

Analyzing the social media representation of female subjectivity in Italy. *Frontiers in sociology*.
Wahana, B. M. (2022). The Representation of Strong Women Among Male Domination in Churchill's Top Girls Drama: Feminist Approach.

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ways indistinguishably connected with the structures of society defining the formation of identities and even the vision of nationalities; every manifestation of freedom in these situations provokes a stronger face of agglomeration and reference to the oppressive traditions, to which the very process of expression belongs. *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill is an excellent work of interrogation of fragmented identities as constructive and accurately informed by feminist politics by focusing on the strata of presence of the fragmentation that is actively manifested in the presence of multiple selves and the ambiguity of belonging. The way the characters in the story can describe and assume alternate identities becomes a point of focus, as well as an analysis of how those performances are deeply superimposed with the trends of generational precedence that still impact the modern dynamics and interactions.

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and makes one contemplate the disjointed opportunities of empowerment and sisterhood in spaces of contradiction and exclusion (Wang and Chang, 2023). In conclusion, *Top Girls* turns out to be a very rich and many-sided criticism of feminist politics where fragmentation is also a structural issue instead of a way to unity. Churchill brings an important gap of rethinking the nexus of identity, performance, and feminist practice in the group by disclosing the boundaries of individualism and the enduring patriarchal dominance.

Conclusion

The meaning of *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill (1982) is a legendary feminist writing, the meaning of which has been evolving continuously as the society and politics are evolving in our times. The play is an extremely intricate exploration of how women acquire power and they always want to be recognized and it reveals the roots of patriarchy that are very deep-rooted and can be the foundation of individual success. It is dogmatic with its line of challenging the collective identities and this point highlights the ongoing conflicts and separation among women in the theatre world as well as in the society in general. Furthermore, it demonstrates how various social agents can be on the one hand, on the other, spreading individual freedom, and, at the same time, increasing the systemic oppression in infinite ways. The complex discussion of fragmentation of identities between the past and the present is expressed radically

and multi-dimensional through historical characters and modern outlines that depict the experience of female subjectivity.

The intentional crafting of characters, their swings within the discontinuous environments, and repetition of performance aspects are all collaborative to the amplification of the criticality of fragmentation in terms of the narrative. The motif of isolation is emphasized and stressed, and the barriers between roles are increasing, but the ability to act unfortunately becomes less. The play also succeeds in defining fragmentation as an inevitable and fundamental element of feminist discourse by pre-stating the scenes that will lead to the most critical moments in the narrative which are the giving away of their free bodies. The personal pursuit of freedom and personal fulfillment is inseparably bound to the muting structures of the historically-determined power relations and privilege deep-rooted through the range of degrees of solitude, which are offered. What might have appeared to be evidently free decisions often turn out to be an aprisio and to be enclosed into the frames of the social masks and demands existing. The topicality of these themes stretches much further than the details represented within the text to larger structures of disruptive identity politics, where the radical possibilities of change continue to contest their right to pre-eminence.

Throughout the various degrees and within the numerous situations, performance is al-

turn to be counterproductive to the objectives of feminist politics. Churchill reveals the way self-realization, when separated off collective responsibility is set in troubling contradiction with social restriction. Neo-liberal claim of Marlene that she believes in the individual and one need merely look after themselves is in itself a rejection of the community building block of feminist solidarity (Churchill, 1982, p. 84). Such ideology is instead divisive of feminist intent and makes agency, ambition, and helping one another over and over again less and less compatible, as opposed to creating unity and liberation among women. Thus, the play is an overwhelming array of nonhomogenous female experience that is still structurally identical in its inability to attain collective emancipation.

This fragmenting is dramatized in terms of split identities of the play which traverses in a complex and multi-dimensional terrain influenced by performance, sacrifice and institutional constraint. In Act One, this intertextual meeting of historical women prefigures the way in which female success has always relied on the kinds of self-displacement. Paper Joan confessed seeing how she lived her life masquerading as a man so she could find out how to live as a man (p. 18) exemplifies the need to subjugate even gendered identity due to the inclusion in the patriarchal power structures. Similarly the continual agitation by Isabella Bird in seeking independence does not come to fruition but makes her end up

isolated emotionally as she acknowledges, "I was not happy. I was lonely" (p. 27). These episodes highlight the fact that the negotiation of personal, professional, and historical selves does not result in liberation but exhaustion and fragmentation.

