THE CONSTRUCTION OF FEMALE IDENTITY IN TIMBERLAKE
WERTENBAKER'S *THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE* AND *THE BREAK OF
DAY*

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ABSTRACT

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DAY*

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This thesis aims to analyse the construction of female identity from the beginning of the feminist activism in Victorian era whose rationale was formed during the eighteenth century, to the contemporary times in terms of patriarchy and motherhood in Timberlake Wertenbaker's *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *The Break of Day*. This study is conducted with the historical development of the feminist movement that has had different agendas at different periods of history being taken into account. Fighting for women's emancipation and equality, feminism has helped women attain certain rights; however certain roles imposed on women that have been designed to define female identity cannot be said to have been eliminated. Rather, as this study shows, the oppression women have faced has just changed direction; but its nature is still the same. To this end, Wertenbaker presents the situation of women in different contexts of time and circumstances in her plays. Women's quest for identity has been interrupted and diverted by various oppressive mechanisms and institutions which are patriarchy and motherhood as the major focus of analysis throughout this thesis in Wertenbaker's plays.

Key words: Timberlake Wertenbaker, patriarchy, motherhood, female identity.

ÖZ

TIMBERLAKE WERTENBAKER'IN *MARY TRAVERSE'IN ZARAFETI* VE *GÜN AĞARMASI* OYUNLARINDA KADIN KİMLİĞİNİN OLUŞTURULMASI

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Bu tez, Timberlake Wertenbaker'ın *Mary Traverse'in Zarafeti* ve *Gün Ağarması* oyunlarında ataerki ve annelik açısından on sekizinci yüzyılda temeli oluşan feminist hareketin başladığı Viktorya döneminden günümüze kadın kimliğinin yapılandırılmasını analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, tarihin farklı dönemlerinde farklı gündemleri olan feminist hareketin tarihsel gelişimi de göz önüne alınarak uygulanmıştır. Feminizm, kadınların özgürlüğü ve eşitlik için çabalayarak, kadınların belli hakları elde etmelerine yardımcı olmuştur; fakat kadın kimliğini tanımlamaya yönelik olarak kadınlar üzerine dayatılan bazı rollerin ortadan kaldırıldığı söylenemez. Bu çalışmanın gösterdiği gibi, kadınların uğradığı baskının doğası hala aynıdır; baskı sadece şekil değiştirmiştir. Bu amaçla, Wertenbaker oyunlarında farklı zaman ve şartlar bağlamında kadınların durumunu ortaya koymaktadır. Kadınların kimlik arayışı, bu tez boyunca analizin temel odak noktası olan ataerki ve annelik gibi bazı baskıcı mekanizmalar ve kuruluşlar tarafından bölünmüş ve saptırılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Timberlake Wertenbaker, ataerki, annelik, kadın kimliği.

To my wonderful mother

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Victorian age (1830-1901) takes its name from Queen Victoria whose rein spanned sixty four years between 1837 and 1901. Throughout the Victorian era, there occurred unprecedented developments in industry, technology, transportation, commerce and trade, communication, class structure and so on and an enormous increase in the population of England. With the Industrial Revolution occurring between the years 1750 and 1830, the Victorian era saw "the shift from a way of life based on the ownership of land to a modern urban economy based on trade and manufacturing" (Greenblatt 979). The passage from agriculture to industry accelerated the development of factorization and industrialization with large numbers of people migrating from country to city.

All along the Victorian age, the colonial activities of the British Empire gained pace and reached its peak in the last decade of the nineteenth century, contributing to its development and wealth. Greenblatt points out that by the year 1890, England possessed more than a quarter of all the territory on earth as her colonies; one out of every four people around the whole world was a subject of Queen Victoria's reign. In the last decade of the nineteenth century, England became the largest imperialist power in the world (980).

During the Victorian age, political and legal rights were granted to the citizens. The first Reform Bill in 1832 gave the right to vote to all males having a property of £ 10 or more and in 1867, working class males were given the right to vote with the second Reform Bill (Greenblatt 982). Women, however, were excluded; they still could not vote. They had to struggle to get the right to vote. The first petition for suffrage was given to Parliament in 1886, but they could have the right to vote only in 1918 partially. There were only limited legal improvements in the lives of women.

Married Women's Property Acts (1870-1908) made it possible for women to have their own earnings and manage their property (Greenblatt 990).

Educational equality did not exist between men and women. Women were deprived of formal education. Women's education was confined to the inside of households until the foundation of Girton College Cambridge for women in 1869 whereas men attended formal schools. The content of the education differed between men and women in that men learned mathematics, law, philosophy, history. But, women were taught "cooking, sewing, embroidery, spinning, housewifery- all of which would later enable her as a wife and mother to run the household economically and efficiently, and to entertain elegantly" (Hill 45). Women had no access to university education, men, however, could attend universities such as Oxford or Cambridge.

The majority of women were exploited during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. One form of such exploitation was prostitution in which women were sexually exploited and harassed; and consequently degraded. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, especially women from lower classes were not respected, rather were tormented by the way of prostitution which was seen as necessary for the "satisfaction of men's uncontrollable sexual urges" (Hill 28) and therefore for the protection of "the purity and virtue of respectable women" (Hill 28) whom men who satisfied their sexual desires with prostitutes did not pose a threat to. Prostitution became a widespread problem in Victorian England. Three Contagious Diseases Acts which were regarded as "controversial efforts to control prostitution more effectively" (O'Gorman xviii) were passed between 1864 and 1869 but to be repealed altogether in 1886 by the Parliament. These acts were criticized as they "allowed women suspected of working as prostitutes in garrison towns to be medically examined with or without their consent" (Gamble 164). Josephine Butler who was the leader of the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act was concerned that "that prostitution was an institution which permitted the male abuse of women" (Gamble 164). So, the practice of prostitution and the control of venereal diseases show that women were underprivileged and abused sexually and socially.

During the Victorian era of Britain, women's sense of identity was controlled through the roles they were forced to internalize. The female identity was predicated upon certain predetermined roles available for women at that time largely that of mother and wife. Women did not have any formal social rights like the right to vote,

which was gained after many years of struggle. Therefore, the construction of identity was shaped in terms of the patriarchal mechanisms of the society, which was restricting and definitely arduous for women. Men were regarded to be the centre, rendering women to be subordinate and inferior.

Those who had education could only use it in domestic spheres, not outside the homes, where they essentially belonged. The phrase 'the Angel in the House' coined by Coventry Patmore as a poem in 1885 to define the role of women reflects the Victorian age concept of femininity quite well. Ideal Victorian woman/wife was deemed to be a pleasure provider for her male counterpart, devoted to and relentlessly loving towards her husband, hence passive and obedient. In Tennyson's *The Princess* the king voices a more traditional view of male and female roles, a view that has come to be known as the doctrine of "separate spheres" (qtd in Greenblatt 992):

> Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
>
> Man for the sword and for the needle she:
>
> Man with the head and woman with the heart:
>
> Man to command and woman to obey.

Marriage which was deemed to be a vital component of the female identity during the Victorian England was obviously the biggest source of the subordination of women to men. "Marriage, […], was primarily a *social* institution, connected to the introduction of private property. After a stage of original matriarchy, women had become the property of men" (Smart 180). Victorian age ideals urged women to be meekly submissive, which was realized via marriage making them docile and yielding. Through marriage, "the very being or legal existence of a woman is suspended, or at least it is incorporated or consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection and cover she performs everything" (qtd in Sanders, 18) as reflected in William Blackstone's *Commentary on the Laws of England*. Obviously, women conformed to the patriarchal norms of society emphasizing the authority of men over women.

In the Victorian era, female identity was determined and shaped by the norms of the society. So, identity formation process was largely dependent on the society. As Greenblatt sets forth, "Victorian age was preoccupied not only with legal and

economic limitations on women's lives but with the very nature of woman" (992). Women were expected to conform to the social roles imposed on them. Since they had limited chances of a social life outside their homes, women were socially marginalized. As a result, the representation of female identity was restricted to the home. Women had domestic jobs as carer, nurse, governess and etc. They were confined to enclosed areas where they spent their time and performed their professions. Women were considered economically, legally and socially subordinate and dependant. "The only occupation at which an unmarried middle-class woman could earn a living and maintain some claim to gentility was that of a governess, but a governess could expect no security of employment, only minimal wages; and an ambiguous status somewhere between a servant and a family member, that isolated her within the household" (Greenblatt 992). In Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* which accurately depicts the Victorian age and the conditions of a governess, the protagonist Jane reflects upon the confinement of women to domestic spheres as such:

> Woman are supposed to be very calm generally: but women feel just as men feel; they need exercise for their faculties and a field for their efforts as much as their brothers do; they suffer from too rigid a restraint, too absolute a stagnation, precisely as men would suffer, and it is narrow-minded in their more privileged fellow-creatures to say that they ought to confine themselves to making puddings and knotting stockings, to playing on the piano and embroidering bags. It is thoughtless to condemn them, or laugh at them, if they seek to do more or learn more than custom has pronounced necessary for their sex (95).

Women had domestic roles and were bound to abide by the social standards and norms setting the area of freedom for them. They were trapped in the norms of femininity determining feminine traits and behaviours. Socially and culturally constructed norms determined the fates of women who were confined to households. Women simply had to conform to the norm of the ideal Victorian woman who is submissive, domestic, good-tempered, quiet, and agreeable. The prescribed roles for women were determined and controlled by the patriarchy.

Motherhood was also one of the roles attributed to women through marriage which formed another aspect of women's identity formation. Idealized as a crucial part of woman identity, motherhood was considered as the holiest status for women to acquire. The role of "nurturing mother, moral instructor and initial educator of her

children" (Hodgson-Wright 8) constituted the female identity in the Victorian age. Depicted as the carer of her children and husband, women were bound to housewifery and totally domesticized that way.

Women have historically been regarded as inferior by the patriarchy; however it was "in the nineteenth century, women's rights advocates embarked on a mission to inform the public of the need for change in women's status in the social system" (Ryan 9). Victorian age is the age in which women actively started to fight for their feminist concerns. However, the background of such activism is rooted in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries when some writers started to express their criticisms against the victimization of women through their writings. The eighteenth century ideas and attitudes about women were not different from the Victorian era. Women's legal position accorded them fewer privileges and opportunities because of "the law that excluded them from almost all the professions that deprived them of all political rights and which, whether in or outside the marriage, subjected them to men" (Hill 108). Not having the access to education, the right to vote, or any legislational and marital rights "both by law and by custom, women were considered "non-persons" (Ryan 12). Female identity was again defined with such terms as "modesty, restraint, passivity, compliance, submission, delicacy and, most important of all, chastity" (Hill 17). The ideal place for women was regarded as the home in the eighteenth century. The division of occupations was based on gender inequality and dichotomy between the sexes; "The main principles behind the accepted theory of the women were that men and women have entirely different characteristics and capacities; consequently they need totally different educations to prepare them for totally different occupations and employments" (Hill 10).

Some writers like Aphra Behn whose "works were among the most pioneering of the period in their treatment of the roles and rights of women" (Plain &Sellers 39) objected to the prevailing attitudes towards idealizing womanly characteristics subjugating women, and the social, political and economic restrictions on women. Another prominent figure who argued about women's status; Mary Astell with her *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) "reiterates the notion that women are only intellectually inferior if bred to be so" (Hodgson-Wright 12). Standing against the patriarchal order, in 1792, Mary Wollstonecraft published *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* "which marks the first modern awareness of women's struggle for equal

rights, and therefore it is the first milestone for the equality of the sexes" (Opperman 1994). Yet, "[t]he first tract on women's equality to be taken seriously, and to gain widespread recognition, was by John Stuart Mill" (Ryan 10-11) with his *The Subjection of Women* (1861) in which he investigated the status of women in Victorian society being inspired by Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Mill wrote about the social norms about man and woman, the so-called economic and social inferiority of women to men, especially the right to vote as the "the first member of Parliament to initiate a debate on female suffrage" (Rich 8). These altogether paved the way for the later developments of feminist thought that engaged and organised women in achieving their rights and freedom starting from the Victorian age onwards.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, women's rights were becoming more of a matter of debate, the central argument of which was legislational reform giving women equal opportunities with men. The reason why women started to stand against the oppression was that "educated women challenged traditional ideology about women's place" (Ryan 23). With more women attending universities, the social structure began to change as a result of the awareness and ideas they were acquiring.

The 'new woman' is a term which came to define the new type of women of the last decade of the nineteenth century "offering a liberatory new concept of womanhood departed from Victorian propriety" (Rich 1). The changing socioeconomic conditions of the nineteenth century society instigated by the Industrial Revolution bringing about the growth of urbanisation and the rise of the middle class all served to create the image of the new woman. Protesting for the right to vote, these new women were after public and personal liberty. Diverging from the Victorian ideals of womanhood, "she [this new woman] replaced the purity, piety, domesticity, and obedience of that figure with a model of womanhood committed to women's social, political and sexual equality" (qtd in Rich 2). Women's acknowledged identities changed orientation with this new type of women demanding socio-political and sexual rights to be granted to them eschewing the demands imposed on them. Economic pursuits and economic developments changed the place of women in society in the end gaining an essential part in the definition of female identity. With the effects of Industrial Revolution becoming evident both in the private and public domain of

women's lives, industrial capitalism caused women to leave their homes so as to enter the public sphere.

Twentieth century saw the suffrage movement, urging the right to vote for women. Suffragists struggled for equal right to vote standing against the legislative oppression against women. The struggles these women took up have been highly instrumental "in bringing about a change from 'private' to 'public' patriarchy, via the struggle for the vote, for access to education and professions, to have legal rights of property ownership, rights in marriage and divorce and so on" (Pilcher & Whelehan 53). There was an increasing tendency towards entering the public sphere in the lives of the Victorian women. With the initiatives of the suffragists, other problematic issues were brought to the fore at the same time. Personal and familial issues of women such as marriage and divorce also became matters of debate among the other rights they had been aspiring to acquire.

Women were consolidated on a unified agenda in their attempt to get the vote; "[t]he issue of the vote, seen as the key to placing the equality of women on the legislational agenda, united almost all feminists into a single campaign" (Pilcher & Whelehan 53). This kind of a collective action turned their focus into a primary goal; ensuring equality with men. This 'equal rights feminism' paved the way for the transformation in the concept of womanhood. As a result of the struggles for equality, there occurred an escalation in opportunities in employment and education for women, which changed both women's attitude and outlook on women's place in society.

Women's rights were legitimated during the twentieth century. Women who used to be regarded as nonpersons were given their civil rights starting with the constitutional right to vote. In 1918, women over 30 won the right to vote, which was followed by women over the age of 21 who were enfranchised and became equal to men in terms of voting rights. After gaining the right to vote, the struggle "turned to the needs of women as women and thus issues such as family allowance or endowment, birth control, and protective legislation were on the agenda" (Pilcher & Whelehan 54). After the acquisition of the enfranchisement, the feminist claims turned out to be regarded with the private and personal domains in the lives of women and their domestic roles as wives and mothers.

In the early phases of women's struggle, enfranchisement through the right to vote was the central focus of the movement together with employment and property rights which were subsequently transformed into liberation from the patriarchal mechanisms surrounding the social sphere of women. This transformation from public to the private was due to the fact that "[e]quality had not been achieved by enfranchisement and so it was time to reflect on life beyond the public sphere" (Pilcher & Whelehan 144). After the access to vote which was a unifying principle to struggle for, women's struggle centred on liberation because of "the paradox of women being granted the status of citizens in public law, long before these rights were conceded to them in private (family) law" (Smart 5). Obviously, social, political, legislational and economic freedom did not guarantee the personal freedom, which has come to the fore with the advent of modern times since they were controlled and regulated by the patriarchy. Women's rights and consequently their identities were constructed according to the male point of view; "[t]here was no clear-cut or fixed identity of 'woman', that could be claimed to be the possessor of 'rights', precisely because 'rights' were so heavily moulded in favour of male needs and identities" (Smart 166).

