

**MARLENE AND JOAN'S STRUGGLE  
AGAINST PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY  
IN THE CARYL CHURCHILL'S PLAY  
*TOP GIRLS***

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**Abstrak**

Esei ini menganalisis tentang perjuangan Marlene dan Joan melawan masyarakat patriarki dalam drama *Top Girls* karya Caryl Churchill (1982). Tujuan dari esei ini adalah menjelaskan dan menganalisis unsur-unsur intrinsik dan ekstrinsik pada cerita tersebut. Unsur-unsur intrinsik yang dianalisis meliputi karakter, latar, dan konflik, sementara pada unsur ekstrinsik penulis menggunakan teori feminisme dari Bell Hooks (1984). Metode yang digunakan untuk menganalisis cerita pada drama tersebut adalah penelitian pustaka dan pendekatan sosial. Metode penelitian pustaka digunakan penulis dalam memperoleh sumber dari buku-buku terkait di perpustakaan dan berbagai rujukan lainnya melalui internet, sementara pendekatan sosial digunakan penulis untuk menganalisis objek penelitian. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa Marlene dan Joan harus berusaha untuk mendapatkan kedudukan sosial yang setara dengan laki-laki. Meskipun perjuangan mereka untuk mendapatkan kesetaraan tersebut tidaklah mudah, namun pada akhirnya mereka berhasil memperoleh hak yang sama dengan laki-laki di masing-masing bidang yang mereka perjuangkan. Marlene sukses meraih jabatan sebagai direktur utama di tempat kerjanya, *Top Girls Employment Agency*, yang pada umumnya dikuasai oleh kaum laki-laki; sementara Joan berhasil meraih kesetaraan hak dengan laki-laki dalam hal pendidikan.

Kata kunci: feminisme, masyarakat patriarki, perjuangan wanita

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Literary works are the product of literature. Literary works are divided into three genres: poetry, prose, and drama. The existence of drama deals with staged drama and drama script or play script. Play script is a basic material of staging. Besides, play script is written in dialog form based on inner conflict, it has possibility to be staged. The play script chosen by the writer to be the object of her analysis is Charyl Churchill's *Top Girls*. This play script was performed first on August 28, 1982 at the Royal Court Theatre, London. *Top Girls* depicts social problem that happened in many eras. The problem is patriarchal society that is

influencing women's life to strive it. Women's life in striving patriarchal society is represented by the main characters of this play script. They are Marlene and Joan.

The struggle of Marlene and Joan to gain an equal position as men attracts the writer to write an extended essay about Churchill's play script. The struggle that they endure is different because they live in different eras. Therefore, in this essay, the writer attempts to describe patriarchal issues in each of their eras that influenced them in doing the struggle.

The struggle between Marlene and Joan opposing male-dominated world is different because it depends on each of their background. Through each of their background, they try to obtain an equal right as men. Based on the problem, the title of this extended essay is "Marlene and Joan's Struggle against Patriarchal Society in the Caryl Churchill's Play *Top Girls*".

### **1.2. Research problem**

The problem in this research is about women struggle against patriarchal society that is depicted by the main characters in this play, Marlene and Joan.

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyze the influence of Marlene and Joan's background towards their struggle against patriarchal society described in the story
2. To identify the struggle of Marlene and Joan against patriarchal society described in the story
3. To explain the results of Marlene and Joan's struggle against patriarchal society described in the story

## **2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

In order to analyze the struggle against patriarchal society, the writer uses intrinsic and extrinsic aspects. The intrinsic aspects that are analyzed in this extended essay are character and characterization, setting, and conflict; meanwhile, the extrinsic aspect is about women equality towards men that is related to Bell Hook's theory of feminism.

## **2.1. Intrinsic Aspects**

Intrinsic aspect comes from the inside of literary work. Intrinsic aspects consist of plot, conflict, character, setting, and theme. In this analysis, the writer will only use three aspects, character, setting, and conflict.

### **2.1.1. Character and Characterization**

A character is one of the basic essential parts of a literary work. It is an essential element to build the story. Character is divided into four types: static, dynamic, major, and minor characters (Holman, 1960: 76). In order to analyze the play, the writer will only use major character. Major character is a character that is mostly told, either as an actor or as one who is subjected to the occurrence. Major character is important to the conflict in a story. The character is needed since character can also explain how the story and the problem arise.

Meanwhile, characterization is a stage where an author introduces and describes a character. Characterization may be showed in a fiction through three fundamental methods: first, explicit presentation that is conveyed by the author in a narrative form; second, the presentation of the character in action; and third, presentation within a character that is delivered through the dialog (1960: 75). Characterization may help us in understanding a character's thought in a story.

