

Reviving Sisterhood as the Key to Feminist Political Unity: Reading Sister Relationships and Friendship in Caryl Churchill's *Top Girls*

Maho YAMAGUCHI

Introduction

Caryl Churchill (1938-), who was born in London, is one of the best-known dramatists in Britain. She avoids mass media, so that there are few official photographs of her “because Churchill prefers her reputation to rest on her work” (Luckhurst 6). Moreover, she has given limited interviews mainly to women during her career (Luckhurst 7). In her childhood, she lived in Canada but returned to England to study English at Oxford University where she started her theatrical writing. After she married David Harter, a barrister, they lived in the suburbs of London and she experienced childbirth and miscarriages. Despite this difficult time, she began her professional writing career in the 1960s with radio plays since they allowed her to spend more time to nurture her children. Owing to several miscarriages, in 1974, Churchill made a radical change in her private life to focus on her writing by having her husband undergo a vasectomy (Keyssar 206). Mary Luckhurst remarks that the decision reflected rising female voices in the 1970s that encouraged women to challenge their economic, social, and sexual subordination (15). Joining the Joint Stock Company founded by Max Stafford-Clark and creating seminal works such as *Cloud Nine* (1979) and *Top Girls* (1982), Churchill became “the great icon of second wave feminism in the British theatre” (Luckhurst 18). Her dramas not only featured various women’s roles but also reflected contemporary global preoccupations and examined how individual relationships are influenced by ideologies in certain social structures.

Top Girls was first performed at the Royal Court Theatre, London, on 28 August 1982 and made Churchill famous as a leader of feminist theatre. She criticises patriarchal and capitalist standards and their effects on female identity. The play is composed of

three acts and the characters are all women. Act One features five historical and fictional women, and a contemporary British woman, Marlene. Those characters, except Marlene, had haunted Churchill's mind (Keyssar 214), so that she made them characters in *Top Girls*. Isabella Bird (1831-1904) was a nineteenth-century female traveller. Lady Nijo, who was born in 1258, is a Japanese courtesan of the Emperor who later walked through Japan as a nun. The subject of a painting by Pieter Breughel (1525-1569), Dull Gret, fought the devils in the hell with other neighbouring women. Pope Joan disguised herself as a man and served as Pope between 854 and 856. Patient Griselda is the obedient wife of the marquis, Walter, in "The Clerks Tale" of *The Canterbury Tales* (1387-1400) by Geoffrey Chaucer.

Churchill plays with time in *Top Girls*. The first act is set at a dinner party held by Marlene at a restaurant on Saturday night. The party is to congratulate her for her promotion at "Top Girls" employment agency. Act Two consists of three scenes which also are not in chronological order. Scene One is at the office on the following Monday, when Marlene is interviewing a job applicant. Scene Two is set in the backyard of Joyce, Marlene's older sister, on the previous day, Sunday afternoon. Joyce's daughter, Angie and her younger friend Kit are hiding in a shelter they made. Scene Three is set again on Monday morning. The events such as Angie's visit to Marlene at the employment agency precede those of Scene One. Act Three is set a year before of Act Two. Marlene visits Joyce's home because Angie has phoned Marlene. This act is dramatic because the audience finds out that Angie is Marlene's biological child. Marlene and Joyce quarrel over Angie, British politics, and their different ways of life.

Churchill also uses overlapping dialogue. In the "Note on layout," she explains:

- 1: when one character starts speaking before the other has finished, the point of interruption is marked / . . .
- 2: a character sometimes continues speaking right through another's speech. . .
- 3: sometimes a speech follows on from a speech earlier than the one immediately before it, and continuity is marked *. . . (52)

The theatrical technique results in the play's complexity and it is one of the elements for which Churchill has become known.

