

**TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY**

**Sexual Liberation in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine***

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This thesis entitled, 'Sexual Liberation in *Cloud Nine*' submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, by Rita Majagaiyan, has been approved by the undersigned members of the Research Committee.

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## **Abstract**

The concept of sex, gender and sexuality has changed in our society. Sex is biologically constructed where as gender is the perception of society. As a result, there is sexual liberation. There is no compulsion to abide by the heterosexual norms within the partners. People can enjoy their life with their own sexual identity. They may live their life as homosexual or bisexual as per their wish. It is proved by the role of Betty who at first plays the role of the unsatisfied wife of Clive a Victorian patriarch. Later she discloses the truth that she is a lesbian. She is living with Clive only for the sake of society. Similarly, another character, Edward, shows his attitude according to the decoded discourse of the society. Later, he, also, turns into homosexual. The fact of uncontrolled sexual desire of human beings is traced in Victoria and Ellen's role since they jumped out of the norm of society and declared themselves as lesbians.

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## **I. Caryl Churchill and Her Treatment of Sexuality**

Caryl Churchill treats sexuality as a social construct rather than a biological construct. So heterosexuality is also taken as performativity and is decoded in the society. Sexual identity is not a natural phenomenon rather a social construct. Sexual identity is also fictional as it has become one of the social discourses. Churchill treats sexuality as a construct to liberate it from the oppressive heterosexual norms and values prevailing in the western society. People have their right to live freely with their own sexual identity no matter whether they are gay or lesbian. They have their own position in the society.

In the play, *Cloud Nine*, Edward, a male character, performs the role of an unsatisfied life, played by a woman. At a young age, Edward (played by a woman in Act 1) discovers a proclivity for feminine things and an attraction towards other males. However, he keeps his yearnings in check for fear of upsetting his conservative father Clive. These fears subside, but do not disappear as Edward grows up. The older Edward of Act 2 (played by a man) finds that he fits well into the role of mother and wife. Betty, in Act 1, played by a man, spends most of her time confused and incapable of making any decisions of her own. She relies totally upon her husband Clive to provide direction in her life. She dreams of a relationship with Harry, Wondering what life might be life outside of her own. Betty remains caught between her duty to family and her yearning for romance. In Act 2, new Betty, played by a new actor, acquires a sense of independence and evolves in to the play's protagonist. The new Betty finds independence intriguing, but frightening and her relationship to her children Victoria and Edward often seems to be the only thing to keep her sane. Both of them stand on the stereotype heterosexual norm of the society, though, they are not satisfied with the sexual identity given by the society. At the end of the drama, both characters find satisfaction in their relationship with the people of same sex: the man turns homosexual

and a woman lesbian. Churchill's approach to *Cloud Nine* was not strictly feminist. She began with the more general concept of sexual repression and how a person can feel its effects. She selected two different repressive periods in British history. The first act takes place in Africa, roughly during the 1870's during British Victorian era while the second act is set in London in the 1970's. So, it seems reasonable that different actors should play these characters in view of the time difference.

Caryl Churchill was born in London in 1938, and grew up partly in the U.K. and in Montreal, Canada. She studied at Oxford University where she studied English. Her social conscience has been a significant part of her play writing and her life. She found herself sometimes depressed by the dullness of the middle-class life demanded of the wife of a barrister, and much of her earlier drama is satire directed at what many people thought was enviable lifestyle. Her first play, *Downstairs*, was written and staged in 1958 while she was still at university, and won her an award at the Sunday Times National Union of Students Drama Festival. She was spotted by the literary agent Peggy Ramsay who carefully nurtured Churchill's writing talent. She is closely aligned with the Royal Court Theatre in London, noted for producing satiric, biting experimental drama with a punch. It was a slow progress- by the time her first play, *Owners* was professionally produced in 1972. Churchill had been working on get unique style for ten years. In that time she had married and produced three sons and had written a number of plays.

Churchill was encouraged by drama producers at the BBC who produced her short radio plays: *The Ants*, *Lovesick*, and *Abortive*. Radio was traditionally more accommodating to female playwrights and the BBC also televised her play *The Judges' Wife* in 1972. She moved to theatre in the early 1970's, where initially working on her own, she soon collaborated companies as joint stock and Monstrous Regiment.

Churchill was also resident dramatist at the royal court theater company from 1974-1975.

Caryl Churchill is recognized as Britain's leading woman dramatist. Her plays are politically radical with strong views on feminism, money, and exploitation. Her own life experience as middle class wife and mother has put her in an ideal position to write about feminism and the impact of it on women like her. Churchill's plays deal with sexual politics, social and political oppressions, and exploitation, but they are also plays where a clear and fierce intelligence meets a sense of mystery to reveal, as Churchill herself stated in a manifesto about writing for theatre, "new worlds beyond and beneath the surface of ordinary life". Many critics and theatres scholars would argue that she has played a leading role in shaping the contemporary theatrical landscape, on national and international stages. Characteristics of her work is her enduring commitment to a socialist and to a socialist-feminist politics, coupled with a desire to experiment with theatrical form; to find a theatrical means of giving expression to her ideas about and concerns for a world that, as she presents it, is increasingly damaged by the relentless march of global capitalism.

A philosophical, political and critical thinker such as Michel Foucault, Frantz Fanon have been an influence on Churchill's work, get performance interventions into the field of ideas have proved both theatrically stimulating and intellectually insightful. More particularly, Churchill has been vital to the field of women's theatre and scholarship where her work has pioneered women's playwriting and furthered critical and theatrical feminist activity. Caryl Churchill has long had a reputation as one of the finest and most imaginative playwrights. Her sense of adventure stretches rest only to subjects matter but also from, so that any part of hers will always be distinctive, challenging and thought provoking. Her first play staged at the Royal Court Theatre was farcical but serious play called *Owners* (1972). It attacks the way that the concept

of ownership destroys potential relationships. Churchill's basic socialist views are very apparent in the play, which is a critique of the values that most capitalists take for granted: being aggressive, getting ahead, doing well. Although this play is not explicitly feminist, Churchill combines socialism and feminism in most of her plays, thus producing an often unusual approach to her subject matter.

Churchill's *Objection to Sex and Violence* (1975) was not immensely successful, but it introduced themes of feminism into her work. Among other themes, the play examines in depth the domination of women by men the relationship of violence to sex rates.

In 1976 Churchill produced *Vinegar Tom*, a play about witch hunts set in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. After researching witch trails, Churchill concluded that women are convenient scapegoats for when times become difficult. *Top girls* (1982) played at the Royal Court Theatre in London and at the public Theatre in New York, where the reviews were mixed. The play, essentially feminist in theme, was praised in England for being "the best British play ever from women dramatist."

*Cloud Nine* (1979), Churchill's first big popular success, came out of a joint stock workshop based on sexuality. A play which exposes the links between patriarchy and colonialism, it includes gay and straight characters in a timeline spanning half a century during which the characters age only twenty years. The play is broadly satirical, involving farcical moments in the relationships of colonist and native, master and servant, and man and women. Churchill casts certain parts of the play in a cross-gender fashion: a woman plays a sensitive school boy, a man plays an unfulfilled wife. The effect is both comic and instructive, since her most important purpose is to cast light on gender distinctions. She said that she saws "parallels between the way colonizers treat the colonized and the men tended to treat women in our society".

The author Caryl Churchill wishes to cover a lot of major themes in her plays. Just a few of them are sexual preference, race, class setting, gender, and much more. In the first half of the play, we witness a Victorian era family residing in a British colony in Africa. The husband is in charge of the natives', while the rest of the family is expected to reside at home and 'be good'. The young daughter is even played by a doll in this scene to show her believed mental capabilities. Churchill also causes confusion further by the fact that some of the women characters are played by men. When we are reading the play, we sometimes forget and just see them as a man or a woman and nothing more, but when we watch it on a stage Churchill hopes that people will overlook the colour, creed, sex, etc and see that when we really think about it, these things are meaningless. The slave, who is said to come from a native tribe, is even played by a white man.

