced by Brecht and his theatrical aesthetics. However, the cultural feminist theatrical theorists "tend to retain the theatre-as-mirror analogy as the locus of [their] theory" (83). Significantly, this theatrical practice offers a reverse model. This reverse model dominates the theatrical experiment of Daniels and is quite prevalent in *Byrthrite*. Dolan even moves further to elaborate this practice of representing a reverse model and states , "These critics and artists propose that if women's hands hold the mirror up to nature, as it were, to reflect women spectators in its glass, the gender inequalities in theatre practice may be reversed" (83). In order for this to take place, a feminine aesthetics should be integrated not only in content through the representation of themes of a great interest to women alone, but also in the form itself. A woman-identified woman model is to be established one way or another. This is the exact model that Daniels depicts and follows in *Byrthrite*. The play goes around the experiences of a group of women. Most of the characters are played by actresses, except for only one actor who represents all the male characters in the play. Moreover, following a radical feminist theatrical tradition, the play is represented to all-women audience members. Commenting on this model, Dolan moves forward and states, "Continuing to think within the binary opposition of sexual difference, they assume that subverting male-dominated theatre practice with a woman-identified model will allow women to look to theatre for accurate reflections of their experience" (83). Some critics, however, argue against this "feminine aesthetics" claiming that it establishes another female-oriented canon which would in turn be exclusionary. Yet, this new "female-oriented canon" is quite important as a response against realism.

Certainly, realism reproduces the conventional power relations between genders and classes. It reinforces the oppression practiced against women as well as other discriminatory patriarchal values and principles. At this point Dolan emphasizes the following:

The nature of realism as a conservative force that reproduces and reinforces dominant cultural relations has been suspect at other moments in theatre history. Both Bertolt Brecht and Antonin Artaud intended to uncover the political and aesthetic myths of realism by, on one hand, distancing spectators from the theatre's lulling narrative and, on the other hand, by total physical immersion in a theater experience of sensual gestures free of narrative authority. (84)

Not only Daniels, but also Churchill is against the realist concept of a well-made play. This could justify why they employ many of the epic devices and techniques in their plays. For instance, Churchill's structure is quite episodic and non-linear. However, surprisingly, Daniels' structure in *Byrthrite* is less episodic, but it is not by any means a linear one. Thus, many critics refer to *Byrthrite* as a realist drama. Still, the big number of scenes, characters, events, the integration of history into the main action of the play, would definitely say otherwise. Unlike the liberal feminists who do not mind at all the traditional realist representations on the stage and the psychological acting styles that result from them, Churchill and Daniels reject them altogether. Rosemary Curb believes that this liberal feminist stand is simply an acceptance of the "basic social structure [that] does not call for a radical transformation of consciousness" (qtd.in Dolan 88). For playwrights such as Churchill and Daniels the social transformation goes even beyond the mere representation of positive female images or role models. So, by rejecting both the realist representations in theatre as well as the practices of male-dominated experimental theatres, both Churchill and Daniels intend to establish their own "woman-identified" performances. Radical feminism tends to adopt the CR (Consciousness Raising) model for the structure of its performances. However, this model is very limited with regard to identity politics. Assuming oppression to be universally gender-based is part of the agenda of white, middle-class, heterosexual feminists. But with the emergence of theories on identity politics in the 80s, women of color as well as lesbians have the feeling that they are excluded or not represented at all. Although Daniels is a radical feminist, she is quite aware of the role played by identity politics in the oppression of certain groups of women. In *Byrthrite*, not all the characters that the audience members encounter with are white, middle-class, heterosexuals. On the contrary, there is a wide variety in terms of class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc. Grace, Mary, and Ann are represented as working-class women. Rose and Jane are represented as women with a queer sexual orientation. Lady H. belongs to the bourgeois, whereas Ursula belongs to the lower-class, being the daughter of a witch and also a woman with a hearing impairment. Helen could be the only woman to be identified as a middle-class woman.

