Cloud Nine, As Butler Likes it

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Abstract: My aim in this article is to investigate the patriarchal forces over marginalized groups and to scrutinize Judith Butler's notion of performativity and parody in *Cloud Nine* (1979), a famous play by caryl Churchill, the contemporary British playwright. What I seek to argue here is to explicate how Churchill tries to show the blurred identities between the characters, social construction of gender, and the play's comic and aesthetic effects. In this sense, I aim to investigate how social construction of gender is related to blurred boundaries. In this sense, I focus on Judith Butler's idea of gender instability and the connection between gender and performativity as well as cross-gender casting and drag or cross-dressing.
Key words: patriarchy; gender performativity; parody; blurred boundaries; social construction of gender; drag

1. INTRODUCTION

In this paper I will discuss a famous play by caryl Churchill: *Cloud Nine* (1979). In this play Churchill is believed to have "traced the legacy of colonial regimes' sexual and racial oppression in contemporary life" (Reinelt, "On Feminist and Sexual Politics" 27). However, I do not intend to discuss all these notions in this play but rather look at the play's other major concerns: to scrutinize the subversive parody and patriarchal forces over marginalized groups. By doing this, I would be embarking on a new and untested way of analyzing *Cloud Nine*.

What I seek to argue is to explicate how Churchill tries to show the blurred identities between the characters, social construction of gender, and the play's comic and aesthetic effects. In this sense, I aim to investigate how social construction of gender is related to blurred boundaries.

The performativity on the part of the various gender is also attempted as they do not just show the constructedness of gender and how this constructedness comes into being because of the patriarchy and patriarchal values. That is a reason why people in the text of opposite gender exaggerate either masculine features or feminine features.

In the following sub-sections consideration will be givan to theoretical framework and methodology and to analysis. In the analysis part I try to answer the questions: why do the characters parody femininity, why do they cross gender and cross dress and why do they hyperbolize and provoke fun at femininity and how this body of work might usefully inform the social construction of gender. Butler's ideas on gender instability and performativity, drag and cross dressing, subversive parody, cross-gender casting, and role reversals will help me to answer these questions.

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Through the above-mentioned tools, I will showcase how Churchill is able to provide her responses to the idea of social construction of gender in this play. In this regard, the purpose of this paper is also to investigate Butler's view about social construction of gender and gender performativity. At the end, I come to conclusion that Butler's theory of society's enforcement of gender roles by any means necessary fits this play by Churchill very well.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

Judith Butler is a theorist who proposes ideas about gender theory. Her theory and ideas on gender are used to demonstrate gender performativity, gender instability, drag and cross- dressing. That is why Judith Butler is known as feminist theorist, and gender theorist in the critical and theoretical fields. The following ideas consolidate her as a gender theorist.

2.1 Performativity and Performance

Butler's explanation of the performative aspect of gender identity has been extensively used in feminist theory. She believes that gender identity is socially constituted. She argues that gender is performative rather than natural. The arguments of this gender performativity are also expanded in two of her outstanding books, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), and *Bodies that Matter: on the Discourse Limits of 'Sex'* (1993). In order to highlight gender performativity and that "gendered and sexed identities are performative", Butler brings de Beauvoir's prominent statement "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Butler, 1990) in explaining that "woman is something we do rather than something we are" (Salih, 2002: 10). In this sense, as Butler in "Performative Act and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" (1988) claims "gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts" (Butler 1995: 1097). Butler declares that "the gendered body is performative suggests that it has no ontological status apart from the various acts that constitute its reality, and if that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is a function of a decidedly public and social discourse" (Butler, 1990: 336). In the first chapter of *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990), Butler proposes the idea of performativity by declaring that "Gender proves to be performative – that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be. In this sense, gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to pre-exist the deed" (Butler, 1990: 25). She also begins the connection between gender and performativity. According to her, "Gender is performative in the sense that it constitutes as an effect the every subject that it appears to express ...[its] performance constitutes the appearance of a 'subject' as its effect" (Butler, 1991: 24).