Access to higher education, economic developments, and affirmative social changes led women to seek more freedom especially in the private sphere. Starting from the 1960s onwards to the 70s, dramatic shifts took place in the attitudes towards women in the West. During these times, the problems of women were more inclined towards the private sphere. Feminism of the 1960s and 70s have come to cover a wide variety of issues ranging from women's body, sexuality, family, reproduction, and working lives of women. Though generally deemed to be private concerns of women, sexuality, reproduction and motherhood, which have always been of crucial importance in defining woman's identity, have occurred both as private and public issues of feminist debate from the 1960s onwards. Sexual relations were also functional in defining female identity. Austrian neurologist Sigmund Freud deployed early childhood experiences to account for identity formation with his psychosexual development theory. The experiences a person lives through during infancy and childhood construct his/her idea of self in terms of sexuality since identity formation brings into the subject the sexual identity since children gain their gender identity as a consequence of sexual development. As Freud sees it, "children go through

distinct psychosexual developmental stages, and their gender identity as adults is the result of how well or badly they have weathered this process. Masculinity and femininity are, in other words, the product of sexual maturation" (Tong 127).

Investigating the nature of infantile sexuality, Freud contends that "infantile sexual life reaches its peak in what is known as the Oedipus Complex (an emotional attachment of the child to the parent of the opposite sex accompanied by an attitude of rivalry to the parent of the same sex)" (220). But, the female experience of Oedipus complex follows a different path from that of the male. So, there is not "a neat parallelism between male and female sexual development" (Freud 226). A child goes through some stages in life so as to gain a viable sense of self sexually depending on resolving the Oedipus complex or not. Out of the fear of castration, the boy distances himself from his mother, which "enables him to resolve his Oedipus complex successfully, to submit himself fully to the father's law. In contrast, because the girl has no such fear—since she literally has nothing to lose—she moves through the Oedipus complex slowly, resisting the father's laws indefinitely" (Tong 132). The boy is more likely to achieve the identity construction by resolving his complex while it is uncertain whether the girl will be able to resolve the complex or not. So, Freud sees sexuality and therefore identity not only as an innately biological but as a constructed concept as well.

Influenced by Freud, the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan developed his own version of psychoanalysis with a different outlook on sexual development than that of Freud. Lacan added a new dimension to the Oedipus complex by representing it in the 'Symbolic order' where a child gains the access to language and is decentred and alienated within this language projected by the father;

> The Oedipus complex,[…], is transliterated by Lacan into a linguistic phenomenon which he designates as the discovery by the subject of the name-of-the-father. (This refers to the father's role as the possessor of the mother and the place of the Law). The accession of the child to speech and the Symbolic is accompanied by an increase, rather than a lessening, of anxiety. The Symbolic order is a further alienation of the subject; the alienating function of language is arrested by the palpable impossibility of returning to an archaic, pre-verbal stage of the psyche itself (Sarup 111).

So, throughout the symbolic stage, there exists an increasing anxiety in both sexes since what the individual experiences is the 'alienation' within the language, namely

the language represented by the father. The phallus which is "the crucial signifier in the distribution of authority and power and […] also designates the object of desire" (Sarup 94) dominates both the boy and the girl as the boy has the fear of castration whereas the girl experiences the lack of phallus, hence the envy. The phallus indicates the separation from the mother and the identification with the father so that their subjectivity can be constituted, which is itself illusory and impossible;

> For Lacan the analysand's unconscious reveals a fragmented subject of shifting and uncertain sexual identity. To be human is to be subjected to a law that decentres and divides: sexuality is created in a division, the subject is split; but an ideological world conceals this from the conscious subject who is supposed to feel whole and certain of a sexual identity (Sarup 125).

The sexual identity of the subject is problematized as the human subject faces division and separation. So attempting certainty and wholeness also turns into an illusion. Language and hence meaning is produced according to the rules of the father. Language is a public discourse and at the same time language is a male-realm. A child enters a language after being separated from the mother into a male-dominated language represented by the law of the father. Women are isolated from the discourse of the Symbolic order;

> because women cannot totally internalize the "law of the father," this law must be imposed on them from the outside. Women are given the same words men are given: masculine words. These words cannot express what women *feel*, however; masculine words can express only what men *think* women feel. Lacking feminine words, women must either babble outside the Symbolic order or remain silent within it (Tong 154).

Women are excluded from the language that way. They either cannot represent themselves with masculine words or they choose to keep silent totally. French psychoanalyst and philosopher Julia Kristeva states in an interview, "many women . . . complain that they experience language as something secondary, cold, foreign to their lives. To their passion. To their suffering. To their desire. As if language were a foreign body" (134). The language representing the father reduces women to object position while men constitute the subject. So, women are not represented through this phallocentric language consequently failing to define themselves properly. This language is based on binary oppositions privileging men over women by focusing on the male-female dichotomy drawing distinctions between male and female as totally the opposite of each other masculine/feminine, rational/emotional, strong/weak,

active/passive, dominant/submissive, superior/inferior, independent/subordinate and so on. All these distinctions between male and female define the female identity in relation to and mostly as opposed to the male.

The presence of such a sharp dichotomy between men and women categorises both sexes and "women are usually associated with the emotions and body, and men with reason and the mind" (Tong 7) which is indeed prompted by Cartesian dualism which is based on the distinction between the mind and the body. This kind of a dualism suggests that the mind determines the identity by totally detaching the mind from the body. The forerunner of this dualism, Descartes considers human beings to be rational beings by employing rationality at the centre of his philosophical arguments made plain through his philosophical statement; *"Cogito ergo sum" -I think, therefore I am-*. Deducing from his argument, it becomes clear that Descartes' outlook on identity heavily depended on rationality totally rejecting the senses. Descartes describes "the nature of the self as a thing which thinks and the nature of corporeal substance, which is extension" (Copleston 135). According to Descartes' philosophical doctrine, the self is seen as a thinking and hence a rational being, rejecting the senses. So, according to the principles of Descartes' philosophy, "The senses, […], yield information only about properties and reveal nothing about substance itself. What can be known about the substance is furnished solely by reason, or the understanding […]" (Barber 7). The construction of gender positions is also centred on the discussion of the body "as the gender conventionally aligned with the body" (Carson 94). Dismissing such an attitude, Julia Kristeva is largely "concerned with analysing the materiality of the female body; its drives, pulsations and emanations, which she argues are regarded with revulsion within a culture which wishes to divorce the 'pure' subject of Cartesian rationalism from its fleshy corporeality" (Carson 94). That is because women are reduced to their bodies while men are associated with the mind, formulating a rough division between the two sexes.

Proposing that men and women are deemed to be basically different since gender is biologically established, essentialism is functional in figuring out the distinctions drawn among men and women. Linguistic distinctions generate binary oppositions by creating divisions between men and women. Phoca puts together these distinctions as follows;

> In English a useful distinction emerged from the linguistic differentiation associated with the two adjectives for the terms 'men' and 'women'. One adjectival derivation— feminine/masculine—is used to refer to social, cultural or psychic constructions. The other—female/ male—represents the biological aspects of gendered identities. This linguistic distinction is crucial in understanding the thinking behind essentialist and anti-essentialist discourses. Broadly, essentialist gender positioning is taken to imply that the identities of men and women are biologically fixed and determined. On the other hand, anti-essentialist thinking is predicated on the notion that patriarchy positions woman as 'other'. She therefore signifies sexual difference, but this is not a fixed and stable identity (48).

These arguments are all generated by linguistic dichotomies which eventually create the essentialist and anti-essentialist discourses. Based on biological differences, identity formation is thus reduced to gender identification. The subject and hence the object positions are established through these opposite traits attributed to both men and women. These binary oppositions define women as opposed to the male. Woman, then, represents the deviant from the male norm. Woman as the 'other' cannot have a stable identity, but is constructed through the deviance or difference from the male. These distinctions are generated as the very result of the discourses which determine the object and subject positions.

Discourse is what determines the position of the individuals in their relations to each other and the systems of power as French philosopher Michel Foucault argues. Analysing the power relations, Foucault concludes that power is conducted within discourses through which the individual subjects are constituted and regulated. Discourse, then, serves as the vehicle of producing subjects. Therefore, the individuals are created through discourses of certain power systems. Foucault does not see power as imposed by a kind of group or authorities upon another in order to repress, dominate, or control. As Foucault himself enunciates:

> Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application (qtd in McHoul & Grace 89).

Power, thus, acts as a process of action in which people also take part and serve for its ends. Hence, the individuals are the means of exercising this power at the same time. Insofar as power is exercised by the individuals rather than individuals being subject to the effects of power, the operations of power do not oppress the

individuals, instead, the individuals and their identities are generated by these same power operations. In French Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser's words; "It is not the beautiful totality of the individual is amputated, repressed, altered by our social order, it is rather that the individual is carefully fabricated within it, according to a whole technique of forces and bodies" (qtd in McHoul & Grace 66). So, it is clear that the individual subject is formed within the social order; "[I]t is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-à-vis of power; it is,[…], one of its prime effects" (qtd in McHoul & Grace 73). Dominated by 'certain bodies and discourses', the individuals are formed as the products of the power relations since they are in a constant process of both enduring and exerting power.

Michel Foucault stands against the concept of identity as a fixed entity and attributes a changing nature to the concept of identity. Individual identity is formed within and through culture. In Foucault's view, power is also fluid and unstable; it does not belong to bourgeoisie, elite or a certain group. Within a social formation, power relations determine the identity of the individuals. As Heller puts; "a subject's ability to speak is ontologically bounded by the discourses through which his or her subjectivity is constructed- a process that is always determined by the subject's location within the specific institutional topography of a particular social formation" (91). Juridical representations of power which are indeed both the cause and the consequence of the power come to dominate the lives of the individuals. According to this analysis, "the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures" Butler states and also analyses the case of women within the structures of the juridical power as such; "the juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as "the subject" of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. And the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation." (4). Juridical power both produces the category of women as the subjects; but then restrains women under its hegemony at the same time. So, women fail to be represented by the discourse of

such juridical power structures which are essentially expected to pave the way for women's liberation, but regulating, limiting, and controlling the women instead.

Along with the discourses and power relations shaping women's experiences and position in the society as subjects or objects, there was much dispute over female body which was the sole source of debate over biological difference. De Beauvoir stands against 'anatomic destiny' rejecting essentialism, hence rails against a fixed female identity. She dismisses any kind of judgement setting certain truths about the identity of women. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) which is noted for the statement "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (273) explores how the gender roles are established for women. In a patriarchally defined society, women came to be regarded as the 'Other'; "Woman has been the Other throughout culture; man has been the Self, the subject" (qtd in Vintges, 134). While male acts were considered to be the norm, women were seen as the deviant from this norm, hence women constitute the 'second sex'.

The subordination of women and the male gaze upon woman as "the absolute object of desire" while "man is, sexually, *subject*" (Beauvoir 340) is another issue Beauvoir covers in *The Second Sex* (1949). She vehemently discusses the inferior role given to women who are dominated by the males either married or unmarried; "it is the men's group that allows each of its members to find self-fulfilment as husband and father; woman, as slave or vassal, is integrated within families dominated by fathers and brothers, and she has always been given in marriage by certain males to other males" (416). Women acted the roles already formulated to be controlled by the male all over.

Women are oppressed in the domestic sphere through reproduction, parenting as wives and mothers. Feminism's often-repeated mantra; 'the personal is political' as coined by Anne Koedt delineates "that male power is exercised and reinforced through 'personal' institutions such as marriage, child-rearing and sexual practices" (Thornham 26). To women's detriment, patriarchy acts as the mechanism of oppression on women by determining the nature of the domestic institutions. As a consequence, once excluded from the public, women lose the domination of the private sphere to men; "[t]he artificial distinction between a "public" sphere of politics and a "private" sphere of domestic life obscures the inescapable fact that

excluding women from the public sphere deprives them of control over their presumably private existence" (Bates & Denmark 414). Men as the determinants and conductors of the public laws have determined the private rights and images of women accordingly, which reinforced their subordinate identities.

Domesticity and reproduction has marginalised women. Women as the necessity of their reproductive role were to stay at home. Beauvoir sees that women's reproductive abilities have eased their exclusion from the production and worldly matters. "The fundamental fact that from the beginning of history doomed woman to domestic work and prevented her taking part in the shaping of the world was her enslavement to the generative function" (Beauvoir 139). Women bound to domestic feminine role especially as mothers have not been able to enter the workplaces or to take care of and contribute to the affairs outside the households.

Influenced by Beauvoir, American writer Betty Friedan wrote *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963 in which she defines the woman problem as "the problem that has no name" (11) which explores how women in the 1950s and 1960s have been pacified and subjugated with feminine mystique urging them "to seek fulfilment as wives and mothers" (Friedan 11). Overwhelmed by the feminine mystique, women are made to feel that they are to act in certain ways and predetermined roles accessible for them to internalise. They imitate certain images prompted by the media and magazines, even their bodies are controlled by the patriarchy. What is regarded as feminine is the sole image women of all sorts are striving to achieve; "healthy, beautiful, educated, concerned about her husband, her children, her home" (Friedan, 13). Women are simply domesticized again despite the access to education and employment.

Friedan sets forth "the lack of a private image" (68) for women to acquire; women's lives, instead, are shaped by public images. In so doing, "[t]he feminine mystique permits, even encourages, women to ignore the question of their identity. The mystique says they can answer the question "Who am I?" by saying "Tom's wife… Mary's mother" (Friedan 64). Friedan contends that women were solely defined according to their matrimonial status, which was caused by their crisis of identity because what women experienced was "a strange discrepancy between the reality of [their] lives as women and the image to which [they] were trying to conform" (7).

Housewifery and motherhood were the two professions that wasted women's potentials. These professions limited women's chances to freedom and prevented women from creating a liberated image instead of the media-led images. Women were again reduced to traditional feminine images- "passive, dependent, conformist, incapable of critical thought or original contribution to society" (Friedan 170).

The outlook on marriage has not much changed when compared with the Victorian ideals. As De Beauvoir pronounces, marriage is still respected and seen as the guarantee of the elevation of women's status in terms of social stance; "Marriage is not only an honourable career and one less tiring than many others: it alone permits a woman to keep her social dignity intact and at the same time to find sexual fulfilment as loved one and mother" (De Beauvoir 327).

Judith Butler brings into account a different outlook on identity with *Gender Trouble* (1990). "Butler introduces the idea that all gender and all sexual identities are performed" (Phoca 46). All of the gender positions are established culturally and conducted accordingly. Dismissing the conventional notions about gender and sex as innately possessed qualities, she, rather views them as culturally and socially constructed. Consequently, the identity is established through culture and society rather than being determined at birth. Butler talks about the unstable nature of woman as a subject; "The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a great deal of material that not only questions the viability of "the subject" as the ultimate candidate for representation or, indeed, liberation, but there is very little agreement after all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women" (Butler 4).

Throughout the modern times, female identity is more problematized when compared with the Victorian age. The idea that marriage is a prerequisite for the construction of female identity has been deconstructed. As a result, marriage has come to be criticised and even condemned as one of the biggest factors of woman's subjugation. A woman who had the role of the wife in marriage was subordinated and overwhelmed by her husband due to economic dependency; "A wife's economic dependence on her husband perpetuated her sense of helplessness and inferiority in the marriage relation" (qtd in Rich 10). However, economic freedom has enabled women to have the freedom to choose as Beauvoir asserts; "Economic evolution in

woman's situation is in process of upsetting the institution of marriage: it is becoming a union freely entered upon by the consent of two independent persons […] Woman is no longer limited to the reproductive function, which has lost in large part its character as natural servitude and has come to be regarded as a function to be voluntarily assumed" (415).

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, liberalisation appears as the locus of women's movement. In the 1960s equal rights groups such as Women's Liberation Movement were organised. In Britain, the nature of these liberation movements possessed "a Marxistsocialist inflection rather different from the liberal or radical feminism dominant in the USA" (Thornham 27). In a society which is divided and designed according to social class, the idea of liberation in England was more towards the social equality and relations. When Women's Liberation Conference took place in Britain in 1970, at Ruskin College in Oxford, the conference developed four central demands "for equal pay, equal education and opportunity, 24-hour nurseries, free contraception and abortion on demand" (Thornham 27).

Women's liberation has come to be felt in certain aspects of personal sphere as Beauvoir asserts,"[f]or the first time in history through the availability of contraceptives and the access to paid work, women have the chance to develop into a Self as well" (qtd in Vintges, 134). Women could have a sense of self through the economic empowerment making them freer. After the gain of civil and legislational rights, the need for economic and sexual liberty became even more significant because as Tong points out, "[i]n order to be fully liberated, women need economic opportunities and sexual freedoms as well as civil liberties" (23). Women needed an array of liberties concomitantly so as to be totally emancipated.