Breaking the fourth-wall in order to allow the women audience members to identify with the women characters on the stage is intended for the woman-identification radical feminist project. Helene Cixous in her article "Aller a la Mer" emphasizes the importance of this identification not through the representation of language but through the representation of body and gesture. However, Dolan believes, "But in most cultural feminist theatre practice and criticism, the female voice, rather than the body, is privileged for its different way of speaking/telling female stories" (87). This insistence on representing the female voice dominates the action of

Byrthrite. Women's weapon against male-violence is by language and laughing as is mentioned earlier in this paper. Primarily, what both Churchill and Daniels succeed in doing is their delivery of women's experiences through giving great opportunities for their voices to be heard. In Daniels' play, women's voices are heard in their meetings, gatherings, their theatrical project, etc. However, Churchill gives her women characters a voice in the very end of the play, namely in the trial scene. Interestingly, their voices in this scene are depicted as the voices of resistance and the shakers of the status quo. This is very clear in Joan's confession of things she has never done, and Alice's protest and wish of ever being a witch. At this point Dolan illustrates the following:

This emphasis on the voice theorizes women's expression without considering the larger implications of representation as narrative, in which the actual physical body onstage tells as much of a story as the written text. The female body as a performance text with particular genderized meanings is rarely considered in cultural feminist theatre. Instead, the female body becomes equated with the female voice. (87)

This emphasis on the importance of a female voice is articulated by Josette Feral and referred to in Dolan's book. Elaborating on this point Dolan demonstrates, "Feral, for example, looks for the characteristics of a feminine voice in performance. She assumes that by replacing male language with its opposite__ a supposedly contiguous, fluid, irrational, body-centered, fragmentary, nonlinear, open female language __ 'a vast picture of the world is presented, this time from a feminine point of view'" (87). This is Daniels' strategy through her representation of a female voice in *Byrthrite*. Her women characters portray their own picture of both the 17th century England as well as England in the 70s through the use of language. Their language is not an ordinary one, but a revolutionary one. This revolutionary language depicted in revolutionary voices is also obvious in Churchill's representation in *Vinegar Tom*. Both Daniels' and Churchill's are classified as "woman conscious" drama as "all drama by and about women that is characterized by multiple interior reflections of women's lives and perceptions…. Woman conscious theatre presents a multi-dimensional unravelling of women's collective imagination in a psychic replay of myth and history" (qtd.in Dolan 88). This "woman conscious" drama or theatre as referred to above reinforces authenticity by representing authentic female experiences, experiences of women, about women, and represented to women audience members as well. Significantly, the feminist theatre has become a space where women playwrights attempt to make the invisible visible, the inactive active, and the unknown known to their women audience members. Therefore, the women audience members do not feel silent anymore or exiled, they are represented and their experiences are brought central to the stage. In spite of all this, many critics criticize the feminist theatre as "monolithic." Others claim that it is not neutral in its representation of the past. It does not allow any space for questioning, doubting, or even discussing the validity of its discourse.

Although the feminist theatre, especially the radical feminist theatre, rejects imitating reality or the "mimesis of realism" like how Dolan puts it, it emphasizes the importance of replacing this "mimesis of realism" with a "feminist mimesis" (96). This refers back to the idea of "mirror analogy." At this point Curb raises a number of very valid questions, "Whom do we see in the mirror of woman-conscious drama? What definitions or boundaries do the seer and the seen share? Does the frame create or define the reflected image" (qtd.in Dolan 95)? Due to all these concerns with regard to whose experiences are reflected in the mirror, and whose ones are not reflected, many feminist theatre

practitioners and critics propose breaking away with this mirror analogy. Case, for instance, does not support this concept of mirror analogy. She believes that any mimetic type of drama has been developed from the realist, heterosexual, misogynist canon which confines women to the domestic or the private sphere. Even its representation of women in the public sphere is only to reinforce stereotypical and patriarchal images. Discovering these inherent problems in the process of representation itself, the materialist feminist theatre like the one of Churchill's proposes the employment of the Brechtian technique of "distanciation" as a means of "dismantling the representational apparatus" (Dolan 97).