The second half of the play takes a hundred years or so after the first part. This might not sound all that bad, but the characters from the first half; some of them are in second act. The children are adults now and the adults are seniors. They are back in England and the characters are some times played by different people than they were in the first half. It is closer to modern period, and one of the main issues to come out of its sexual preferences. Throughout both halves of the play, characters choose their sexual partners, from the same or different sexes quite sporadically. There are only a few straight characters in the play, and even some of them by the end are questioning their choices.

It is just a basic story of colonialism and then later life in Britain, but at the same time Churchill has written a play that causes the readers or viewers to question how the world is. Do the things that we make matter so much really matter? Is color of importance in how we treat someone? Does it matter what sex we choose to spend the

rest of our life with? Does it even matter if we are male or female? These are the questions that Churchill leaves us with the end of the play.

In review of The Old Production of *Cloud Nine* by James Treadwell, he responds its structure as a series of difficult adjustments. He says “there are individual strengths and weakness among the actors, but Churchill’s polemical essay in sexual politics is not about individuals; it’s about relationships, communities, social rather personal identity” (113).

In *Contemporary Feminist Theatre*; Lizbeth Goodman writes, "Churchill’s belief in the possibility of breaking down limiting sex roles stereotypes through re-evaluation of the masculine percepts of language increased attention to body language and forwarding of the unstated, were all developed" (78).

Lizbeth Goodman in the same book writes, "Like in Neaptide’s mane emphasizes a crucial link between the marginalization of Lesbian in relation to feminism. Lane condition might be reread in the context of the conflation of the term “Lesbian and feminist” in Churchill’s *Cloud Nine* (84).

James M. Harding in *Cloud Covers*; (Re) dressing desire and comfortable subversions in Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*, writes:

By all accounts, the workshop was a profoundly enlighten experience. It promoted intense exploration of the relation of sexuality and gender to power and authority and provided the material forms which Churchill developed her play. Careful orchestration created an open environment where participants recounted their sexual histories and explored through improvisation the social structures that mediate sexuality and genders.  
(112)

But the researcher sees the sexual liberation in the play. She finds sexuality as the social construct and heterosexuality also falls on social discourse. People can live on their own sexual identity. They may be homosexuals, lesbians as per their desire.

The researcher deconstructs contemporary norm of society and explore the characters with their own sexual identity. She deconstructs so called concept of heterosexuality and replaces it with the concept of homosexuality. So the methodological frame work for the thesis will be post-modern theories on gender and sexuality with the Foucauldian concept and Judith Butler's concept of sexuality with Chris Beasley's theories.

For this, the researcher has used the concept of Michael Foucault and Judith Butler's concept of gender and sexuality to prove her statement. The research paper is divided into four parts. Chapter one deals with the introduction and literature review of the text, second chapter deals with the methodology, the third chapter deals with textual analysis and the fourth one is conclusion.

## II. Sex, Sexuality, and Gender: A Discussion

'Sex', 'sexuality,' and 'gender' are the terms whose relations and uses are almost irremediably slippery. They are so much interrelated that while talking about one of them, the next comes automatically, and we cannot talk about them as a separate entity. These terms have an importance in the social theories in the recent time. These terms are also the most influential and successful undertakings of feminist thought.

Sex, in its basic level, refers to a certain group of irreducible biological differentiations between member of the species of *homo sapiens* who have XX and those who have XY chromosomes. These include more or less marked dimorphisms of genital formation, hair growth, fat distribution, hormonal function, and reproductive capacity.

According to Merriman Webster, gender is, "the behavioral, cultural or psychological traits typically associated with one sex" – while sex is defined as "either of the two major forms of individuals that occur in many species and they are distinguished respectively as female and male" (qtd. in Kate 1).

Gender in western society refers to a binary division (into two categories) of human beings and social practices to the point of this division even being construed as oppositional. We see this at work in the phrase the opposite sex. The two categories are merely regarded as distinct and opposed, they are also put into a hierarchy in which one is typically cast as positive and the other negative. Compared to chromosomal sex, which is seen by these definitions as tending to be immutable; immanent in the individual, and biologically based, the meaning of gender is seen as culturally mutable and variable, highly rational in the sense that each of the binarized genders is defined primarily by its relation to the other, and inextricable from a history of power differentials between genders.

Sedgwick further says,

"Sex" is, however, a term that extends indefinitely beyond chromosomal sex. That its history of usage often overlaps with what might, how, more properly be called "gender" is only one problem ... Beyond chromosomes, however, the association of "sex", precisely through the physical body, with reproduction and with genital activity and sensation keeps offering new challenges to the conceptual clarity or even possibility of sex/gender differentiation. (2439)

Sexuality is a set of social processes which produce and organize the structure and expression of desire. Ideas about sexuality are so intimately tied up with gender that it sometimes difficult to see where one ends and the other begins. To begin with, the hierarchy that privileges the male in dualist systems of gender, also gives the structure for how sexuality works in Western society. Female sexuality is marked as naturally masochistic, narcissistic and passive; male sexuality is inscribed as naturally aggressive, sadistic and active. Traditional notions of women's sexuality make it virtually synonymous with her reproductive function. Motherhood is seen as the natural expression of female sexuality.

As Freud argued and Foucault assumed, the distinctively sexual nature of human sexuality has to do precisely with its excess over or potential difference from the bare choreographies of productions, "sexuality" might be the very opposite of what we originally referred to as chromosomal-based sex. It could occupy instead, even more than "gender" the polar position of the relational the social/symbolic, the constructed, the variable, the representational.

The category of "sex" is, from the start, normative; it is what Foucault has called a "regulatory ideal". Judith Butler in *Bodies that Matter* writes, "In this sense, then, "sex" not only functions as a norm, but is part of regulatory practice that produces

the bodies it governs, that is, whose regulatory force is made clear as a kind of productive power, the power to produce – demarcate circulate, differentiate – the bodies it controls (1). Thus, "sex" is a regulatory ideal whose materialization is compelled, and this materialization takes place or fails to take place through certain highly regulated practices. In other words, "sex" is an ideal construct which is forcibly materialized through time. Judith Butler further writes:

It is not a simple fact or static condition of a body, but a process whereby regulatory norms materialize "sex" and achieve this materialization is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled. (2)

There will be no way to understand "gender" as a cultural construct which is imposed upon the surface of matter, understood either as "the body" or its given sex. "Sex" is, thus, not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the "one" becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility.

According to the Butler, if gender consists of the social meanings that sex assumes, then sex does not accrue social meanings as additive properties but, rather, is replaced by the social meanings it takes on; sex is relinquished in the course of that assumption, and gender emerges, not as a term in a continued relationship of opposition to sex, but as the term which absorbs and displaces "sex", the mark of its full substantiation into gender or what, from a materialistic point of view, might constitute a full desubstantiation. It refers to the understanding of performativity not as the act by which a subject brings into being what s/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constraints. It also is to be understood the construal of 'sex' no longer as a bodily given on which the construct of

gender is artificially imposed, but as a cultural norm which governs the materialization of bodies. If gender is the social construction of sex, and if there is no access to this 'sex' except by means of its construction, then it appears not only that sex is absorbed by gender, but also that 'sex' becomes something like a fiction, perhaps a fantasy, retrospectively installed at a paralinguistic site to which there is no direct access.

On the other hand, sex is a contrived premise, a fiction, then gender does not presume a sex which it acts upon, but rather, gender produces the misnomer of a prediscursive 'sex' and the meaning of construction becomes that of linguistic monism, whereby everything is only and always language. If constructivism is reduced to a position of linguistic monism, whereby linguistic construction is understood to be generative and deterministic, critics making that presumption can be asked about the definition and existence of body.