Top Girls describes diametrically opposed women such as Marlene and her

colleague's wife, Mrs Kidd in Scene Three of Act Two who have differing views of who should be promoted, and Marlene and Joyce in Act Three who approach work and family differently. On the other hand, there is an intimate relationship between Angie and Kit, which implies that the younger generation may possibly change male-female and female-female relationships, and seeks a better life for all women. This paper analyses sisterhood between Marlene and Joyce and friendship between Angie and Kit. Building a bond among women can forge political solidarity. However, in spite of being blood-related sisters, Marlene and Joyce cannot compromise with each other because of their different ways of living and political beliefs such as capitalism and socialism. Compared to them, the relationship between Angie and Kit is closer than that of Marlene and Joyce although the two young girls are not sisters but neighbourhood friends. The shelter made by them is a representation of their closeness and through their conversation, we realise that they need each other unlike Marlene and Joyce. Moreover, they themselves have the potential to bring about a revolutionary change for their future.

Sisterhood for Political Solidarity

Top Girls explores women's conflicts in terms of their social status, oppression by both men and women, mother-daughter relationships, and sisterhood. Among these themes, this section explains the idea of sisterhood, how it emerged and how it relates to solidarity among women. As Churchill criticised mainstream feminism in this era, which she thought lacked female unification, African American feminist bell hooks likewise insisted that 1980s feminism was racist and it ignored interwoven issues of race and class. She claimed that if women utilised racial and class power to dominate other women, sisterhood could not be realised ("Sisterhood is Still Powerful" 16).

According to hooks, the idea of "Sisterhood" ("Sisterhood: Political" 43) originally emerged from women's liberationists and it "was based on the idea of common oppression" ("Sisterhood: Political" 43). "Common oppression" denotes that women share a certain experience of oppression, such as male discrimination against women. Since "Sisterhood is powerful" was one of the most popular feminist slogans in the 1960s and 1970s" (Walters 117), many women felt the boosting of "a sense of universal

sisterhood” and a suggestion of unity. In England, Elaine Aston further explains that “[a]chieving solidarity between women and organising collectively was core to how the WLM [Women’s Liberation Movement] shaped itself politically, and this in turn influenced the structural organisation and creative practices of Monstrous Regiment” (208), which is one of the leading feminist theatre companies in Britain. Mainly, bourgeois white women declared their views of sisterhood and female bonding in liberal and radical perspectives.

In respect to common oppression, hooks states that “[w]omen are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudices” (“Sisterhood: Political” 44). As the first step, women must confront and change female sexist thinking for the purpose of building sisterhood (hooks “Sisterhood is Still Powerful” 15). She claims that women can make a powerful bond among them only when these divisions meet and necessary actions are carried out in order to diminish and tackle them (“Sisterhood: Political” 44). Such female bonding cannot be formed within patriarchy but the feminism movement can be a process to strengthen female bonds or sisterhood. Therefore, the idea of sisterhood as a sign of political solidarity is important to maintain the feminism movement. hooks notes that “[s]olidarity strengthens resistance struggle” (“Sisterhood: Political” 44), so that women have to take the lead and demonstrate their solidarity in the feminism movement against their common oppression.

The basis of female bonding or solidarity is shared victimization for bourgeois women, which means that women have to regard themselves as victims of oppression (hooks “Sisterhood: Political” 45). Once all the women feel they are victims of men, they can recognise that they share the same experiences, so they no longer confront each other. However, hooks suggests that it is necessary to promote political solidarity between women beyond their recognition as victims. Hence, she shows that women can forge a bond based on “political commitment to a feminist movement that aims to end sexual oppression” (“Sisterhood: Political” 47). As hooks has demonstrated, women have to face and break their absorption in sexist ideology before they struggle to achieve equality with men and to resist male domination. Sexism shows that women are sex objects and submissive to men. Unless they examine and eliminate their sexist attitudes, women will have difficulty strengthening their relationships and ascertaining political

unity.

Not only the eradication of sexism but also mutual understanding is one of the elements that develops female bonding. People have different thoughts and behaviour patterns because of their different cultural backgrounds, which can be unacceptable for others. hooks discovers that women “ha[ve] a greater feeling of unity when people focu[s] truthfully on their own experiences without comparing them with those of others in a competitive way” (“Sisterhood: Political” 57). She may imply that individual experiences vary, so women should embrace them without comparing them with others’ experiences from a perspective of superiority or inferiority. When they reach a mutual understanding of their own experiences, they can feel a sense of unity. Furthermore, “political solidarity between females expressed in sisterhood goes beyond positive recognition of the experiences of women and even shared sympathy for common suffering” (hooks “Sisterhood is Still Powerful” 15). After they recognise their experiences positively and share their common agonies, their solid political solidarity can trigger the commencement of feminism movements.