Clearly, the radical feminist playwrights and theatre practitioners continue to focus on the sexual difference model representing a woman as a transhistorical female subject. Teresa de Lauretis in her article "The Technology of Gender" published in *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction* (1987), comments on the problem of representation, "This femininity is purely a representation, a positionality within the phallic model of desire and signification; it is not a quality or property of women__ which all amounts to saying that woman, as subject of desire or of signification, is unrepresentable; or better, that in the phallic order of patriarchal culture and its theory, woman is unrepresentable except as representation" (20). This poses an issue for feminist playwrights as well as theatre practitioners. Moreover, feminists feel the urgency of finding a new theatrical space for representation which would pinpoint the gender-based socialization as a direct result of this representation and at the same time make visible the invisible power structures perpetuated by patriarchy one way or another. This leads again to the "apparatus-based theory." In this regard, Dolan argues, "Foregrounding and denaturalizing the representational apparatus__ can be traced to the legacy of Bertolt Brecht…. Brecht's theories of alienation and historicization serve as a precedent for materialist feminist theatre practice and criticism. Brecht's 'epic theatre' is 'a model of how to change not merely the political content of art, but its very productive apparatus'" (106). In fact, the Brechtian theatre rejects the "normativity" or the naturalization of social relations represented by realism. This naturalization helps keep the status quo. It does not promise of causing any kind of change whatsoever. That is why, it is completely excluded from either the Brechtian or feminist theaters altogether. Brecht's theory focuses on ideology and brings it central to the theatrical experience as a whole. This has a great impact on the audience members themselves. Moreover, it deconstructs the institutionalized traditions represented in front of the audience members on the stage. Thence, they do not sit there passively just receiving whatever is represented before them, but they tend to actively question the validity of the action itself taking place in front of them on the stage. Absolutely, they change from being passive listeners into active participants in action. They begin to analyze the relationships between characters, their interactions, and finally they become quite aware of power relations. Once this realization takes place, a real radical social change can happen. According to Dolan, "This critical, reflective position disrupts the process of identification that normally pulls the spectator through the text, subjects him or her to the authority of narrative closure, and offers the relief of catharsis" (106). Both Churchill and Daniels make use of the Brechtian legacy, especially in their revision of history for the same reasons mentioned above. However, many theatre critics and theorists reject the Brechtian theory for theatre for being limited and ignorant of the importance of the psychological processes as the foundation upon which human

communication is based and made up of. Martin Esslin (1918-2002), for instance, is one of them. In his detailed study on Brecht, *Brecht: The Man and His Work* (1960), he protests against Brecht's decline of identification as he mentions, "In his rejection of identification… Brecht comes into conflict with the fundamental concept of psychology that regards the processes of identification as the basic mechanisms by which one human being communicates with another" (150). Nonetheless, Brecht believes that such an identification reinforces power relations and the oppressive power of patriarchy, especially with regard to class.

Although Brecht's theory for theatre does not consider gender as the basis of oppression, the materialist feminist playwrights and theatre practitioners use it while integrating other factors into it including, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender as well as social status or class. Among these materialist feminist playwrights is Churchill, for sure. Instead of sympathizing with the catastrophe of the tragic hero, the audience member in epic theatre learns to think critically of the circumstances under which the character acts in a certain way. This is referred to by Brecht as the "estrangement technique." Elaborating on this point, Dolan illustrates the following:

Estranging the spectator from the conditions of life outlined by the representation denaturalizes the dominant ideology that benefits from such 'natural' social relations. Ideology circulates through a text as a meaning effect which can be deciphered by a spectator freed from the dreamlike state of passive receptivity. If the representational apparatus is ideologically marked, its material aspects must be brought into full view and denaturalized for the spectator's inspection. The mystification of social arrangements is exposed and the spectator is presented with the possibility of change. (107)

Through the previous representation of the main concerns of both the radical and materialist feminist theatres with regard to the female subjectivity and how urgent and quite important this subjectivity is for causing a real social change, both Churchill and Daniels are quite aware not only of gender-based oppression, but also of class-based oppression. Although Churchill is identified as a materialist feminist playwright, the oppression women encounter with in *Vinegar Tom* is partially gender-based, partially class-based. Not only this, but whereas Daniels is identified as a radical feminist, he representation of oppression in *Byrthrite* has a lot to do with class and social relations. In both cases, this could justify their representation of woman-identified woman model as well as their use of the Brechtian techniques and devices for representation. Chief among these epic devices are the use of historicization, episodic structure, music and songs, cross-dressing, social gestus, and above all the alienation technique. Commenting on the Brechtian technique of representation, again Esslin argues, "While the theatre of illusion is trying to re-create a spurious present by pretending that the events of the play are actually taking place at the time of each performance, the 'epic' theatre is strictly historical; it constantly reminds the audience that they are merely getting a reporting of past events" (134). However, these past events are directly linked and related to the present ones.

