

Study on Feminist Thoughts in Top Girls

He Shi

Liaoning Communication University, Shenyang, Liaoning, China

54341867@qq.com

Abstract. The development of western feminist literature is close to the development of western feminist movements and theories. With the aid of the theories of Simone de Beauvoir and Irigaray, the paper intends to explain *Top Girls* written by Caryl Churchill from the way of feminism. It explores the alienation and oppression of feminists themselves, and points out feminists fall into imitating patriarch pattern unconsciously. It manifests the characteristics of postmodern feminism of feminist literature.

Keywords: Feminism; *Top Girls*; Marlene.

1. Introduction

The development of western feminist literature originates from western feminist movements and theories. The same as western feminist movements and theories, the development of western feminist literature also experiences several periods. The early western feminist literature shows the politic direction of early feminist movement, which devotes to explore patriarchy society oppressing women, to wake the independent consciousness of women, to enlighten feminist consciousness, to raise feminist position and to fight for feminist powers. It has an active function to promote the development of society. With the development of feminist movements, feminist movements begin to ponder vicissitudes of feminist fate and future development. In the content, it regards social gender theory as the basic position, looking for the reasons which explain feminist being oppressed, admitting frankly the different living and social essence of both sexes, question the extreme thoughts of women power, reconstructing feminist images. Since 1970s, in the effect of postmodernism, deconstruction and postcolonialism in the content, they pay more attention to the complexity and diversity of feminists who are being oppressed, and think deeply about the cause, and it plays a role to explore the alienation and oppression of feminists' inner group and reflect the development of feminism. Therefore, feminist literature goes into a more broad space and shows a stronger artistic power of influence and a more social influence.

Her creation is a very original work, which shows consideration to the thoughts of western feminism and the direction of the development in many aspects. It explores social reality through a group of feminist experiences. The reality is that the result of feminist movements is only shared by top girls who belong to upper and middle class. However, to most women, they are also oppressed. The roles of this drama are all women who pass through time and space to have dinner. The drama tells us: regardless of past, present and future, if women want to win success on their causes like men, they must pay great price, such as love, marriage or family; next, it gives a brief account indirectly that if women want to liberate completely, they must have independent economy, have right to accept education and feminist sense; then, patriarch thoughts are still alive in the society and men's oppression still exists, many women are ignorant to liberate independently and feminist sense, the same sex oppresses to each other. All of these hinder feminist health and development. The whole drama tries to answer the author's question---why are women so bitter? Churchill arranges language and plot smartly to show consideration of development of feminism through above aspects.

2. Top Girls

The primary step of feminist movements is to revolt patriarchal society, when they win equality and freedom which they look for bitterly, even superior to man. What dilemma will they face? *Top Girls* is not a work which does not hail feminist liberation and their success, but a work which is full of satire and makes people quite thought-provoking. It shows that women pay great price to success but they question whether it really deconstructs patriarchal society and whether they really feel happiness and satisfactory. This question does not depend on well-modulated traditional work but the method of no realism coming from passing through time and space and combination of absurdity and reality.

The first act builds a dramatic effect by coexisting reality and absurdity. The heroine is Marlene who gives a banquet to congratulate that she promotes to the manager of "Top Girls" employment agency. The five female guests are not Marlene's relatives and friends but the historical and artistic characters who pass through time and space. They are Laisa Bird who lived in Edinburgh, traveled extensively between the age of 40 and 70; Lady Niobe who was an Japanese Emperor's courtesan, Dull Gret who is the subject of the Brueghel painting, Dulle Griet, in which a woman in an apron and armor leads a crowd of women charging through hell and fighting the devils, Pope Joan who disguised as a man, is thought to have been Pope, Patient Griselda who is the obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in *The Clerk's Tale* of the *Canterbury Tales*. In real life, Marlene has no real friend to congratulate her, so she can only congratulate with illusory guests. Although the guests belong to different ages, countries and backgrounds and their characteristics are quite different, but they have a common core that they all try to liberate and succeed. The author puts the success of Marlene into such extraordinary females which strengthens the time and space three-dimensional effect of protagonists and motif. It tells us those ancient times, a few females shed traditional roles and regulations, Marlene is not the first.