As for the 1980s, an unrelenting backlash activism against feminism was commenced through films, women's magazines, advertisements, and so on, which aimed to undermine the gains of women's struggles for liberation. Susan Faludi draws out the deliberate design of the attack on feminism as a prevalent attitude during the eighties and how feminism has been turned into the reason causing the oppression on women's part;

> it must be all that equality that's causing all that pain. Women are unhappy precisely *because* they are free. Women are enslaved by their own liberation.

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> They have grabbed at the gold ring of independence, only to miss the one ring that really matters. They have gained control of their fertility, only to destroy it. They have pursued their own professional dreams—and lost out on the greatest female adventure. The women's movement, as we are told time and again, has proved women's own worst enemy. (Faludi 2).

Women were oppressed by the principles of the backlash manifestos via the instruments of the media disseminating certain images. The 'Superwoman' image can be said to have been designed to construct the backlash tenets tormenting women. During the 1980s, 'superwoman' image was prompted both by the media and as a result of Thatcherism. Tim Lott, the writer of *Rumours of a Hurricane* (2002) which is about the transformation of a woman during the 1980s states in an article in the *Guardian*; "They [women] wanted jobs - good jobs. They wanted money - as much as men had. They wanted the right to compete with men on equal terms in the commercial marketplace. They wanted economic power and social respect through that power". Being the first female Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher of Conservative Party has always been criticised and unwelcomed by left-wing feminists. As the representative of all women as the first woman Prime Minister in England's history, Thatcher has been regarded as unfeminine and harsh against women conforming to the patriarchal world of governmental politics. Having an ideal happy family life with her two children and supporting husband Denis Thatcher, Margaret Thachter became the epitome of 'have-it-all' type of female power urging the other women to take up the same struggle.

Together with this 'superwoman' image to conform to, women have the role of motherhood along with their careers and working lives. Even though there were tremendous changes in their lives since economic freedom empowered women, women were still biased against in workplaces; they were underpaid when compared with their male counterparts and prone to sex discrimination in workplaces. So, they had the load of the domestic and public roles at the same time both of which are to be fulfilled as Walby depicts;

> Despite the ongoing transformations, women are not yet in employment in equal numbers with men; men are not yet contributing to care work equally with women; childcare is still disproportionately performed by women in the domestic sphere, in spite of some development of public childcare; the state does not have a monopoly over legitimate violence against women that is not fully criminalised (106).

Domesticity is still the mostly argued and resisted issue. Women are still desperately confined to private sphere whether they are employed or not. Caring and rearing children have been attributed to mothers who are trapped inside both by motherhood and employment. Women were trapped and oppressed by "two standards of perfection: the one set in the workplace by traditional men, who had wives to take care of all their nonworkplace needs, and the one set in the home by traditional women, whose whole sense of worth, power, and mastery came from being ideal housewives and mothers" (qtd in Tong 29).

Economic independency has rendered women more liberated; yet not less subjugated; hence the definition of their identity has become more complicated. Tong summarizes Betty Friedan's idea; "trying to be full-time career women as well as full-time housewives and mothers— Friedan concluded that 1980s "superwomen" were no less oppressed (albeit for different reasons) than their 1960s "stay-at-home" mothers had been" (qtd 29). As economic pursuits have made women more indulged in success, their trajectory has turned into a thorny one. Under the constraints of capitalism, women were oppressed with their entrance into the public sphere providing them with the low-paid or part-time jobs. As Sassoon points out in *One Hundred Years of Socialism* (1996), women were exploited for the benefit of the capitalist system. That sort of an exploitation led to the creation of "a dualistic class, made up of a stagnant or declining sector of full-time employees (two -thirds men) and an expanding and mainly female sector of part-timers" (659). Women were encouraged to enter into the public sphere, which did not liberate them, but further deepened the inequality between men and women.

As a further effect of capitalism, media-led enterprises such as magazines popularized certain roles for women so that they would be able to promote certain images for women to take up. In so doing, they also attempted to sell the beauty and fashion products for their own economic interests. They were focused on their economic gain; not the emancipation of women. As a result, magazines became tools for oppressing women by fixing some characteristic features that women would feel the need to gain;

> In the 1950s, women's magazines urged their readers to be good full-time wives *and* to take advantage of the new consumer goods, which would be available to them only if they also worked. By the 1980s, new magazines

urged them to have a successful career, master the intricacies of *nouvelle cuisine,* excel in love-making, look glamorous and be good mothers. Men were still expected to be just men (Sassoon 669).

Encouraging women to adopt these promoted positions, magazines aimed at controlling their images, bodies and behaviours. Therefore, women were both consumed and became consumers under the constraints of commercialism which determines the behaviours and preferences of women. Capitalism, on the one hand, oppresses women in the public sphere by presenting them the lower rank jobs with lower incomes; however on the other hand imposes the 'super woman' image upon women by urging them to be successful both in their jobs and families.

From the 1990s onwards, diversity and difference in the domain of feminism have been welcomed and celebrated. There has been a shift from the communal to the personal. Instead of the collective activism of the 1960s and 1970s, the personal empowerment of women has been more important. "The critique of the subject led to an investigation of the differences between men and women, differences *within* the group 'women', and differences embodied in 'one' woman (Howie & Tauchert 51). As a result, there is a multiplicity of choices as feminism has gained a much wider spectrum of women inside the movement such as women of colour, working class women and lesbians. Women are deemed to construct their identity in the way they aspire for without the boundaries of social or traditional constraints. It is an obviously true fact that women are much freer in their choices of identity. Yet, the social, economic and personal freedom of women is still debated issues in our day. So, women's struggle to gain a viable sense of self is still in process although there is more room for change and respect in the contemporary world.

Media images of womanhood and femininity oppress women in the contemporary world. Male dominated world still sees woman as the "other"; deviant from the male norm and constructs the images they should conform to. In the contemporary times especially, the media-led images of the female and femininity have certain figures for the representation of women. "The media [..] urged us [women] to be pliant, cute, sexually available, thin, blonde, poreless, wrinkle-free, and deferential to men. But…. the media also suggested we could be rebellious, tough, enterprising, and shrewd" (Bates & Denmark 22). The conflicting images stimulated by the media have made women oscillate between these two types of constructed images and thus

both objectified women and blurred women's inner selves and their identities correspondingly.

Even in art, women's representation through symbols has some certain icons based on certain ideas of femininity. Bates & Denmark summarize the five themes generally available in different cultures throughout the world in the same way: "frightening females, venerated madonnas, sex objects, earth mothers, and invisible women" (25). These prevalent images reflect the basic stereotypes about women who are constructed as certain figures. Evil figures such as witches are generally depicted as women, yet women are also portrayed as religious figures to be respected. Women are reduced to sexual objects in especially pornographic magazines. Women are basically associated with nature and therefore reflected as belonging to nature. They are despised and limited in the mainstream culture represented by men.

Though women have acquired social and legal recognition, self-control over reproduction, access to higher education and professions and hence money and power after years of struggle, Naomi Wolf argues in *The Beauty Myth* (1991) that there is a new source of oppression for women which controls women's bodies and consequently their sense of identity. That is the 'beauty myth' which has overwhelmed women to be physically perfect under the guise of fulfilling their sense of selves. By analysing the relationship between beauty and female identity as a consequence of the beauty myth, Wolf asserts that taking the place of the "myths about motherhood, domesticity, chastity, and passivity" (Wolf 11), the beauty myth acts as a social control subjugating women; "[a]s women released themselves from the feminine mystique of domesticity, the beauty myth took over its lost ground, expanding as it waned to carry on its work of social control" (Wolf 10). After successfully eschewing the domestic oppression, women have come across the challenge of the beauty myth.

Women have fought for their rights, liberation, and equality with men. They eventually have acquired what they have been aiming; yet this time they are dominated by certain standards of beauty which act to repress women:

> As the economy, law, religion, sexual mores, education, and culture were forcibly opened up to include women more fairly, *a private reality colonized female consciousness*. By using ideas about "beauty," it reconstructed an alternative female world with its own laws, economy, religion, sexuality,

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education, and culture, each element as repressive as any that had gone before (Wolf 16 emphasis added).

The beauty myth setting up standards of beauty have started to form a new type of ideology in which to melt women's resistance. So restrictive this myth has come to be that it may be seen as equal to the oppression they have encountered in former times.

Sexuality, domesticity, marriage and motherhood are still the determinants of the construction of the female identity. But the victimisation of women is not the part of debate as in the past; rather women are seen as the 'survivors'. The orientation of freedom is more towards the personal rather than social because the contradictions and differences structuring female identity have become more obvious in the contemporary world. Gaining rights led to the liberation movement, which are followed by the plurality of thoughts about the nature of womanhood. However, as Walby concludes, "[t]here is no simple, monolithic, timeless category of 'woman', whose 'interests' would be obvious; rather there are changes in who women are, in how they are positioned, and also in hoe they perceive their interests and imagine them being taken forward" (123). There is always a changing trend in the definition of identity. In our day, women celebrate the rights that have been acquired coming after a long way of activism, however, they continue to be restricted and diminished by unrealistic or distorted images and different sources of oppression always come along the way. Women have no solid or uniform sense of self as a result of the contradictory images surrounding them and their differences and peculiarities;

> Increasingly there have been explorations and celebrations of differences among women and appreciation of the complexities of subjective identities. The question of defining "women" must now be broached in terms of a multitude of racial, ethnic, religious, class, and sexual identities and histories (Barber 71).

Consequently, defining women as a fixed category having certain traits and identity has always been almost impossible and continues to be so in today's world; rather there is a prevalent tendency to celebrate the differences of women with their own unique characteristics and choices. The attempt to define 'women' calls into question the various features marking the difference between different women such as race, ethnicity, religion, class, sexual orientation and experiences.

Timberlake Wertenbaker, one of the leading contemporary woman dramatists of British theatre, has always been preoccupied with women throughout her writing career. As a woman dramatist, Wertenbaker indulges in the feminist issues concerning the place of women in the society, women in relation to patriarchy, men and women in their power struggles. As Wertenbaker herself expresses: "I see feminism as humanism, and the questioning of authority, any authority, and therefore male authority since most authority is male" (qtd in DiGaetani 270). She is continuously in an attempt to question the male power and control over women in her plays. So, the forms of control employed by the male as the agents of male hegemony are among the main concerns of her dramaturgy. Snodgrass points out that "Wertenbaker's developing talents turned more pointedly to feminist themes of identity and male on-female VIOLENCE" (562 emphasis original).

Wertenbaker is critical of the domination and control of the male over the theatre and therefore she is one of those female playwrights who constantly endeavour to produce plays to be received into the theatre canon in which women are generally ruled out by the male writers. In an interview in *The Guardian*, Wertenbaker talks to Michael Billington about the mainstream tendency of the theatre world that is controlled by male playwrights: "We talk about women dramatists, but it's significant that 'woman' becomes the compound whereas 'male' is the noun. It's as if that's the norm. I don't even think the prejudice is conscious. It's just that men judge the plays, put on the plays and, on the whole, run the theatres." Wertenbaker repents that women writers are dependent upon the male writers, who regulate the theatre world. Rather discouraging for women writers; plays by male writers are staged excluding women from both the literary texts and the stage. Exploring such themes as woman identity and patriarchy in her plays, Wertenbaker reacts against the male domination in the theatre and gives voice to women and their problems.

An Anglo-American who grew up in the Basque region of France, Timberlake Wertenabaker has a mixed upbringing (Stephenson & Langridge 136). After she graduated from Saint John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, she lived in Greece where she taught French. Then, she moved to England where she began to write for the theatre. She worked for theatre at the Royal Court Theatre from 1984-85 (Snodgrass 562). Wertenbaker has produced many award-winning plays for the stage and television and radio as well. Some of her prominent plays are *New*

Anatomies(1981), Our Country's Good (1988) which is based on Thomas Keneally's *The Playmaker* and received prizes including Evening Standard Award for Most Promising Playwright and Laurence Olivier/BBC Award for Best New Play in 1988, which was followed by Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best New Foreign Play in 1990 , *The Grace of Mary Traverse* (1985) which won the Plays and Players Most Promising Playwright Award; *The Love of the Nightingale* (1989), which won the Eileen Anderson Central Television Drama Award; *Three Birds Alighting on a Field* (1991), which won Critics' Circle Theatre Awards and also Writers' Guild Award for Best West End Play and the Susan Smith Blackburn Award in 1992, *The Break of Day* (1995), *After Darwin* (1998), *The Ash Girl* (2000), and the *Credible Witness* (2001).

Wertenbaker generally uses historical and mythological settings for her plays, however as Sullivan points out; "[e]ven when her plays are set in the past, they focus on contemporary issues" (140). As a result, the historical settings in which Wertenbaker structured her plays have a two-fold function: a medium of questioning of the past and commentary on the present. Though she portrays stunning and destructive themes at times, there is always hope for the future in Wertenbaker plays: "Stealthily, optimism peeps below the surface of her plays" (Cohn 16).

This thesis aims to examine the construction of female identity as defined by patriarchy and motherhood in *The Grace of Mary Traverse* (hereafter *GMT*) and *The Break of Day* (hereafter *BD*) respectively. These two plays are chosen as the focus of this study for the reason that they provide the necessary material for analysis since they both portray the condition of women within different social and historical contexts. They also clearly depict the trajectory of feminist movement via the historical and contemporary contexts presented in the plays; covering a large time span from the eighteenth century to the ardent feminist activism of seventies, and the backlash-ridden eighties. Patriarchy and motherhood are two subjects within whose contexts the impossibility of the construction of a viable identity for women is clearly shown both in *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *The Break of Day*.

The Grace of Mary Traverse is about young Mary Traverse who is the daughter of a wealthy merchant named Giles Traverse. Mary leads her life confined to the domestic sphere. Her father does not allow her to step into the outside world.

Detached from the public life completely, Mary yearns to explore the world which is entirely out of her touch. However, with her servant Mrs Temptwell, Mary Traverse embarks on a journey in London to discover her identity, power; and to have experience. Throughout the journey, she witnesses a number of destructive experiences that help her face the oppression women are prone to. Employing the eighteenth century as a parallel metaphor to reflect on the contemporary times in which the play was written, Wertenbaker discusses several issues such as women's status in the society, roles assigned to women, sexual exploitation of women and class distinction.

The second play by Wertenbaker to be investigated in this study, *The Break of Day* tells the story of three adult women who live in the contemporary England of the nineties. The playwright investigates the issues of adoption, reproductive technologies, career, and paid work in relation to motherhood and hence woman identity. The two of these women; Tess and Nina whose priority has been their occupations and careers in their youth, are characterized by their uneasiness about having children at present. The third one; April seems to contradict her friends in her outlook on parenthood as she does not consider motherhood to be the sole aim of a woman's life. Objectively presenting different perspectives regarding motherhood, Wertenbaker voices women's ideas and feelings about parenthood and questions the significance of motherhood in framing female identity.

CHAPTER2

THE GRACE OF MARY TRAVERSE: PATRIARCHY AND FEMALE IDENTITY

The Grace of Mary Traverse (1985), one of the most successful and well-received plays of Timberlake Wertenbaker, is about the young Mary Traverse who embarks on a journey on the streets of London hoping to break free from the boundaries of her domestic life and to experience freedom and power in the male dominated society of the 1780s. The play traces the quest of Mary Traverse for power, experience, knowledge, liberation and identity among the cruelty and intricacy of densely male-populated public world she finds herself in. Although Mary is the daughter of a wealthy merchant, she leads her life completely bound to the indoors. She is curious about the external world to which she has been attracted since she leads her life totally outside the public sphere. She struggles to construct her identity freely, but she cannot define her place in the patriarchal codes of the society. The play explores how an ordinary girl like Mary "traverses or crosses both class and sex boundaries in her quest for enlightenment or a grace by which to live" (Cohn 191). The play likewise portrays the restrictions and oppression women are subject to under the rules of the patriarchy defining and providing certain roles for women to live by and to internalize. The roles imposed upon women through domesticity, sexuality, marriage and motherhood by the patriarchy turn into the very means by which women's position in the society and hence their identity are constructed.

