

**ELEMENTS OF FEMINISM IN PULITZER PRIZE
WINNERS IN THE 2000s: A STUDY ON SELECTED
PLAYS**

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**CULTURAL CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2018

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**THESIS SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR
OF PHILOSOPHY**

**CULTURAL CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR**

2018

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
ORIGINAL LITERARY WORK DECLARATION

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Name of Degree: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Title of Project Paper/Research Report/Dissertation/Thesis ("this Work"):
ELEMENTS OF FEMINISM IN PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS IN THE 2000s:
A STUDY ON SELECTED PLAYS

Field of Study: PERFORMING ARTS - DRAMA

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ELEMENTS OF FEMINISM IN PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS IN THE 2000s: A STUDY ON SELECTED PLAYS

ABSTRACT

In this research, the researcher studies and analyses the elements of feminism in the plays that have won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, ranging from the year 2000 until 2009, an era which is also known as Third Wave Feminism. First, the researcher identifies Pulitzer Prize-winning plays from 2000 until 2009, in order to locate elements of feminist ideas such as liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism. Subsequently, the researcher analyses each selected feminist theory and how their ideas are incorporated in the themes and character and characterisation of the selected plays, where he later compares and contrast the influence of different feminist theories in the selected Pulitzer Prize winners in the new millennium. This is a qualitative research, where the researcher has conducted his research by studying the aspects of liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism, as well as reading and comprehending the scripts of the case studies. The selected Pulitzer Prize winners in the 'Drama' category chosen by the researcher for this thesis are *Proof* by David Auburn, *Doubt, A Parable* by John Patrick Shanley, *Rabbit Hole* by David Lindsay-Abaire and *August: Osage County* by Tracy Letts. It is found that cultural feminism has the biggest influence in these selected plays, followed by liberal feminism and socialist feminism.

Keywords: Pulitzer Prize, third wave feminism, liberal feminism, cultural feminism, socialist feminism

ELEMENTS OF FEMINISM IN PULITZER PRIZE WINNERS IN THE 2000s: A STUDY ON SELECTED PLAYS

ABSTRAK

Di dalam kajian ini, pengkaji mengkaji dan menganalisis elemen-elemen feminisme yang terdapat di dalam drama-drama yang pernah memenangi anugerah unggul Pulitzer Prize dari tahun 2000 hingga 2009. Ini merupakan sepuluh tahun pertama di dalam abad baru, yang juga merupakan era Gelombang Ketiga Feminisme. Pertama, pengkaji mengenalpasti drama-drama yang telah memenangi anugerah berprestij ini untuk meneliti elemen-elemen feminisme liberal, feminisme budaya dan feminisme sosialis. Kemudian, pengkaji menganalisis setiap elemen-elemen ini untuk memperhatikan bagaimana idea-idea feminisme ini diperolehi menerusi tema dan watak dan perwatakan, di mana sesudah itu pengkaji membandingkan bagaimana elemen-elemen ini diperolehi di dalam drama-drama yang memenangi Pulitzer Prize. Ini merupakan kajian kualitatif, di mana pengkaji telah mempelajari aspek-aspek cabang-cabang feminisme yang dipilih, serta membaca dan memahami skrip-skrip yang dikaji. Drama-drama yang terpilih untuk kajian ini termasuklah *Proof* hasil tulisan David Auburn, *Doubt, A Parable* hasil tulisan John Patrick Shanley, *Rabbit Hole* hasil tulisan David Lindsay-Abaire dan *August: Osage County* hasil tulisan Tracy Letts. Hasil kajian mendapati elemen feminisme budaya mempunyai pengaruh paling besar di dalam kajian ini, diikuti dengan feminisme liberal dan feminisme sosialis.

Kata kunci: Pulitzer Prize, gelombang ketiga feminisme, feminisme liberal, feminisme budaya, feminisme sosialis

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are no words to write that could properly capture the gratitude and love I have for all the incredible people who have been a part of this journey with me, pushing me to another level with the love and belief you have in my research. In reality, life is bigger than all of us and I'm beyond proud and blessed to say: IT'S DONE! Thank you to my parents, Sallehuddin Mohd Mashor and Maiza Ismail, for being patient with me, and for being so supportive and helping me to be who I am. To my sisters, Nor Salleizah, Norainul Asyikin and Nor Aqmar Aizura – thanks for being with me every step of the way. My love to your respective family members. To Dr. Rosdeen Suboh – thank you for embarking on this roller coaster ride with me. Thank you to everyone at Cultural Centre, University of Malaya; Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS); Faculty of Film, Theatre and Animation, Universiti Teknologi MARA; INTEC Education College; my former students from the American Degree Foundation Program and American Credit Transfer Program (batch ATU 13 to ATU 20 and ACT 1 to ACT 6); my former and current students – Diploma Creative Technology and Bachelor of Creative Arts, FiTA UiTM. Thank you to Steve Massa at Theatre on Film and Tape Archive, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center in Manhattan, New York for his assistance. To my extended family – Francissca Peter, Bibiana Peter, Sarena Hashim, Chew Kai Jun, Larry Yusof, Tengku Muhammad Fauzan Tengku Afandi, Carishma Menon, Jad Khalidan Norazian, Mohamad Khairil Hisham Osman and his lovely wife Nurul Adibah Roslan, the Inner Circle of Sherry, Ahmad Alif Ashraf Rozali, Syaza Nazura Noor Azmi, Faisal Syafiq Abd Razak...and everyone I have met in my entire life – friends, fans and foes.