In order to add to the "performativity" of gender, Butler (1990) maintains that people's performing masculinity or femininity learned from the beginning constitutes their gender identity. For example, "acting feminine" does not mean a natural feminine, but creates the "act" of a feminine, that is its performative aspect, which continues the feminine performance in which femininity is an unnatural quality of the person, whether a man or a woman.

As Salih mentions,

> Butler is not suggesting that gender identity is a performance, since that would presuppose the existence of a subject or an actor who is doing that performance. Butler refutes this notion by claiming that the performance pre exists the performer, and this counter- intuitive, apparently impossible argument has led many readers to confuse performativity with performance (Salih, 2002: 10).

One should bear in mind that, as Salih (2002) pointed out the concept of "performativeity" of gender should not be taken for the assumption that gender is "performance". Indeed, she distinguishes between performativity and performance. This notion can be used in cross-dressing, a theatrical device in which men can wear women's clothes and play women's roles and women can wear men's clothes and play men's roles. This means that gender is imaginary rather than real. If we think of gender as "performance", it

implies the idea that there should be a doer or subject to do that performance; thus, countering Butler's claim that the act or performance exists before the doer. Indeed, In *Gender Trouble,* Butler suggests that there is a distinction between the idea of performativity and that of performance although relate to gender. As explained earlier, Butler argues that performativity refers to the way people act their genders everyday by acting the parts they play and believe that it is natural (though it is performative) while gender performance refers to the destabilization of performativity. Regarding performance, she declares,

> In no sense can it be concluded that the part of gender that it performed is the truth of gender; performance as bounded 'act' is distinguished from performativity insofar as the latter consist in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer's 'will' or 'choice'…. The reduction of performativity to performance would be a mistake (Butler in Roden, 2005: 29).

Thus, by refuting the idea that gender identity is performance, Butler distinguishes between performativity and performance. This means that gender is imaginary rather than real.

2.2 Drag and Cross- dressing

In order to show the instability of gender Butler points to drag and cross-dressing as an activity which centres the untrue nature of gender, and which suggests the possibility of a concept of gender identity which does not work to standardize the male/ female bounds. According to Butler, both binary categories (man and woman) are constructions. So an actress can wear men's clothing and introduce herself as a man and vice versa, an actor can wear women's clothing and appears as a woman. Moreover, she argues that they are constructions that depend upon one another in order to distinguish one from the other: "In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingencies" (Butler, 1990:175). Drag has always used for amalgamating the performance and gender unnatural identity as one is "in drag" if one wears the clothes intended for the opposite sex. To be in drag is often to be involved in an imitation of performance that dismantles the conventions of the gender.

Drag also functions as opposite to "heteronormativity" in a way that it denaturalizes a set of relations between sex, gender and desire while such relations are considered natural by the notion of "heteronormativity". Another effect of drag, as Butler puts it in *Gender Trouble*, is to reveal the odd relations among the elements of "heterosexuality" which finally leads to undermining the assumption of both the coherence and originality of heterosexuality. Scrutinizing the nature of drag, Butler goes further to the extent that she assumes some awkward relationships between the sex (maleness) of the drag performer, the gender (femininity) he or she is performing and the performance. Following Esther Newton, Butler, too, concludes that there is no way to tell from the performance that the performer desires.

> To add more to the role of drag in relation to gender, Butler asserts that drag contributes to creating a "unified picture of "woman"; thus, revealing the fictive nature of gender coherence in a sense that it shows how gender is fabricated. Drag also uncovers the imitative structure of gender itself both in contingency and in imitating gender (Butler, 1990: 175).

So drag functions to challenge heteronormativity by demonstrating all gender as parody. To do so, drag denotes the "mundane" way in which every ordinary person can theorize, wear and do gender in an appropriate way. In other words, drag, in contrary to gender, does not involve the "expropriation or appropriation" of gender as this feature cannot be practised by everyone, but it belongs to a particular sex (Butler, 1991: 21). In other words, both heterosexual identity and drag are performative because rely on the repetition of those acts decreed within the heterosexual matrix to signify a particular gender (Llyod, 2007: 44).