Besides, Churchill manages to develop this ideological tension by the modern opposition between Marlene and Joyce, where abstract politics collide with the real life. Joyce accuses him of making him leave his own child. (p. 81) reveals the ethical price of the success of Marlene and prefigures the exclusions on the foundation of which her professional rise has developed. It is then followed by another demand of Marlene that she does not believe in class and that anyone can do anything as long as they have what it takes (p. 84) also indicates that she has internalized dominant capitalist and patriarchal discourses. In this case, feminist desire turns into an inseparable part of the same institutional forces that constrain women as a group, which proves the point that any personal progress cannot be used to replace structural change.

Therefore, the feminist undertones of the play do not serve as an empowerment noise but rather a piece of criticism on the circumstances in which women seek to gain independence. Following Khader and McGill (2022) idea, these negotiations are entrenched in cultural discourse and institutions, which construct desire and identity. The ensuing conflict of forces questions the essence of womanhood in modern society

and assertive (A Connelly, 2015).

This dichotomy offers extensive texture of the plot that emphasizes the ambivalent desires women are bound to face between self-fulfillment and the social conventions that strive to restrain the latter. On another level, Nijo performs her act of self-dislocation of national identity when she enchants the ballet of chivalrous dances that wisely disguises the culturally specific motives and traditions that are deeply ingrained. This expression of the artwork is later taken shelter in the outlived but broadly expressed word courtesan which suggests a certain tension in the relations between the structures of personal identity and the functions of the society and the historical context (Lorber, 2021).

Subtleties of her experience are the reflective pointer of the complexity of the identity formation in the environment of the complex historical and cultural backgrounds that construct the personal experiences. Meanwhile, Joan the Sniveller demonstrates the intricacies of her existence since she inhabits her own stories just as she gives another life story, it is a life of unselfish service to God and another life of intellectual mania that cannot be summarized so easily. This two-sidedness is mirrored in a strong and annoying sheepishness over her femininity, in which she demonstrates the weight that women of faith usually bear when they have to negotiate the demands of society and their own convictions. Such a level of acting in the play gives an addi-

tional layer to such a complex plot, where actresses seem to flirt with the projections and expectations of the characters on society (Grimell et al., 2025).

At various times, they assume a ridiculing facade or masterfully alter the personas of their historical counterparts and the fictional characters of Churchill; thus, the characterisation process occurs as the contagious and causes a more significant resonance. This makes the identity of the performed character an open issue, which can be explored repeatedly in terms of the convoluted nature of identity formation that is constantly in flux. In short, the identity fragmentation is, ultimately, an extremely female struggle, which the Thatcherite epoch of the 1980s felt the echoes of the past, offering the background of numerous decisions and compromises made (Li, 2023). The sociopolitical conditions that dominated this period created the ideal of the aspiration life, which always appeared elusive to women and created a sense of inadequacy. The decisions executed in this crisis period were to be characterized by considerable social costs, and they demonstrated deep-seated divisions and difficulties involved in the process of following personal ambitions in the environment laced with systemic inequalities and obstacles that women have to face to accomplish their aims. (Khozaei Ravari & Naidu, 2011)

Discussion

Top Girls explores the contradiction whereby the aim of gaining female autonomy can

fragmented identities play in feminist politics in *Top Girls*? Fundamental ideas: fragmentation, identity, feminist politics, representation. *Top Girls* exists in the field of postwar feminism; the characters represent several identity negotiations and social roles. Thesis statement: fragmentation has a role in feminist politics as it unveils conflict between personal power and structural limitations. The aim, importance, and extent of the study are outlined, and the line of analysis and main arguments. Caryl Churchill characterizes *Top Girls* using theoretical lenses, namely, feminist theory, identity politics, and performance studies. The selected areas include playscript analysis, overlapping dialogues, historical context, and intertextual references.

An overview of the literature on the topic of gender, identity and power in *Top Girls* reveals debates and gaps, as well as contradictions in the literature. Comparison of interpretations of the group of women is made, varying interpretations of agency and solidarity have been observed. The methodologies used in previous researches and the limitation of the methodology is evaluated. The method of the research is qualitative, textual analysis and thematic coding of scenes; the choice of scenes and instances of fragmentation is reasonable. The sources of data include the script, live performance, production decisions, and criticism. The thematic criteria of the identification of the fragments, role conflict, and feminist politics are explained.

The results indicate that there is fragmentation of identity in terms of character representations, the mode of performance and social expectations. Some of the key scenes are examined in order to depict how various selves, belonging, and cluster are negotiated. Fragmentation is seen as a part of feminist goals, and it facilitates resistance and compromise in institutions. The discussions appear to come up with implications to the knowledge of feminist politics in theatre with the issue of solidarity versus division being interrogated. Performance is revealed to provide identity negotiations, critique of patriarchal society, and address to the culture at large. Restrictions, other interpretations as well as a wider cultural influence are taken into account.