This thesis is dedicated to my parents...and to my mentor, the late Datuk Sharifah Aini Syed Jaafar – thank you for giving me the opportunity to shine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
<i>Abstrak</i>	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Tables	ix
List of Appendices	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Statement of Problem	2
1.3 Objectives of Study	9
1.4 Research Scope	9
1.5 Rationale of Study	14
1.6 Limitation of Study	16
1.6.1 <i>Proof</i>	18
1.6.2 <i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	19
1.6.3 <i>Rabbit Hole</i>	21
1.6.4 <i>August: Osage County</i>	23
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	26
2.1 Introduction to Feminist Theatre	26
2.2 The Evolution of Feminism in Theatre	30
2.3 Pulitzer Prize Winners: Drama	36

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY	52
3.1 Research Methodology	52
3.2 Theoretical Framework	55
3.2.1 Liberal Feminism.....	59
3.2.2 Cultural Feminism.....	64
3.2.3 Socialist Feminism.....	68
 CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS	 73
4.1 Liberal Feminism.....	73
4.1.1 Ideas of Individuality and the Right to Seek Self-fulfilment.....	73
4.1.2 Promote a Positive Self-image for Being a Woman.....	96
4.1.3 Free to Take Action Beyond Physical Aggression.....	121
4.1.2 Having Access to Increase Opportunities.....	138
4.1.3 Suppressing Male's Sexual Desire towards Female.....	141
4.2 Cultural Feminism.....	145
4.2.1 Injecting Harmony, Maternal or Feminine Values into Everyday Lives	146
4.2.2 The Capability to Relate to Life and Nature.....	155
4.2.3 Celebrate the Elements of 'Woman-Ness', Especially as Caregivers and Nurturers.....	160
4.2.4 Intra-Feminine – Emphasis on Mother/Daughter Relations or Sisterhood	178
4.2.5 Contesting the Patriarchal Organisation of Society.....	194

4.3	Socialist Feminism.....	213
4.3.1	The Idea of Living in A Utopian World.....	213
4.3.2	Emphasis on Collaboration between Members of Society Towards Achieving Harmony.....	214
4.3.3	Overcoming Oppression Based On Race, Economy, Status and Nationalities.....	223
4.3.4	Diversity of Gender, Class, Sexuality and Ethnicity.....	225
4.2.5	Overcoming Alienation of Gender Stereotypes in Achieving Equality.....	228
4.4	Conclusion.....	229
 CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION		234
5.1	Summary	234
5.2	Conclusion	237
 References		 240
Appendix		245

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1: Pulitzer Prize Winners and Finalists – Drama (2000-2009)	10
Table 3.1: Analysis Method	72
Table 5.1: Liberal Feminism	235
Table 5.2: Cultural Feminism	235
Table 5.3: Socialist Feminism	236

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LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: David Auburn	245
Appendix B: Script of <i>Proof</i>	246
Appendix C: Poster of <i>Proof</i>	247
Appendix D: A Scene from <i>Proof</i>	248
Appendix E: John Patrick Shanley	249
Appendix F: Script of <i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	250
Appendix G: A Scene from <i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	251
Appendix H: David Lindsay-Abaire	252
Appendix I: Script of <i>Rabbit Hole</i>	253
Appendix J: A Scene from <i>Rabbit Hole</i>	254
Appendix K: Tracy Letts	255
Appendix L: Script of <i>August: Osage County</i>	256
Appendix M: Poster of <i>August: Osage County</i>	257
Appendix N: A Scene from <i>August: Osage County</i>	258

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter covers the statement of problem, research questions, objectives, research scope, rationale of study, limitations of study and a brief introduction of the method used, as well as analytical procedures. It includes the introduction to the winners of the coveted Pulitzer Prize in the Drama category. Theatre is a multifarious form of art that began almost 2,500 years ago, since the 4th century BCE during the peak of Greek Empire.¹ In 1993, Alan Reed argued that theatre has undertaken plethora of changes and evolved into diverse paths, as there are divisions and similarities between the above-mentioned areas, in which are explored with regard to orientation, accretion, inspiration, circulation and combustion. Read further stated that these areas offer “the ways in which everyday life is infused by the theatrical and the ways in which the theatrical influences and frames the real” (Read, 1993, p. 2). The practices that most practitioners are accustomed with today incorporate a range of the theatre’s vast prospects and explorations. One of the many explorations is the infusion of an ideology, such as feminism, into a performance and its transformation on stage.

The topic of the research is “Elements of Feminism in Pulitzer Prize Winners in the 2000s: A Study on Selected Plays”. Made popular by Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem in the 1960s, feminism has become one of the most divisive subjects ever studied, especially in a patriarchal-led society. There are many ways used by feminist activists and their fervent supporters to spread their ideas to the public; one of those useful ways includes theatre. In this research, the researcher studies and analyses the aforementioned element in the plays have won the prestigious Pulitzer Prize, ranging from the year 2000 until 2009.

¹ However, according to “The Essential Theatre” co-written by Oscar G. Brockett and Robert J. Ball, it is uncertain just how and when theatre originated.

Feminist theories are the epitome of this study, as such it is necessary to explain the many types of ideas derived from the ideology of feminism and how they affect the world of performing arts. Explanation about how feminist theories infuse themselves into theatre and why Pulitzer Prize-winning plays are selected to be the case study of this research will be indicated. Internationally, there have been numerous research attempted by theatre scholars to study feminism, feminist theories and feminist theatres, but the subject in question is still fairly new in this country. It is important to stress here that this is the first attempt in Malaysia to study winners of the most prestigious literary award in the United States, Pulitzer Prize, predominantly in the category of 'Drama'.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Feminism is the ideology that supports the uplifting of status and improving the rights of women and has been one of the most influential ideologies (some might perceive it as a political idea or mere propaganda) of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Kathleen Berkeley (1999) recognised that the foundation of feminism has been acknowledged as "a profound liberation of society", while there are a number of critics panning it as "a philosophy of victim hood", and "responsible for the breakdown of the nuclear family and the degradation of society in general". The work of its activists and reformers has been responsible for colossal progresses in elevating the position of women in the world over the past 200 years. According to Joan Kelly (1982), there are three basic positions of feminism during its early inceptions: a conscious stand in opposition to male defamation and mistreatment of women, or a dialectical opposition to misogyny; a belief that the sexes are not just biologically but also culturally formed, and women were a social group shaped to fit male notions about a defective sex; and an outlook that transcended the accepted value systems of the time by exposing and opposing the

prejudices narrowness mentality towards women.² Sally J. Scholz (2010) opines that the First Wave of Feminism began in the 17th century, and lasted through the early part of the 20th century, focusing on the rights of women to vote in local and national elections, as well as women attaining better standing in the society with full civil, intellectual, social, economic, and legal rights (6). The Second Wave Feminism began in between 1948 and 1960, and peaks from 1960 until the late 1980s; this time, the activism focuses more on aspects of women's physical existence or experience, as well as solidarity among all women in the experience of oppression (7). Women were beginning to defend themselves against male domination, stereotyping, violence and other forms of oppression.