The Lack of Mutual Understanding Between Marlene and Joyce

In *Top Girls*, one of the examples of sisterhood is the relationship between Marlene and Joyce. This section focuses on their characteristics relating to sisterhood and compares their relationship with that of Isabella Bird and her younger sister, Hennie.

From their conversation in Act Three, we learn that it has been a while since Marlene last visited Joyce and Angie, so that the relationship between Marlene and Joyce seems distant. Marlene visits them because Angie calls her to tell that Joyce wants to see Marlene. However, it turns out that Angie lied to Marlene. Marlene is unwilling to believe that Angie lied. Joyce contradicts Marlene, saying “It’s not my fault you don’t know what she’s like. You never come and see her” (124). Joyce seems to welcome Marlene’s visit, but she is ironic:

JOYCE. You can come and see Angie any time you like, I’m not stopping you.
/ You know where we are. You’re the

MARLENE. Ta ever so.

JOYCE. one went away, not me. I'm right here where I was. And will be a few years yet I shouldn't wonder. (124)

Joyce criticises Marlene for leaving home and not coming back for a while because she has been busy working. Joyce even tells Marlene that she does not want to see her (123). Possibly, their relationship was not bad and awkward in their youth because Marlene remembers picking reeds with Joyce in the local estuary (130). Nevertheless, their family's poverty and Marlene's leaving break down their sisterhood.

Marlene acts more freewheelingly and follows her will to succeed in business, compared to Joyce who has more responsibilities for child upbringing and looking after her mother. Marlene has had a determined nature since she was young, so that she does not care about others. Marlene says, "I knew when I was thirteen, out of their [her parents'] house, out of them, never let that happen to me, / never let him, make my own way, out" (139). Because she is shocked by her father's binge drinking and his violence towards his wife, Marlene realises that she wants to escape her father who is destroying their family. In addition, Margaret Thatcher, who took up the post of prime minister in the UK in 1979, influenced Marlene to pursue her achievement in career. Therefore, Marlene supports individualism and capitalism.

It becomes clear that Marlene got pregnant and bore Angie when she was seventeen years old. After that, she leaves Angie to Joyce and goes to London to seek a job:

JOYCE. I don't know how you could leave your own child.

MARLENE. You were quick enough to take her.

JOYCE. What does that mean?

MARLENE. You were quick enough to take her.

JOYCE. Or what? Have her put in a home? Have some stranger / take her
would you rather?

MARLENE. You couldn't have one so you took mine. (133)

We realise that Marlene is reckless and has no responsibility for her actions. Moreover,

Marlene shocks us because she is able to tell Joyce that she is lucky to have Angie because she cannot have a baby. Here, we see Marlene shows her dependence on her sister and family. Marlene, the younger sister, is assertive and self-centred. If something bad happens, she can easily leave it to her family members and escape from taking responsibility.

On the other hand, Joyce as an older sister feels responsible for taking care of her family. Parents often make older brothers or sisters act independently and look after their younger brothers or sisters. Considering that, Joyce plays her role as an older sister very well. After Marlene leaves Angie to Joyce, Joyce nurtures her as her mother. Joyce thinks that she has no choice but to help Marlene. Furthermore, the conversation over their mother between Marlene and Joyce shows that only Joyce has tried hard to support her mother:

MARLENE. Why can't I visit my own family / without all this?*

JOYCE. Aah.

*Just don't go on about Mum's life when you haven't been to see her for
how many years. / I go and see her every week.*

MARLENE. It's up to me.

Then don't go and see her every week.