Giving the play a historical setting, the playwright intends to use the play as an instrument for portraying the themes and characters not focusing either solely on the present or the past. "Although the play is set in the eighteenth century" Wertenbaker informs, "it is not a historical play. […] I found the eighteenth century as a valid metaphor, and I was concerned to free people of the play from contemporary misconceptions" (*Plays One* 66). Wertenbaker uses a historical setting and time for the play with the contemporary issues embedded within. As Cousin asserts;

"Timberlake Wertenbaker uses past landscapes partially, at least, to explore the present" (159).

The Grace of Mary Traverse highlights gender inequality in society as a theme. Men and women are starkly juxtaposed all along the play, which is caused by the "system of domination [that is] called patriarchy" (Walby, *Theorizing Patriarchy* 3). Patriarchy, from the radical feminist point of view which forms the underpinnings of *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, is seen as the cause of women's subjugation. Walby explains that "Radical feminism is distinguished by its analysis of gender inequality in which men as a group dominate women as a group and are the main beneficiaries of the subordination of women." (*Theorizing Patriarchy* 3), which is evidently demonstrated within the play.

Throughout the play, Wertenbaker deals with the issue of identity on gender basis. Categorising human beings as masculine and feminine and attributing certain characteristics to each category, males dictate themselves as the superior while they attribute lower qualities to the females as Kate Millett summarizes; "aggression, intelligence, force and efficiency in the male; passivity, ignorance, docility, "virtue" and ineffectuality in the female" (26). According to such constructed notions of personality traits regarded as either masculine or feminine, women are diminished to object position whereas men hold subject position which determines and controls the positions, behaviours, attitudes and lifestyle choices of women. In the first scene of the play, Mary and her father are seen to be sitting "*in the drawing room of a house in the City of London*" (*GMT* 67). Mary's father; Giles Traverse is watching over her while she is practising the manner in which she must talk to a man: "*Mary Traverse sits elegantly, facing an empty chair. She talks to the chair with animation*" (*GMT* 67). She addresses the imaginary man and the only thing she talks about is nature which is a trivial matter for conversation: "Nature, my lord (*Pause*). It was here all the time and we've only just discovered it" (*GMT* 67). This makes clear the fact that women are expected to talk about unimportant and simple things such as nature, and not to express wishes, ideas or opinions, which is a substantial part of the traditional outlook on women's place in the conversational exchange.

Mary's father supervises her manners and words. He leaves no room for the expression of Mary's desires. Upon hearing Mary's will "to visit a salt mine" (*GMT*

68), Giles Traverse warns her immediately: "You are here not to express your desires but to make conversation" (*GMT* 68). Giles Traverse urges his daughter to be submissive and pleasant by taking up certain attitudes: "To be agreeable, a young woman must make the other person say interesting things" (*GMT* 68). So, as Carlson affirms Mary's language is determined and controlled by the patriarchy: "Mary's language suffers in the shadow of male hegemony" (142). Giles Traverse monitors Mary's words, gestures and conducts. As a consequence, Mary is conditioned to gain the already determined form and manner of elegance, beauty, charm. Her manners and movements are expected to be like that of a charming young lady as her father always directs Mary to: "A compliment must be received in silence" (*GMT* 70). Giles Traverse guides Mary to be an ideal young woman because he wants Mary to possess the features of "the 'graceful daughter' into whom [he] tried to construct Mary" (Cousin 169). That is why, Giles is in a constant struggle to determine and define her manners, conducts, gestures, even ideas and wishes, and thereby shape her identity.

Education is another issue with which Giles Traverse oppresses Mary who has ideals and ideas. Giles again tries to fix Mary's educational field not allowing her to study what she wants; "But Papa, you won't let me study politics. And I'd so like to" (*GMT* 69). In terms of education, women are not given the same opportunities as men as Lorber states: "Gender inequality can also take the form of girls getting less education than boys of the same social class" (6). Though Mary does not come from a working class family, she is deprived of the chance to follow her educational dreams just because she is a woman.

Domestic sphere where women are confined to indoors is seen as the ideal place for women to sustain their womanly roles. That is why, Mary's domesticity is of crucial importance to Giles Traverse who is afraid of the idea that other "people might think [his daughter] spend[s] time out of doors" (*GMT* 69). Until the modern times, women were surrounded by the oppression of the "domestic ideology" that entailed their confinement to their private realm: "[women] did not work in public, only in their own households, and were excluded from the public sphere of the state, lacking citizenship rights such as suffrage and, if married, ability to own property. […] Cultural institutions, such as the church, supported the notion that women's place was in the home" (Walby, *Theorizing Patriachy* 179). Women's position was defined

by the male; first fathers or brothers; or husbands in the marriage. Women's subordination changed hands, but the extent or nature of the subordination did not diminish; rather it was possible to increase within marriage. Such kind of a "private model of patriarchy […] was especially applied to middle-class women to a much greater extent than working class women" (Walby *Theorizing Patriachy* 179-80) since women of the working classes especially needed to work outside their hearth in order to aid the maintenance of their families financially. Mary Traverse, as the representative of the middle class becomes more prone to the oppression of the patriarchy in the private realm. Giles Traverse tries to confine Mary into the domestic sphere. When Mary says that she sees his coaches while looking out of the window, Giles questions her by emphasizing that she should not be curious about the outer world, on the contrary she should be grateful for what she has in the house all provided by her father: "Why gape out of the window when I've given you so much to see in the house?" (*GMT* 69). Mary is wondering about the external world that is denied to her by the boundaries her father has established. She wants to go to the theatre to see a play, but Giles Traverse does not take her out to the theatre. He protests against her wish to "[see] more of the world" (*GMT* 70) saying: "I am afraid that's not possible" (*GMT* 70). All the time rejecting her wishes, Giles overwhelms Mary's subjectivity and aspirations.

Mary is to submit to the roles that she is expected to play. After her father's departure, she practices walking alone in the room. She recites the manners she has learnt from her teachers: "You must become like air. Weightless. Still. Invisible. Learn to drop a fan and wait" (*GMT* 71). Mary endeavours to conduct the manner of walking idealized for the women: "See the invisible passage of an amiable woman" (*GMT* 71). She has been intentionally educated so as to improve not her mind, but her manners: "I may sometimes be a little bored, but my manners are excellent" (*GMT* 71). Although she feels weary as she lacks interest in such activity, she is still preoccupied with perfecting her conduct.

Mrs Temptwell, the servant of Traverse family for twenty five years, comes to the scene with the command of Mary to pick up the fan she dropped. Mrs Temptwell tells Mary about how successful Mary's dead mother was in "not breath[ing]" (*GMT* 72) and how "[her mother] went in and out of the rooms with no one knowing she'd been there" (*GMT* 73). Linking death with passivity and submissiveness, Mrs

Temptwell maintains that "[d]eath suits women. You'd look lovely in a coffin, Miss Mary" (*GMT* 73).

Having a keen desire to learn about the outside world, Mary is inquiring about the "girl in number fourteen" (*GMT* 73) who is said to have gone out to the streets of London disguised in order not to ruin her reputation. Mrs Temptwell lures Mary into the adventurous journey that will eventually transform her. Captivated by the idea of being out in the streets, Mary voices her wish to Mrs Temptwell: "You'll take me out there. Yes. Into the streets. I'll glitter with knowledge" (*GMT* 74). So, as Cousin states, "[b]y means of a process that her name encodes, […] Mrs Temptwell has persuaded Mary Traverse to leave the imprisoning security of her father's house, and to explore the forbidden London street outside, forbidden to Mary, that is, by her father" (159). Mary is a courageous young girl who is not afraid to enter the public life from which she has been kept away by her father.

After Mary gets into the London streets, the environment she finds herself in is fraught with malevolent men who seek to objectify and exploit women. As the very first contact with a male, Mary confronts Lord Gordon who repents that he is "a man of stunning mediocrity" (*GMT* 75). He complains to himself that he is outshined by excellent men around him. He looks for a chance to make himself noticed by others. When he sees Mary on the street, Lord Gordon attempts to draw Mary's attention to himself. But, Mary's disregard for Lord Gordon infuriates him: "How dare someone like you ignore me. You!" (*GMT* 78). He reckons Mary's behaviour as a challenge to his manhood. *"[T]ak[ing] out his sword"*, he strives to overpower Mary: "I'll make you frightened. Yes. I'll show you my strength. Come here to the lamp-post" (*GMT* 78). His concern is to get an opportunity to prove himself. Yet, when he is ignored, he finds the way to disguise his disillusionment by using his sexual prowess towards Mary. In the meantime, Sophie who is a poor peasant girl who has come to London so as to find her aunt interferes to save Mary from his attack. However, amongst the confusion of the moment, Sophie ends up being raped by Lord Gordon before Mary's eyes. When he meets Mr Manners, Lord Gordon claims that this violent action has transformed him: "Mr Manners, I'm a different man" (*GMT* 81) just because what he gains afterwards is "power" (*GMT* 81). Rape, an intentional form of violence against women by men has its underpinnings in the power struggle for the

possession of the female body as Brownmiller explains in *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape* (1975):

> Rape became not only a male prerogative, but man's basic weapon of force against women, the principle agent of his will and her fear. His forcible entry into her body, despite her physical protestations and struggle, became the vehicle of his victorious conquest over her being, the ultimate test of his superior strength, the triumph of his manhood. […] It is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all men* keep *all women* in a state of fear (Brownmiller 14-5 emphasis original).

According to this analysis, as the rapist of Sophie, Lord Gordon attempts to use his manhood as the agent of his tyrannical nature. His sole aim is to emphasize his superiority and dominance over women who are devoid of his 'manly' strength. First attacking Mary and then Sophie, he finally exercises his physical power over Sophie by forcibly having sexual intercourse with Sophie. In an attempt to exert his masculine power, Lord Gordon also threatens Sophie's own sense of identity by the assumption of control over her body. In the end, Lord Gordon boasts about his manhood by linking his sexual tyranny to manly power, consequently causing Mary's first impression of the London streets and men to be an unpleasant one: "I don't like this world. It's nasty" (*GMT* 77).

By resorting to violence, men control women socially and threaten the remaining others emphasizing their supremacy over women. Hester draws a parallelism between the current forms of violence against women and witchcraft accusations and trials that took place during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, in various parts of Europe and England with many people -mainly women- eventually being charged with witchcraft. Hester asserts that it is significant that witch-hunting was chiefly aimed at women, which accounts for the emphasis of the domination of men over women:

> In the case of rape and sexual harassment today, any woman could be the target of male violence, although some women may at times be more vulnerable. […] At the time of the witch-hunts we find an analogous picture. It was perhaps easier to accuse those women who were more vulnerable such as the old, widowed and poor, and those who stepped outside the socially-accepted stereotype, although the persecutions were based on a religious and inherently male supremacist ideology which saw *all women* as a threat and as potential 'witches'(Hester 201 emphasis original).

Seeing women as the evil and potential threats, the male ruling class accused lower-class women who could not protest against the witch-persecution because of their vulnerability resulting from their old age, poverty, or widowhood or singleness. Many women were tortured and killed during the witch-hunting trials which are revived in *The Grace of Mary Traverse* with the case of Mrs Temptwell whose grandmother "was hanged as a witch" (*GMT* 113). She remembers how she was tortured: "[t]hey put a nail through her tongue" (*GMT* 114). In a similar vein with Hester's account, Mrs Temptwell reveals that "[the] magistrate who hanged [her] grandmother" was Mary's uncle who is again a male administer from a higher class. With the revival of with-hunting trials in the play, Wertenbaker shows that deemed vulnerable and weak, women have historically been apt to different forms of violence. Linking this historical form of violence to the present experiences of women, the playwright aims to draw the attention to the continuity of violence exerted upon women from the past to the present.

Patriarchal codes of the society determine the ideal features of women who can be considered suitable for marriage. That is why, men search for some certain characteristics in women so as to marry. They prefer to get married with women who are dutiful, subservient, silent, and obeying. Lord Gordon reveals his intention to marry Giles Traverse's daughter though he does not know that Mary is Giles Traverse's daughter. He firmly states that he "want[s] a wife to look up to [him]" (*GMT* 86). He does not want a wife who is intelligent and witty since he supposes an ideal wife to be meek and taciturn: "You've said your daughter is pretty and clever. She is not too clever, is she? She won't talk at breakfast? I couldn't bear that" (*GMT* 86). Lord Gordon thinks that his wife should yield to him so that he will have superiority over her. So, Lord Gordon's idea of an ideal wife for himself is based on the subordination of his possible female counterpart.

Surrounded by the male-dominated ideals of the society, women are not deemed equal with men. They are despised just because they are women. When Mr Manners asks Lord Gordon implying Sophie and Mary: "Who are these women?", Lord Gordon's answer is disparaging: "Just women" (*GMT* 80). At almost every encounter between men and women, women are suppressed by men. They are denied the chance to express themselves or do what they wish to do. To illustrate, the Boy, a servant in front of the coffee house into which Mary and Mrs Temptwell want to go

does not allow Mary and Mrs Temptwell in the coffee house blocking their way at the entrance: "you can't come in" (*GMT* 82) just because they are women. He thinks that women do not deserve to be treated kindly: "It's a waste of time being kind to women" (*GMT* 83). Moreover, the Boy again gives clues to the attitude of men towards women by mentioning the characteristic of the men inside the coffee house: "They don't like ladies' talk" (*GMT* 82) implying that they are not capable of witty conversation just because they are women, to which Mary responds inquiring: "What sex is wit?" (*GMT* 82). Mary's question underscores the gender discrimination that attributes wit to men rather than women.

The dichotomy between men and women are clearly put in the construction of the play. Women and men are continuously compared with one another; however men are positioned higher than women in certain characteristics. For instance, reason is a trait that is attributed to the male. So, when Mary asks her father about reason, he responds "a woman talking about reason is like a merchant talking about nobility" (*GMT* 69). It sounds factitious that women should talk about reason which is widely ascribed to men. Mary emphasizes emotional/rational dichotomy between women and men. After the cock fight which is marked by Mary's defeat by Mr Manners, Mrs Temptwell protests against Mary's giving money to Mr Manners as a result of her failure: "Don't give it to him. He likes you. Burst into tears" (*GMT* 109). Mary regards this act as feminine: "What? Turn female now?" (*GMT* 109). Because crying as a sign of emotionality is attributed to women.

Inasmuch as women are to adopt to the ideals and conducts that men have rendered available for them to adopt, they are not allowed to resist the power and dominance of the patriarchy As Beauvoir analyses, "She [woman] is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is Absolute- she is the Other" (16). Women, as a consequence, cannot achieve subjectivity and for this reason are left dislocated in the male-designed world. Mary feels displaced in a world completely dominated and monitored by men. She witnesses the freedom they enjoy, their cruelty and outrageous actions:

> I've seen them walk the streets without fear, stuff food into their mouths with
> no concern for their waists. I've seen them tear into the skin without

hesitation and litter the streets with their discarded actions. But I have no map to this world. I walk it as a foreigner and sense only danger (*GMT* 83).

In this world, men are free to practice anything they want not even if it is a brutal act like a rape. They are not concerned about the things women are worried about. So, Mary's vision of the world that she has always wondered about is not a pleasing one since this world is overwhelmingly populated by outrageous men who cause fear in her. As Mary gains experience, she is after more pleasure and knowledge though: "what comes next, Mrs Temptwell, what comes next?" (*GMT* 93).

Coming across various vile practices of men in London streets, Mary eventually ends up conducting similar manlike deeds. After she steps into the world of men in the public life, "Mary is observed to have acquired male mannerisms which results in her feeling empowered just like men" (Bozer 72). Mary ends up acting "manly" among the large population of men surrounding the public life in the society. Mary attends a cock fight which is a manly challenge in Lord Exrake's words: "Ladies didn't have cocks in my day" (*GMT* 105). Just like the other men around, Mary sees her cock as the representation of her power: "Now my bird, fight for me, match my courage and my strength" (*GMT* 105).