The researcher is interested to analyse the elements of feminism in a number of contemporary American-based plays written in the post-feminism era, in order to observe whether feminism and its theories are still recognised or are pertinent in the theatre scene. The period of time is the first 10 years of the new millennium, a period which is also known as Third Wave Feminism. In her critically-acclaimed, award-winning book *Backlash: The Undeclared War against American Women* (henceforth to be referred to as *Backlash*), journalist Susan Faludi, a Pulitzer Prize winner for 'Explanatory Journalism' in 1991,³ explores the fictitious media campaigns against feminism in the era of Reagan conservatism in the 1980s. Faludi reported that former President Ronald Reagan declared that women in the 1980s have achieved "so much", his administration at the White House "no longer needs to appoint them to higher office" (Faludi, 1991, p. 1). Faludi simplifies what really went into the minds of critics of feminism and conservatives (both men and women) during the Reagan era in this next passage taken from her aforesaid bestseller:

² The descriptions were quoted in the section "Feminism", administered by Paula Treichler and Cheris Kramarae, and taken from *Feminist Theory: A Reader* (2005), published by McGraw-Hill (New York).

³ According to the official website of Pulitzer Prize, Faludi won for "a report on the leveraged buy-out of Safeway Stores, Inc., that revealed the human costs of high finance," which was published in *The Wall Street Journal* in 1990; Ms. Faludi was attached to the San Francisco bureau of the aforesaid newspaper. Ironically, she released her ubiquitous *Backlash* in the same year as she won her Pulitzer.

Professional women are suffering “burnout” and succumbing to an “infertility epidemic.” Single women are grieving from a “man shortage.” The New York Times reports: Childless women are “depressed and confused” and their ranks are swelling. Newsweek says: Unwed women are “hysterical” and crumbling under a “profound crisis of confidence.” The health advice manuals inform: High-powered career women are stricken with unprecedented outbreaks of “stress-induced disorders,” hair loss, bad nerves, alcoholism, and even heart attacks. The psychology books advise: Independent women’s loneliness represents “a major mental health problem today.”... Women are unhappy precisely because they are free. Women are enslaved by their own liberation. 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.

The book touched on the creation of wildly anti- feminist 80's myths and backlashes in popular culture (*Fatal Attraction*⁴, the “New Traditionalism”, the new “feminine” fashions); in politics (reproductive rights, the female New Right); in popular psychology (“to improve your marriage, change yourself”); in the workplace (lack of day care, parental leave, the wage gap); and in health (white career women's supposed sterility vs. black women's actual, unaddressed, sterility problem), Faludi convincingly deciphers layers of cautious and passive misrepresentation of feminism. *Backlash* became a runaway bestseller and reawakened the essence of feminism among American women, and then some. This book was christened as the responsible factor for the third coming of feminism, also known as Third Wave Feminism. In 2006, when *Backlash* celebrated its 15th anniversary, Faludi gave another insight about the effect of Third Wave Feminism, which she helped launched right after the success of her book, in the “Preface” section.

In the early ‘90s, after the long despond of the Reagan years, American women shook off their torpor and began again to fight. The televised sexist spectacle of the Senate Judiciary Committee members mocking Anita Hill’s allegations of sexual harassment against Supreme Court nominee Clarence Thomas proved one humiliation too many for female

⁴ A Hollywood movie directed by Adrian Lyne, this American psychological thriller is about a married man who has a weekend affair with a woman who refuses to allow it to end, resulting in her becoming obsessed with him. Some feminists did not appreciate what they felt was the depiction of a strong career woman who is also a psychopath.

viewers to witness. After all this time, indignant women told each other across the nation, these men still “don’t get it.” Indignation led to anger, which led to mobilization, which, by the spring of 1992, led to a massive pro-choice demonstration in Washington (one of the largest protest rallies of any kind in the nation’s capital), the birth of dramatically effective feminist PACs like Emily’s List, and a record number of progressive women running for national office...But disillusionment is a start. Being disappointed is not the same as being defeated. The very fact that women feel cheated, the very fact that, when we survey the perfumed trappings of our world, we smell, however faintly, a rat, suggests that women are still in fighting form. We aren’t yet down for the count. The right-wing forces understand this fact better than we do.

Owing to the statement, the researcher believes that elements of feminism are alive and exist in literary works of contemporary playwrights, especially winners of the much-coveted Pulitzer Prize. In addition, it is important to inform that the term “third wave” does not derived directly from Faludi’s book. The term was coined by writer-cum-activist Rebecca Walker (whose mother is the renowned author-cum-feminist Alice Walker, who won a Pulitzer Prize in 1983 for her innovative and provocative novel *The Color Purple*) in an article she wrote for Ms. Magazine in 1992. The article was written a year after *Backlash* was published, as well as the Clarence Thomas-Anita Hill debacle. In her article, Walker, who was only 22 at that time, reaffirms to what Faludi had stated in her book – that women in the United States are experiencing backlash, that women became the victim of misconception of equality between genders which are becoming more pervasive, as well as the numerous attempts to restrict the boundaries of women’s personal and political power. She shared her experience of taking a train, where she encountered two men (sitting behind her) who were talking loudly about their sexual experience, complete with explicit details and profanities; unfortunately, a young girl was sitting near to Walker and could hear the vulgarities discussed by the two men. She related how her personal space was invaded and violated by men. Her rage inspired her to be a feminist who is able to integrate an ideology of equality and female empowerment into life. To close her article, Walker wrote the following passage:

So I write this as a plea to all women, especially the women of my generation: Let Thomas' confirmation serve to re-mind you, as it did me, that the fight is far from over. Let this dismissal of a woman's experience move you to anger. Turn that outrage into political power. Do not vote for them unless they work for us. Do not have sex with them, do not break bread with them, do not nurture them if they don't prioritize our freedom to control our bodies and our lives.

I am not a postfeminism feminist. I am the Third Wave.