JOYCE. Somebody has to. (132-33)

Marlene treats her mother as someone else's problem despite their mother-daughter relationship. She is neither kind nor cooperative towards Joyce. In other words, family is unimportant to Marlene. However, Joyce recognises that she has to victimise herself to help her mother. Although she suffers from the busyness and the weariness of her four cleaning jobs, raising Angie, and caring for her mother, she admits that she has to do all of this because there is nobody except her. Sonia Firdaus notes that "Marlene improved herself by alienating herself from the filial responsibilities to succeed in her ambition as a top career woman, in contrast to, Joyce who sacrifice[s] for the sake of her family and receives no gratitude or appreciation" (59). Therefore, unlike Marlene who attains her promotion in her business, Joyce does not obtain any benefits and gratitude from others by victimising herself for her family.

From the perspective of sisterhood, the relationship between Marlene and Joyce can also be compared with that of Isabella Bird and her younger sister, Hennie, in Act One. Kumiko Yamada focuses on the representation of Isabella Bird to emphasise that her relationship with Hennie can connect to Marlene and Joyce. Compared to Marlene and Joyce, Isabella and Hennie are very close and accept each other. Isabella shows her affection for Hennie, saying “Hennie was happy. She was good. I did miss its face, my own pet” (56). They sometimes exchange letters, whereas Marlene hardly sends a letter to Joyce or visits her. Isabella is proud of Hennie because “Hennie did great works” (59). While Marlene and Joyce tend to criticise their different ways of living and political ideologies rather than complimenting each other, Isabella and Hennie maintain a sense of sisterhood because they admired and kept in touch with each other.

Not only compliments but also acceptance of difference can be seen in the relationship between Isabella and Hennie. After Hennie’s death, Isabella despairs, so that she loses her eagerness to travel. However, by marrying John, Hennie’s doctor, she determines to travel again, leaving her sorrow for Hennie behind (66). Although she tries to overcome Hennie’s death, she cannot forget her and realises that they are different:

ISABELLA. I can never be like Hennie. I was always so busy in England, a kind of business I detested. The very presence of people exhausted my emotional reserves. I could not be like Hennie however I tried. I tried and was as ill as could be. ... (79-80)

Yamada claims that “even though Isabella and Hennie are close sisters, they are different with regard to their characteristics and they can accept their different natures” (translation mine 117). Isabella lived extraordinarily, maintaining her identity as a “lady” while enjoying experiences usually only available to men. She was a female traveller with curiosity and vitality who defied the stereotypical submissive image of women. In contrast to her, Hennie probably lived as “the Angel in the House.” However, they never argued with each other in terms of their differences, unlike Marlene and Joyce who quarrel over different perspectives on family and politics.

According to Yamada, Churchill describes the relationship between Isabella and

Hennie as a preliminary for that of Marlene and Joyce:

Isabella's role is significant because she talks about her experiences as a female traveller in a harsh environment where women were still not liberated from their husbands' domination as well as her relationship with Hennie. This leads to a consideration of the relationship between Marlene and Joyce and their different ways of living. (translation mine 117)

Churchill aims to contrast Isabella's life in the nineteenth century and her sense of sisterhood with Hennie to that of the late-twentieth-century sisters, Marlene and Joyce. Isabella and Marlene are similar because they leave their domestic spheres and pursue their goals. Moreover, in comparison to the intimate sisterhood between Isabella and Hennie, Churchill shows that Marlene and Joyce are in a sibling rivalry and they end up losing their unity, which is necessary for sisterhood. Therefore, Churchill warns that 1980s feminism can lack sisterhood solidarity.

Applying hooks's examination of sisterhood, Marlene and Joyce cannot earn mutual understanding and acceptance. Marlene thinks that her decision to prioritise a job is right and after all she can promote her social status. Joyce just struggles to live a poor working-class life and victimises herself. However, Marlene might have had many challenges while she works. When visiting Joyce, Marlene becomes honest and shows her appreciation and affection towards Joyce by stating, "I know I'd cry if I wasn't careful" (136), "You've been wonderful looking after Angie" (136), and "I can't write letters but I do think of you" (136). Yamada reveals that Marlene also tries hard to resolve in conflicts and tension at work, even as she achieves a promotion in her career (translation mine 120). Therefore, she too can be a victim of capitalism.