According to modernist tradition of feminist theory, gender and sexuality are taken as transhistorical features of culture, just as the modernist viewpoint within psychoanalysis conceives of sexual and gender as universal psychic phenomena. By contrast, the postmodern traditions in both feminist theory and psychoanalysis concept of gender and sexuality as emerging in and through history and culture and thus consider them to be fluid and variable social categories.

At the end of nineteenth century, Sigmund Freud became the rising star on the theory of sexuality. The link between sexual desire and language is one of Freud's most important contributions to theories of sexuality. His theories are important because of the ways in which sexuality is accorded central status in his attempts to understand human relations, pleasures and satisfaction, and the place of the sexual subject in culture. Freud connects sexuality with instincts in his own work three essays on the *Theory of Sexuality* as follows:

"That extension is of a twofold kind. In the first place sexuality is divorced from its too close connections with the genitals and is regarded as a more comprehensive bodily function, having pleasure as its goal and only secondarily coming to serve the ends of reproduction. In the second place the sexual impulses are regarded as including all of those merely affectionate and friendly impulses to which applies the exceeding ambiguous word "Love". (38)

Freud's observation leads him to conclude that all subjects are sexualized that children are sexual subjects as much as adults, as a consequence, all children are sexual perverse. Sexual pleasure as theorized in psychoanalysis is not linked to a specific activity like heterosexual genital relations, but to the satisfactions associated with particular functions and bodily zones, Freud's account of the complex ways in which the individual is tormented by hidden sources of mental conflict provided a source of inspiration for the undoing of sexual repression in both personal and social life. In our therapeutic culture, constraints on, and denials of, sexuality have been and, for many, still are regarded as emotionally and socially harmful. The Freudian insight that personal identity is forged out the psyche's encounter with particular experiences, especially those forgotten experiences of childhood, has in turn led to an increasing interest in the secret history of life.

Michel Foucault views sex as, "not only a matter of sensation and pleasure, of law and taboo, but also of truth and falsehood, that the truth of sex becomes something fundamental, useful or dangerous. Precisely or formidable in short that sex was constructed as a problem of truth" (56). Foucault, in *History of sexuality* vol. 1., argued that the field of sexuality must be understood from the view point of a history of discourse. He further says, "The history of sexuality is a series of studies concerning the historical relationship of power and discourse on sex" (90). In his examination of

the relationship between truth and pleasure, Foucault has said that sexuality must not be described as a stubborn drive, by nature alien and of necessity disobedient of a power, which exhaust itself trying to subdue it and often fails to control it entirely, rather sexuality should be thought of as an effect of the relationship of power. He further opines "Sexuality appears rather as an especially dense transfer point for relations of power, between men and women, young people and old people, parents and offspring, teachers and students, priests and laity, an administration and a population. Sexuality is not the most intractable in power relations. (103)

Foucault further says that the discourse of sexuality is not simply the natural expression of some inner drive or desire. The discourses of sexuality concern the operation of power in human relationships as much as they govern the production of a personal identity. By stressing the ways in which sexuality is written in or on the body, and in showing how the homosexual is forced in the cultural visibility. On the contrary, in the essay, "*Nietzsche, Genealogy, History*" he writes:

The body is the inscribed surface of events (traced by language and dissolved by ideas) the locus of a dissociated self (adopting the illusion of a substantial unity), and a volume in perpetual disintegration. Genealogy, as an analysis of descent, is thus situated within the articulation of the body and history. Its task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body. (Foucault qtd. In Riely, 223)

The integrity of the body's claim to afford a starting point for analysis is refused. This Foucauldian body is a deliquescing effect, composed but constantly falling away from itself.

Whereas to Moira Gatens, the recent feminist researcher, suggests that the history of western thought shows a deep hatred and fear of the body. This

somatophobia is understood by some feminists to be specially masculine and intimately related to gynophobia and misogyny. In response to this negative attitude towards the body and women, some feminists advocate the affirmation and celebration of women's bodies and their capacity to recreate and nurture. In its strongest form this view argues that the specific capacities and powers of women's bodies imply an essential difference between men and women, where women may be presented as essentially peace loving, 'biophilic' or caring, and men as essentially aggressive, 'necrophilic' or selfish. These theorists argue that there is an essential sexual difference that should be retained, not eroded by scientific intervention.

According to Jacques Lacan, female bodies is lacking or castrated and male bodies as full or phallic. This construction tells of power relation where the actual understandings of sexual difference imply a passive/active relation. Feminism believed the human body as itself a politically inscribed entity, its physiology and morphology shaped and marked by histories and practices of containment and control from foot-binding and corseting to rape and battering, to compulsory hetero sexuality, forced sterilization and unwanted pregnancy.

New generation of feminist theorists found Foucault and deconstruction to be useful in elaborating their ideas. Deconstructionism has been helpful in pointing to the many sided nature of meaning, for every interpretation, there is always a reading against the grain. From post modern prospective, both earlier emphasis on women's bodies as subject to social conditioning, the later move to normalization, underestimate the unstable nature of subjectivity and creative agency of individuals- the cultural work by which nomadic, fragmented, active subjects confound dominant discourse. In this view, the dominant discourses, which define femininity, are continually allowing for the eruption of difference, and even the most subordinated subjects are therefore

continually confronted with opportunities for resistance, for making meanings that oppose the dominant ideology.

Lacan has exercised an enormous influence on debates over sexuality in social theory, especially in the area of feminist studies. According to him, "men" and "women" are not essences or biologically givens but rather positions in a structure. For Foucault sexuality is intricately bound up with advanced system of power and domination within our culture Foucault's major studies in the 1960s and 1970s, such as *Madness and civilization*, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *Discipline and Punish*, examine the deeper social implications of configurations of knowledge and power in the human sciences for example, psychiatry, sexology, criminology, penology, and demography. He argues that scientific discourses, while aiming to uncover the truth about "the criminal" or "madness" or "sex", are in fact used to control individuals. In his genealogies of power/knowledge, he emphasizes that scientific disciplines and discourses shape the social structures in which culture defines what is acceptable and unacceptable: what can be said from a position of authority, and by whom and in what social conditions.

The production of discourses, text, and knowledge is deeply interwoven with the operation of power in society. The individual subject is viewed by Foucault, in this early phase of his career, as an upshot or product of discursive positioning and fixation, the individual is increasingly subjected to new forms of power and control in what Foucault terms our "disciplinary society"; in Weberian terms, the Foucauldian subject is caught up in the iron cage of modernity.

In the later part of his career, Foucault problematized global conceptions of sexuality (e.g.-those portrayed in psychoanalytic, social constructivist and feminist theories), and developed powerful genealogies of the self and subjectivity.

Foucault's concerns about the culture of sexuality were prompted, in part, by his own homosexuality; in particular, he was troubled by what he saw as the intolerant and repressive heterosexual regime governing sex in French society. He became increasingly fascinated with the sexual liberation movements of the 1970s and 1980s, especially the politicization of gay and lesbian identities. He regarded political demands for sexual liberation to be of crucial importance of redefining configurations of normal and pathological desires, acts, and identities. However, he was suspicious of the claims of various sexual liberationists that desire was repressed in western societies; he was even more troubled by the notion that, if sexuality were released from existing personal and social constraints, society might achieve greater levels of autonomy. Rejecting what he described as "the Californian cult of the self" – the notion that the scrutinizing of sexuality would reveal the essence of the 'true self' – Foucault sought to develop a radically different approach to analyze the culture of sexuality, desire, and sexual identity.