"The Third Wave" loosely refers to the next chapter of feminist movement, which the sequel to the "Second Wave" which started in 1964 after the release of *The Feminine Mystique*. In other words, the "Third Wave" is not a new movement, it is a continuation of a legacy that has been overlooked, or a new chapter that has been neglected, thanks to the spread of conservatism in the Reagan era. Furthermore, Third Wave theories and practices engage in a number of mainstream and alternative cultural techniques to contest the occasional ways of thinking and simultaneously present new elements into personal and cultural consciousness.⁵

The researcher decides to study the productions that have deservedly won Pulitzer Prize utilising elements of feminism because of the background factors, such as the author's gender, the characters and the themes of each play; there is a possibility that these Pulitzer Prize-winning plays dealt with women issues, which have been given a more contemporary facelift under the banner of Third generation feminism; hence, feminism is known as a doctrine advocating political, social and economic equality of the sexes, as well as an organized activity on behalf of women's rights and interest.⁶ Shulamith Reinharz believes that feminist perspective is a way of looking at or thinking about something from a point of view of feminists and its theories, as "females are worth examining as individuals and as people whose experience is interwoven with other women" (Reinharz, 1992, p. 241).

⁵ Susan J. Scholz's explanation of Third Wave Feminism in her book *Feminism* (2010).

⁶ The quote is taken from *Introducing Feminism* (1994), co-written by Susan Alice Watkins, Marisa Rueda and Marta Rodriguez.

Since the inception of Second Wave Feminism, the influence of feminism in theatre has been studied academically as many theatre groups and playhouses began to explore feminism in the 1960s. One of the most influential works of feminist theatre studies was published in 1979. Originally written as a dissertation for the University of Missouri at Columbia Department of Theatre a year earlier, Janet Brown's *Feminist Drama* focused on defining a feminist aesthetic in the world of theatre. A good source in finding scholarly studies on feminist theatre is the world famous *The Drama Review: The Journal of Performance Studies* (henceforth to be referred to as "TDR"). "TDR" has an impressive number of papers or essays not only about women in theatre but also about the avant-garde, intercultural and feminist analysis by other renowned scholars and practitioners such as Peggy Phelan, Helen Krich Chinoy, Holly Hughes, Karen Finley, Jill Dolan, Charlotte Rea, Rebecca Schneider and Carol Martin. Theatre studies began to examine the history of playing spaces, performance conditions, audience compositions, and the various artistic, social, and political functions assigned to theatre at different times, and therefore successfully connected to disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, and psychoanalysis (Aston, 1995, p. 2-3). As a result, feminist movements sought to re-evaluate the tasks and positions imposed on women by traditional, patriarchal-led social systems. It was believed that social changes gave new plateau and influence to previously marginalise social groups and the theatre becomes an alternative space for expression of thoughts of new ideas. As a result, many recent dramas echo the range of ideologies and trends of the current pluralistic culture.

The Pulitzer Prize is "a U.S. award for achievements in newspaper journalism, literature and musical composition" (Topping, 2006). It was established by Joseph Pulitzer, a Hungarian-American journalist and newspaper publisher, and is administered by Columbia University in New York City. Pulitzer, who founded the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and bought the *New York World*, left an undisclosed sum of money to

Columbia University upon his death in 1911 as to execute a portion of his bequest was used to found the university's journalism school, the Columbia School of Journalism, in 1912. He also made a provision for the formation of the Pulitzer Prize as “an incentive to excellence, Pulitzer specified solely four awards in journalism, four in letters and drama, one for education, and four travelling scholarships (Topping, 2006). In the category of ‘Letters’, awards are bestowed to an American novel, an original American play performed in New York, a book on the history of the United States, an American biography, and a history of public service by the press, as described in the official website. The first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded on June 4, 1917, and they are now announced each April. Recipients are chosen by an independent board consists of 19 members consists of leading editors or news executives. In the ‘Drama’ category a winner is elected based on the criteria “for a distinguished play by an American author, preferably original in its source and dealing with American life” (Topping, 2006).

For the benefit of generic readers, the researcher includes the official biography taken from the official website of Pulitzer Prize, updated in 2013.

Joseph Pulitzer was born in Mako, Hungary on April 10, 1847, the son of a wealthy grain merchant of Magyar-Jewish origin and a German mother who was a devout Roman Catholic. His younger brother, Albert, was trained for the priesthood but never attained it. The elder Pulitzer retired in Budapest and Joseph grew up and was educated there in private schools and by tutors. His great career opportunity came in a unique manner in the library's chess room. Observing the game of two habitués, he astutely critiqued a move and the players, impressed, engaged Pulitzer in conversation. The players were editors of the leading German language daily, *Westliche Post*, and a job offer followed. Four years later, in 1872, the young Pulitzer, who had built a reputation as a tireless enterprising journalist, was offered a controlling interest in the paper by the nearly bankrupt owners. At age 25, Pulitzer became a publisher and there followed a series of shrewd business deals from which he emerged in 1878 as the owner of the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, and a rising figure on the journalistic scene. In 1912, one year after Pulitzer's death aboard his yacht, the Columbia School of Journalism was founded, and the first Pulitzer Prizes were awarded in

1917 under the supervision of the advisory board to which he had entrusted his mandate. Pulitzer envisioned an advisory board composed principally of newspaper publishers. Others would include the president of Columbia University and scholars, and "persons of distinction who are not journalists or editors."

Today, the 19-member board includes the president of Columbia University, the dean of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism two academics, leading editors and news executives. The dean and the administrator of the prizes are non-voting members. Annually, the post as the chair rotates to the most senior member. The board is self-perpetuating in the election of members, and voting members may serve three terms within three years. In the selection of the members of the board and of the juries, priorities are extended to professional excellence and affiliation, as well as diversity in terms of gender, ethnic background, geographical distribution and size of newspaper.⁷

1.3 Objectives of Study

There are three objectives of this research: to identify Pulitzer Prize-winning plays from 2000 until 2009, in order to locate elements of feminist theories such as liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism; to analyse each selected feminist theory and how their ideas are incorporated in the themes and character and characterisation of the selected plays; and to compare and contrast the influence of different feminist theories in the selected Pulitzer Prize winners in the new millennium.