Though Marlene and Joyce are both victims of capitalism, they cannot share victimised experiences. Marlene does not realise how hard Joyce makes efforts to maintain her family's lives, while Joyce denies that Marlene cherishes her by thinking that Marlene just gets drunk. Because they do not recognise their victimisation and sufferings, there is no possibility to build solidarity between them. Therefore, their lack of mutual understanding prevents their political commitment to feminist movements.

Angie and Kit's Friendship and Their Desire to be Adults

Another example of sisterhood is the relationship between Angie and Kit. They are closer than Marlene and Joyce. In the beginning of Scene Two of Act Two, 16-year-old Angie and 12-year-old Kit are hiding in a shelter they made out of junk. From their conversation, we learn that the shelter is not spacious, so that Angie and Kit sit very closely and have physical contact: Angie says, "You're sitting on my leg" (87) and Kit later says, "You're sitting on me" (89). This illustrates their physical as well as psychological closeness. In addition, their closeness is strengthened in the scene in which Angie licks Kit's menstrual blood. Angie mocks Kit because Kit is terrified of blood and the supernatural. Therefore, as a proof of being mature, Kit shows her menstrual blood to Angie (translation mine Suzuki 111). By having Angie lick Kit's blood, Churchill implies that they have a strong bond. Etsuko Matsuo notes that Angie and Kit "have a cannibalistic blood connection" (11) and "they are 'sisters' connected by the blood peculiar to women" (11) as it is menstrual blood. At the same time, Matsuo asserts that the sister-like relationship between Angie and Kit results from the female body (13). In other words, "their sisterhood is genital" (13). They connect to each other by not only menstrual blood but also their use of "genital slang" (Matsuo 13) such as "you silly cunt" (Churchill 90) and "[s]tupid fucking cow" (Churchill 90).

Throughout their conversation, Angie and Kit try to act mature. When Kit invites Angie to go to watch *The Exterminator* (87), Angie tells Kit that the film is in X-rated, which means the film is inappropriate for them. However, Kit does not care and states, "I can get into Xs" (87). Furthermore, Kit suggests that she will pay for Angie's ticket when Angie says she has no money for the film. We can see that Angie stresses that she is mature, saying "I'm old enough to get married" (92). Both of them even use obscene words: Angie says, "Mind my hair / you silly cunt" (90), and Kit responds, "Stupid fucking cow, I hate you" (90). Although they are still young, using dirty words makes them feel mature.

Furthermore, Angie tries to show she is mature because she knows more about sex than Kit. The topic of their conversation turns to Kit's mother. Angie mocks her because

she is an immoral person having sexual intercourse with anyone. Although Kit rejects Angie's view, Angie ridicules Kit by saying she has no idea what sex is (91). Kit claims that they can learn it all at school and even on television. She also declares that Angie has not ever experienced sex. They quarrel over whether or not Angie has done it and who it was with. This scene shows that Angie becomes conceited by pretending to have had sex with someone, whereas Kit realises Angie is lying because Kit is smart and knows Angie well.

Angie reveals that she cares a lot about Kit because she tries to act like an older sister. Angie repeats that she does not make Kit go home: "You couldn't [go home]" (89), and "No you couldn't, not if I said" (89). It seems that Angie, as being the older, forces Kit to follow what she says. On the other hand, Angie tries to comfort Kit after she teases her. Being older, Angie apologises first to Kit, saying "I'm sorry I hurt you" (93) and "No you're not [going home]" (94) after Angie twists Kit's arm because Kit says her mother thinks it is weird that Angie does not play with people her own age. Angie's apology results from her anxiety about being alone. Finally disclosing her secret that she is going to visit Marlene in London, Angie says to Kit, "Now give us a cuddle and shut up because I'm sick" (95). She speaks the line like a mother talking to her child, so we see that Angie recognises that she is older and possessive of Kit.