As a parody of a manly act, Mary attempts to objectify Mr Hardlong and Sophie sexually. Wyllie explains what Mary gains during her adventurous journey: "Mary's odyssey is an exploration of essentially masculine exploitativeness" (43). Wanting to be educated sexually, Mary pays money to Mr Hardlong for his sexual teaching. Following her first sexual intercourse Mary has with Mr Hardlong, she feels "at first power" (*GMT* 90). She relates sexuality with power: "I am the flesh's alchemist" (*GMT* 90). Just like Lord Gordon, Mary links sexuality with power. Mary wants to possess Mr Hardlong via her money, which depicts her attempt to subordinate him just like men tend to do to women: "Mr Hardlong, it is I who have the money. Will you come to me?" (*GMT* 105). Mary tries to objectify Sophie in the same way. She offers Sophie money in exchange for her services in a manner that proves how exploitative she is towards Sophie just like a man would be: "Nothing for nothing. That's their law. When they offer you money, you know what for" (*GMT* 106). When Sophie cannot grasp what Mary means, "*Mary turns to Sophie and lifts up her skirts to her*" (*GMT* 106 emphasis original). Trying to seduce Sophie, Mary's action underlines the sexual abuse that women are subject to in the hands of men. So, acting

out the beneficiary male role, Mary turns into an exploiter of women with her treatment of Sophie, which can be linked to Kate Millett's notion that "One of the chief effects of class within patriarchy is to set one women against another" (38). As an effect of class, patriarchy seems to create an antagonism among women from different classes. "Through multiple advantages of double standard, the male participates in both worlds, empowered by his superior social and economic resources to play the estranged women against each other as rivals" (Millett 38). Though Mary feels superior to Sophie who is a peasant girl, Mary is envious of the interest in Sophie by the males around. So, Mary tries to emphasize the hierarchy between them via her attempt to abuse Sophie sexually.

Causing envy in one woman for another, patriarchy overpowers women by pitting them against each other. The play metaphorically is a reference to the time span between 1979 and 1983 when Margaret Thatcher ruled England. Drawing parallelisms between Margaret Thatcher and Mary Traverse, Bozer contends that "[t]hey are both manly in their conduct (Mary consciously refuses "Turning female", […] and Thatcher is widely known as the "Iron Lady" or Iron fist in a Velvet Glove") and unsupportive of her "sisters" not caring to realise that the "power" of one woman is not effective in ameliorating the status of women in general" (71). Feminists think that "Mrs. Thatcher is only a surrogate man. […] She was not interested in being a woman--and she certainly had no particular policies for women" (Toynbee 1988). That is why, Thatcher was not seen as the representative of women in the cabinet and hence not welcomed. Though she was the first women Prime Minister in Britain's history, Margaret Thatcher did not support other women in the administration of the country becoming "[t]he only prime minister since the war to appoint no woman to her cabinet, she has given fewer government jobs of any kind to women." (Toynbee 1988). During her political career, Margaret Thatcher was encircled by only males, and Mary likewise finds herself surrounded by men in chasing after knowledge and power, which causes her to take up a similar attitude to that of men. She is bossy and harsh towards Mrs Temptwell and Sophie. Apart from this, there is a scene in the play where Mary resorts to violence. After Mary loses her fortune to Mr Manners who beats her in the hag race, Mary whips the Old Woman who wants money in return for her service: "Give me something" (*GMT* 110). Mary links her wicked behaviour to the ruthlessness prevailing in the world: "There is no

kindness. The world is a dry place" (*GMT* 110). In search for power and experience, Mary turns out to be unpleasantly rough on the women around her. The reason for such enmity among women as Kate Millett asserts is the distinction the patriarchy creates leading to antagonism among women (Millett 38).

Meekness and obedience are valued highly in women by men. Sophie is preferred by all the men around them. Mary is envious and compares herself with Sophie. When Mary learns that Mr Hardlong wants to pay for sleeping with Sophie, Mary protests saying: "I would do that too. Mr Hardlong. I would advocate the community of pleasure. Teach me what to do and I will" (*GMT* 93). Mr Hordlong explains why he does not choose Mary: "It's too late, Mary: you would have to learn to ask for nothing" (*GMT* 93). So, the reason behind the desire for Sophie is that she is non-demanding, silent and subservient. Mary realizes that the reason why men are more demanding towards Sophie is her silence and tranquillity: "Ah, Sophie, how sweet you are, I understand why they love you. Such peace, Shall we sleep?" (*GMT* 106). The difference between Mary and Sophie is that "by masculinizing herself [Mary] has excised female vulnerability from her persona, and so no longer appeals to the more predatory instincts of men. The more obviously vulnerable Sophie is constantly being preferred by men to Mary" (Wyllie 43). Sophie is restricted to being docile and silent. When Sophie meets Jack with whom she falls in love, their dialogues are interesting as Sophie answers his questions with just "Yes" or "No" (*GMT* 120). She cannot express herself properly. These responses reflect her symbolic imprisonment in her life and hence in her language.

The characteristics ascribed to women are also evident in Robert's future dreams. Robert who is the educated nephew of Lord Exrake is heedful of the oppression Sophie lives through. Being aware of the dreadful state of women, Robert plans to "build a school for women [and…] help all those girls find virtue and religion again" (*GMT* 95) after inheriting his uncle's money. But it is clear that Robert also accredits a virtuous characteristic to women: "When I have my school, you'll be saved from all this. Your work will be hard but decent and you'll celebrate your chastity (*GMT* 99). Robert's promise emphasizes "chastity" which is assigned to women only. Hill explains the reason for the significance given to chastity in women: "Of all the desirable feminine attributes by far the most important was chastity. Its importance lay in the accepted unchastity of men and the belief that men's passions were

uncontrollable and natural, if regrettable" (Hill 25). So, as the most important feature in women, it was expected from the women to preserve their chastity.

Both men and women are conditioned to act in certain ways thereby they succumb to the ideals of the society. However, women are subjugated and oppressed in this manner since they are seen as inferior to men. Sexuality is one of the biggest components of male domination over women. Women are subject to sexual abuse growing up under the patriarchal control. Sexuality has always been the cause of submission and objectification on the part of women as Lorber asserts:

> Sexual exploitation and violence against women are also part of gender inequality in many other ways. […] women are vulnerable to beatings, rape and murder […] The bodies of girls are and women are used in sex work-pornography and prostitution. […] They may be forced to bear children they do not want or to have abortions or be sterilized against their will (6).

It is women who are prone to violence and sexual abuse. Women are beaten, raped, or murdered by men. Pornography and prostitution entail the use of the female body as a commercial commodity. Women's bodies are controlled and regulated by delivery, abortion or sterilization even without their consent. All these are altogether components of women's physical enslavement as a result of the disparity constructed between men and women in terms of gender. Mary is likewise diminished to a sex object and led into prostitution. Lord Exrake implies that Mary can use her body as a matter of a deal: "Indeed mademoiselle, a beautiful young lady can always pay one way or another. We shall come to an amicable agreement" (*GMT* 96). Mary, however, boldly defends herself after the sinister implication of Lord Exrake: "I do not need to sell my flesh, my lord, and yours might not fetch enough" (*GMT* 96), which Robert regards as "disgusting" (*GMT* 96) because of her manner of talking. He thinks that "[a] young woman shouldn't talk like that" (*GMT* 96). The prevalent attitude is again questioning women about the presence and absence of certain manners and behaviours deemed either agreeable or disagreeable for women.

Fixed gender roles determine the lifestyle and behaviours of both sexes whereas women are expected to conform to the patriarchal principles. Women are considered to be pleasure providers by men. That is why, female body becomes a matter of debate. So though Mary's ambition is to be equal and to gain experience and knowledge about the world, she comes to be regarded as inferior to men:

> [Wertenbaker's] theatre calls attention to the constant hailing of individuals who find themselves already identified as subjected subjects. This is particularly the case in relation to gender. Mary strikes out to know the world, and she naively believes she can act with authority that men enjoy. She soon discovers, though, that she is constantly hailed as "Woman" and routed into the only and oldest profession that patriarchy supports for women-sex trade. (Sullivan 146).

Men represent the authority where women are expected to act in accordance with that authority. Though Mary strives to enjoy liberty and equality with men, she comes to realize that she is conforming to the expectations of patriarchy. Mary is eventually led into prostitution in which woman body is treated as a transactional commodity; therefore submitting to the forces of male domination.

Prostitution is a practice that engages women's bodily subordination to men for financial gain. Jeffreys firmly states that "prostitution is a form of brutal cruelty on the part of men that constitutes a violation of women's human rights, wherever and however it takes place" (348). Women become victims of a sexual transaction conducted by men who exert their dominance over women. *The Grace of Mary Traverse* reflects the very issue of prostitution both as an activity in which some characters are involved and as a matter of debate among people. The conversation between the old women, Mary and the locksmith is a portrayal of the different outlooks upon prostitution by different people:

> **Old Woman** I'm not giving anything to my daughter. She's a whore.
>
> **Mary** In the new world, there will be no whores, there won't have to be.
>
> **Locksmith** If I want a whore and I can pay for her, I have a right to that whore (*GMT* 132).

While the old women's point of view presents a traditional attitude of disinheriting the daughter who has taken up prostitution, as the voice of the riot, Mary attempts to highlight the need to do away with the victimization of women due to prostitution exploiting and degrading women. Locksmith, on the other hand, is after being offered a female body in exchange for money because prostitution is "a sexual activity of women" (Jeffreys 4) in the view of men who believe that prostitution is not a form of oppression imposed on women; but it is a sign of women's "promiscuity" (Jeffreys 4). Whether it is sexual abuse or prostitution, it is an

undeniable fact that women are tormented both physically and emotionally; and women's sense of identity is brutally shattered accordingly.

Giles Traverse adopts a similar attitude to that of the Old Woman in the dialogue. Persuaded by Mr Manners, Giles Traverse decides to pretend that his daughter "died yesterday, of a bad chill" (*GMT* 87) in order to prevent a scandal concerning his political career. Disowning Mary for the fear that her departure may spoil his future prospects in politics, Giles Traverse chooses to announce his daughter dead. Mary repents that she is rejected by her father: "How easily he cancelled my existence" (*GMT* 113). As Mrs Temptwell puts it, Giles Traverse is "in the Cabinet now [and…] happy" (*GMT* 113).

The issue of prostitution is revived in the play in a scene where Giles Traverse is led into a house thinking that he is visiting a house of prostitution and presuming that Sophie is the prostitute he will pay for. He is taken by Sophie to his daughter Mary instead. In the meantime, Mrs Temptwell praises Mary and herself rather than Sophie whom Giles Traverse supposes to be his partner: "She's fanciful and clever and I'm practical and knowing, if not so young" to which Giles responds as: "I want a woman, not a personality" (*GMT* 115). He considers women to be devoid of personality, rather wants a body to entertain himself, not ideas, wit or knowledge which are not attributed to women. When Mary uncovers her face and her real identity is revealed, Giles does not want to face his daughter condemning her: "I have no daughter [...] You're a whore" (*GMT* 117). Mary protests against his words questioning: "Is a daughter not a daughter when she's a whore? […] you make fatherhood an act of grace, an honour I must buy with my graces, which you withdraw as soon as I disgrace you." (*GMT* 117). In the end, Mary wants two things from her father which are experience and money. When Giles hears Mary's ideas, he is bewildered: "I let you read too much, it's maddened you" (*GMT* 117). Giles eventually suggests to Mary to go back to her old way of living "as [his] graceful daughter" (*GMT* 118). However, Mary does not want to go back to her old way of living in which Giles Traverse always oppresses her, imposing certain characteristics to be his "graceful daughter" (*GMT* 119). Mary underscores the difference in their points of view with regard to their father-daughter relationship: "The father I want cannot be the father of 'your' daughter" (*GMT* 119).

Female sexual submission is an approved attribute of women and therefore glorified. Sophie's passivity and obedience are fancied by the males. Mrs Temptwell urges Lord Exrake to take advantage of Sophie's weakness and subservience: "Do what you want with her, Lord Exrake, she never resists" (*GMT* 98). With these words, Mrs Temptwell objectifies Sophie as a powerless person who can claim no right neither on her life nor her own body. She also diminishes Sophie to a person prone to the commands of the others: "Sophie does what she is told" (*GMT* 105).

Sexual exploitation in the form of incest is exemplified in the case of Sophie who tells Mary that she has been sexually abused all through her life. She grew up poor and she has been harassed sexually by her brother: "My brother used to touch me. He was strong and I learned to make it not me. I was somewhere else" (*GMT* 127). As Bell suggests, "[i]n feminist analysis, incest signals not the chaos it did (and does) for sociological functionalism, but an order, the familiar and familial order of patriarchy, in both its strict and its feminist sense." (3). So incest as a form of sexual violence exerted on women emphasizes the power of the patriarchy again. But Sophie has invented a certain way to evade the brutal exploitation of her body: "Sometimes I don't feel I'm there. It could be someone else. And I'm walking in the fields. So I don't mind much" (*GMT* 127). Sophie invented a way of dealing with such exploitation, which is dreaming that she was physically not there at that moment. In so doing, Sophie attempted to get away from the harassment imposed upon her.

As the dominant gender in the social sphere, males strive to exert authority and hegemony over the women. "Hegemonic men are economically successful, from racially and ethnically privileged groups, and visibly heterosexual; they are at the top of the social ladder" (Lorber 220). Their social position resulting from their economic fortune gives them the strength to dominate. They do not have characteristics which may be deemed as deviant. "Hegemonic men within a society monopolize privileges, resources and power" (Lorber 220) just as in the example of Mr Manners who tries to control the regulation of the society. Mr Manners defends the idea that "whatever happens, nothing must change" (*GMT* 124). So, he can be said to be eager to sustain the status quo.

In the third act of *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, Wertenbaker portrays a rebellion in which the main characters are also involved. When poor working class people start a riot against the government for gaining equality, Mary is also enthusiastic about joining this struggle of the people like Jack who "dreams of a new world" (*GMT* 128). When Mary meets Jack, the ardent leader of the riot, she immediately gets caught up with the idea of equality sympathizing with their grievances: "I know the humiliation of being denied equality" (*GMT* 130). Mary has a keen interest to embark on the activism supporting the idea that the new world: "[w]ill be a world ruled by us, for our delight, a world of hope for all. Oh Jack, that's beautiful. Let's go tell everyone" (*GMT* 130). Mary criticizes women's deprivation of their natural rights by the authority they should have gained with their births: "Nature has given us certain unquestionable, inalienable rights but these have been taken from us by those who set themselves above us" (*GMT* 130). This riot depicted in the play is a reference to the Gordon Riots of the eighteenth century in parallel to Brixton Riots of the eightees: "By referring to Gordon Riots that took place in June 1780 in London, Wertenbaker attempts to draw a historical parallel with the Brixton Riots that took place in the summer of 1981 in a small neighbourhood in London" (Bozer 71). Gordon Riots of 1780 was initially a revolt against the Pope and the Catholics after the removal of some limitations formerly inflicted upon the Roman Catholics with the Catholic Relief Act of 1778; but it turned into an uncontrollable turmoil that left many people dead (Babington 21). In the same vein, the Brixton Riots of 1981 was caused by socially and economically oppressed people-mainly the blacks- against the government due to the "oppressive policing over a period of years, and in particular the harassment of young blacks on the streets of Brixton" (Scarman 1) as explained in an inquiry conducted by the police as *The Brixton Disorders* (1981). The playwright makes use of these riots in the setting of *The Grace of Mary Traverse*. So, apart from the parallelism between Mary Traverse and Margaret Thatcher, Wertenbaker associates the past with the contemporary times using certain historical events.

With the inspiration she gets from Jack, Mary seeks power in the male-dominated world contrary to what is expected from a woman. Before the riot, she resorts to the Parliament "where the power sits" (*GMT* 131), however, she is denied access to the Parliament: "[n]o petticoats, no petitions, what do you allow in that house which is

supposed to represent us all?" (*GMT* 131). It is made plain that women are kept away from the governmental posts that are largely held by men. Men are positioned as the holders of power and governmental occupations whereas women are held responsible for the housework and motherhood. Mary emphasizes the power of hegemony by mentioning the soldiers who are the subjects governed by higher authorities: "A soldier braves death but obeys the authority" (*GMT* 101). So, no matter how courageous you are, you are to submit to authority which controls and manages its subjects.