2.3 Gender and Sex

It was during the seventies and the eighties when feminist scholars paid special attention to the distinction between sex and gender. Ann Oakley for example, contends "sex is a word that refers to the biological

differences between male and female, whereas gender… is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classification into masculine and feminine" (Oakley in Lloyd, 2007: 28). So sex is different from gender in that the former is conceived as natural and constant biological fact while the latter is thought to be unnatural and inconstant (Lloyd, 2007: 28). In an attempt to theorize the relation between sex and gender, such scholars would give priority to sex over gender in terms of both logical and chronological considerations. They would conceptualize gender norms as determined by culture; hence, secondary to natural sex.

However, as a gender theorist, Butler put into question the priority of gender over sex as well as the priority of homosexuality over heterosexuality. In parts of *Gender Trouble* (1990) on feminism and identity, Butler analyzes the instability between concepts of sex and gender and sketches a programme for reading gender as an ideological creation subject of deconstruction and change. She claims, "If the immutable character of sex is contested, perhaps this construct called 'sex' is as culturally constructed as gender, with the consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all" (Butler, 1990: 7). Therefore, instead of regarding sex as the origin of gender, she contends instead that gender produces sex.

Furthermore, Butler maintains that gender can be culturally understood through what she calls the "heterosexual matrix" which is a specific framework of meaning within which sex, gender and desire are signified and make sense (Butler, 1990: 9). Accordingly, she links both sex and gender to this heteronormative matrix in a way that both are produced by it. It is through this matrix that she refers to gender not as a noun, but as "always a doing". Thus, to her, gender is defined as a process, not an essence. In this regard, Butler does not believe that gender is caused or determined by sex. In her words, "if gender is the cultural meaning that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way" (Butler, 1990:10). Therefore, it can be concluded that that gender cannot be limited to just one particular sex; namely feminine or masculine. In other words, as Butler once put it, "All that is required in this setting is that a sexed body has a gender. Given this, gender might be best conceived of a "free floating artifice" (Butler, 1990: 10). In this sense, Llyod (2007: 32) seems to have arrived at the same conclusion by making the point that since Butler maintains that gender is not a production of sex, then, it must be a means through which sex, as a natural construct is produced before discourse. It is based on such claims that a ground is provided for one of the core concepts of Butler's work: the concept of gender instability.

2.4 Gender Instability

Butler in Gender Trouble (1990) brings up the instability of gender. She analyzes not only the instability between concepts of sex and gender, but also that of gender identity and the existence of a stable feminist subject. According to Penelope Deutscher (1997) in Yielding Gender: Feminism, Deconstruction and the History of Philosophy, "Gender has never been a stable matter. It has been argued that the meanings of 'female' and 'woman' are troubled and unfixed" (1).

Butler also argues in *Gender Trouble* that "[a]s a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations" (Butler, 1990:10). In this respect, she holds culture responsible for determining the original identification of gender. As a matter of fact, there are some imitative practices taking place in a culture which "construct the illusion of a primary and interior gendered self or parody the mechanism of that construction" (Butler, 1990:176). Hence, since such practices are subject to change in a cultural context, so is gender itself.

It is in the same book where Butler has questioned the existence of a stable feminist subject, holding that feminist politics should consider the issue from the perspectives of homosexuality as well. In her own words,

> Is the construction of the category of women as a coherent and stable subject an unwitting regulation and reification of gender relations? And is not such reification precisely contrary to feminist aims? To what extent does the category of women achieve stability and coherence only in the context of the heterosexual matrix? If a stable notion of gender no longer proves to be the foundational premise of feminist politics, perhaps a new sort of feminist politics is now desirable to contest the very reifications of gender and identity, one that will take the variable

construction of identity as both a methodological and normative prerequisite, if not a political goal (5).

The above selection reflects Butler's position in that she criticizes categorizing women as fixed coherent identity against the opposite sex. She also questions the "heterosexual matrix" as a result of women's consistency. More specifically, Butler assumes that it is quite natural to consider other sexual binaries rather than just that of male/female. Thus, asserting that gender is not stable, how could one associate the notion to "a new sort of feminist politics"? What does Butler exactly mean by that?