On the other hand, Kit expresses her affection for Angie as well as her cleverness. After Joyce finds them at the shelter, Kit offers her help to clean Angie's room in order to go to watch the film later. While Angie is cleaning her room, Kit and Joyce talk about Angie and Kit herself. Joyce looks down on Angie for not getting a job and is surprised at Kit's ambition to be a nuclear physicist. Just as Kit's mother wonders if Angie has no friends at school, Joyce asks Kit if she has any friends. Kit answers, "I'm old for my age" (97). Kit believes that she is intelligent and has high self-esteem. Therefore, the reason why she often plays with Angie is that others tend to keep away from her due to her self-centred attitude and thoughts. For Kit and Angie, though they are coincidentally neighbours, they are each other's only friends. Kit presents her love to Angie as friends: "I love Angie" (97). Considering their actions and emotional expressions, Angie and Kit need each other.

The younger generation represented by Angie and Kit "presents hope of

establishing feminist and socialist bonds among women” (Matsuo 11) in spite of conflicts in the older generation such as Marlene and Joyce. Not only their relationship but also Angie and Kit themselves have the potential to change 1980s British politics and society in which individualism and free market were promoted by the first female prime minister, Margaret Thatcher. Angie shows her independence and creativity although she is not intelligent and behaves inappropriately for her age. In Act Two, Scene Three, Angie visits Marlene’s workplace in London. Marlene who is surprised at her unexpected visit asks Angie where her mother is and what bus she is taking to go back home. Angie just comes to see Marlene without Joyce. This action can be seen as a sign of Angie’s independence although it appears that Angie cannot do things by herself, considering her relation to Kit.

At the same time, Angie is reckless but can act determinedly. Her purpose for visiting is to just see her biological mother, Marlene, and it is unclear what triggered her to see Marlene. However, in accordance with her will, Angie decides to meet Marlene. In addition, Sian Adiseshiah notes that “[Angie] also demonstrates astuteness when she highlights Marlene’s dislocation from her family” (153). Angie challenges Marlene by saying “Didn’t you know that? You don’t know much” (128) after Marlene asks where Joyce’s husband, Frank, is.

From the perspective of women as workers, Adiseshiah states that Angie’s unwillingness to get married, her rebellious behaviour against her mother, and trying to be an active part in her family will not be satisfied by good employment opportunities like Marlene who is promoted to a managerial position. Angie will have to live in a humble working-class life since Joyce predicts that “her children will say what a wasted life she had” (140) rather than being an independent career woman.

In addition to Adiseshiah’s comments about Angie, who cannot break her original social status and make her future career for herself, Zahra Khozaei Ravari and Sivabala Naidu argue that Angie and Dull Gret, roles that are performed by the same actor, share a contradiction (162). Dull Gret builds a bond among neighborhood women and heads to hell with courage, so that Churchill describes her “as a symbol of femininity who wants to defeat masculinity” (162). More concretely, Joseph Marohl points out that Dull Gret’s fighting devils in hell, leading a mob of women dressed in aprons, “parodies

radical and bourgeois forms of feminism, which either reverse or capitalize on existing inequalities rather than remove them” (388). Her aggressive behaviour can be similar to that of radical and bourgeois feminism which tries to tackle inequalities between men and women. On the other hand, Angie cannot deal with her situation and fails to seek a better life. Because she is unable to “have any protection from either Marlene or Joyce, she feels defenceless” (Ravari and Naidu 162). Therefore, compared to Dull Gret, Angie seems not to have an ability to tackle patriarchal society.

Nevertheless, Victoria Bazin concludes that “[i]t is Angie who represents the revolutionary force within the play, and it is Angie’s ‘frightening’ vision of the future that suggests the possibility of political change” (119). Although others predict a bleak future for Angie, Bazin argues that Angie can seek a better future with the violence and rage she has within her. Furthermore, Bazin finds a similarity between Angie and Dull Gret of Act One:

[T]here is a sense in which Angie’s violence could and might be directed at Marlene, the mother who abandoned her. This rage, this expression of a desire to kill links Angie with her double, Dull Gret. While she is unaware of why she should be angry, while her anger is misdirected at Joyce her adoptive mother, at the same time, her inarticulacy and her powerlessness resemble Gret’s. (127)

Bazin states that although Angie cannot give a reason for her anger and her desire to kill, her violence relates to Dull Gret’s. In addition, Angie’s illogicality and ambiguity resemble Gret’s taciturn nature. Their sense of threat and inarticulate nature can turn to revolutionary action. They also serve “as a powerful reminder of the revolutionary potential of self-interest” (Bazin 120). Stuart Marlow adds that “Gret shows no reverence for the forces which are out to destroy her community, and has nothing to lose by turning to violence in self-defense” (71).