At the core of Foucault's approach was a rejection of the modernist assumption that sex should be understood as a natural or biological foundation, upon which an imprinting of 'sexuality' and 'gender' is added. Foucault argues that the idea of sex as origin, as base, or as given and social relations is itself the outcome of a discursive regime of sexuality. In the *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault says:

We must not make the mistake of thinking that sex is an autonomous agency that secondarily produces manifold effects over the entire length of its surface of contact with power. On the contrary, sex is the most speculative, most ideal, and most internal element in a deployment of sexuality organized by power in its grip on bodies and their materiality, their forces, sensations and pleasures. (155)

Preexisting types of sexual pleasure, says Foucault, become 'sex' as the creation of discourses about it such as medical texts, therapeutic books, self-help manuals, and the like – bring about an ordering of "normal" and 'pathological' sexual practices. The human subject, according to Foucault, is not 'sexed' in any meaningful sense prior to its constitution within a discourse through which it becomes a carrier of a natural or essential sex.

Foucault has talked about "the repressive hypothesis" in the *History of Sexuality: The Will To Knowledge*. According to this hypothesis, the healthy expression of sexuality has been ensured, negated, forbidden; at any rate this is held to be the case in the west sexuality as repressed: this theorem has been crucial not only to Freudian and post Freudian theory, but also to various sexual liberationists. Foucault rejects the thesis of sexual repression. Sex, he says, has not been driven underground in contemporary culture. On the contrary, there has been a widening discussion of sex and sexuality. For Foucault, sexuality is an end effect, a product, of our endless monitoring, discussion, classification, ordering, recording and regulation of sex.

Foucault considers sexuality as an attitude in the Victorian age. He further says in Victorian era, the conjugal family took custody of it and absorbed it into the serious function of reproduction. On the subject of sex, silence became the rule, children were prohibited to talk about sex. They closed their eyes and stopped their ears wherever they came to show evidence to the contrary sexuality was rationalized within the domestic sphere, the home, the family. Against this concept, he argues that the production of sexuality during the Victorian era as a secret, as something forbidden or taboo, created a culture in which sex then had to be administered, regulated and policed. For example, doctors, psychiatrists and others catalogued and classified numerous perversions, from which issues about sex became endlessly tracked and monitored with the growth of social medicine, education, criminology, and sexology.

Foucault further states that the fostering of a science of sexuality arose from the connection of confession to the growth of knowledge about sex. The Roman Catholic confessional was the principal means of regulating the individual sexuality of believers; the Church was the site in which subjects came to tell the truth about themselves, especially in relation to sexuality to their priests. The confessional can be regarded as the source of the West's preoccupation with sex, particularly in terms of the sanctioned inducement to talk of it. Confession became disconnect from its broad religious framework, however, somewhere in the late eighteenth century and was transformed into a type of investigation of interrogation through the scientific study of sex and the creation of medical discourses about it. Sexes became increasingly bound up with networks of knowledge and power, and in the time a matter for increasing self-policing, self regulation, and self-interrogation. In therapy, the individual does not so much feel coerced into confessing about sexual practices and erotic fantasies; rather, the information divulged by the patient is treated as the means of freedom, the realization of liberation from repression.

Different views have emerged about the theme of gender and sexuality by some of the feminists. Some of the feminists talk about the social role of women from the viewpoint of patriarch society. According to them women are the targets of sexual oppression, abuse, harassment, and denigration. Some feminists talk about the female as the source of entertainment for the male to fulfill his desire. Some feminists talk about the economical and political scenario of the then society in which women sexuality is taken as the tasks of child rearing and household duties. It seems that there is always identity crisis of women. But some of the feminists have approached it in the theme of gender and sexuality. They have raised a question mark towards the existing concept of women regarding their identity.

The American Feminist Nancy Chodorow powerfully theorized the interlocking relations of subjectivity, gender, and society in the late 1970s. In *The Reproduction of Mothering*, Chodorow combines sociological and psychoanalytic approaches to study the reproduction of gender asymmetries in modern societies. Against the tide of various socialization theories, Chodorow contends that gender is not so much a ways in which mothers emotionally relate to their children.

Regarding the sex roles of men and women which are expected to conform, Chodorow argues that the developing infant acquires a core gender identity that functions as a psychological force in the perpetuation of patriarchy. The core of her argument concerns gender difference. The mother emotionally relates to her daughter as an extension of herself, not as an independent person; the daughter, as a consequence, finds it extremely difficult to disengage emotionally from her mother and to create a sense of independence and individuality.

Chodorow's work, psychoanalytically oriented sociology has become the platform for many feminists researching gender identity in the wider frame of families and communities.

Postmodern feminism does not simply challenge women's current social status but their status as a group. Women are not therefore the, or even a means to resist power, and never outside it. Power is not all of piece, not simply negative oppression of a unitary cores self. Rather, power is productive and multiple. It provides the dynamic shaping of the self. On this basis, Foucault also questions Freud's model of gender and the self as based in 'repression' (Sullivan, 2003:40). Indeed, he argues the productive (rather than repressive) nature of power can be seen at work in the Freudian account itself, in that this account supports the idea of an interiorized deep core to the self. The notion of necessary deep self found in Freud is itself a mechanism of power. The body is granted some active status that exceeds culture and hence power relations.

Postmodern feminists like Butler typically retain a less critical attitude than Foucault towards the psychoanalytic account of how gender identity comes into being, but tend to go further than Foucault with regard to a critical examination of notions of the body as a foundational element of identity self.

Most recently, the development of a social theory of sexuality has been transformed by the writings of the American feminist post structuralist Judith Butler. She argues that notions of "identity" or "core gender identity" serve to reinforce a binary gender order that maintains women's oppression. Butler believes sexual identity as shot through with desire, fantasy, emotion, symbol, conflict, and ambivalence. She says that desire is not so much come inner psychic force as a result of the internalization of gender images upon the surface of our bodies. Pointing towards the work of Foucault, Butler contends that the link between sex and gender power is produced, not through nature, biology or reason, but through the deployment of knowledge, discourses, and forms of power, actualized through acting bodies and sexual practices.

In her work, *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Butler insists that the body too is a thoroughly cultural product, such that bodily sex anatomy itself can be seen in terms of cultural interpretations of gender difference. Gender (for example, distinctions between men and women) is typically interpreted as derived from the body. Bodily (anatomical) sex is seen as pre-dating culture, as eternal sex, the eternal male/female binary. However, in Butler's analysis, the body is also a gendered performance which is socially constituted as the essence of gender, as it's an intact, untouched foundation, and is all the more culturally powerful for this interpretation as being outside culture. To those who would exclaim that surely bodies are sexually different and this is the basis of gender, Butler retorts that such differences as exist need not be any more significant than the color of one's eyes. Butler exteriorizes everything

of the self identity (including the body that the interior psyche) and deems it cultural, a social construction, as constituted by the particular socio-historical forms of power.

Social power cannot be escaped, or overthrown, but it can be destabilished, demassified.

Butler argues that sex and sexuality are constituted and reproduced through the body that performs – the production of masculine and feminine bodies, lesbian and gay bodies, the sexy body, the body beautiful. According to Butler, gender is not the outcome of the 'true self' or 'core sex identity' but rather a matter of performance, the performance of a corporeal style. Individuals for Butler model their gender performances after fantasies, imitations and idealizations of what we think it means to be a 'man' or 'woman' within the range of cultural representations of sex in the current gender regime. Butler's notion of performance, of the body that performs, encompasses the copying, imitation and repetition of cultural stereotypes, linguistic conventions, and symbolic forms governing the production of masculinity and femininity.

Butler says, the disciplinary production of gender effects a false stabilization of gender in the interests of the heterosexual construction and regulation of sexuality within the reproductive domain. The construction of coherence conceals the gender discontinuities that run rampant within heterosexual, bisexual, and gay and lesbian contexts in which gender does not seem to follow from gender-indeed, where none of those dimensions of significant corporeality express or reflect one another.