Results

The problem of fragmented identities comes to the forefront of Caryl Churchill famous play *Top Girls* which premiered in 1982 when several characters exist in the vast and elaborate web of multiple identities and conflicting demands that are brought about by the notion of sex and the notion of class. An example of the main characters, Marlene is not only one of the most powerful representations of this kind of fragmentation but is an iconic figure of the struggles of many women in the society. She is constantly struggling with the burden of maternal love and the sense of duty and duty at the same time advocates the life of being independent, ambitious,

cio-political climate of Thatcherite Britain. Scholars frequently note that the play's title borrowed from a real London restaurant functions not merely as a geographical marker but as a symbolic entry point into a competitive, capitalist, and gendered social space (Khozaei Ravari & Naidu, 2011). Set against the backdrop of the early 1980s and the 1984 general elections, *Top Girls* is commonly read as a critique of the neoliberal values that accompanied second-wave feminism's engagement with institutional power. While some critics celebrate the play as a landmark feminist achievement that foregrounds women's entry into public and professional spheres, others argue that Churchill deliberately exposes the ideological contradictions within liberal feminism, particularly its complicity with patriarchal and capitalist structures (Wahana, 2022). One of the main argumentative questions of the current literature relates to the idea of whether *Top Girls* supports the model of female success shaped by individualism and portrayed by Marlene or not. Mehropouyan and Zakeri (2023) focus on the transhistorical female characters of the play, stating that they reinforce the idea of the continuation of litany of women oppression through history and culture. In this sense, Churchill implies that the history of progress has been disparate and discriminatory and only some women have benefited without struggling to eliminate systemic inequalities. Roberti (2022), on the contrary, centres on the ethical dilem-

ma of Marlene, especially her choice to leave her daughter in the background of the moral cost of becoming a member of power structures dominated by males. This meaning turns Marlene into not a feminist hero but a disturbing character whose achievement relies on the disenfranchisement of other women, and of those women in particular who are enslaved by class and motherhood.

Based on such arguments, the paper uses a feminist-materialist theoretical framework that transcends gender, classes, and power. Instead of approaching liberation of women as a coherent or linear process, critics are more prone to see *Top Girls* as pointing out the faults of feminist movements themselves. Lata et al. (2024) apply this argument to modern-day contexts and they state that modern-day women especially millennials are still bound to the stereotypes even though there seems to be a social change. Their discussion makes Churchill ever-relevant and might imply that the struggle portrayed in *Top Girls* has never been solved historically and is reproduced over and over again in different forms. By situating the play within both second-wave feminist discourse and ongoing critiques of neoliberal feminism, this paper argues that *Top Girls* dramatizes liberation as a deeply contested, uneven, and ethically fraught process rather than a universal feminist triumph.

Methodology

The Research question is What role do

Introduction

The spirit of the postwar British feminism, *Top Girls* provides the audience with the cast of various female figures representing various identifications that demonstrate the ambiguity of relations between individuality and the social environment. When Marlene is confined in the exclusive position that the play dictates she performs in the play, she exhibits the complicated bargaining of multiple identities at once that emanates through her multiple identities and the compounded sense of community that each personality gives. The fact that this disintegration of identity will not just describe the general politics of the work in question, but the very fact that the given work shows the underlying suffering of the struggle against the patriarchy to form a coherent opposition to it. The considerations of the opportunities of never becoming a part of a patriarchal system in the story make the struggles of the characters a bit more complicated, and the possibility of the complexity of the experiences of women who inhabit the society that is more likely to suppress their agency becomes obvious. The travels of the characters, therefore, are not only personal but also represent a larger statement about the sociocultural restrictions in which they are forced to exist. (Khozaei Ravari & Naidu, 2011)

Fragmentation is influential in that it maps out the profile of feminist politics through its complex exposure of the large gap be-

tween the desirable terms of existence women desire and the available means of knowing that are usually available to them. Here, the brilliant work of Churchill dramatizes the multifaceted quest of freedom with a tremendous force using the same properties that the cycle of performance gestures in this piece is violently opposing. These aspects are heteroglossia, theatricalization of experience, the immanent instability of the path that people are forced to walk through in the various dimensions of time and space, and the theatre itself as a necessary condition of enactment.