Obviously, plays such as Vinegar Tom and Byrthrite urge the women audience members to re-question the truth of their past. Shelia Rowbotham in her introduction to her book *Hidden from History* (1974), emphasizes the importance of re-visioning history because, "It is evident that the discovery of our history is an essential aspect of the creation of a feminist critique of male culture" (xvii). Both Churchill and Daniels share the same point of view. Proof of this is their representation of history in

their plays such as *Vinegar Tom*, *Light Shining at Buchinghamshire*, *Byrthrite*, and *The Gut Girls*. Through their revision as well as representation of history, both Churchill and Daniels prove themselves to be original, namely original as playwrights as well as intellectuals. Both playwrights infuse the contents and forms in their plays with their contemporary feminist perspectives either socialist or radical in order to provoke a real change in their audience members. Christine A. Colon in her article "Historicizing Witchcraft Throughout the Ages: Joana Baillie and Caryl Churchill," published in the book *Metafiction and Metahistory in Contemporary Women's Writing* (2007) edited by Ann Heilmann and Mark Llewellyn, argues, "Churchill rejects the tradition she has been taught and crafts her play in order to present a new understanding of history" (90). This is quite applicable to Daniels as well. Both prove to believe in the process of "undoing" history by representing history on the stage. In addition, both Churchill and Daniels set their plays during the witch-trials in England in the 17th century. Also, both reject realism and depict the Brechtian theory for theatrical representation. Moreover, both use "anachronistic" language designed to shock their women audience members of the twentieth-century England. Furthermore, both are daring feminist playwrights in discussing the issues of great concern to female bodies such as the menstruation, menopause, sexuality, sexual orientation, reproduction rights, sexual desires, queer sexual desires, etc. Both make a good use of freedom of expression in the 70s and 80s England and go even beyond the boundaries to represent a shocking as well as a liberating portrayal of the 17th century England. Specifically, both use the context of witch-hunts to condemn gender-based oppression as well as class-based oppression. The two have one purpose ahead which is to urge for a real social change. Significantly, both believe in the transformative power of theatre and they intend to design their plays in such a provocative way which might inspire their audience members' reactions leading to a change outside the theatre house. In fact, both draw their audience members' attention to social injustice in such a way that has never been done before. Again, one can quote Colon's commentary on *Vinegar Tom* and Joana Baillie's *Witchcraft* to serve as a final comment on both Churchill's *Vinegar Tom* and Daniels' *Byrthrite*, "No real witchcraft occurs in either of these plays. While the accusations abound, the authors show that they are a result of a flawed social system that works to oppress any women who transgress its boundaries" (96).

In final words, employing revisionism as a technique for establishing an alternative history and culture opposed to the dominant history and culture of patriarchy is a feminist tradition. This tradition prevails the feminist theatre of the 70s and 80s and even afterwards in England. Both Churchill and Daniels re-vise history and represent it in their plays in order to offer a new understanding of it from a feminist perspective. Ultimately, this process of revision either of history or myth is to serve the feminist project of creating a female canon opposed to the male-literary one. Furthermore, the theatrical representation of women itself serves the feminist ideology and strategy of getting rid of the male-gaze and replacing it with a female one. This can never be achieved unless the concept of "mirror analogy" is adopted while taking into consideration other factors such as race, class, and sexual orientation. Given these points, both Churchill and Daniels manage to do this through declining realism in theatre and the concept of a well-made play while embracing the Brechtian theory of representation in theatre.

In conclusion, the next paper explores Churchill's and Daniels' endeavors

in re-visioning myth and representing it again for the sake of creating a woman-identified- woman model in theatre. This model is reinforced through the representation of queer relationships, especially lesbian relationships as is the case in Daniels' *Neaptide* (1986) as well as the depiction and portrayal of violent women as is the case in Churchill's *A Mouthful of Birds* (1986). Coincidently, the two representations denaturalize the conventional realist representation of women in theatre. Moreover, this denaturalization succeeds to a certain extent in creating a female-gaze to replace its male-counterpart. Only then, a real change, or even more a feminist revolution can take place.

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