When Mary, Jack and Sophie together go to the Houses of Parliament and the Guard in front of the building does not let them in, Mary asks the Guard: "Wouldn't you like a world where everyone was free to choose their future?" (*GMT* 132). He replies with: "Not much" (*GMT* 132). Not all the people believe that a change will occur. Just like the Guard, Mrs Temptwell thinks that their revolt will bring no good: "New world? This is no way to get rid of the old" (*GMT* 137) even though Jack, Mary and Sophie intend to achieve freedom and liberty with their revolt. Jack advocates the rights of the poor: "We want bread. Bread for everyone" (*GMT* 138), but Mary's objective is more than the bread: "We have to ask for more than bread" (*GMT* 138).

The dialogue between Jack and Mary makes it clear that liberty cannot be gained easily. They search for "a good cry as [their] banner" (*GMT* 138). While Jack sets liberty as the goal, "Liberty. We'd go for that", Mary's words ironically emphasize the meaninglessness of liberty for their lives since they are all deprived of it: "Yes. Liberty is a beautiful word" (*GMT* 139). Jack finally sets his mind for his struggle: "I want to organize for bread and liberty" (*GMT* 140). But, hegemonic men like Mr Manners and Lord Gordon manipulate the riot in the way that they want to lead the crowds. Mr Manners lures Mary into revolting against the Pope and Catholicism rather than fighting for equal rights. In the meantime, Mr Manners continues degrading women by attributing womanhood to the Pope: "Actually, The Pope is a woman. Her red robe is dyed anew every year in putrid blood" (*GMT* 142). Mr Manners and Lord Gordon convince the people around them that Popery is a corrupt institution that prevents their freedom. As a result, their banner becomes "NO POPERY" (*GMT* 143) instead of liberty in the end. Thousands of people gather around the square among the noise and confusion of the riot. All drunk, the crowd gets out of control after some time as Mrs Temptwell narrates: "we moved step by

step, pushed, pushing. Torches were at the front […] we fell in, pressed against the houses, torches high. I was pushed, I dropped, on my knees, […] looked up to see all coated in flames, fire rippling along the gin, houses, people, clothes, all burning" (*GMT* 148). They throw the city into turmoil, thereby tormenting each other instead of realising the ideals they have aspired to due to the manipulation of Mr Manners and Lord Gordon who intentionally lead Mary and thereby Jack and others to change the orientation of the riot in order to protect their status in the government and prevent the destruction of the system by the uprising of the people.

Along with women, working class people like Jack are eliminated from the governing positions or not represented in Parliament. The uprising causes people to rebel, hence the demolition of both the people and the city; however it is Jack who is eventually sentenced to death. At the last act of the play following the termination of the resistance, Jack is carried away to be killed in a cart. Mary expresses her amazement: "I thought it would be Lord Gordon" (*GMT* 156). Mrs Temptwell voices the reason: "You don't like to hang lords" (*GMT* 157). As Jack is a working class man, not a noble person like Lord Gordon or Mr Manners, he is to be hanged.

In the meantime, as the stage direction guides us, Mary is pregnant, which is against her will: "*Mary has a rounded stomach under dirty clothes*" (*GMT* 111). She does not want to deliver the baby: **"**Damn this leech in my stomach, sucking at my blood, determined to wriggle into life. Why can't you do something about it, you old wizard?" (*GMT* 112). It is revealed that the man with whom Mary had sexual intercourse persuaded Mary that he was using "pigskin [that is] a new invention from Holland" in his words as a protection against pregnancy and Mary's infection. However when Mary ultimately gets pregnant, she questions the nature of her pregnancy: "Why is it the one time I had no pleasure my body decided to give life?" (*GMT* 112). Mary is probably infected with venereal disease and wants the man to have developed the same disease: "I hope he caught my infection" (*GMT* 112).When she gives birth to the baby later on, she even thinks of killing her, but Sophie hinders her from killing her own baby reminding Mary of the natural right of her baby to survive and live: "She is not yours. You gave her birth, that's all. Let her decide, when she's ready, when she knows" (*GMT* 155).

Mary craves for the knowledge about the world throughout the play. Since she has grown up away from the real world, she has been increasingly eager to break her boundaries: "I've spent my life looking through window panes. I want to face them" (*GMT* 82). Her ideal has been to face the world's reality: "I want the world as it is, Mrs Temptwell, no imitations, no illusions, I want to know it all" (*GMT* 84). She dares to leave her house to discover the world, yet indulges in gambling, cock fights and she is eventually involved in prostitution and then in the Gordon riots as an anti-Catholic. "Mary Traverse herself is a mercurial protagonist, Faustian in her aspiration, picayune in her achievement, unremitting in her questions" (Cohn 192). She is vigorously and incessantly struggling for knowledge and power. Mary is unsatisfied in her ambition to reach knowledge like Faustus who finally exchanges his soul for knowledge. Yet, what she achieves is of little value. Though she is destroyed in the end, she is still hopeful: "One day we will know how to love this world" (*GMT* 160).

As a conclusion, Wertenbaker explores gender relations and the class distinction between different layers of the society. Putting patriarchy as the main source of women's oppression and the chief factor in defining female identity, Wertenbaker seems to adopt a radical feminist point of view in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*. Women constitute the oppressed part whereas men are hegemonic. There are certain defined roles available for women to internalize, thereby silencing and subjugating women. Throughout Mary's quest for realising her free woman identity, the reader witnesses women's subjection to the unjust control of men over women. Sexual torture and men's cruel and degrading treatment of women are the signs of their outlook on women as powerless and defenceless beings. Using women as agency for their empowerment, men restrict women's struggle for identity and thereby construct women's sense of identity as they wish.

CHAPTER 3

THE BREAK OF DAY: MOTHERHOOD AND FEMALE IDENTITY

In *The Break of Day* (1995) by Timberlake Wertenbaker, motherhood which has always been regarded as one of the vital components of female identity is questioned in the cases of different characters from beginning to the end. Throughout the play, Wertenbaker writes about three close friends- Tess, Nina and April- reflecting upon their lives regarding their choices of motherhood, their families and relationships, and occupations. Putting off motherhood for the sake of their professional careers when they are young, the two of these friends; namely Nina and Tess are caught up in their current wishes of having children. While Nina resorts to adopting a child from abroad, Tess undergoes an expensive and harsh medical treatment so as to have a biological child herself. April, on the other hand, is a singleton who has no yearning for motherhood at all.

Parenthood is idealized as an extremely important part of their identity in the eyes of Nina and Tess. All through the play, motherhood is juxtaposed with female identity from the points of view of different characters whether they are male or female. So, motherhood is either acknowledged or rejected as a significant part of woman identity by various characters; this is because as Carlson states, "Wertenbaker urges that any rethinking about female identity must accommodate women's options for motherhood" (146) and concludes: "Mothering, then, is not a biological issue here, but an economic, cultural, and political one" (146). Surrounded by the difficulties involving race, nation, medical institutions, Nina and Tess get confused and depressed "in their attempt to buy motherhood" (Carlson 146) as they cannot become pregnant naturally. Consequently, the concept of motherhood as a component of female identity is not only a matter of biology, but filled with political and social implications as well.

The play starts with a description of a *"beautiful and peaceful garden of a small country house in the middle of summer"* (*BD* 3). Getting prepared to celebrate Tess's fortieth birthday, the friends are together discussing several issues in their lives. As the play unfolds, the glimpses of their past and their current desires are revealed. It becomes clear that these women fought for the feminist ideals they had in the past. It is immediately made known to the audience that they were active and ardent feminists in the seventies while Tess reflects upon their past: "I remember those consciousness raising sessions" (*BD* 5). Hugh's words also give glimpses into Nina's activist past as a feminist: "After Nina's first album she decided to rebel and got mixed up with these women who spent all their time discussing whether they could allow a male producer and a capitalistic record company to interfere. […] Every interview was vetoed if it was a male interviewer" (*BD* 16). Nina, Tess and April who were actively involved in the activism of the 1970s were among those who fought hard for women's personal and professional emancipation. Nina, a singer, and Tess, a journalist, are talking about the musical band Nina formed. Tess recaptures their meeting with Nina: "I felt so powerful. There you were, an all-female band, and I was the only woman reporter on a rock magazine. Women were exploding everywhere, with their anger, hunger, confidence, all those possibilities" (*BD* 4). During the ardent activism of the 1970s, women began leaving their traditional roles of housewifery and motherhood after gaining access to the public realm via working outside their households. They started to pursue occupational careers even in the male-dominated workplaces. The image of women who "saw marriage and motherhood as the final fulfillment of their lives" (Friedan 330) changed accordingly. As a consequence of Women's Liberation Movement, with the access to paid work outside their private sphere, women broke the chains of domesticity and housewifery which they thought to be hindering their development as human beings.

Standing against femininity which was seen as the determinant of woman identity, these women of the 1970s analysed the ways both society and patriarchy controlled women. They were aware of the patriarchal oppression to subordinate them to the males via imposing feminine ideals over women: "To be feminine in appearance, behaviour and activities described as an "essential" component of both woman's sense of self and the sexual and material subjugation that she encounters in many parts of her life" (Genz 37-8). Women's Liberation Movement undoubtedly has

provided women with a variety of free choices one of which is mothering. Abortion rights and contraceptives, birth control have all made it possible for women to have freedom in their choices for motherhood refusing women's total confinement to the reproductive function of their womanhood. Protesting against the definition of their identity which equated it with motherhood, passivity and inferiority to men, women began working outside their homes and fulfilling their ambitions. In so doing, women started to feel complete and as a part of the outside world: "That sense of being complete and fully a part of the world-'no longer an island, part of the mainland'-had come back" (Friedan 344). Thus, women having monetary and hence social and personal freedom followed their aspirations and such freedom has made it possible for them to feel whole and to achieve a sense of self since they have been successful in their attempts to have equality and freedom.

Back in the seventies, women were encouraged to reject the housewife image that has been seen as the only image available and suitable for women. As Friedan asserts in *The Feminine Mystique*, women need to seek new ways of fulfilling themselves outside the private realm;

> First, she must unequivocally say "no" to the housewife image. This does not mean, of course, that she must divorce her husband, abandon her children, give up her home. She does not have to choose between marriage and career; that was the mistaken choice of the feminine mystique. In actual fact, it is not as difficult as the feminine mystique implies, to combine marriage and motherhood and even the kind of lifelong personal purpose that once was called "career." It merely takes a new life plan-in terms of one's whole life as a woman (Friedan 330).

The widespread urge of feminism during the 1970s was that women did not need to make a choice between their marital and occupational lives. They were prompted to pursue a career along with a family and children. Friedan states that "with the vision to make a new life plan of her own, she [woman] can fulfil a commitment to profession and politics; and to marriage and motherhood with equal seriousness" (Friedan 362).

The women of the 1970s challenged the notion that women "can find fulfillment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love" (Friedan 37). Deconstructing the notion that women are passive, inferior to men, these women struggled to achieve what they aspired to. They stood against the patriarchy that

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constructed and defined their lifestyle choices and hence their identities. They had access to education and paid work in order not to be like traditional women who suffered from the oppressions of patriarchy. Following the ardent activism of the 1970s, there has been a revolutionary transformation in the lives of women with their attendance in the workforce outside their homes; hence a transformation in the family and society. As a consequence, women's identity has come to be defined with some different elements other than family and children being considered crucial in the process, the biggest of which is their employment as Moen states:

> Women enact many roles-daughter, sister, friend, volunteer, and neighbour, to name a few- but it is the wife/mother family role that is central to most women's identity, and it is the employment role that has become increasingly prominent in women's lives, as it has always been in men's" (4).

The challenge for women was to serve as the worker outside the hearth and to come back to the domestic sphere again to fulfil their familial roles. So, women had to balance the pressure of the two fold responsibilities both inside and outside the house. Women both want access to paid employment and motherhood at the same time which "has left many mothers to face the "second shift," taking all or most responsibility for child rearing and domestic work while also meeting the demands of paid work" (qtd in DiQuinzio xi). As Robert asserts, Tess dealt with her career and never cared about having children. She has recently changed her job after she made the decision to bear her own child: "She went to the women's magazine to have more time- you can't have a child if you are on a daily" (*BD* 25). As clearly seen in Tess's case, it is really challenging to fulfil both of the roles that prompt women to be both career women and to lead a family life married with children easily at the same time.

Liberated women who were employed in the labour market had a dual responsibility; both as a worker and a housewife because women were still the main carer of their children and house as mothers and wives. Trying to combine career, work, family and motherhood, "[the 1980s were] meant to be the age of the "Superwoman" who could "have it all" and juggle home, children and job" (Genz 67). Without sacrificing career for familial responsibilities, the superwoman image prompted women to take up employment in the public realm and pursue a familial life in the private realm at the same time. The stereotypical woman figure prompted by the media and film industry in the eighties was: "career-focused and financially independent; sexually confident and unabashed; demanding equality and respect from men, the 1980s

woman was clearly the beneficiary of feminist advancements in the public and private spheres" (Genz 66). This image was a challenge to the feminine mystique that glorifies the housewifery as the sole occupation ideal for women in order for women to suppose they can fulfil themselves through housewifery. The mystique makes women believe that they "can find fulfilment only in sexual passivity, male domination, and nurturing maternal love" (Friedan 37). Yet, married women faced a number of difficulties because "[t]hey were willing to perform their traditional motherly/wifely roles in addition to their new work responsibilities" (Genz 67). As Betty Friedan asserts in *The Second Stage (1981),* there are various predicaments women face trying to achieve the superwoman image. Friedan outlines the characteristics of superwomen as follows:

> The superwoman trying to have it all, looking for security, status, power, and fulfilment in the full-time jobs and careers in the competitive rat race, like men, and trying to hold on to that old security, status, power and fulfilment women once had to find solely in home and children. Or giving up, in mainstream or in advance- because who can live as that kind of superwoman?- and "choosing" to go back again and stay at home, despite the economic and nervous strain. Or "choosing" not to marry or have children, and therefore seeking all identity, status, power and fulfilment in job or career-embracing, more single-mindedly than most men now, that obsessive careerism that has made so many men die prematurely of stress-induced heart attacks and strokes(67-8).

Tess, Nina and April also conformed to the superwoman image. They focused on their professional development, however, they did not have aspiration for both work and the familial responsibility of bearing and bringing up children. They were rather involved in their professional improvement and ideals in their quest for success. Tess of *The Break of Day* is another exemplification of the success and money oriented nature of the 1980s. She reflects women's achievement in that she accomplished the economic pursuits she aspired to: "I felt I had a right to what I wanted. It goes with the empowerment I felt all my life [..] Being a woman in the seventies, then being in London and clever in the eighties, making money despite myself, buying this house" (*BD* 5). As clear from her case, Tess has led a success-oriented life and succeeded in what she desired and therefore she feels powerful. Like Tess, Nina also led an active life as a result of her feminist struggles during the seventies and a success-oriented life in the eighties and Nina got what she wanted as expressed by Tess: "You succeeded where you wanted to-like me" (*BD* 5).

Although they are economically and hence socially liberated women, Tess and Nina get stuck with the idea of motherhood. After a time, they consider motherhood to be the ultimate goal of their lives. Carlson puts forward; "These women, however privileged to have a position and a voice denied to women through most of the history, have not resolved the issues of gender and power" (145). They feel powerless and inadequate as they have missed their chances for motherhood. Among them is only April who is content with her way of life and still finds hope and relief in her occupational present and has aspirations for the future: "I know that at least one of my nameless students will come into contact with an ancient, wise and passionate mind and ignite" (*BD* 18-9). She is self-sufficient and away from the unhealthy thoughts Tess and Nina are overwhelmed with: "[April's] opting out of the biological crisis that has ambushed Nina and Tess is largely presented as a sympathetic and worthwhile alternative. She is indeed 'clear-sighted', having not been blinded in the way that Nina and Tess's obsessions have blinded them" (Wyllie 30).

In her introduction to *Plays Two*, Wertenbaker claims: "In *The Break of Day*, gender identity is questioned and suffered. Is female identity ultimately bound up with having children? Three women face different options in an uncomfortable setting" (vii). Tess and Nina want to have children; however they are uneasy and anxious because of their ages which are too old for biological mothering. On the one hand, after the tumultuous activism of the 1970s, coping with the success-oriented environment in the 1980s, these women are empowered economically, socially and personally, but on the other hand, they are inclined to conform to motherhood that they have deemed as the most traditional role imposed upon women.