Salih (2002) seeks to answer this question. She asserts that Butler also considers that "gender is not just a process, but it is a particular type of process a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (63). Therefore, a set of acts is required in order for the "new feminist politics" come into existence. Butler herself clarifies the idea by claiming that,

> Because gender is not a fact, the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, and without these acts, there would be no gender at all. Gender, is thus, 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 (Butler,1990:140).

The approach to feminism in this study is from the perspective of the problems of subordinate groups. In this sense, I deal with those problems that demonstrate patriarchy through gender representation. Other terms that will be used in this paper are Judith Butler's above mentioned terms such as performativity of gender and gender instability, drag and cross- dressing. Hence, the performative aspects of gender identity, gender as a construction of masculinity and femininity of people and that both group are socially constructed will be taken into consideration. I also draw my attention to parody and blurred boundaries of the characters. As the main goal of this study is on scrutinizing patriarchal forces over marginalized groups as well as performativity and parody in relation to blurred identities, I only focus on Act One of the play.

3. PATRIARCHAL FORCES OVER MARGINALIZED GROUPS

Cloud Nine consists of two acts. The first act is set in a Victorian British African colony, an era of exceptionally rigid gender and class roles. The uncomfortable nature of those roles is shown to the audience by casting actors who are clearly opposite to the stereotypes they are playing: Betty, the loyal wife is a man; Edward, her son, is a woman; Joshua, the black servant, is white. All are playing parts which are unnatural to them, enforced upon them by the society within which they live. The audience is thus prepared to see the same disparity between nature and role among the more conventionally cast characters in the second act set in modern day London.

The first act of the play focuses on the home and surroundings belonging to Clive, a colonial administrator whose family faces threats from the discontented African people. In this sense, this act focuses on the exertion of power of Clive over some other inferior ones.

According to Churchill "the first act, like the society it shows, is male dominated and firmly structured" (Churchill, 1985: 246). On the surface, the family in Act One appears to be very strict and conventional, thus unhappy compared to the family in Act Two whose members are happier than they were before because they are not subjugated by patriarchy.

In a nutshell, the first act clearly portrays male-domination. Churchill introduces Clive as the "Patriarchal head of the family" (Aston, 1999: 117), masculine stereotype, decision-maker, leader, thinker and head model of control represents extreme authority establishes his authority and control over all members of his family and the others including the two visitors, Harry Bagley and Mrs. Saunders as well as the native tribes, reinforcing his patriarchal values. Above all, he is the symbol of order and heteronormative organization. Clive emphasizes that the structure of society is based on patriarchy and it is

the duty of the patriarch agent to tame the shrews including native tribes and women in the dark Continents of Africa.

In the introductory scene of the play, Clive also draws our attention to the stereotypes about one's duty to the Queen and simultaneously, tells the audience about his position as the ruling head of his family. He introduces his tightly-controlled family and stamps his authority over them seen in the scene when the whole family sings "come gather, sons of England", a national hymn to the British union in choir as,

> This is my family. Though far from home.
> We serve the Queen wherever we may roam.
> I am a father to the native here.
> And father to my family so dear (Churchill, 1985:251).

These lines divulges the domination and the oppressive forces of patriarchal agent over gender, "sexual and racial identities" (Amoko) who include the subordinate members of his family and the lower-class natives.

One of the subordinate members of family whose main aim in life is to fulfil Clive's desires is Betty. Although she does not seem as stereotypical as her mother, Maud, who believes that men order and control the world and the women are the subordinate creatures in comparison to them, Betty is the ideal Victorian woman and an angel in the house. She thinks her only duty is to fulfil her husband's dreams of a dutiful wife and to wait uncomplainingly for him and other men to make decisions for her. Her behaviour and her language confirm this stereotypical characteristic. In the beginning lines of the play she introduces herself by showing her devotion and dependence on Clive, her husband by saying,

> 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 (Churchill, 1985:251).