### **2.1.2. Setting**

Setting is one of the main substances of fiction. It depicts time, place, and atmosphere of the story. To analyze the play, the writer will only use setting of place and setting of time. Setting of place provides the story a place to happen while setting of time impacts what types of lives the character can lead and what choices they can make. The analysis of setting can also help in observing the causes of the conflicts related to the topic of the extended essay.

### **2.1.3. Conflict**

Conflict is one of the important parts of a story. It occurs when there is opposition between two sides. Conflict is divided into internal and external conflict. Internal conflict happens within a man. Meanwhile, external conflict happens in a character against things outside oneself that are man challenged by nature, character struggles against other character, man embattled by society, and one opposed to fate or destiny (Holman, 1960: 105). Conflict is the central issue which arouses the story.

## 2.2. Extrinsic Aspect

Extrinsic aspect comes from the outside of literary work. Extrinsic study is “merely attempt to interpret literature in the light of its social context and its antecedents” (Wellek and Warren, 1949: 65). The social problem in this play script is patriarchal society. Because of feeling suppressed with the system of society, Marlene and Joan strive to against it. Based on this social problem, the writer is going to analyze the struggle from feminist point of view. Therefore, the writer used feminism theory to understand deeper the problem of the story.

### 2.2.1. Feminism

To analyze this drama which tells us about women struggle against patriarchal society, we have to understand first about the definition of the social construct as the basis for analyzing. Patriarchal society is a social construct which originally refers to a father who dominates his family, “The word ‘patriarchy’ literally means the rule of the father or the ‘patriarch’, and originally it was used to describe a specific type of ‘male-dominated family’” (Sultana, 2011: 2). The family that is dominated by father is a household consisted of his wife, children, even domestic servants. As it said by Sultana, “– the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male” (Sultana, 2011: 2). Sultana also said about wider definition of patriarchy as “the manifestation and institutionalization of male dominance over women and children in the family and the extension of male dominance over women in society in general” (Sultana, 2011: 3). Therefore, male domination over women is not only happened in domestic field but also in public field or in general society.

The writer uses feminism theory as a point of view or as a tool to help her in criticizing the concept of male-dominated-world depicted in the drama. There are many theories about feminism study. One of them that is going to be applied in this analysis is Bell Hook’s feminism theory. In her book, *Feminist Theory from Margin to Center*, she defines feminism as, “a struggle to end sexist oppression” (1984: 24). It means that feminist movement is aimed to stop sexist oppression. Sexist oppression refers to behavior that set women to be submissive to men.

Sexist oppression may direct to discrimination, exploitation, or oppression. In the words of Hooks, “sexism is most often expressed the form of male domination which leads to discrimination, exploitation, or oppression” (1984: 47). Sexist oppression that harassed women makes them to strive it. Besides, Hooks also mentions about what kind of woman so they can be called as a feminist. She says, “woman who wants social equality with men

regardless of her political perspective (she can be conservative right-winger or a nationalist communist) can label herself feminist” (1984: 23). It means that there is no political specification for woman to be entitled as a feminist.

Feminist focuses on woman’s self-determination. It deals with Hooks statement about feminist, “...focus on the individual woman's right to freedom and self-determination” (1984: 23). It affirms that a woman has the right to define her own fate. Afterwards, in order to have social equality with men, the thing called education is important for women. In accordance with Hooks, education is essential for, “encouraging women to strive for education, to develop their intellects, should be a primary goal of feminist movement” (1984: 114). Education needed to make them smart in facing male-dominated world.

Overall, feminist struggle to end sexist oppression can be a success if women commit with the form of new social order. Hooks describes that, “feminist movement to end sexist oppression can be successful only if we are committed to revolution, to the establishment of a new social order” (1984:159). Hence, their success is resulted from their strong determination.

### **3. RESEARCH METHOD**

In writing this extended essay, the writer uses two kinds of research methods. They are library research and sociological approach. The library research is used by the writer to collect data and to support information related to the topic. Meanwhile, the sociological approach is used by the writer to analyze the object of the study. In addition, she also said that sociological approach is divided into Marxism and feminism (1998: 2172). The one that is used by the writer to analyze the problem of this essay is feminism theory by Bell Hooks.

### **4. ANALYSIS**

This chapter contains the discussion of intrinsic and extrinsic aspects in Marlene and Joan’s struggle against patriarchal society. The intrinsic and extrinsic aspects will be elaborated within the stages of their struggle. The stages of their struggle consist of background of their struggle, their struggle, and the result of their struggle.