Butler, further says, if the inner truth of gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fabrication and if a true gender is a fantasy instituted and inscribed on the surface of bodies, then it seems that gender can be neither true nor false, but are only produced as the truth effects of a discourse of primary and stable identity. She writes, "I would suggest as well that drag fully subverts the distinction between inner and outer psychic space and effectively mocks both the expressive model of gender and the notion of a true gender identity" (2497).

The notion of a primary gender identity is often parodied within the cultural practices of drag, cross-dressing, and the sexual stylization of butch/femme identities. Within feminist theory, such parodic identities have been understood to be either degrading to women, in the case of drag and cross-dressing, or an uncritical appropriation of sex – role stereo-typing from within the practice of heterosexuality, especially in the case of butch/femme lesbian identities. If the anatomy of the performer is already distinct from the gender of the performer, and both of those are distinct from the gender of the performance, then the performance suggests a dissonance not only between sex and performance but sex and gender, and gender and performance. In the place of the law of heterosexual coherence, we see sex and gender denaturalized by means of a performance that avows their distinctness and dramatizes the cultural mechanism of their fabricated family. Straub writes:

The cross-dressed actress points to a feminine desire in access of this role, and in this case that desire is explicitly sexual. The cross-dressed actress threatened the apartment naturalness and stability of what was becoming dominant gender ideology by suggesting of feminine sexuality that exceeded the heterosexual role of woman. (429)

Whereas, according to Fen Coles, the female body builder raises some important questions for feminist because of the ways in which she challenges traditional ideas about femininity. Patriarchal ideology depends on and enforces the idea that sex, gender and sexuality come together “naturally” as a package, i.e. you are born female, therefore you must naturally be feminine and heterosexual.

Gender can be neither true nor false, neither real nor apparent, neither original nor derived. As credible bearers of these attributes, however, gender can also be rendered thoroughly and radically incredible. Kristina Straub in *The Guilty Pleasures of Female Cross-Dressing* talks about theatrical cross-dressing that took place in the late

seventeenth century and lasted throughout the century without change. By the end of the century it was more a travesty.

The cross-dressed actress of the early to mid eighteenth century seems, to her, to constitute as historical possibility for pleasures in sexual and gender ambiguities. This possibility calls into question the naturalness of an economy of spectatorial pleasure that works on the promise of rigid boundaries between categories of gender and sexuality- male/female, hetero/homosexual.

Butler views, gender as a construction that regularly conceals its genesis. The tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them; the construction 'compels' our belief in its necessity and naturalness. Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts. Butler's work to displace all certainty and especially to displace norms of identity. She describes gender identity as per formative to stress that no interior essence, no 'real' self exists. Gender is per formative because it has no 'real-ness' at all, no natural core. It is an effect of a 'decidedly public and social discourse' which make gender seem real/eternal/a deep truth of our lives, by repetition (Ibid.: 119, 122). Gender, she says 'is a fabrication', a 'truth effect'. Here, identity is a fantasy – that is, imagined and experienced as set in immutable concrete – which supports power. It is an effect of power and not its means of escape. Thus, the task is not to enjoin a gender identity like women, which attends to a singular difference from men, or even to invoke multiple identities like lesbian, black women and 'third world' women, which acknowledge differences between women.

If gender (which seems so fundamental) is not an immutable fact of social life, then the whole of existing society can be questioned and can be viewed as potentially radically different. There is no core to which we must adhere. We can remake our own rules. The notion of the interior, real, natural truth status of gender can, Butler argues, be undercut by impersonations like drag, which parodies the notion of a true gender identity. These 'imitations' show up the artifice, the social fabrication that is the gendered self. Butler acknowledges the limits of these performances and calls for performances that compel a 'radical rethinking' of gender identity and sexuality. She says in *Imitation and Gender Insubordination* (1991) that she is not intending to legislate against, the use of identity terms like 'lesbian'. She notes that she will appear on 'political occasions' under the 'sign' of such an identity, but 'would like to have it permanently unclear what precisely that sign means' (Butler, 1993: 309, 308).

If gender attributes are not expressive but per formative then these attributes effectively constitute the identity they are said to express or reveal. The distinction between expression and per formativeness is crucial. If gender attributes and acts are per formative, then there is no pre-existing identity by which an act or attribute might be measured; there would be no true or false, real or distorted acts of gender, and the postulation of a true gender identity would be revealed as a regulatory fiction. That gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex and a true or abiding masculinity or femininity are also constituted as part of the strategy that conceals gender's per formative character and the per formative possibilities for proliferating gender configurations outside the restricting frames of masculinity domination and compulsory heterosexuality.

Queer theory is set against a backdrop of the radical sexual politics of the 1970s, in particular the assumption that homosexuality is a foundation of minority sexual experience in the socio-cultural order. The development of this theoretical

approach to sexuality arose not only from emerging social divisions around the meaning of homosexuality throughout the 1980s but also from new attempts to avoid exclusionist and separatist strategies of political opposition to the masculinity, heterosexual dynamic of western culture. If the first generation of gay, lesbian, and feminist activists and theorists sought to analyze homosexuality as a minority experience, then the focus of queer theorists has been to contest the binary divide between majority and minority experience, as well as the social dynamics of heterosexuality and homosexuality.

A number of theorists from several perspectives can be seen as shaping the theoretical porridge that has generated queer theory. Michel Foucault's work is usually seen as of special significance. Foucault explicitly reconceptualises identity in ways that have reworked sexuality studies along queer lines. In particular, argues Jagose (1996: 79), his work is explicitly concerned with 'denaturalizing dominant understanding of sexual identity', such that sexual identities including the homosexual- are seen as having a history, as being historical products of social regulation. Here, Foucault's historical studies of the emergence of sexual categories demonstrate that marginalized sexual identities are not merely victims of power – a natural form of self repressed by power – but produced by power. Three marginalized identities, no matter how socially excluded they might be, are not outside but part of the organization of societies.

The theoretical grounding of queer theory lies in post structuralism and literary deconstructionism, and the influence of social theorists such as Foucault, Lacan and Derrida looms large. Queer theory attempts to subvert the cultural stereotypes used to understand gay, lesbian, or bisexual people – to bring into focus the “queer knowledges” that modernity has unleashed in its framing of sexual identities and differences. As Teresa de Laureates explains this transgressive edge of queer theory:

Today we have, on the one hand, the terms “lesbian” and “gay” to designate distinct kinds of life style, sexualities, sexual practices, Communities, issues, publications, and discourses; on the other hand the phrase “gay and lesbian” or more and more frequently, ‘lesbian And gay’ (ladies first), has become standard currency... in a sense The term ‘ queer theory’ was arrived at inn an effort to avoid all these fine distinctions in our discursive protocols, not to adhere to anyone of given terms, not to assume their ideological liabilities, but instead to both transgress and transcend them or at the very least problem tize them. (de Lauretis qtd.in Elliott,148)

So queer theory embraces not only leishian, gay, and bisexual people but also sadists, fetishists, voyeurs, drag queer, transsexuals, transvestities, butches, gender benders, and all other practices that attract’ deviant sexualities’ writes the asymmetrical power relations of patriarchy.

In The Epistemology of the Closet, Eve Kosofsky argues that the hetero/homo sexual binarism not only shapes and structures sexual identities and differences, but informs key categories of western thought and culture. For Sedgwick, the hetero/homosexual binarism organizes people’s experience and knowledge of the world, particularly forms of self knowledge, self disclosure, and self revelation. “Coming out” and the “closet” are key terms for understanding the experiences of gay and lesbian people; but there broad categories and practices in relation to homosexuality, especially the power of homosexuality to disturb and displace. The contemporary crisis of homo/hetero sexual definition is at root desire for certainty at the level of sexual knowledge. Following Foucault, Sedgwick argues that the secrecy surrounding the knowledge of the closet is both maintained out frustrated because of the risk of the secrets disclosure. Knowledge of the closet and its secrets, Sedgwick

says, is invested with much energy and anxiety, a set of fears and fantasies, which underwrites spacing's between appearance and reality, norm and pathology, power and powerlessness. Due to the intense anxieties and fears in our culture associated with the closet and coming out, we can never know the truth about self, sexuality, or gender. The closet, Sedgwick argues is the disturbing underside of "normal sexuality", always threatening to open or to be opened.