It is generally assumed that all women have to be mothers to fulfil their identity. As Ireland affirms, "[t]here is an implicit assumption that motherhood is intrinsic to adult female identity. This assumption necessarily implies an "absence" for any woman who is then not a mother." (1). Tess and Nina become obsessed with this 'absence' since they have not resolved their conflicts about motherhood. Just because they are not mothers, they do not feel whole even though they have economic and social equality with men, and when they have plenty of opportunities especially with respect to their jobs, they get stuck up with the idea of motherhood. Landa stresses the point that motherhood is considered crucial for woman identity: "The voluntarily

childless women themselves- function with the early twentieth century paradigm of human development […] which confounds womanhood with motherhood" (139-140). April who is a university professor does not conform to this idea and warns them about the path they have taken reminding Tess of their principles: "Having a child isn't the only purpose of a woman's life. That's our credo" (*BD* 34), but Tess does not agree with April's idea, she rather finds fault with their former opinions saying, "We were wrong" (*BD* 34). April thinks Tess and Nina have betrayed the feminist ideals they fought for back in the seventies and eighties: "I can understand you betraying feminism in your public life but you could at least apply some of it privately" (*BD* 33). Nina also does not support the principles of feminism regarding motherhood any more. Deeply preoccupied with her dream of experiencing motherhood herself, she craves for having a baby: "I compose lullabies in my head I can't tell Hugh" (*BD* 26).

Nina who is a singer and composer sees herself as barren as an artist: "I am not an artist any more. The product's gone, but I'm stuck with the temperament" (*BD* 54). When April reveals that Nina formerly had "[a back-street] abortion that went septic" (*BD* 32) which caused her not to have children again, it becomes plainly clear that she also sees herself as unproductive as a woman. Yet, she is professionally revived when her chances of motherhood increase because Nina agrees to do the album for the sake of the child she is planning to adopt: "All right, I'll do the album. As soon as we get back" (*BD* 68). However, Tess does not even give importance to her professional improvement. She thrives to be a mother at the expense of her career. So her artistic unproductivity and her lack of reproduction are seen as parallels.

The pathetic situation Tess and Nina are in is also a result of the backlash against feminist ideals. After the activism of the 1970s, the 1980s came as a difficult and complicated period for feminism since feminist activism was prone to a backlash campaign especially prompted by the media. The backlash was actually against the gains of feminism that "targets the growing social category of working women and announces that, in their search for professional success on male terms, they are bound to end up single, unloved and fraught with neuroses" (Genz 71). Women for long fought for social and economic equality with men, their independent identities, economic and personal freedom, employment, equal standards and payment with the

male in labour force, and so on. However, the 1980s became the period of reversal as the achievements of feminism were intended to be ruined.

Susan Faludi "outlines the backlash tenets that have been propagated in a range of media texts in the 1980s and early 1990s and that are based on the assumption that female identity is troubled and tormented" (Genz 71):

> Professional women are suffering "burnout" and succumbing to an "infertility epidemic". Single women are grieving from a "man shortage."[…] Childless women are depressed and confused and their ranks are swelling […] Unwed women are "hysterical" and crumbling under a "profound crisis of confidence."[…] High powered career women are stricken with unprecedented outbreaks of "stress-induced disorders."… Independent women's loneliness represents "a major mental health problem today."(ix-x).

Within the context of backlash against feminism, the basic tenets of feminism have come to be scrutinized and criticized. During the backlash campaign throughout the eighties, feminism and its attainments were attacked especially by the media and women were criticized for a variety of their choices and consequently put under pressure. Women were intended to go back to their feminine and domestic roles. *The Break of Day* depicting the end of the eighties reveals similar backlash attempts surrounding women's independency and identity, and the path to take women back to the subordination they fought against for years. Tess and Nina as professional women who have had achievements in their professions are now trapped in the idea of motherhood which is regarded as the most outstanding embodiment of femininity. When Nina faces the reality that she cannot be a biological mother, she resorts to being an adoptive one. Yet, Tess becomes obsessed with conceiving her own child. When Nina encourages Tess to adopt a child just as she does: "There are so many children in the world. Lost. Waiting. Why don't you look into that?" (*BD* 35), Tess rejects the idea: "I want my own child, in here, like her" (*BD* 35). Nina and her husband Hugh want to adopt a baby from abroad but Tess still does not want to adopt a baby, she wants her own biological baby: "I do wish you well, I do. I've decided to go to a fertility clinic. [..] I don't want to waste any more time" (*BD* 41).

Lack of sisterhood between women is exemplified in the play at the same time with another female character being introduced while Tess, Nina, April, Robert and Hugh are chatting in the country house. This is a young girl named Marisa who is Nick's girlfriend. Marisa comes from a different city just to see Nick who is Hugh's son in

order to let him know that she is pregnant. Within the context of Tess and Nina longing for motherhood, Marisa becomes the embodiment of biological motherhood with her pregnancy which is what Tess and Nina desire, but cannot achieve. Marisa advocates motherhood though she is an unmarried young girl. Tess and Nina's desire for mothering makes them react to Marisa's pregnancy in an odd way. They try to persuade Marisa into abortion. Naming Marisa's pregnancy a "mistake" (*BD* 30), Tess even attempts to make some medical arrangements for Marisa to have the abortion: "I can help you. I know a good clinic. I can make an appointment for you" (*BD* 30). Yet, April gets angry with Tess and Nina: "I'm ashamed of you" (*BD* 32). Marisa also protests against Tess and Nina accusing them all: "You're trying to make me kill my baby, you're child murderers" (*BD* 32). It becomes clear that "[Marisa's] reinforcement of heterosexuality, marriage and family, alongside the rejection of feminists as unhappy, manhating and embittered women, sounds like a staged version of anti-feminist backlash manifestos" (Komporaly 135) when Marisa exposes her thoughts on being like them: "So I can end up like you, married to ambition, bitter and childless" (*BD* 32). Tess later confesses the reason for her attitude: "I want a child. I was horrible to Marisa because I was envious, because she has what I want […] I have been trying for three years, I'm forty years old. I am in biological recession. I want a child. I've never wanted anything so badly" (*BD* 34).

The lack of sisterhood between the female characters is also evident in the nature of their relationships. Some of them had extramarital affairs in the past. Robert who is now Tess's husband is Nina's former lover who leaves Nina in order to marry Tess. Nina still cannot be said to forget the infidelity as she expresses her feelings towards Tess: "I never really forgave you". In response, Tess asks: "What's feminism for if we still hate each other?" (*BD* 27). Tess's words underline the feminism's emphasis on sisterhood and resolving the conflicts between women. It is also revealed that Nina's husband, Hugh, was married to another woman at the time when their love affair started and she hid the relationship as Tess remembers Nina's tendency: "you'd say you had to protect the identity of your lover" (*BD* 5).

Media has also been an agency of the backlash manifestos through magazines, advertisements, TV serials emphasizing certain images for women thus aiming at obliterating the gains of feminism. With Tess's occupation at one of woman magazines, Wertenbaker explores how media uses magazines as an agency for

subjugating women. Containing low quality publications, women's magazines diminish woman identity only to appearance and trivial pursuits for perfect bodies and hence oppressing women under such bodily objectification. They cause women to be preoccupied with the construction and maintenance of bodily images. April thinks that the magazine Tess works for is the same. It is of inferior quality containing only "[w]omen's shlock" (*BD* 33) when compared with its past when Tess was making an "astounding analysis" (*BD* 33). Instead of analysis, ideas that will make women think and learn, her magazine publishes the ads of beauty products and so on. In so doing, they aim at large numbers of sales. April continues reminding Tess of her performance and achievements which came to a halt with the dramatic change in her attitude: "You had one of the best minds- your deconstruction of the kind of magazine you're editing. How it held up an image of happiness that was unattainable" (*BD* 33-4). April blames Tess for giving up her ideals for the sake of money: "You wanted money, you succumbed to a designer version of yourself – just as you have a designer version of mothers" (*BD* 34). She even contends that good writings and articles are "[s]andwiched between adverts for lipsticks and orgasms" (*BD* 33).

Surrogate mothering, fertility treatments, IVF (in vitro fertilisation) for women older than forty and, adoption are all mentioned during the play while some are realized just in the case of Nina who adopts a baby whereas some of them appear in the play as just plans or vain struggles as illustrated by Tess who undergoes fertility treatments and even IVF; but cannot get pregnant. Nina and Hugh go to a country in Eastern Europe to take the baby they are going to adopt. But there are uncertainties about the condition of the baby, even the man who comes to take them to the baby; Mihail does not know the exact whereabouts of it. Hugh's attitude towards Nina is a sympathetic one. He supports her, yet tries to get her to terminate the process of adopting a child calling it "a completely crazy idea" (*BD* 46). Hugh wants Nina to give up adoption as he realizes this process will wear them out: "We don't have a bad life, Nina. And having a child is a lot of work (*BD* 54). However, after a while, like Nina, Hugh becomes so attached to the idea of parenthood that when they face the possibility of not being able to adopt the baby Nina held in her arms, he cries saying: "I thought it was a loopy idea. Then there's a child… and she even looks like you" (*BD* 63). Nina relates the regulation and maintenance of her life to having the

baby: "Don't cry. I can't bear it. Somebody has to hold the world firm" (*BD* 63). Their lives are shattered in the process of adopting the child. They spend days in an Eastern country in Europe dealing with the legal procedure to be completed in order to take the child back to England with them. Following the difficulties they face along the way, Nina and Hugh eventually adopt and bring the child to England.

In the meantime, Tess and Robert undergo highly expensive medical processes so as to have a baby naturally, but with high uncertainty in success rate. Robert also suffers from this ongoing process: "the drugs, the anaesthetic, this waiting. I don't want to make love to two tubes at once" (*BD* 60). Robert expresses his discontent and wants to put an end to the treatment: "I am proud of you. I don't want a mother for my children" (*BD* 60). He tries to make Tess become her old self as she has lost her sense of self in her quest for motherhood: "We must live. I fell in love with an independent, intelligent woman" (*BD* 60). Yet, Tess relates her existence and identity to being a mother: "One more time. Otherwise- we're nothing" (*BD* 62). Tess does not feel complete. She rather feels the lack of having children as something missing in her identity.

When fertility treatment does not work out for Tess, she resorts to finding a surrogate mother though Robert refuses it. Even accepting the fact that the child born to a surrogate mother will not have her genes, Tess is determined to find a surrogate mother. They lose large amounts of money and even get their house mortgaged seeking medical treatment for a baby. Robert urges Tess to work and feel relieved both economically and psychologically: "Tess, you have to work […] partly to pay the mortgage and partly to come home and tell me what you did all day" (*BD* 71). But Tess is still obsessed with the idea of finding a surrogate mother as she tells Hugh about how her days pass:

> I can tell you what I do every single day. I walk down the street and leer at women. Which one has the good eggs? There's an exhausted twenty-year-old with three brutalized children. Shall I tell her I'll get her out of her rut in exchange for her eggs- but what kind of genes does she have? I spot a young mother in a bookstore, perfect: brainy eggs. She goes to the feminist section, she will wonder why my only identity is motherhood. There's a foreign student. I fantasize about kidnapping her. I wouldn't have pity. I sit on a park bench like a flasher. Women used to be my sisters. They're objects: egg vessels. Now you know (*BD* 71).

Tess expresses how she has lost her sense of sisterhood she felt for other women. Robert is worried about Tess's occupational future. He warns Tess not to miss the opportunity of a further position at the magazine she works for: "You're going to lose your chance of becoming Editor "(*BD* 71), which ultimately comes true when Tess cannot be the editor of the magazine as she ignores her job seeking new opportunities to become a mother.

With the fertility clinic and reproductive treatments, Wertenbaker presents the "paradoxical politics of mothering" (DiQuinzio 250). Tess resorts to fertility treatment instead of adopting a baby like Nina. Dr Glad first recommends Tess and Robert IVF. When this does not work out for them, Dr Glad bases the failure of the treatment on her unproductivity resulting from her age: "Nature is cruel: you were born with a finite number of eggs and now they're used up or old" (*BD* 65). This time, Dr Glad urges Tess to surrogate mothering: "we need to take the next step" (*BD* 65). He persuades Tess into surrogacy: "Once we don't have to deal with your eggs, Tess, there's no age limit. We can go on for years" (*BD* 66). Dr Glad is obviously after money which is evident in his tendency to recommend a new kind of solution each time. DiQuinzio writes about the reproductive technologies intending "both to control and exploit women, particularly by putting some women in the position of being able to exploit other women, for instance in the case of surrogate and adoptive mothers" (250). It is an evident fact that Tess has the economic means for fertility treatment and she confesses that she is constantly planning to exploit her fellow women: "Women used to be my sisters. They're objects: egg vessels" (*BD* 71). While subjugating some women devoid of economic power by economically privileged women, "the greater use of reproductive technologies risks the recuperation of essential motherhood's view that all women are meant to be and want to be mothers" (DiQuinzio 250). Consequently, women are oppressed and exploited by reproductive treatments whether they receive the infertility treatment or they are used as the reproductive agency through their fertile bodies.

Tess's constant insistence on being a mother also strains her relationship with Robert. Tess even wants Robert to ask Irina who is a young girl at Robert's theatre company "to donate her eggs" (*BD* 73). Tess says boldly that she is still with Robert for the sperm production he manages for having a baby: "If it weren't for your sperm, I'd leave you" (*BD* 73). Robert cannot bear her wretchedness: "Come back to

me. Come back to yourself" (*BD* 77). This pursuit of motherhood deteriorates their relationship ultimately leading them to break up.

Even after the breakup, Tess does not go back to her work. Still obsessed with the idea of having a baby, Tess looks for an egg donor. When Marisa delivers a baby boy, Tess writes a letter to Marisa asking for being a surrogate mother for her. She tries to control herself but fails to do so: "I'll try it once more, no, three times. Then I'll stop" (*BD* 90). She sees being a mother as a life-or-death situation: "I won't accept defeat" (*BD* 90). April notices how weak she looks after what she has been through in order to have a child: "You look – ravaged. What happened? (*BD* 92). Tess, however, considers the problem as the normal way of life: "La condition feminine- life" (*BD* 92).

Tess likes to resort to the past most among all the characters of the play. That is because she feels stressed and distressful at present. Besides, she is the least happy woman among them all as she is currently obsessed with mothering that has become the insurmountable problem of her life whereas Nina sets her life up after the adoption and she is happy. April also indulges in her academic work though she has had many problems because of her former love affairs. Tess's inclination to go back to her old times as a refuge is in a similar vein with people who tend to retreat to the time when they felt safe and secure if they are faced with stress, difficulty and insecurity at present. Sigmund Freud explains this tendency in *The Interpretation of Dreams* with the regression theory which is about the backward nature of one's thinking towards the basis of a memory. In Freud's words, regression is:

> intentional remembering and other processes that are part of our normal thinking correspond to a backward direction taken in the psychical apparatus, starting from a complex act generating imagined ideas and moving backward to the raw material of the memory-traces at its basis (Freud 334-5).

Regression is a backwards movement in psychological time when one faced with stress creates imagined and idealized ideas by resorting to the memories of the past. Underneath this inclination lies the desire to be free of the tension and burden of the present and to feel alleviated and comforted again, which is the case with Tess Warner of *The Break of Day*. Nina detects Tess's tendency to employ her memories so as to get away from the burdens of the present and to feel secure and relieved:

"Tess is raking up the past- how we stood in front of life with all those possibilities- not because we were young but it was that moment. I don't feel powerful at all" (*BD* 7). Nina accepts that she is tired and powerless while Tess still does not accept it: "I wasn't trained for grief. None of our generation was" (*BD* 35). Tess tries to console herself with the thought of the childlessness of April and Nina: "Not just my oldest friends, but my only friends who don't have children" (*BD* 35), and Tess regresses to the past in order to feel relieved: We'd validate each other. Get back some of the passion of our early days when that [motherhood] was the last thing we wanted" (*BD* 35). She resorts to her past successes so as to feel less distressful: "Do you remember the articles I commissioned about the domestic side of war? No one did it before" (*BD* 89).