1.4 Research Scope

The feminist element in a theatre production is a unique aspect; the researcher is positive that besides the United States (as well as Britain), feminist ideology could also be sensed in performances around the world. Owing to the above-mentioned fact, the researcher decides to limit his scope. The research was done solely on selected Pulitzer Prize winners. After scaling down the category of the research, the researcher decides to

⁷ Taken from www.pulitzer.org/page/biography-joseph-pulitzer; updated by Sig Gissler, Administrator of Pulitzer Prize official website.

focus on the winners in the category of ‘Drama’. For the aforementioned category, a jury, usually composed of three critics, one academic and one playwright, attends plays staged in New York and the regional theatres. The award in drama goes to a playwright, but production of the play, as well as script, is taken into account. The category was included in the inaugural edition of Pulitzer Prize in 1917, but no winner was declared. Technically, the first play to eligibly won Pulitzer was the following year when *Why Marry?* by Jesse Lynch Williams was acknowledged as the winner in 1918.

These are the plays that have won the prestigious award in the decade of 2000s, which are the prospective case studies for this research:

Table 1.1: Pulitzer Prize Winners and Finalists – Drama (2000-2009)

Year	Winner	Finalists
2000	<i>Dinner with Friends</i> Donald Margulies	<i>In the Blood</i> Suzan-Lori Parks <i>King Hedley II</i> August Wilson
2001	<i>Proof</i> David Auburn	<i>The Play About the Baby</i> Edward Albee <i>The Waverly Gallery</i> Kenneth Lonergan
2002	<i>Topdog/Underdog</i> Suzan-Lori Parks	<i>The Glory of Living</i> Rebecca Gilman <i>Yellowman</i> Dael Orlandersmith
2003	<i>Anna in the Tropics</i> Nilo Cruz	<i>The Goat, or Who is Sylvia?</i> Edward Albee <i>Take Me Out</i> Richard Greenberg

Table 1.1, continued

Year	Winner	Finalists
2004	<i>I Am My Own Wife</i> Doug Wright	<i>Man from Nebraska</i> Tracy Letts <i>Omnium Gatherum</i> Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros
2005	<i>Doubt, A Parable</i> John Patrick Shanley	<i>The Clean House</i> Sarah Ruhl <i>Thom Pain (based on nothing)</i> Will Eno
2006	No award	<i>Miss Witherspoon</i> Christopher Durang <i>Red Light Winter</i> Adam Rapp <i>The Intelligent Design of Jenny Chow</i> Rolin Jones
2007	<i>Rabbit Hole</i> David Lindsay-Abaire	<i>Bulrusher</i> Eisa Davis <i>Elliot, a Soldier's Fugue</i> Quiara Alegria Hudes <i>Orpheus X</i> Rinde Eckert
2008	<i>August: Osage County</i> Tracy Letts	<i>Dying City</i> Christopher Shinn <i>Yellow Face</i> David Henry Hwang
2009	<i>Ruined</i> Lynn Nottage	<i>Becky Shaw</i> Gina Gionfriddo <i>In The Heights</i> Lin-Manuel Miranda and Quiara Alegria Hudes

According to the official website, no prize was awarded in year 2006 - according to The Plan of Award, "If in any year all the competitors in any category shall fall below the standard of excellence fixed by The Pulitzer Prize Board, the amount of such prize or prizes may be withheld."

Throughout the years, some of the popular plays that have won this coveted award including *Our Town* by Thornton Wilder (1938), *A Streetcar Named Desire* by Tennessee Williams (1948), *South Pacific* by Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II and Joshua Logan (1950), *Long Day's Journey into Night* by Eugene O'Neill (1957), *A Delicate Balance* by Edward Albee (1967), *Crimes of the Heart* by Beth Henley (1981), *Driving Miss Daisy* by Alfred Uhry (1988) and *Wit* by Margaret Edson (1999). Other playwrights who have won this much-coveted honour including August Wilson, Horton Foote, Neil Simon, Sam Shepard, Frank Loesser, William Inge, William Saroyan, Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. Before 1982, the Pulitzer board only released the name of the winner in this category; in 1983, the board decided to release the list of finalists to the public.

In the end, the researcher may encounter the most important question relating to his choice of case study: Why does the researcher select Pulitzer Prize? Why not the more renowned and glamorous Antoinette Perry Award for Excellence in Theatre (created in 1948), also known as the American Theatre Wing's Tony Award, or the more underrated Obie Award (Off-Broadway Theater Awards), which was created in 1955. There are also numerous theatre awards that could be considered as case studies, such as Drama Desk Award, Drama League Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Theatre World Award and Outer Critics Circle Award. The justification is lucid – the researcher is highly fascinated with the reputation and credential of the prize itself. While most awards were chosen by practitioners (actors, union members, stage crew members, journalists, etc.), Pulitzer Prize exudes the quality of academic rigour as the judges are

strictly composed of academics, critics and playwrights. The final act of the annual competition is enacted in early April when the Board assembles for two days in the Pulitzer World Room of the Columbia School of Journalism. In prior weeks, the Board had read the scripts of the nominated plays, and attended the performances or seen videos where possible. By custom, it is incumbent on Board members not to vote on any award under consideration unless they have reviewed the entries; some other awards do not pay attention to this strict regulation as mass votes can be tricky sometimes.

This is a qualitative research, where the researcher has conducted his research by studying the selected theories of feminism, as well as studying the scripts of the case studies. The scripts were sold in various bookstores, so ordering or buying them off the shelves were not problematic as compared to sourcing related materials for literature reviews. The researcher had done extensive library research, analysis and e-mail interviews. The researcher successfully located and viewed the taped performances, courtesy of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center in Manhattan, New York, the United States of America; these recordings are held in reserve in the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (TOFT) department. According to the official statement obtained from the library, these recordings were made possible “with the consent and cooperation of the theatrical unions and each production's artistic collaborators.”⁸ In the research section, the researcher studies each performance by observing and looking into themes and elements of feminist theories, as well as character and characterisation. The researcher then utilises principles drawn from these selected feminist theories: liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism. More details on methodology will be discussed in Chapter 3.

⁸ Official statement by Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (TOFT), New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, as its main objective is preserving live theatrical productions and documenting the creative contributions of distinguished artists and legendary figures of the theatre.