Being different from other female characters in Act One, Gret confronts the control of patriarchy and even tries to combat it in order to regain women’s safety. By likening Angie to Gret, Gret’s assault and violence in hell can be “Angie’s resentment of her single parent upbringing” (Marlow 73) and her willingness to kill her mother, Joyce:

ANGIE. I put on this dress to kill my mother.

KIT. I suppose you thought you'd do it with a brick.

ANGIE. You can kill people with a brick.

KIT. Well you didn't, so. (98-99)

As Dull Gret advances to hell, wearing an apron and armour, and armed with her helmet and sword, Angie desires to kill Joyce with the dress which her aunt, Marlene, gave her a year ago, making it her armour for violence.

Moreover, the desire to kill by wearing the dress turns to hatred towards Marlene because the dress was presented to Angie by her. Angie's desire to kill and hatred towards Joyce and Marlene suggest her challenge against capitalism and conflicting feminist groups in 1980s. Though Marlene and Joyce assume that Angie will live in poverty and achieve nothing, if Angie realises that she has nothing "to lose in the new free enterprise culture" (Bazin 132) and recognises women's oppression, unlike Marlene who has to abandon her family and even victimise herself for her promotion, she can represent an alternative feminist perspective which can change society. If her violence turns to political provocative actions which claim women's inferior status in society and she recognises conflicts within female groups as well as admitting diverse feminist groups with their ideologies, Angie can fix splits between feminist groups and face various problems ranged from sex to race among them.

Unlike Angie, Kit has confidence in her cleverness like Pope Joan in Act One. When Joyce asks Kit what she wants to be in the future, Kit has a well-determined dream: to become a "Nuclear physicist" (97) because she recognises herself as smart. Pope Joan, disguised as a man, shows off her confidence and intelligence. She says, "suddenly I was quite famous, I was everyone's favourite" (66) and "I thought I knew more science than he [her 16-year-old male friend] did and almost as much philosophy" (62). Because Kit and Pope Joan know they are smart, they can declare it to others confidently.

Kit is also realistic and rational, considering her desire to be a nuclear physicist. Being different from Angie who believes in superpowers that are able to move things, Kit talks about reality: war. Kate Dorney states that Kit faces reality and the threat of

imminent war:

Her ability to project herself beyond her immediate surroundings (a sign of maturity) is demonstrated by the contrast between Angie's attempts to frighten her with stories of ghostly kittens and poltergeists while Kit is genuinely haunted by the possibility of a nuclear war. (63)

Kit is concerned about real life more than Angie who talks about fantasy. Dorney regards Kit's projection of herself beyond her surroundings as a symbol of her maturity. In terms of her age, her realistic point of view connects to her maturity. Furthermore, Adishesiah notes, "[Kit's] sensitivity to global issues (fear of a nuclear war) and her solidarity with Angie ... position her as a more hopeful working-class female figure in the play" (153). This shows that Kit tries to free herself from the limitations of working-class life that Joyce, who works at low-paid cleaning jobs, represents. Kit asks Angie where the safest place is and seems to be bothered by war images such as "walking round with your skin dragging on the ground" (92). Even if Angie suggests to Kit that she forget war, Kit remembers it at night. She contemplates war very seriously.

Churchill also implies that Kit is concerned about the Falklands War which happened in 1982 and was probably taught at school. The war started because Argentina invaded the Falkland Islands, a British overseas colony, on April 2. The British government under Thatcher determined to overthrow Argentine forces and re-establish British authority (Edwards 298). The war ended with Argentina's forces surrendering ten weeks later. Dorney remarks that Kit shows her rationality by envisioning being a nuclear physicist against her terror of war, commenting "[h]er desire to be a nuclear scientist shows a rational desire to control her fear by understanding more about it, as well as showing a degree of awareness of current affairs and an ability to live in the present moment rather than in a fantasy world (as Angie does)" (63-64).