Nina even agrees to record the album just for the sake of the adoption of the baby; however, after the adoption, there was a great change in her attitude. She left the care of the child to a number of nannies. Hugh and Nina tend to ignore the baby as Hugh tells about the baby: "She's with our tenth nanny" (*BD* 91). Nina deals with recording her album while the baby is cared for by nannies: "After all we've been through, I hardly see her" (*BD* 91). "Career oriented women are the most likely to experience conflict between work and family roles, which suggests that such conflict occurs when a woman is absorbed in her job at the same time that she is highly invested in mothering" (Moen 54). Nina oscillates between her communal life and motherhood: "I want to go back to my child, but I also want to stay" (*BD* 94). Hugh responds to her stressing the difficulty of sparing her time between the family and the life outside the family: "That's how it's always going to be" (*BD* 94).

Ireland classifies women into three types with respect to their outlook on and choices concerning motherhood. The first one is the "traditional" woman who has tried but could not achieve motherhood due to infertility or health problems. The second one is the "transitional" woman who is childless because of delaying motherhood until it is impossible. The third one is the "transformative" woman who deliberately and willingly decides not to have children (Ireland 15). According to this analysis, Nina and Tess fall into the second group of "transitional" women who choose not to be mothers until it is too late with respect to age. Robert exposes Tess's attitude towards parenthood in the past: "Tess and I want children […] She'd sort of forgotten about it in the heady eighties, I reminded her we ought to start. I think she thought it would

be like everything else and she would have two perfect children then and there" (*BD* 25). Nina also postponed mothering until it was too late for her to conceive a child biologically. Among them only April can be regarded as the "transformative" woman who consciously rejects motherhood and does not repent it at the same time. April still has satisfaction and happiness in her life and job and does not share the same attitude with Tess and Nina in their quest for motherhood.

Though April forces her boyfriend Jamie to make up his mind about marriage; "I'm tired of being at the edge of your life. You should decide –now" (*BD* 21), Jamie does not consent: "I don't want a family in these circumstances" (*BD* 39). Moreover, April had a destructive affair with a married man named Tony who "made [April] have an abortion, wait until he was divorced for [them] to have a child" (*BD* 32) ending up with the abortion of her baby. In the end, even when her relationship with Jamie fails, April is still happy and hopeful of the future. April cannot grasp her friends' efforts for mothering as she still adheres to her feminist principles and does not regard motherhood as the ultimate end or ambition of her life. April fills her life with her academic pursuits, her students and production of knowledge just in the way Friedan sees education as the source of change and progress and also a vital component of getting free of the traditional image of woman as only a housewife. With access to higher education, women feel powerful enough to manage their lives on their own. Friedan draws out the map for women's salvation: "The only way for a woman, as for a man, to find herself, to know herself as a person, is by creative work of her own. There is no other way" (Friedan 332). Not constrained with marriage, children or love affairs, April leads her life alone but happily: "I live alone. I work. I have my students and my friends. […] there's nothing to curtain me from the world the way a marriage, children, even a romance does. It makes me very clear-sighted" (*BD* 93). April keeps on giving the details of her life. Though she "feel[s] lonely sometimes" (*BD* 93), she feels prolific as a working woman: "We may not consume much, but we contribute a lot. We work. I think I live with dignity and some grace. I try to behave with decency. "(*BD* 93). In so doing, April challenges such ideas as 'motherhood is the ultimate fate of women' and 'being a mother makes a woman's life meaningful'.

Whether they are men or women, some of the characters suffer from the weariness after the initial enthusiasm for the ideals they had in the past starts to wear off. Their

ideals and personal gains do not make them happy any more. They either give up their ideals on the way or are engulfed in a feeling of futility. A male character of the play, Paul who is a former businessman reveals the prevalent attitude towards earning money and success throughout the eighties that entailed being successful and making money: "They said it's because it's what you do in the eighties, you work hard, you make money" (*BD* 36). The people of the eighties were made to feel that they need to work and earn a lot. So the success and money oriented nature of the eighties has made people exhausted. This automatically led to a change in the attitudes of people towards the ideals they had in the past. Tired with all these economic pursuits, Paul discloses his political stance: "I'll vote for the party that doesn't promise an economic recovery" (*BD* 36). The weariness he felt at the time and the meaningless pursuit of more money and success made him quit his job and family, and ultimately he started to work as a gardener at Tess's house. Similar to Paul's case, Tess and Nina even stand against their feminist ideals they had back in the past. They also strove hard for the ideals of economic, social, sexual and personal emancipation for women; however they ended up regretting what they fought for getting caught up in the idea of having children.

As Wertenbaker explains in an interview in *Rage and Reason*, she writes about "the fatigue at the end of the century, the breakdown of a lot of ideals, particularly for women" (Stephenson& Langridge 144) in *The Break of Day*. As Robert puts it, they are all overwhelmed by a "sense of worthlessness. I used to think I could change the world." (*BD* 18). Just like Robert, Nina cannot find meaning in what she has gained professionally: "I used to love the title: singer-songwriter. It feels meaningless" (*BD* 18). Likewise, Paul loses his patience in the competitiveness of the eighties and ultimately terminates his pursuits of success and economic gain after his spiritual awakening: "One day I was sitting in the traffic, as usual, and I thought why am I doing this? I couldn't answer" (*BD* 36). He expresses the incessant inclination towards hard work at the time when he and his friends were all conditioned to achieve and earn more: "once you've been bitten by the eighties, it's hard to stop. My friends are riding the recessing, waiting for it to be over, so they can be like before. I hope it's never over" (*BD* 36). Paul gets tired of his way of life so that his sacrifices and struggles seem nonsensical, and he thus takes up gardening in Tess's house.

To conclude, in *The Break of Day* depicting the end of the twentieth century, Wertenbaker questions feminism and the construction of female identity in relation to the activism of the 1970s and the challenging competitiveness of the 1980s, career, family, and most importantly motherhood; its institutionalisation by patriarchy and capitalism. Giving motherhood various functions in exploring the experiences of Tess, Nina and April in different conditions, Wertenbaker does not highlight one case over the other. As Komporaly points out "[t]he playwright investigates parenting in a multitude of circumstances: from momentary to long-term yearning, from the standpoint of single as well as married women, and as something both shared and rejected by partners: treating them all as equally legitimate" (136). She examines medical treatments for motherhood with the case of Tess who breaks up with her husband Robert in the process, adoptive parenting with Nina who is warmly supported by her husband Hugh, biological motherhood with Marisa whose child is born out of wedlock, and the total rejection of motherhood with April. As exemplified by the characters in *The Break of the Day*, women cannot be said to construct their identity either through career, job, professional success, love affairs, or motherhood; they rather construct their identity through their personal differences and choices throughout their lives. All in all, motherhood which has traditionally been regarded as the ideal ultimate aim or end of womanhood has been glorified by tradition, patriarchy or capitalist enterprises especially by the media and advertisements. Wertenbaker analyses the different outlooks on this notion within different contexts through her characters that either challenge or embrace the idea of motherhood.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of the feminist movement has been prone to mutability from its beginning, which has taken different agendas to the fore at different periods of history as a consequence of the various approaches used to account for women's oppression and the possible ways to eliminate it. The right to vote was the objective of the suffrage movement at the beginning of the twentieth century. Afterwards, women's personal emancipation along with their emancipation in the social sphere became the central arguments of Women's Liberation Movement in the sixties and seventies; however equality and emancipation have always been the foremost concern and continues to be so in our day.

In the same vein with feminist movement, it is clear that the definition of female identity has been in transformation all through the struggles of women. As we move towards modernity from the times when women were confined to indoors and regarded as the 'angel in the house', we see a transition to the 'new woman' who fought hard for equal rights with men. After the Industrial Revolution, modes of production, class, economic conditions have become prevalent issues in the formation of female identity since women have started to work outside their households. However, modernity was struck by women's continuous attempts to earn freedom in the public sphere with suffrage movement which was followed by Women's Liberation Movement. With the legitimation of women's rights such as the right to vote, proliferation of educational opportunities, sexual freedom, personal and familial rights like abortion, and entry into the labour force have made women mindful of gaining equal rights with men and critical of the conventional roles imposed on them by patriarchy during the Women's Liberation Movement starting in the late 1960s and extending towards the 1970s. Standing against the silencing and pacification of women through domesticity, the women of this period made determined efforts to get rid of the fixed gender roles assigned for them by the

patriarchy. Women were made to feel that they needed to be silent, obedient, take good care of the household and children; but occupational opportunities for women outside the home started to change the female image in the eyes of the society. As a result, women gained many rights regarding their freedom. Large numbers of women began to leave their houses for paid work, thereby achieving economic freedom. "Feminism had undoubtedly played an important role in emboldening women to challenge gender discrimination and transform the dynamics of the workplace." (Genz 67).

Women endeavoured to construct their identity rejecting the restrictions of the house-bound woman image to free and self-fulfilling women who determine their own lifestyle choices. The activism women tackled during the seventies was still to achieve equality with men and liberation which have always been the great concern of the feminist movement. Economic and educational, hence social aspects of women's lives gradually improved causing a huge change in the definition of female identity. Consequently, the challenge for equality in terms of employment, laws, and property rights has transformed the woman identity from a fixed definition to multiple definitions which reflect the various domains of female reality and struggle. In such an environment, it has become hardly possible to construct a viable sense of self rendering the construction of female identity very elusive.

The vigorous activism of 1970s was followed by the backlash campaign against feminism designed to dismantle the positive effects of the liberation movement of women. The 'superwoman' image especially promoted by the media presenting working mothers who are excellent both in parenthood and their occupations was imposed upon the women of the 1980s. Such an impossible image has come to eliminate women's struggle to do away with patriarchal structures aiming to keep them in subjection. Trying to make women subservient with the revived notions of femininity and encouraging women to take up work outside their homes at the same time, the superwoman image seems to define a woman's identity again in terms of motherhood as parenting goes hand in hand with women's employment. Even if they have satisfaction from their occupational careers, women are made to feel that they need to become mothers so as to feel whole. There were changes in women's demands deconstructing the fixed notions of ideal womanhood and femininity: "Be career oriented but also a paragon of domesticity" (Moen 37). These two

expectations waiting to be met at the same time put women under pressure and suppressed them more.

Women have transformed from 'the angel in the house' to 'new woman' and later on to 'superwoman' resolute in maintaining the dual role of family and professional career. With the superwoman image, women have become obsessed with gaining power and success, and ideal familial lives as well. So this time "[t]he quandary [women] face is not employment, but combining employment with motherhood" (Moen 37). As a result, women have been subjugated by the prevalent tendency to incorporate domesticity in the workforce; thus conforming to the constructed images of the media that has eventually problematized women's inner selves. So, it becomes clear that the efforts to determine certain features and categories that define woman have not achieved validity. That is because change is inevitable in how women see themselves emanating from their racial, ethnic, religious, sexual differences and so on.

Presenting different periods of history as metaphors for the present, Wertenbaker employs the past and present at the same to discuss her themes. In so doing, Wertenbaker aims to break her ideas away from the confinement of the time limitation on her theatrical agenda. The playwright also wants to highlight the continuity of the imposition of certain images of womanhood, which has always suppressed women in their struggle for identity. Even though women have got the access to public sphere, women are still restricted and oppressed. As Walby explains, "Women have entered the public sphere, but not on equal terms. They are now present in the paid workplace, the state and public cultural institutions. But they are subordinated within them. Further, their subordination, in the domestic division of labour, sexual practices, and receivers of male violence, continues" (*Theorizing Patriachy* 180). So, notwithstanding all the struggles women have shown, they cannot be said to remove the pressure of the imposed roles on them. Domesticity is still regarded to be the ideal sphere for them; women are not equal with men in the public domain populated by men. Female body that is violated by men is also the site for male domination. So, women's subjection cannot be said to have finished; rather along with the conventions, expectations of the society, the assigned roles and prompted images for women continue to deteriorate women's position.

The common point this study has revealed between the two plays is that certain determined images are imposed upon women and assimilated into their sense of identity either by patriarchy, capitalism, media, or prevalent values of the society. Women internalize the ideals that are dictated by such institutions as patriarchy and motherhood since women are made to feel that they are to submit to the conventions and meet masculine expectations. Wertenbaker presents different contexts from the eighteen century to the nineties; however she underscores the oppressive imposition of some mechanisms like patriarchy and motherhood that have been institutionalised. In such practices to subordinate women, the female body has always been seen as the ideal agency of control and manipulation.

The female body has always been regarded as a territory to be utilized by men for their pleasure and adoration by subjecting the female body to the intervention of the patriarchy. The imposition of male power that has been advocated by patriarchy over female body is realised generally through violence. This has historically been so and patriarchal mechanisms still continue to manipulate woman's body with such violations as sexual abuse and harassment, rape, battering, pregnancies against women's will and so on. So through their bodies, "women's sexuality is policed, denied, exploited, as a means of social control of women" (Bell 5). As illustrated in *The Grace of Mary Traverse*, assigned gender roles and spatial division between men and women exclude women from the social life outside their homes as the authority figures are the males who decide and define the status of women. Women are trapped by the essentialism caused by the patriarchal mechanisms controlling the notions of manhood and womanhood. All along Mary Traverse's quest for identity, female characters are subject to violence and humiliation. Men treat women with contempt and disrespect since women are silent, submissive and defenceless. This study has shown that men's superiority is emphasized over women who are deemed inferior and patriarchal values are to be sustained by hegemonic men under the patriarchally defined social structure defining the identity of women.

Women's bodies have also been deemed as the symbol of fertility. Female fertility has always been glorified and the reproductive function of women has become more than a physical property; it has rather gained a social role to be embraced and assimilated by women. Women are expected to give birth to children as the proof of their womanhood. Wertenbaker presents the diversity of the notions about

motherhood with different experiences of her characters in *The Break of Day*; but does not highlight or idealize one particular stance. Not putting the story in a patriarchal setting, the playwright presents the superwoman image of the nineties victimizing women under the oppressive competitiveness of the working life along with glorification of domesticity. So *The Break of Day* is a good presentation of how motherhood is institutionalized, glorified and promoted by the images imposed on womanhood and capitalistic enterprises that are exemplified in the play with reproductive technologies. The imposition of parenthood on women urges them to feel lacking and powerless; therefore their sense of identity is problematized.

This study investigating the trajectory of feminist movement from its early activism to the contemporary times through Wertenbaker's theatre also suggests that at the times when feminism was a collective action from the suffrage to Women's Liberation Movement; when they had definite aims, it was easier for women to follow the ideals of feminism and remain devoted. Women did not only fight for their own rights and emancipation; but for each other as well. However, economic and financial forces prompted by the capitalist enterprises have rendered people more profit-oriented in the nineties. The hunger for economic gain and profit has affected women as well. With the superwoman image available for women to adopt, economic and professional preoccupations engrossed women much more than anything else. They pursued occupational careers, wanted to earn money, and sustain families with children at the same time. Therefore, individual concerns have overpowered the collectivity women gained through feminism in the seventies and before. In the end, the collective sisterhood supported by feminism as a crucial ideal among women has been problematized.

As a conclusion, this study has shown that it is not the nature; but rather the appearance of women's subordination has changed. Far away from eliminating the subjection, women continue to confront new mechanisms of oppression in different historical and social contexts. Timberlake Wertenbaker who questions the oppression women have been prone to reflects on how female identity is designed to be shaped by patriarchy and motherhood which have been debated on all occasions in relation to woman identity in her plays *The Grace of Mary Traverse* and *The Break of Day* which have been the focus of this study. As illustrated in both of the plays, women

are trapped by a form of oppressive mechanism imposing on them certain characteristics, values and conducts.

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YAZARIN

Soyadı : ....
Adı   : ....
Bölümü : ....

TEZİN ADI (İngilizce) : ....
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....

TEZİN TÜRÜ : Yüksek Lisans ☐   Doktora ☐

1. Tezimin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılsın ve   kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla tezimin bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisi alınsın. ☐

2. Tezimin tamamı yalnızca Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi kullancılarının erişimine açılsın. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) ☐

3. Tezim bir (1) yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olsun. (Bu seçenekle tezinizin fotokopisi ya da elektronik kopyası Kütüphane aracılığı ile ODTÜ dışına dağıtılmayacaktır.) ☐

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