1.5 Rationale of Study

The researcher is interested to understand the differences of each selected feminist theories and how their ideas could be incorporated in a play. Moreover, the winners in this category are plays written by both male and female playwrights. Throughout the history, many earlier feminist scholars believed that feminist writing must be done by feminists or female playwrights, as stipulated by Helene Keyssar, when she wrote in 1984 to justify that feminist drama is about female issues and agendas written exclusively by women. However, by 1990, a year before *Backlash* was published, leading feminist playwrights had moved to other matters, and women's theatres were in flux. Some had ceased producing, while some had moved away from feminism to venture into different type of writings or productions. The rest moved in directions newly pointed to by feminism itself, as a consequence of the Reagan era, thus emphasising differences among women. Simultaneously, many male playwrights were beginning to write plays dealing with issues on women, highlighting their plight with both pessimism and optimism. These issues include the explorations of the function of gender in life and art, investigating through performance the ways in which society and theatre construct gender, while not labelling these plays as "feminist plays". Concurrently, the researcher wishes to document the influence of feminism in plays written after the new millennium, or at least achieved prominence after 2000, as he is fascinated with feminism and its many school of thoughts.

Pulitzer Prize is one of the most renowned and prestigious literary awards in the world. However, in Malaysia, Pulitzer Prize remains unpopular within the society, especially to students who are interested or majoring in arts and letters, such as English Literature, Performing Arts and Education, to name a few. Malaysians in general, especially avid readers, are more familiar with the Man Booker Prize award, a literary award recognising the best original novel written in the English language and published

in the United Kingdom; this is not just a silly presumption as the researcher managed to do a verbal survey among visitors at a couple of bookstores in Kuala Lumpur. A general assumption for this circumstance would be Malaysia's Commonwealth to its former colony, Britain. Meanwhile, Pulitzer Prize is only known by a rather limited number of literature aficionados, especially those who are in favour of American literature and authors. Occasionally, these enthusiasts are basically Malaysians who have gone to the United States to pursue their tertiary education, or they have lived in the aforementioned country due to other factors. Other observation would be that they are simply huge admirers of literature. The researcher first became acquainted with the prestigious Pulitzer when he read *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, a Pulitzer winner for fiction in 1983, when he was 14 years old in 1990. Subsequently, the researcher began to venture into winners in the other categories, such as biography, history and drama. In the latter category, the researcher's first encounter was *The Heidi Chronicles*, a Pulitzer winner in 1989, written by Wendy Wasserstein. Soon after, he began to delve into other winners such as *The Piano Lesson* by August Wilson, *Driving Miss Daisy* by Alfred Uhry, *Night, Mother* by Marsha Norman and *Seascape* by Edward Albee, and began to enjoy more selections from the fiction, biography and history winners as well. The researcher decides to be a collector of winners and finalists in these four categories. Unfortunately, most of these influential and masterpiece works remain largely unfamiliar to Malaysians. In the aforesaid Man Booker Prize, only novels are recognised, while any awards relating to plays or dramas remain undiscovered. Subsequently, only plays written by Shakespeare were incorporated in English syllabus, which the researcher found convoluted (as the language is antediluvian and challenging for common students to penetrate) and would impede many young people's interest in studying drama and theatre. 20th century plays are only introduced in higher learning institutions, where students begin to discover Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller and

Eugene O'Neill. The researcher believes that newer plays by more contemporary playwrights should also be incorporated in the college courses, as these newer plays contained issues that more current for anyone to comprehend, besides the usage of language. Besides, the researcher hopes to introduce more Pulitzer Prize-winning plays to the general public, particularly to his fellow Malaysians, and this research is his first major leap to achieve this aspiration. At the same time, academic research solely based on this aforesaid prestigious honour is rare and in between. For this research, the researcher successfully discovered two books that are still in print, and a handful of scholarly journals, but many were written not from the perspective of feminism.

1.6 Limitation of Study

This is a relatively new area of study in this country. As the researcher had mentioned earlier, feminism has been studied widely in Malaysia, especially in the field of sociology, economics, politics and theology. As for theatre, there has been several scholarly works, which have been published in journals and seminar papers. However, the researcher is yet to find any thesis that studies plays produced by a local production house from a feminist perspective, thus making it difficult for the researcher to compare any significance of the studies.

There are a number of feminist theories around, either newly introduced or reformulated and revamped by academicians and feminists alike. The researcher has selected three theories which are definite, applicable and relevant to the world of performing arts. The theories are liberal feminism, cultural feminism and radical feminism. Simultaneously, the researcher will only be concentrating his study on scripts only as taped performances of stage productions are rare and impossible to obtain as most theatre performances are not recorded for commercial purposes unlike its counterpart in the motion picture industry, while watching live performances is also

impractical given the fact that the researcher does not live in the United States. At the same time, some of these plays are no longer performed for the public members.

Finally, it is imperative for the researcher to declare that he will only be concentrating his study on four out of nine Pulitzer; the selected winners are *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable*, *Rabbit Hole*, and *August: Osage County*. These four are chosen, as they have female characters that look and sound stronger and carry a great deal of women's issues in daily livelihood. *Dinner with Friends* offers female characters that are rather stereotyped and docile in the presence of patriarchal elements, where the female characters seemed to happily succumb to domestic living. *Topdog/Underdog*, written by a renowned female playwright Suzan Lori-Parks, has no female characters; a couple of women's names are mentioned throughout the play, but only in passing as the play focuses more on the volatile relationship between two brothers. *I Am My Own Wife* is a one-man show based on the life of a German transvestite, Charlotte von Mahlsdorf who survived the Nazi and Communist regimes in East Berlin; the researcher is abstaining from incorporating transvestite issues within feminism as it will lead to another element feminism other than liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism. Subsequently, the research is putting other factors into consideration, such as accessibility of plays and adaptation works that could be extra fodders for prospective readers who are not familiar with theatre and staging of plays. All four aforementioned plays, *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable*, *Rabbit Hole*, and *August: Osage County* have been adapted into feature films in the United States and received worldwide distribution, and also available for online viewing via legal download. In addition to Pulitzer Prize, all four plays have won another much-coveted award in theatre, the Antoinette Perry Awards, also known as the Tony Awards. Moreover, these four plays have been adapted into feature films, and these adaptations were also recognised by film critics, as well as winning and being nominated for numerous awards such as Academy Awards, Golden

Globe Awards, Screen Actors Guild Awards and BAFTA Awards, to name a few. These movies are also available for purchase in the formats of DVD and Blu-ray, thus giving the opportunities for anyone who did not have access to the recordings of the plays. This is extremely accommodating for anyone should they wish to do further research on the aforementioned plays. Both *Anna in the Tropics* and *Ruined* are yet to be adapted into feature films or television miniseries. While both plays are exceptional and affable, the researcher decides not to include both titles as the accessibility is limited and therefore prospective readers are not able to look for supporting material should they are in the look for more than just published scripts in order to have better grasp of this research. In addition, the researcher selects the aforementioned productions due to its refined script, elegant productions and fervent characters. Later, the analysis will be discussed in Chapter 4, and a summary of findings will be detailed in Chapter 5.