Sedgwick's work has been very influential in queer theory primarily since she has moved 'debate beyond narrow definitions of the politics or identity, as well as, the basic oppositions of oppression and resistance. Refusing to accept that the world can be easily divided between homosexuals and heterosexuals, Sedgwick seek to underline(1)that knowledge is the consequences of bodies; (2) that sex is not the centre or foundation of the human subject; (3) that sexual identities are fundamentally provisional, mobile, and fractured; and (4) that the inability of the heterosexual binaries opposition holds our possibilities for the reinvention of identities , desires, practices, communities, knowledge and social structures.

### III. Sexual Liberation in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*

*Cloud Nine*, Caryl Churchill's first major commercial success, had its beginning in a theatre workshop on sexual politics that was arranged in collaboration with the director Max Stafford – Clark and the now defunct Joint Stock Theatre Group. By all accounts, the workshop was a profoundly enlightening experience. It promoted intense exploration of the relation of sexuality and gender to power and authority and provided the material from which Churchill developed her play. The selection of participants was based not only on acting ability but also on diversity of sexual identities.

The forced wedding at the end of Act 1 is paradigmatic for this conservative performance current in the play. Though seemingly critical of the compulsory ceremony between the homosexual adventure explorer Harry Bagley and the lesbian governess Ellen, Churchill's use of cross-casting reinforces the compulsory heterosexuality that the act's concluding image ostensibly questions. Pivotal here is the cross-casting of Betty (the wife of the colonial administrator Clive), who Churchill indicates is to be played by a man. This cross-casting, scholars have argued, makes "the point that sexual identity in the hallowed institution of the Victorian family is not 'natural' but is constituted by prevailing gender codes." The deconstructive relation of cross-casting to the social construction of gender has tended to obscure the implosive relation of that cross-casting to the play's liberal embrace of expressions of diverse desires.

From the very beginning of *Cloud Nine*, Churchill lets her audience know that the play, or at least the first act, will be some form of satire, a poking fun at British society and convention. First, she marks Clive's family as stereotypically British society and sing a patriotic tune to the audience and then identify themselves. Each character tells the audience of his/her unwavering commitment to Clive and / or Britain, establishing the stereotypes further. Then, Churchill introduces one of the principal comic devices of the act: the physical composition of the cast blatantly contradicts the

roles that they intended to play (Betty is played by a man, Joshua by a white man, etc). The opening images of the play suggest that the characters have somehow been misplaced, foreshadowing the mayhem to come. These images also symbolize the gender confusion that will become one of the major themes of the play. Churchill suggests that Betty's striving to become "What men want" has actually transferred her into a man. The fact that women have become men, and vice versa, indicates the severity of their sexual repression.

Clive: What's that you're holding?

Betty: It's Victoria's doll. What are you doing with it. Edward?

Edward: Minding her. Don't pull her about. Vicky's very fond of her.  
She likes me to have her.

Betty: He is a very good brother.

Clive: Yes, it's manly of you Edward, to take care your little sister.  
We'll say no more about it. Tomorrow I'll take you riding  
with me and Harry Bagley. Would you like that? (1.1.1412)

Clive quickly becomes a symbol of repression, in each of its forms, sexual and colonial. Clive's disgust at Edward's playing with a doll suggests a British intolerance for feminine men. However, in establishing Clive as representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century British attitudes, Churchill argues that these attitudes were accompanied by a sense of impending change. Instead of accepting the fact that Edward might have a feminine tendency to play with a dolls Clive quickly accepts the weak excuse that Edward is "minding it for Vicky". Clive's actions demonstrate a denial of the truth that also characterizes the British treatment of its colonial holding this era.

Clive: My Wife is all I dreamt a wife should be, And everything she  
is she owes to me.

Betty: I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life is to be what he looks for in a wife. I am a man's creation for you see, And what men want is what I want to be. (1.1.1409)

The character Betty reflects a nascent lesbian consciousness that, in the nineteenth – century setting of act 1, has yet to establish fully a discourse distinct from hetero sexuality. When, for example, Betty flees from Harry's hearted adulterous overtures and then in confusion look to Ellen for comfort, one might logically conclude that the stage has been set for a significant moment of transgression – especially since Ellen simulates the role of Harry as Betty confesses her love for him. When Betty says that she wants Harry to stroke her hair, Ellen responds, "your lovely hair. Like this, Betty ?" (1.2.1417) When Betty says that she wants Harry to put his arm around her, "like this, Betty ?" (1.2.1417), and when Betty finally says that she want Harry to kiss her again – a first kiss not indicated in the stage directions – Ellen again responds, "like this Betty ?" (1.2.1417) and kisses Betty.

Yet in the context of Churchill's cross-casting, these textual subversions of heterosexual discourse clash with their enactment onstage. While the cross-casting of Betty may underscore the social construction of gender, it also refigures Ellen's and Betty's transgressive lesbian moment as a conventional reaffirmation of heterosexuality. The male actor playing Betty flees from the male actor playing Harry. This performative flight from homosexuality is then sealed with a conventional heterosexual kiss between the male actor playing Betty and the female actor playing Ellen. The kiss simultaneously reinverts the transgressive lesbian enactment of desire. The textual appropriation of heterosexual discourse for convert lesbian expression gives way to a stage performance that erases the lesbian act with the lips of a man and a woman. Accessed in the light of what Mulvey calls scopophilic pleasure, the cross-casting of Betty ensures that the expression of lesbian desire never breaks with the

normal pleasurable expectation of heterosexual culture. Providing an image of lesbian desire that leaves the audiences' dominant heterosexual subjectivity intact; the model provided by cross-casting demands acceptance of what it only claims rhetorically to have presented.

Though, *Cloud Nine's* rhetoric of acceptance is less explicit regarding male homosexuality than it is regarding lesbianism, the play is equally squeamish toward enactments of gay male and lesbian desire. This tendency is evident in the scene directly preceding the kiss between Betty and Ellen. Betty's flight from Harry is not unreciprocated. While Betty turns to Ellen, Harry turns to Joshua, whom he propositions and then leads to a barn offstage, beyond the spectators' gaze, where he and Joshua presumably have sex. Like the subsequently displaced lesbian kiss, the homoerotic act between Harry and Joshua is also displaced by an enactment of heterosexual desire.

Churchill's choices in switching roles say certain things about how time has treated her protagonists. Without any words being exchanged, an audience can make some assumptions about where the story stands as Act 2 begins. Victoria is an Act two now, no longer a doll, suggesting that she has acquired at least some independence from her father's control. Betty and Edward are now played by same-sex actors, indicating that they, too, might have come closer to finding out who they truly are. Churchill lets the audience know immediately that this will not be the force language is less theatrical and more conversational. Instead of making poetic statements about the nature of women and the need to tame the natives, as Clive was so inclined to do, Lin and Cathy speak about the movies and Betty speaks about the weather. Churchill has not rubbed this new act of comedy, but she has made it possible for the audience to really identify with the protagonists. When Churchill wrote the play, the second act was meant to take place in the present day.

Regardless of which actor plays Betty in act 2, the character Betty exhibits remarkable change. She speaks almost to exhaustion, for more opinionated than her first act counterpart she also announces her intention to leave Clive, laying out her intention to give independence, and even work, a try.

Victoria: He's not going to fall in.

Betty: It's since I left your father.

Victoria: Mummy, it really was the right decision.