The language she uses confirms her devotion and dependence on Clive, her husband. She attests that she is a subordinate woman and hence tends to display a suppressed feature of gender oppression as evident from the fact that she accepts that men's statuses are always more highly valued than women.

This also reflects on the patriarchical nature of the family which "encourages men to accept male privilege and perpetuate women's oppression" (Johnson, 2005: 19). Betty is, thus, completely dominated by Clive which she readily acknowledge throughout Act One.

In another incident, Clive introduces Betty as "My wife is all I dreamt a wife should be, / And everything she is she owes to me" (Churchill, 1985: 251). These words can be taken to show the domination and oppression of Betty by Clive. Bsically, Clive's dominance forms "power and superior" (Johnson) relationships between him and Betty.

As another example of exertion power over women and taming them, Clive punishes his wife as she betrays him and inclines toward Harry. When Clive is informed by Joshua, his spy, that Betty and Harry met each other, he blames his wife. She subsequently confesses to her fault and asks Clive to forgive her: "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Forgive me. It's not Harry's fault, it is all mine. Harry is noble. He has rejected me. It's my wickedness…there is something so wicked in me, Clive" (Churchill, 1985: 277). By this confession she is potrayed as admitting to her 'female treacherous nature' to deceive a man. This aspect of women's potrayal is also evident in Clive who threatens his wife to oppose her "dark lust" and admit that the whole thing is the result of her own weakness as a woman. He also accuses women as 'thoughtless', 'evil', …darker and more dangerous than men" (Churchill, 1985: 277).

Although Harry is queer by nature, he pretends to be heterosexual by showing his admiration for Betty. In the conversation between the two characters in Scene One when Betty asks him where he has been, Harry replies her that he was in the nature and among the native tribes. Hearing that, Betty confesses: "Where I'm near you it's like going out into the jungle. It's like going up the river on a raft. It's like going out in the dark" (Churchill, 1985: 261).

Here, it must be acknowledged that nature is depicted as a space of the native tribes rather than civilization. In nature, society's rules do not apply, and non-heterosexual relationships can be assumed. Therefore, it is a symbol of the world of darkness and evil of homosexuality. It is a symbol of "moral wildness" in which Harry has been wandering. Besides this connotation, we can also interpret the nature as the symbol of reality, the reality that Harry is a queer and hides himself in such a place where the severe moral restraints of heterosexual oppressive doctrines dominate the non-heterosexual gender identities.

In addition, the Jungle, nature, and dark are also considered by some critics like Freud as the characteristics of female sexuality and here Betty identifies herself with these characteristics. So nature, in this context, illustrates both the characteristics of Harry as a queer identity and Betty's sexuality.

The two male characters, Clive and Harry have two different view points towards Betty. For Clive, female sexual tendency is a metaphor for darkness and chaos. He equals his wife's passion and her treacherous feelings to Africa, the dark Continents, and tunknown places. So he uses the metaphor dark to describe his wife: "You are dark like this continent. Mysterious (Churchill, 1985, 263). However, Harry's attitude towards Betty is different from Clive's attitude as he believes that instead of being dark and treacherous, she is "safety and light and peace and home" (Churchill, 1985: 261). Nevertheless, by reminding her of her position as a woman in society, Harry unconsciously limits her to the domestic sphere under patriarchy.

Walby (1992) contends that "women are confined to the private sphere of the family because they bear and rear children" (174). So as a mother, she should remain within the domestic spheres and rear her children, as a daughter she should obey her mother's advice about men, and as a wife she should obey her husband and should be loyal to him.

In essence, Act One potrays Betty as a Victorian slave of patriarchy who is absolutely in the shadow of her husband and someone who has lost all sense of herself and in this sense has no independency, subjectivity, free will and agency.

This oppressive force over Betty is revealed in the sense as Allan Johnson (2005) contends "As with any system of privilege that elevates one group by oppressing another, control is an essential element of patriarchy: men maintain their privilege by controlling women and anyone else who might threaten it" (14). In a sense, it seems that Churchill is trying to illustrate what Vicki Kirby (2006) stated once that "all women suffered the oppression of the universal system of male domination, a patriarchy whose exploitative advantage for males was clear" (22).