#### **4.1. Background of the Struggle against Patriarchal Society**

This part of analysis is going to analyze Marlene and Joan’s background that motivates them to do the struggle to obtain the same rights as men. The backgrounds between

them are actually different but the purpose of their movement is the same that is attaining social equality with men.

#### **4.1.1. Marlene**

Marlene is one of the major characters of Churchill's play *Top Girl* who lives in London, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the 20<sup>th</sup> of London, there was a social order which father or eldest male controlled the household, that is a group of people who lived in the same house, while women's role was to be submissive to men. Women had to support them without any matter whether they were good men or bad men, to take care of children, and to do the house chores. Male domination in this system might arouse problem such as power abuse that could be violence, rape, and murder. Marlene grows in a family where the violence has already become a habit in her house. She watches her mother is abused frequently by her father without any resistance against the mistreatment that she suffers. Due to the habitual violence, thus, Marlene says that her mother has a wasted life for being married to her father who is then called as a bastard. Her mother's accepting of destiny makes her does not want to be positioned in her mother's submissive position. Therefore, at her thirteen, she decides to leave house in order to define her own future from being man's object. Her decision to leave house is related to her anxiety if someday she will be treated so by her father. Besides, house is the place where individuals grow with attaining first impression of her life in this world. Since Marlene get a bad first impression in her house, it leads her to escape to find a better life. Through the explanation above, it can be recognized that there is a conflict in Marlene's past life opposing her destiny. Her conflict leads her struggles to obtain freedom of life and social equality with men. She needs to get freedom in her life for the reason that she wants to discharge herself from the anxiety of going to be mistreated by her father. Since she does not want to be mistreated by man, she expects that she will be treated same like man so she can get social equality with man.

#### **4.1.2. Joan**

Joan is another major character who lives in Peru, Latin America, 9<sup>th</sup> century. In the social history of the world, at that time, women's roles in Latin were to do many domestic duties such as weaving, spinning thread, and cooking. Yet, women were not permitted to study or in other words, only men who might come to enter school for studying. Whereas, getting education is essential for women to develop their intellects in obtaining social equality with men. Joan, as a Peruvian who is not allowed to study makes her wants to fight her fate.

She decides to run away to Athens at her twelve and dresses as a boy. She goes there with her friend. She wants to go to Athens for the sake of feeding her desire for studying since Athens is the world intellectual center. Athens is also a city of college where many of Rome youths are sent there to study philosophy. The dialog above also represents the conflict happened in Joan's life, that is opposing to her fate. The social construct, which is not permitting women to study, encourages her to struggle to gain the same rights as men.

## **4.2. The Struggle against Patriarchal Society**

In this part of analysis, the writer is going to discuss Marlene and Joan's struggle against patriarchal society. The struggle between them is intensely different. One is based on her family past life, while the other one is based on the social construct that inhibit her, as a woman, to study.

### **4.2.1. Marlene**

Marlene's struggle is based on her past life story. Since she does not want to be determined by men, her effort is shown when she is in her adulthood. Adulthood is a phase of life span of individuals where they have to be responsible of their decision. Therefore, Marlene has to be responsible of her decision to get a better life. In Top Girls Employment Agency where she works, she has to compete with a man, Howard, to get the great position, as a managing director. The dialog is happened when Nell and Win talks about Marlene who wins the competition over Howard. Marlene's struggle to get the position as a managing director does not run smoothly because there is a woman who cannot accept her succeeds. She is Mrs. Kidd, Howard' wife. She thinks that Howard is more appropriate to get the position rather than Marlene. Therefore, she comes to the office to express her disappointment. The dialog above shows that Mrs. Kidd regrets Howard's defeat. She thinks that as an old man with his long period of working whose role as a breadwinner in the family, he shall get the position. Mrs. Kidd's saying means that Marlene's need to get the position is not as significant as Howard's. Howard has to be responsible to support the children but Marlene has not. Indeed, Marlene's reason to be a managing director is to get the social equality with men, not to support children since she does not want to have children. It can be concluded that Marlene has abortions, which means she does not want a baby. Base on her motivation of getting a great position in her office, Top Girl Employment Agency, Marlene's unwillingness to have a baby implies something personal. Since her dedication of life is for her career, so

having a baby may ruin her career life. Afterwards, Marlene's struggle will bring to a result. The result that she will get is in accordance with her efforts.