Betty: Everything comes at me from all directions. Martin despises me (2.2.1427)

Betty at last, recognizes herself. She deconstructs the 19<sup>th</sup> century British attitude. She felt relaxed when she left Clive and lived with her own identity as a lesbian. Churchill is successful to unveil the hypocrisies of colonial and sexual repression.

Like Betty, Edward and Victoria are not fully capable of leaving the past behind. Edward is still uncomfortable about his sexuality, becoming embarrassed when Lin asks him about it, and both Edward and Victoria acknowledge the difficulty that will come from a separation between their mother and father. As Edward and Victoria resist fully committing to their new identities, Betty remarks, "I'm finding a little flat, that will be fun." This first scene marks the juxtaposition between old and new in which Churchill quickly introduces the problems of the transition from one to another. She throws Betty, Edward, and Victoria into Lin's new London and forces them to deal with new sexual and political freedom.

Betty: I do miss the sun living in England but today could not be more beautiful. You appreciate the weekend when you are working. Betty's been at work this week, Cathy. It's terrible tiring, Martin, I don't know how you're done it all these years. And the money, I fell like a child with the money,

Clive always paid everything but I do understand it perfectly well. Look Cathy let me show you my money... Well I'm glad to hear it. Look what a lot of money, Cathy, and I sit behind a desk of my own and I answer the telephone and keep the doctor's appointment book and it really is great fun.  
(2.4.1433)

Betty continues her struggle to define herself apart from Clive. Through Betty, Churchill argues that a woman's empowerment is not without negative consequences. As over bearing as Clive was, he did provide comfort and protection. He also allowed Betty to exist without confronting her short comings as a woman. Betty tells Lin that women "spoil things for themselves with their emotions." Churchill's feminism is not blind. She argues that any group of people has its problems and that achieving liberation will evolve one accepting those problems in seeking an identity. In this scene, Betty acts hesitant to start the painful journey of becoming a woman, not just becoming a wife and mother. By looking for jobs, Betty and Victoria demonstrate that sexual liberation is in part a by product of economic liberation. To find their sexual identities, the women must break free from a historically male dominated economy.

The dominant interpretation of Edward comes from Churchill in her privileged role as author. She explains that cross casting underscores "the way Clive tries to impose traditional male behaviour" on his son.

Edward : Papa, papa, Ellen tried to lock me in the nursery. Mama is going to tell you of me. I'd rather tell you myself. I was playing with Vicky's doll again and I know it's very bad of me. And I said I didn't want to be like you and I hated you. And it's not true and I'm sorry, I'm sorry and please beat me and forgive me.

Clive : Well there's a brave boy to own up. You should always respect and love me, Edward, not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I respected and loved my own father, because he was my father. Through our father we love our queen and our God, Edward. Do you understand ? It is something men understand. (1.3.1419)

The audience apparently sees Edward through Clive's disapproving gaze as Clive attempts to divert his son from behaviour supposedly characteristic of women. Echoing Churchill, Austin Quigely argues that Edward --- is played by a woman not because Clive wishes him to be female, but because Edward is unwilling to accept the narrow image of masculinity that is thrust upon him. But if this assertion is correct, Edward is the site not only of a 'radical struggle over gender identification' but also of a struggle to bridle cross-casting as an aesthetic technique. In act 1, Churchill's divergent explanations subtly impose one set of interpretive strategies for the cross gender casting of Betty and the cross – racial casting of Joshua (a black character played by a white actor) and another set for the cross-gender casting of Edward. As a result, Churchill's expressed authorial intent has effectively channeled inquiry away from the stereotypes that are perpetuated in a noticeable consistency linking all the cross-cast characters in act 1.

This consistency center on the characters' uniform desire to live up to Clive's expectations. The only difference is what while Betty and Joshua achieve this desire, Edward does not. Apparently, Betty's and Joshua's success is also their loss.

Clive : This is my family. Though far from home we serve the queen wherever we may roam. I am a father to the natives here. And a father to my family so dear. My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be, an everything she owes tome. (1.1.1409)

Clive represents himself as the model British aristocrat. He puts his duty to country above all else and expects those that depend on him to behave according to his will. Clive becomes a symbol of repression, in each of its forms, sexual and colonial. Clive is expecting Betty as a woman of Victorian era who only thinks and acts according to Clive.

Clive : Joshua has been my boy for eight years. He has saved my life. I have saved his life. He is devoted to me and to mine. I have said before. (1.1.1411)

Being what Clive' looks for in a wife' or what white men want leads to theatrical erasure. Betty is played by a man and Joshua by a white because their subjectivity is completely subsumed by the white patriarchal male. The women is absent, as is darkly pigmented skin. Though Edward shares Betty's and Joshua's desire, he has difficulty living upto expectations: "what father wants I'd dearly like to be", he says but adds, 'I find it rather hard as you can see". In these lines, Edward implicitly contrasts Betty's and Joshua's successes with his own failure, which, given the consequences of success, might be considered a blessing in disguise, or at least the performative rhetoric of the play suggests that it should be. Indeed, Edward is torn between his real nature and his desire to perform the role Clive has prepared for him.

Churchill's explanations tend to neutralize whatever Edward is supposed to have onstage. If the cross-casting of Edward were meant merely to highlight the crude attempt to police the behavioral patterns of boys by reserving certain activities (like playing with dolls) for girls, the issue involving Edward might simply be socialization into "traditional male behavior'. But Edward is not just a boy coming to terms with a society's over reaction to his interest in a girl's toy. He is a young homosexual. The cross-casting forces the audience to formulate an answer to the difficult question, why is a man playing Betty? Already exists in the arsenal of stereotypes that reinforce the

continued dominance of heterosexual discourse: Edward is played by a woman because he is homosexual. Instead of representing the damage caused by socialization into "traditional male behavior", this cross-casting suggests that beneath the socialization, there is something effeminate or feminine at the core of Edward's character. Churchill's use of cross-casting critically inverts audience perspectives and uses 'the comic attitude ... to unsettle habitual perceptions and to empower audiences to overcome ingrained habits of acceptance. Yet since casting a woman as Edward reproduces the stereotypical idea that to be a male homosexual is to be like a woman, one could comfortably view the play as a spoof that derives its humour at the expense of those who depart from the heterosexual norm.

As social constructions, the categories of male and female have historically given shelter only to those who answer the heterosexual call in kind. As Monique Wittig argued when *Cloud Nine* was first being produced, "If we, as lesbians and gay men, continue to speak of ourselves and to conceive of ourselves as women and as men, we are instrumental in maintaining heterosexuality" (108). From a Brechtian perspective, it is paramount that the play somehow bring sexual identities of the performers out of the closet if it seeks to alienate the ideological presumptions that sustain heterosexuality. Unlike race and gender, sexuality must be seen to be known, must be performed to be read. Because the signs of sexuality are inherently performative, the assumption of heterosexuality prevails unless homosexual or lesbian practice is made textual.

While the enacted ritual supposedly solidifies the lesbian relationship of Lin and Victoria in that it recalls a time when women did not need men, it also constitutes the only unambiguous performance of sexual activity in act 2. As such, the ritual, if it is at all representative of a suppression of the heterosexual repressiveness of act 1, moves beyond the repressiveness in name only. The striking dimension of this ritual is that

while it begins with a call to a 'goddess of many names' and ask her 'to give ... back what we (the women) were, give us the history we haven't had, make us the women we can't be, the ritualized enactment of these desires succumbs to the same fate as the lesbian kiss and the homoeroticism do in act 1. On a textual level, heterosexuality may be far from compulsory in act 2, its performative enactments remain well within the hegemonic main stream. Ironically, a lesbian goddess is at best present in spirit only: this arrangement may make for god liberal religion. The ritual that is supposed to make Victoria and Lin 'the women they can't be' symbolically indoctrinates them, and even Edward, further into heterosexuality.