In this section I showed the power of patriarchy over the marginalized woman. However, as the whole idea of this paper is to concentrate on *Cloud Nine* as a Butlerian play, I attempt to consider some other parts namely blurred boundries, social construction of gender, gender instability and its performativity, parody in detail. In this regard, in the following section I concentrate on performativity of gender and parody as two important issues in Butler's view which dismantle the notion of gender.

4. PERFORMATIVITY AND PARODY IN RELATION TO BLURRED IDENTITIES

Having provided a comprehensive overview of *Clould Nine*, I will now discuss some specific issues related to sex and gender in the play.

From the time when a child is born, people ask about her or his sex, about her or his identity, to know whether she is a girl or he is a boy. Hence, a child begins to understand her or his sex identity. However, the notion of sexual identity is deemed not important by certain feminists who focus on the notion of gender as Lloyd (1999) in "Performativity, Parody, and Politics" believes "gender is not what we are but as Butler suggests, it is something we do" (1).

In addition, gender is believed to be socially constructed. In other words, we can consider that a boy or a girl, a man or a woman is expected to have a fixed identity. However, this is untrue as identities can fluctuate and social boundaries between the different genders can be blurred. In other words, the gender of the person is obscure.

As the blurred boundaries are related to social construction, the way in which the characters are constructed socially will be considered by the use of "subversive parodic performances" (Shugart). In this sense, I will concentrate on who the characters are as a man, as a woman, or blurred gender identity; how they show these blurred boundaries; their personalities; and the comic language they use, in order to reinforce the social construction of gender.

In addition, there are some characters in the play who illustrate the notion of blurred boundaries via their personalities and language. As Shugart in "Parody as Subversive Performance: Denaturalizing Gender and Reconstituting Desire in Ellen" (2001) suggests, the characters illustrate the "subversive performances of femininity by women or of masculinity by men"(96).

Some examples of such identities in this play are Betty, the mother of the family who is played by a man, Edward, the son who is played by a woman, and Victoria, the daughter who is played by a doll (Churchill Introduction to *Cloud Nine*) in Act One of the play and In Act Two the role of Cathy, the four year old girl who is played by the same character who played the role of Clive, the patriarch of Act One.

Butler in *Gender Trouble* debates that gender is not natural but is constructed and performed. It was Judith Butler who first "retheorized gender as performative, that is, naming no reality other that "acts and gestures" through which sex, gender and sexuality are produced as identity" (Carver, 2007: 4). In Butler's own words, opinion, acts, gestures and enactments are "generally construed" and thus are "performative in the sense that the identity that they express are "fabrications that are manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discusrsive means" (Butler, 1990: 136).

Salih (2000) who interprets Butler's ideas claim that:

> All bodies are gendered from the beginning of their social existence (and there is no existence that is not social), which means that there is no 'natural body' that pre-exist its cultural inscription. This seems to point towards the conclusion that gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a 'doing' rather than a being' (62).

In relation to this, Salih, thus, asserts that "all gender is a form of parody, but… some gender performances are more parodic than others… parodic performances such as drag effectively reveal the imitative nature of all gender identities" (65).

The technique of cross-dressing allows women to wear the clothes of men and vice versa. The history of cross dressing or transvestism goes back to the seventeenth century. In Shakespeare's drama, for example, the roles of women were played by the male performers. The cross-dressing device was widely used historically because women were not allowed to perform in theatre as they were considered as public domains – it was the men who had a monopoly over the public domains while women were relegated to the private domains.

Although "cross dressing" is still used in the present time, the purpose of using it is changed. Writers such as Judith Butler use the device in order to implicitly convey a message. Her message is that gender is performative rather than performance. So, gender identity is regarded as socially constituted. In this regard, performativity refers to the way people act their genders everyday by acting the parts they play and believe that it is natural (though it is performative).