All these factors are amazingly combined to leave their unique and important imprints on the continuation of the labeling of gender. In addition, they engrave the numerous connotative liberties which are codified in that name. These kinds of freedoms are quite varied: breaking the shackles of oppressive situations, repression of the self, avoidance of conflicts, overloading emotions, defence mechanism, emotional attachment, the suffering of sacrifice, abandonment of reality, or the exciting action of setting out on a new adventure. It is also through this complex web of experiences that the theatre becomes an effective medium of interpreting and expressing the issues of gender and freedom. (A Connelly, 2015)

Literature Review

Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls* has been widely discussed within feminist literary criticism as a text deeply embedded in the so-

context of feminist politics in the British landscape. It claims that the characters are struggling to achieve personal freedom, but they are faced with the problem of collective domination. The discussion demonstrates that the play challenges the fact that only within the context of systematic oppression, feminist ideals founded on the self-determinatory identity can become a possibility. In conclusion, *Top Girls* takes advantage of fragmentation to form a form of resistance and a response to the inadequacy of feminism movements. The work also adds information to our understanding of feminist politics in that it shows that personal agency, and the collective struggle do co-exist as components of domination structures and thus may need to be manipulated in order to reach a more comprehensive feminist endeavor.

Keywords: Fragmented, Identities, Feminist, Politics, Caryl Churchill, Top Girls.

ملخص

تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية بشكل أساسي إلى مناقشة الهوية المجزأة في مسرحية «فتيات القمة» لكارييل تشرشل، وكيف تُشكّل هذه الهوية المجزأة البُعد النسوي للمسرحية. كما تهدف الدراسة إلى فهم الصراعات بين الإرادة الشخصية والقيود الهيكلية، وتقييم جدوى السياسة النسوية القائمة على تقرير المصير. تستخدم هذه المقارنة منهجًا نصيًا مترابطًا لاستكشاف الشخصيات باعتبارها تجسيدًا للشخصيات التاريخية والمرأة المعاصرة. وتوظف

الورقة تحليلات نصية دقيقة وتحليلات مقارنة للخطابات النسوية لفهم كيفية تعامل الشخصيات مع هوياتها ضمن نطاق محدود من الأدوار المقبولة اجتماعيًا. تُظهر النتائج أن شخصيات مسرحية «توب غيرلز» تواجه صعوبة في التكيف مع بيئة مُربكة تتسم بتعدد الهويات وتضاربها، حيث تتفاعل الاستقلالية الشخصية مع الأعراف الاجتماعية. ويُصبح التشرذم أحد استراتيجيات مُعارضة الأنظمة الأبوية، ولكنه يُسلط الضوء أيضًا على القيود التي تُعيق في نهاية المطاف جدوى الجهود النسوية الفردية. وتُناقش هذه النتائج في سياق يهدف إلى وضعها ضمن السياسات النسوية الأوسع نطاقًا في بريطانيا، مؤكدةً أن الشخصيات تُناضل من أجل نيل حريتها الشخصية، لكنها تواجه في الوقت نفسه مشكلة الهيمنة الجماعية. ويُبين النقاش أن المسرحية تُشكك في إمكانية تطبيق المثل النسوية القائمة على الهوية المُستقلة في ظل القمع المُمنهج. وخلاصةً، تستغل مسرحية «توب غيرلز» التشرذم لتشكيل شكل من أشكال المقاومة ورد فعل على قصور الحركات النسوية. يُضيف هذا العمل معلومات قيمة لفهمنا للسياسة النسوية، إذ يُبين أن الفاعلية الفردية والنضال الجماعي يتعايشان كمكوّنين أساسيين في هياكل الهيمنة، وبالتالي قد يتطلب الأمر توجيههما للوصول إلى مسعى نسوي أكثر شمولية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: مجزأة، هويات، نسوية، سياسة، كارييل تشرشل، فتيات القمة.

Feminist politics and fragmented identities in *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill.

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Abstract

This paper is mainly intended to discuss the disconnected identity in *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill and how it shapes the feminist theme of the play. The study also aims at understanding the conflicts between personal agency and structural constraints and evaluating the sensibleness of feminist politics based on self-determination. This comparison uses an intertextual approach to explore the characters as the depiction of the historical figures and the modern women. The paper employs close textual analyses and comparative—feminist discourses analyses to comprehend how

the characters conduct their identities in a restricted range of socially legitimate roles. The results demonstrate that the characters in *Top Girls* have to maneuver in a confusing environment of multiple and rather conflicting identities, as the personal independence and social norms interact. Fragmentation is one of the approaches of resistance to the patriarchal orders that are so crucial, however, the fragmentation also puts emphasis on the restrictions which are ultimately to hinder the efficacy of the single feminist endeavor. These findings are discussed in such a way that they are sought to be positioned in the wider