Churchill opens Act 2, scene three with a séance scene in which she classifies female sexuality as sacred. For Lin, Edward, and Victoria sex has become a kind of new religion for a new society. They have to reject the old notion of reverence for England because of the ties established in the first act between Colonial and sexual oppression. There is no longer one sexual or political heritage that everyone must adhere to.

What is true for Lin and Victoria in this scene is also true for Edward, whose homosexuality likewise yields to heterosexual expression. The ritual leads to domestic arrangements that offer Edward a fulfillment the play denies him in his homosexual relationship with Gerry, on the train from Victoria to Clampham.

In Act 2 sex is casual for Martin and tells Victoria and Betty he's ready for almost everything. Edward decides he is probably a lesbian because he thinks he likes women more than women. Whereas scene 3 looks further back into history at ancient cults, many of whose priestesses were interested in unusual sexual relationships. It is as if Churchill were suggesting that the more things change the more things remain the same.

The part the domesticated women have to play is the consistent reproduction, in a deeply theatrical sense, of docile, obedient bodies useful in support of the colonial economy. Churchill specifies that the role of Betty to be played by a male actor during the first act of the play. This casting choice physicalizes and concretizes the occupation of her body and that of other women by patriarchy. Even if she keeps sexual relationships with ladies at the later part of the play, at the beginning she appears as a weak creation of patriarchal society.

Betty : I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life is to be what he looks for in a wife, I am a man's creation as you see, and what men want is what I want to be (1.1.1409).

*Cloud Nine* demonstrates the non-voluntary manner in which bodies are forcefully compelled to materialize within prescribed gender, racial, and sexual forms. At the very outset of her play, Churchill illustrates some of the multiple but inter-related sites of white patriarchal oppression: the colonization of Africa and the enslavement of African bodies, and the metaphorical colonization of women and children. Churchill deploys a number of dramatic strategies to disrupt the categories inherent in this epistemic regime, including what Diamond classifies as 'cross-racial' and 'cross-gender' casting (194). The elaborate use of 'cross-casting' in *Cloud Nine* anticipated and in some instances seems to have triggered debates over gender identity in contemporary Western culture and in Western theatre theory. Churchill's enactment of gender constitution seems to anticipate Butler's contentions regarding the performativity of gender. In her book *Gender Trouble*, Butler adopts the philosophical doctrine of constituting acts from the phenomenological tradition in order to demonstrate the performativity of gender. The analysis of the ways bodies materialized as various racialized, sexual and gendered subjects in *Cloud Nine* undertaken drew much of its implicit authority from Butler's work. On the basis of her argument, Simone

de Behavior claims that 'one is not born a woman, but, rather, one becomes a woman. Butler explores the potential for deconstructing and subverting the gender script. She argues:

[. . .] gender is in now way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed (sic); rather, it is an identity tenuously instituted through time – an identity instituted through the stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self. (Butler qtd. in Amok, 50)

Butler makes a clear distinction between 'sex as biological facility', even as she contests the given-ness of sex as a natural fact. She argues that discrete and polar gender identities are punitively regulated cultural fictions whose reproduction sustains a system of compulsory heterosexuality based on a notion of opposing 'natural' sexes with 'natural' attractions for each other. We find this argument in *Cloud Nine*, particularly in the scene three, act one. In that scene, such mundane acts as bodily comportment, floggings, playing with dolls, and speech acts are coded in race and gender-specific ways. These race and gender-inflected bodily codes are violently enforced in order to ensure that bodies materialize in every specific way.

The comparison between sexual or gender oppression in contemporary Britain and British colonial settlement in Africa in the nineteenth century is abandoned at the end of the first act, following the uncontextualized and unexplained end of the colonial presence in Africa. At the level of casting, by assigning 'men' as perceived sexed bodies, to play, 'female' roles, and 'women' as perceived sexed bodies, to play 'male' roles. Betty, act 2, played by an actor identified as a man; Cathy as a young child, in act 2, played by a grown actor described as a man; Edward, as a young child, is, in act 1,

played by an adult actor identified as a woman. Churchill uncouples gender and sexual identities and appears to fulfill Butler's call for disruptive gender performances, for a different sort of stylization of acts. This is accomplished by the presentation of images of actors, as perceived sexed bodies, playing gender roles or repeating performative acts in conflict with the genders that dominant ideology 'naturally' and unalterably assigns them – women acting masculine and men acting feminine.

The uncoupling of gender and sexual identity is reiterated by doubling, where an actor plays more than one role in the course of a performance, in some instances across the boundaries of biological sex. In the first production of the play following roles, among others, were doubled: the same actor, identified as a woman, played Edward in act 1 and Betty in act 2 and Cathy in the second. Its specific theatrical setting contains this demonstration of the performativity of gender and the possibility of transformation through gender performances out of turn. The actors' real sex and real gender cannot altogether be subverted in the theatre.

#### IV. Conclusion

*Cloud Nine*, Caryl Churchill's first major commercial success, emphasizes on the structure of oppression that constructs the prevailing gender, sexual, and racial definition. Churchill uses a lot of dramatic devices to disclose the theme. The devices include cross-casting, the destabilization of racial, gender and sexual identities as discrete categories in character development, Brechtian alienation attained through a non-linear dramatic structure and a historical plot.

Making visible gay male or lesbian bodies in motion, engaged in sex acts, is perhaps one most radical way to disrupt dominant cultural discourse on sexuality and gender. Like cross-casting, doubling affects the production of meaning at the basic level of visual recognition and previous association. An actor assuming a new role in act 2 unavoidably carries the baggage of this or her previous role. When combined with cross-casting, doubling becomes a volatile aesthetic force. Whose effects extend well beyond Churchill's stated intentions. Witness the cross-casting of Cathy, played in the Dartington college production of *Cloud Nine* by her, who also played Clive in act 1 of that production.

In a purely theatrical sense, Churchill's cross gender casting brings out the comedy of the play. She amuses the audience by choosing a man to play the wife of a homophobic Clive. One might also find humor in Clive's attempts to force son Edward, played by a woman, to act create a stage image of contradicting status relationships. Normally, one would expect Betty to be weaker than Clive, making her less powerful than he, both physically and socially. However, it is quite larger than Clive, raising the issue of how a society really determines status.

Thematically, the cross-gender casting suggests sexual confusion. The characters of the first act are not in touch with their sexual identities. Their identities have been manufactured by Clive, and their appearance (as cross-dresses) makes this

all the more evident. For Act 2, Churchill instructs that the roles be switched so that actors play roles of their same sex. With this change, Churchill asserts that the characters are drawing nearer their true identities. Churchill uses sex as a metaphor for life. Betty says, "I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them (her mother and Clive)," conveying the notion that sexuality is an essential part of identity. Just as masturbation is the physical act of pleasing one's self, mastering one's destiny is the method for deriving pleasure from life. Betty worries less when she is active.

Churchill proves that sexuality is not a natural phenomenon rather a social construct. As a result, sexual identity is also fictional as it has become one of the social discourse. The formation of a subject requires an identification with the normative phantasm of 'sex', and this identification takes place through a repudiation which produces a domain of objection, a repudiation without which the subject cannot emerge. Sexuality is ruled by the power framework. Body is not independent materiality that is invested by power relations external to it, but it is that for which materialization and investiture are coextensive.

Gender identity is performative as there is no interior essence, no 'real' self exists. Gender is performative because it has no 'real-ness' at all, no natural core. It is an effect of a 'decidedly public and social discourse' which requires the relentless reiteration of various gender acts/styles which make gender seem real/eternal a deep truth of our lives, by repetition. Body performs, encompasses the copying, imitation and repetition of cultural stereotypes, linguistic conventions and symbolic forms governing the production of masculinity and femininity. If gender is performativity, then there is no superiority of male over female in the heterosexual society. An individual can identify himself/herself on the basis of sexual identity because heterosexual is not natural, it is constructed by the society.

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