As Butler asserts "being female constituted a cultural performance rather than a natural fact. Naturalness constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex" (Butler, 1990, viii). In essence, *Cloud Nine* illustrates the performativity of characters' genders as they are displayed unnaturally. One way to show this unnaturality is via the use of cross-dressing to emphasize the roles people are sometimes forced to play and to simultaneously encourage the audience to question sexual stereotypes.

Drag is another example of performativity. The reason Butler proposes drag is to emphasize that gender is the shadow of reality and so is unfixed and instable: "when drag successfully challenges heteronormativity…it reveals all gender as parody" (Butler in Loyd, 2007: 44). Drag and performativity lead us to the concept of social construction of gender.

As mentioned earlier, one of the chief aims of this paper is also to show the blurred gender boundaries. The most obvious characteristic in the play is the fact that the play does not have some characters who can be typically labelled as masculine or feminine as we see in the characters of Betty, Edward and Cathy who are socially constructed. In this regard, I examine how and where the construction of gender takes place in this play.

Firstly, we can note that Churchill illustrates the "nonrepresentability" (Diamond) of gender identity in the depiction of Betty, Edward, Victoria and Cathy.

Similar to Ellen in Shugart's essay "Parody as Subversive Performance: Denaturalizing Gender and Reconstituting Desire in Ellen" (2001), Betty is the manifestation of the "parodic performance of femininity" (97) and the distinction between the real and the constructed nature of gender. Betty is a favorite Butlerean character who shows that "women are nonexistent in drag performance" (Shugart, 2001: 97) and proves that "Butler's theory is one in which sex, sexuality, desire, gender, and the body are all regarded as discursively constituted. In other words, none of these features is treated as a natural fact of human existence" (Lloyd, 2007: 30).

Via Betty, Churchill also makes attempt to deconstruct gender. In this regard, we can note that Betty is an impersonate feminine self as she is played by a male actor. Inspired by Butler's ideas on gender instability and performativity, Churchill potrays Betty in drag, and having the gestures and acts of a woman. This leads to subversive performance that intentionally points up "the constructed nature of gender. Butler addresses this phenomenon… in connection with parody as it occurs in drag, focusing especially on men impersonating women" (Shugart, 2001: 97). In the first glance Betty is socially constructed and has not "choice and action" (Salih, 2002: 51) but considering Butler's idea "cultural construction remains trapped within the unnecessary binarism of free will and determinism. Construction is not opposed to agency; it is the necessary scene of agency, the very terms in which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible" (Butler, 1990: 187).

Churchill also challenges the sex-gender relations by "dismantling the conventional representation of character[s]" (Diamond, 1985, 275). As already explored in previous session, some feminists like Ann Oakley believe that sex is a biological fact while gender is a cultural reality. However in order to subverting gender Betty is constructed as a stereotypical woman. When someone like Betty is played by the opposite sex and impersonates another gender, she hyperbolizes femininity. Betty is not a female but she takes on the role of a female and use female costume, she behaves and acts as a female, and she exaggerates her femininity, she does not just act like a female because that she can act naturally like a female but she redicules the femininity that is projected by natural female, because she hyperbolizes femininity and when she hyperbolizes femininity is basically because she wants to poke fun and trivilaize the whole notion of femininity which is a construct of patriarchy. Basically when someone impersonates another gender, for example, when a male impersonates female, exaggerates and hyperbolizes the femininity essentially to provoke fun and redicule the whole notion of femininity to show how constructed femininity is. The idea of being a female is something women conform to because, this is something that has been subscribe to them by patriarchy. By this explanation, Betty is a rediculous feminine character.

Edward is also another subversive gender performance and along with Betty is another instance where a blurred identity can be noted. He is played by an actress in drag. In the depiction of Edward, the conventional images of the male characteristic are reframed and subverted. He is in drag because he has a presumed female body and womanly desires so, a female actress plays a male's role. This is subversive parody which aims to subvert the authority of patriarchy and stress on the notion that gender is socially constructed. This parodic gender performance also mocks Clive's effort to impose traditional male behaviour on him as seen later when Edward finds it hard to repress the strong feminine side of his character. It is salient to point out that the notion of the stability of binary sex wherby the construction of "men" will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that "women" will interpret only female bodies" is not necessrily true (Butler, 1990: 10).