Being against Angie who tends to contemplate a fantasy world, Kit hints at something challenging to Marlene's preoccupation with business success, high salary, and individualism by engaging in social and political environment. Unlike Angie, who utilises her violence to counter 1980s feminism, Kit challenges it with her realistic and

rational way of thinking. In other words, Kit will be able to solve the problems of 1980s feminism such as economic and social disparities among women, by her realistic perspectives and reason.

Unlike Pope Joan who spends her life as a man, Kit remains female and wishes to work in a field dominated by men. She shares her career ambition as a woman with Isabella Bird in Act One. Isabella Bird travelled the world although women were still restricted their freedom in the nineteenth century. Bird is proud of herself for accomplishing this deed as a woman: “Well I always travelled as a lady and I repudiated strongly any suggestion in the press that I was other than feminine” (62). At this point, Churchill implies that women are no less wise than men and that women should be confident of being women, unlike Pope Joan who masks her femininity.

Kit’s affection for Angie is also similar to Isabella’s for Hennie. Isabella refers to Hennie many times. She says that “Hennie was happy. She was good. I did miss its face, my own pet” (56). She cherishes Hennie and Hennie always supports Isabella even if Isabella has a hard time while she is travelling. This is why Hennie’s death shocks Isabella substantially:

ISABELLA. The loves of my life were Hennie, my own pet, and my dear husband the doctor, who nursed Hennie in her last illness. I knew it would be terrible when Hennie died but I didn’t know how terrible. I felt half of myself had gone. How could I go on my travels without that sweet soul waiting at home for my letters? ... (65)

We can see that Isabella and Hennie have a strong bond like Angie and Kit. Frequent remarks about Hennie by Isabella mean Isabella cares about Hennie a lot just as Kit expresses her loyalty to Angie (Tycer 33). Kit, Pope Joan, and Isabella share some traits such as confidence, pride in being a woman, and consideration to others. These traits can trigger the reform of 1980s feminism in order to resolve economic and social disparities among women.

Conclusion

This paper examined the relationships between Marlene and Joyce as well as Angie and Kit from the point of view of sisterhood. The ideology of sisterhood is based on female solidarity and mutual understanding of women's experiences and sufferings. Marlene and Joyce cannot understand each other and their experiences because of their different thoughts. Marlene escapes from taking any responsibility and pursues her career, whereas Joyce shoulders all responsibilities, so that they cannot build a female bond with each other.

Unlike the relationship between Marlene and Joyce who argue over politics and cannot reconcile with each other, Angie and Kit are very close and need each other even if they are just neighbourhood friends and tease each other. Their closeness is exemplified in the shelter they made out of junk because they have physical contact owing to the narrow shelter. Moreover, a strong bond is expressed by Angie's licking Kit's blood. Angie and Kit regard themselves as friends who do things together. They desire to act mature and share each other's affection. The use of indecent words and their talk about sex make them feel mature. Angie cares about Kit a lot, whereas Kit has a loyalty to Angie, because each is the only friend the other can rely on.

In addition to their close relationship, Angie and Kit together as well as individually can possibly subvert the oppressions of both men and women and different ideologies within feminist groups in 1980s. On the one hand, Angie can cause a revolution in 1980s feminism with her violence if she realises how oppressed women are as Bazin suggests (132). Her violence reflects aggressive political protests. With the help of Kit's rationality, Angie's provocative behaviour makes clear not only women's disadvantaged position but also the existence of hierarchy within women. That is why in the future, Angie may recognise and solve disagreements and problems among different feminist groups, accepting their diversity. On the other hand, Kit aspires to become a nuclear physicist with high ambitions and her realistic, reasonable views. At the same time, she admires and understands Angie. Taken together, Angie and Kit suggest that the flaws of 1980s feminism, which was divisive and also was influenced by Margaret Thatcher, are socio-

economic disparities and little consideration towards minor feminist groups. Therefore, Churchill hopes that women will embrace other feminist groups and acknowledge their different ideas to pursue better lives. In other words, contemporary women should challenge Thatcherite feminism as a community.

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