1.6.1 *Proof*

Proof wins the Pulitzer Prize in the 'Drama' category in 2001. Catherine, the daughter of Robert, a recently deceased mathematical genius and professor at the University of Chicago, has her own struggle with mathematical genius and mental illness and starting to face the demon. Catherine had cared for her father through a lengthy mental illness. Upon Robert's death, his ex-graduate student Hal discovers a paradigm-shifting proof about prime numbers in Robert's office. The title refers both to that proof and to the play's central question: Can Catherine prove the proof's authorship? Along with demonstrating the proof's authenticity, the daughter also finds herself in a relationship with Hal. Throughout, the play explores Catherine's fear of following in her father's footsteps, both mathematically and mentally.

The list of characters for *Proof* including Catherine, a twenty-five-year-old mathematics wunderkind who just lost her father while battling symptoms of mental illness; Claire, her twenty-nine-year-old elder sister who lives in New York; Harold (or

Hal), a twenty-eight-year-old protégé of Robert, and Robert, a mathematics professor suffering from schizophrenia, and father of Catherine and Claire.

The play premiered at the Manhattan Theatre Club in New York City on May 23, 2000 and directed by Daniel Sullivan. The cast members were Mary-Louise Parker, Larry Bryggman, Ben Shenkman and Johanna Day. Other credits for this production including John Lee Beatty as set designer, Pat Collins as lighting designer, John Gromada as composer of original score and sound designer, Jess Goldstein as costume designer, James Harker as production stage manager, Lynne Meadow as artistic director and Barry Grove as executive producer. It was later staged on Broadway on October 24, 2000 at the Walter Kerr Theatre. Produced by Manhattan Theatre Club, Roger Berlind, Carole Shorenstein Hays, Jujamcyn Theatre, Ostar Enterprises, Daryl Roth and Stuart Thompson, it retained the same director, cast members and technical crew members. Besides Pulitzer Prize, the play also won 3 Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Direction of a Play (Daniel Sullivan) and Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play (Mary-Louise Parker). It also won Drama Desk Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle and Lucille Lortel Award.

Proof was adapted to film by Miramax Films. The script was adapted by Rebecca Miller, based on Auburn's stage version. The film version was directed by John Madden and starring Gwyneth Paltrow (Catherine), Sir Anthony Hopkins (Robert), Jake Gyllenhaal (Harold/Hal) and Hope Davis (Claire). It premiered on September 16, 2005; Paltrow received a Golden Globe Award nomination for Best Actress (Motion Picture Drama).

1.6.2 *Doubt, A Parable*

The play is set in the St. Nicholas Church School, in the Bronx, during the fall of 1964. The school's principal, Sister Aloysius, a rigidly conservative nun vowed to the order of the Sisters of Charity, insists upon constant vigilance. During a meeting with a younger

nun, Sister James, it becomes clear that Aloysius harbours a deep mistrust toward her students, her fellow clergymen, and society in general. Aloysius and Father Flynn, a beloved and progressive parish priest, are put into direct conflict when she learns from Sister James that the priest met one-on-one with Donald Muller, St. Nicholas' first Negro student. Mysterious circumstances lead her to believe that sexual misconduct occurred. Aloysius, in the presence of Sister James, openly confronts Flynn with her suspicions. He angrily denies wrong-doing, insisting that he was disciplining Donald for drinking altar wine, claiming to have been protecting the boy from harsher punishment. After failing to convince Mrs. Muller, Donald Muller's mother, that something devious had occurred between Donald and Father Flynn, Aloysius takes matters into her hand by threatening Father Flynn about his past infringements, which is later revealed as a fabrication.

The list of characters for *Doubt, A Parable* including Sister Aloysius Beauvier, a draconian school principal in her fifties; Father Brendan Flynn, a priest in his late thirties; Sister James, a delicate young nun-cum-teacher in her mid-twenties, and Mrs. Muller, an African American in her late thirties and mother of Donald Muller (a character mentioned only in the play).

The play premiered on November 23, 2004 at the Manhattan Theatre Club. Later, it was shifted to Walter Kerr Theatre on Broadway on March 31, 2005. Produced by Carole Shorenstein Hays, MTC Productions, Roger Berlind and Scott Rudin, both versions were directed by Doug Hughes and starred Cherry Jones (Sister Aloysius), Brian F. O'Byrne (Father Flynn), Heather Goldenhersh (Sister James) and Adriane Lenox (Mrs. Muller). The creative team behind this production including John Lee Beatty as set designer, Pat Collins as lighting designer, David Van Tieghem as composer of original score and sound designer, Catherine Zuber as costume designer,

Charles Means as production stage manager, Elizabeth Moloney as stage manager, Lynne Meadow as artistic director and Barry Grove as executive producer.

In addition to Pulitzer Prize, the play also won 4 Tony Awards for Best Play, Best Direction of a Play (Doug Hughes), Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play (Cherry Jones) and Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role in a Play (Adriane Lenox); it also received 4 other nominations. *Doubt, A Parable* also won a number of accolades from Drama Desk Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle and Lucille Lortel Award.

Doubt, A Parable was adapted to film by Scott Rudin Productions and Miramax Films. The script was adapted by John Patrick Shanley, based on his stage version; Shanley also directed the movie. Starring Meryl Streep (Sister Aloysius), Philip Seymour Hoffman (Father Flynn), Amy Adams (Sister James) and Viola Davis (Mrs. Muller), the film version of *Doubt* premiered on December 12, 2008; it received 5 Academy Award nominations, including Best Actress in a Leading Role for Meryl Streep.