Edward is played by a woman because he has feminine behaviours. He is also an example of gender instability where a woman can have man-like qualities. Again, by using such a technique, Churchill reflects Butler's idea that: "man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and woman and feminine as male body as easily as a female one" (Butler in Kirby, 2006: 23).

The two characters, Edward and Betty display the performativity of gender rather than its performance or naturalness. In both cases, we can see "the unnatural nature of gender" (Salih, 2002: 66) or gender performativity. In other words through depicting these characters, "Gender is performatively constructed" (Carver, 2007: 8). In this sense, "Judith Butler uses performance to underscore the fictionality of an ontologically stable and coherent gender identity" (Case qtd. in Goodman, 2002: 69). The two characters also display blurred identities: a woman portrays masculinity while and a man diplays femininity. None of the abovementioned characters are real but are constructed.

The other comic blurred identity is that of Victoria in Act One which is a doll. As a female child she is seen but not heard as a human being. She is constantly unnoticed by others. She also depicts gender instability as she tells the audience that gender is not real. It is only a puppet and does not have a real personality. Therefore, Churchill tends to emphasize the instability of the construction of gender by suggesting that it does not exist as reality. As Joanne Klein (1987) states, "we are paradoxically invited to remain aware of that sex in order to apprehend the social construction of gender" (35).

All the comic blurred identities and "subversive parodic performances" (Shugart, 2001: 3) mentioned above can be classified as "Butler's models of identity" (Salih, 2002: 51) which demonstrate "the social appearance of gender" (Butler, 1990, 33).

Along with the blurred boundaries of these characters, the term cross-gender casting complement Butler's idea of gender as she believes "gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual…constituted identities" (Butler, 1990: 6). It is this comically blurred world in *Cloud Nine* which provides a world of shifting and transforming identities. One of the techniques which illustrate such a comic world is "multiple roles playing" which means that one actor or actress plays the roles of more than one character.

Churchill tends to question gender stereotypes and illustrates that gender is a social construction that is not natural. One way to show this idea is through role reversals wherby actors of different races, and genders play different roles. In addition, the characters are not identified according to their races and their genders deliberately, in order to demonstrate a contrast between whom they are and whom they should be or want to be. In this sense, some characters play parts which are unnatural to them, enforced upon them by the society within which they live.

In my opinion, the main purpose of role reversals of the characters is to demonstrate that gender is unstable and not fixed. Another purpose is to highlight the fact that many people share the same kind of experiences, no matter where or when they live. In this sense, some characters in Act One, are played by the same actors or actresses in Act Two. This technique shows the "revolution where many people share the same kind of experience... When different actors play the parts what comes over is a large event involving many people, whose characters resonate in a way they wouldn't if they were more clearly defined" (Patterson, 2003: 161).

This technique also illustrates that it is gender and not sex that is more important in shaping people's social identity. For instance, the actor who plays the role of the unconventional Edward in Act One also plays the role of the conventional Betty in Act Two, by leaving Clive and attempting to experience a new life as a completely new person, not as the "Other" and subordinate invention of a man according to Victorian norms.

Through the mentioned tool, I have attempted to show how Churchill is able to provide her responses to the idea of the social construction of gender in this play.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, in *Cloud Nine* Churchill satirizes the stable identities as the play is about the blurred boundaries in identities that some people in the Victorian time are involved in.

Churchill demonstrates that patriarchy is the source of the oppression of marginalized groups. As a result, women are always dominated and repressed by white heterosexual men.

In Act One Churchill makes the audience realize the stupidity of man-created heteronormative sex. She tends to criticize the stereotypes which have been accepted as the standards of sex-roles by showing how her characters were entrapped in a system of power, economic, and personal relationships.

As it came in this paper, I evaluated the oppressive forces of patriarchy over marginalized groups. Moreover, I explored how sex stereotypes were dismantled by the subjugated community. Furthermore, by the help of Butler's ideas on gender instability and her suggestion of performativity, I revealed how identity crises are related to social construction of gender.

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