The bustling scene makes readers think it should praise females' success next, but the development of plot becomes despair even sorrow. They say their frustrated experiences actively on the banquet, aftertaste joys and sorrows of life. When Joan says she is found to be a woman who becomes cardinal, and she is killed including his baby. Although Marlene gains success, however, as a woman, she pays great price for her individual success. She has an abortion two times. French postmodernist feminist Irigaray thinks the bearing ability of female has a great value to her in the imagination of men. Marlene has a daughter, but she gives up her responsibility to hinder the success of her career, so she never gives her daughter enough care. Because bearing often forces women to limit to be housewives, it difficult to coordinate between work and kids. In order to success, women must be more tired than men, at least as tired as them, which deprives most of their spare time and increases their pressure. Many upper class females worry that if they give birth to children, which will block the development of their careers, so they delay their bearing time again and again. Marlene is the model of this group of women.

Many successful women hinder careers at the same time they pay painful price. Men abandon them or are far away from them. They become humdrum but loved birds or become horrible wolves. If women choose the latter, they suspect whether their choice is right or not. Home is not a harbor for them to rest after hard work. They have to find sense of ownership to other places. This is the throes of the development of feminism. Although it is painful, it is necessary and inevitable. The proportion of upper females is low; the success of these women forms a strong contrast with other females' fate. Cousin says, society gives too much to upper class women taste the fruits of feminist movements by the satisfaction of others. Like Marlene, she put all family responsibilities to her sister Joyce, who is only a housewife waiting for being waken and liberate. This relates to another importance question: the oppression in the same sex.

3. The Oppression in the Same Sex

Top Girls keeps Churchill's overlapping dialogue which is important to the drama. Overlapping dialogue uses thoroughly. On the table, the six females eager to tell their unique experiences which

results in no one listening. It's fatal and its moral is obvious. Because no one listens, women can not absorb experience lessons and power from others and can not share others' feeling which reflects the oppression of the same sex. Cousin thinks the drama shows a little change. Only a small portion of females can climb to the top of ladder, keep close to men, sometimes can overstep them. Marlene is the representative of such kind of women who realize their hanker of cause, owning wealth, glory and confirmation. But most of the women are "poor". It is easy to see that the success of Marlene is on the oppression of her sister Joyce who looks after their parents and her slow-witted daughter. However, both of Marlene and her sister think the other don't know how to find happiness. Because they have different understanding of their own value, they can not support each other, encourage each other and develop mutually. Their problem can be regarded as failing communication between successful and unsuccessful women. Some successes of women seem to narrow the gap between men and women, but the distance enlarges with women. The feminist slogan--sisterhood seems to disappear, only suspicion, trample and fight left. Irigaray says the relationship between women is unsolved, because there is no custom or mythology to teach us how to like other females and how to coexist with them, wreck may happen forever. Only realize the possibility and importance of coexistence, female can pay attention to the destruction of oppression of the same sex and can coexist and get in with the same sex.

In fact, even if a small group of women gain power, the development of feminism shoulders heavy responsibilities in the future. It's not easy for feminism to find the way. Now, it is in the bottom, the future is confused. The more grave situation is that women are enduring the invisible oppression from patriarch society, and the cry of woman is at home still awakens the muddle-headed. Irigaray says to build a shelter for women, the most important is material and spiritual spirits can be fostered, protected, which will be a world that respect oneself and others and respect the differences of social culture. If we pay more attention to the feminist movements, we can expect a more optimistic future. At that time, not only top girls, all women can enjoy improving life and gaining equality and respect. This is an emergent task of the development of feminism. Now, although it has a large upper class people but failures unfairly treated too much. The distance, we are on the way, history can not reverse his own steps.

References

- [1] Zheng jiyu, A study on the feminist view of science based on postmodernism philosophy[D]. Harbin University of Science and Technology, 2021.
- [2] Fu Jun, The British Drama Reader[M]. Shanghai Foreign Language Education Press, 2006.
- [3] Li Lei, Fan Jianwu, Cultural hegemony from the perspective of feminism development [J]. Journal of Chinese Women's Studies, 2002.
- [4] Feminism in multicultural societies: an analysis of Dutch multicultural and postsecular developments and their implications for feminist debates [O]. Midden Eva 2010.