#### **4.2.2. Joan**

Joan's struggle to obtain the same rights as men is motivated by her craving of knowledge. Her decision to go to Athens and to dress like a boy for the sake of entering library does not make people suspicious of her disguise. On the contrary, people notices her as a smart one. Joan's journey to study is not only in Athens but also in Rome. Rome is a city in Italy that also becomes the center of world art, science, culture, religion, and politics beside Athens. Moreover, Joan's decision to move there because Italian men do not have beards and as a woman she does not have any beard. Her leaving to Italy where men do not have beards is actually for her disguise safety. In Rome, she is not only studying but also teaching in the Greek School. Based on the dialog above, it represents that Joan's reason to teach in the Greek School is for earning money, since being a settled foreigner she has to survive. Even though she is paid for teaching, she teaches earnestly. It shows that woman is capable not only to study but also to teach. Joan's struggle will lead to a result. The result that she will obtain is in line with her struggle to have social equality with men.

### **4.3. The Result of the Struggle against Patriarchal Society**

In this part of analysis, the writer is going to explain the result of Marlene and Joan's struggle. Their struggle delivers the goal that they wish for, that is to obtain the same rights as men.

#### **4.3.1. Marlene**

Marlene's past life motivates her to do the struggle against patriarchal society that later bring a result. The result of her struggle is in accordance with her effort. Her effort then runs to be a success since she committes to obtain the same rights as men. Her success in reaching the position as a managing director of Top Girls Employment Agency is a kind of her attainment to have social equality with men. Achieving her success, Marlene holds a dinner party and invites her friends who are all women, they are Isabella, Joan, Nijo, Great, and Griselda. In this party, Marlene toasts her drink to her friends' to celebrate her success. Griselda is not coming yet while they are toasting. The party is placed in a restaurant, at Saturday night. There are six chairs, a chair for her, five left are for her friends. Marlene holds



the dinner party in restaurant since restaurant is a place where people usually hold events such as family gathering, birthday party, and farewell party. Meanwhile, she holds the dinner party at Saturday night since that night is generally a time for people can break after their long day. In addition, Saturday nights might be a long night since tomorrow is Sunday, a day off. Marlene successfully get the position as a managing director even though she is beaten by Mrs. Kidd. In order to maintain her career success, she does not want to be a mother. Yet, it does not matter to her because her life goal is about career. In conclusion, being a managing director implies that Marlene, as a woman, is capable to get the job position that is commonly chaired by men as her effort to equalize her social position as a man.

#### **4.3.2. Joan**

Joan moves to other areas and dresses as a man in order to determine her own fate. Her struggle to define her fate leads to success through her disguise so she is not only able in entering library but also teaching. Attaining her success, she attends dinner party's invitation held by Marlene. Joan's coming makes Marlene happy because she finally can order the menus as she does not want to order them if her friends are not coming yet. Celebrating her success, Joan toasts her drink with other friends who come to Marlene's dinner party. They are Isabella, Nijo, and Gret. In conclusion, Joan's struggle to have social equality with men in entering school to study reaches success through her disguise. It implies that woman is capable to have the same right as men to get knowledge.

## **5**

### **CONCLUSION**

According to the analysis in the previous chapter, the researcher found that there are feminism aspects characterized in the play. The aspects are applied through the three stages of Marlene and Joan's struggle against patriarchal society.

First is background of the struggle that tells us about Marlene and Joan's motivation to do the struggle against patriarchal society. Marlene's motivation to do the struggle is due to the violence habit existed in her family. The other character is Joan, whose motivation to do the movement is to be able to study since as a woman, she is not permitted to enter library like a man. Both Marlene and Joan struggle to obtain the social equality with men.

Second is the struggle itself that conveys us about Marlene and Joan's struggle to obtain the social equality with men. Their struggle happened is based on their rights to

determine their own fate. Marlene's effort to get social equality with men makes her has to compete with a man, Howard, to get the great position as a managing director in Top Girls Employment Agency. Getting more points than Howards, she wins the competition. In order to maintain her career success, she does not want to be a mother because it will ruin her career. Different from Marlene, Joan's struggle is quiet extreme. Being a woman who is not permitted to study, she runs away and dresses as a boy to Athens in order to study. She also goes to Rome for not only studying but also teaching.

The third stage is the result of their struggle that brings a success due to their strong determination to get social equality as men. Marlene, who struggles to obtain the social equality with men finally get the position as a managing director, where the position is usually chaired by men, in her office. It proves that not only man who can attain the position but also woman. Afterwards, Joan's effort in entering school to study is also getting success through her disguise. Dressing as a man, she is not only studying but also teaching. It proves that woman is able to have same rights as man to study. Celebrating their success, Marlene and Joan come to the dinner party in a Restaurant, Saturday nights.

The three stages of struggle are actually related to other elements such as character and characterization, setting, and conflict. Marlene and Joan are the major characters whose characterization are represented through the dialogs; setting shows place and period that implies the conflicts existed in the play; meanwhile, conflict shows the central issue in Marlene and Joan's life that motivates them to do struggle.

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