1.6.3 *Rabbit Hole*

Rabbit Hole is about Howie and Becca, a couple learning to cope with grief after the accidental death of their four-year-old son Danny, who ran out into the street after his dog and was hit by a car. Howie attends a support group and wants to have reminders of Danny around the house while Becca is trying to get rid of Danny's mementos and trying to sell the house. Nat, Becca's mother, tries to comfort Becca but the latter is closed off from everybody so she does not end up helping much. Izzy, Becca's younger sister who just recently learned that she is pregnant, also tries to comfort Becca, but to no avail. Surprisingly, the only person who is able to offer comfort to Becca is the driver of the car that killed her son. Seventeen-year-old Jason is a science fiction writer who longed to talk to Becca not only about Danny's death but about his plan to dedicate

a story he wrote in Danny's memory. Becca agrees and by the end of the play, both Howie and Becca are becoming closer to one another and plan to start all over again.

The list of characters in *Rabbit Hole* including Becca, a woman in her late thirties who just lost her son in a car accident; Howie, a man in his early forties and Becca's husband; Izzy, Becca's sister who is in her early thirties; Nat, a woman in her mid-sixties and mother of Becca and Izzy, and Jason, a seventeen-year-old boy who accidentally ran into Becca and Howie's son, Danny.

Rabbit Hole premiered straight on Broadway on February 2, 2006 at the Biltmore Theatre and produced by Manhattan Theatre Club and Barry Grove. It was first commissioned by South Coast Repertory in Costa Mesa, California. Directed by Daniel Sullivan, the cast members were Cynthia Nixon (Becca), Mary Catherine Garrison (Izzy), John Slattery (Howie), Tyne Daly (Nat) and John Gallagher, Jr. (Jason). Other credits for this production including John Lee Beatty as set designer, Christopher Akerlind as lighting designer, John Gromada as composer of original score and sound designer, Jennifer Von Mayrhauser as costume designer, Roy Harris as production stage manager, Lynne Meadow as artistic director on Broadway (Martin Benson as artistic director in Costa Mesa) and Barry Grove as executive producer on Broadway (David Emmes as executive producer in Costa Mesa).

Besides Pulitzer Prize, *Rabbit Hole* also won a Tony Award for Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play (Cynthia Nixon) and received 4 other nominations. It was later adapted into film by Blossom Films, Odd Lot Entertainment and Lionsgate. The script was adapted by David Lindsay-Abaire, based on his stage version. The film version was directed by John Cameron Mitchell and starring Nicole Kidman (Becca), Aaron Eckhart (Howie), Dianne Wiest (Nat), Tammy Blanchard (Izzy) and Miles Teller (Jason). It premiered on December 17, 2010; the

following year, Kidman received an Academy Award nomination for Best Actress in a Leading Role.

1.6.4 *August: Osage County*

August: Osage County focuses on a reunion of the Weston family, living in the state of Oklahoma; the play's title refers to Osage County, located in northwest of Tulsa. The Weston family members are all gifted yet sensitive and excellent in making lives of others miserable. When Beverly Weston, the patriarch of the household, mysteriously vanishes, the Weston clan gathers together to instantaneously support and fights with one another. The family members evoke their story with each other, with Violet Weston, Beverly's drug-addicted wife, launches into confrontational tendencies against him. When Beverly's body was found as a result of an apparent suicide, the family then holds a funeral, where Violet's drug habit is becoming more apparent and getting worse. Barbara Fordham, Ivy and Karen Weston, Beverly and Violet's daughters, share more family anecdotes and past stories (with a few are painful memories) with Violet's sister, Mattie Fae Aiken. Later, each character becomes more despondent from each other, as the relationships between Violet's daughters are becoming more ruptured. Barbara and her mother have one last angry confrontation during which Violet blames Barbara for her father's suicide when Barbara admits that she knows her father's whereabouts as Violet believed that Beverly's suicide can be prevented.

The list of characters in *August: Osage County* including Violet Weston, a sixty-five-year-old woman addicted to drugs; Beverly Weston, a sixty-nine-year-old man and husband of Violet who committed suicide; Barbara Fordham, a forty-six-year-old embittered wife and Beverly and Violet's eldest daughter; Ivy Weston, a forty-four-year-old woman recuperating from cancer and Beverly and Violet's middle daughter; Karen Weston, a forty-year-old ambitious woman and Beverly and Violet's youngest daughter; Bill Fordham, a forty-nine-year-old college professor who has an affair with

his student and Barbara's husband; Jean Fordham, a fourteen-year-old rebellious young woman and Bill and Barbara's daughter; Mattie Fae Aiken, a fifty-seven-year-old woman and Violet's sister; Charlie Aiken, a sixty-year-old man and Mattie Fae's husband; Little Charles Aiken, a thirty-seven-year-old man and son of Charlie and Mattie Fae; Steve Heidebrecht, a fifty-year-old man and Karen's fiancé; Johnna Monevata, a twenty-six-year-old woman and Beverly and Violet's housekeeper, and Sheriff Deon Gilbeau, a forty-seven-year-old man and Barbara's former flame.

August: Osage County made its premiere at Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago in June 2007. Directed by Anna D. Shapiro, the cast members were Dennis Letts (Beverly Weston), Deanna Dunagan (Violet Weston), Amy Morton (Barbara Fordham), Jeff Perry (Bill Fordham), Fawn Johnstin (Jean Fordham), Sally Murphy (Ivy Weston), Mariann Mayberry (Karen Weston), Rondi Reed (Mattie Fae Aiken), Francis Guinan (Charlie Aiken), Ian Barford (Little Charles Aiken), Kimberly Guerrero (Johnna Monevata), Troy West (Sheriff Deon Gilbeau) and Rick Snyder (Steve Heidebrecht). When it opened at the Imperial Theatre on Broadway on December 4, 2007, all but two cast members remained the same; both Fawn Johnstin and Rick Snyder were replaced by Madeleine Martin and Brian Kerwin respectively. The creative team behind this production including Todd Rosenthal as scenic designer, Ann G. Wrightson as lighting designer, David Singer as composer of original score, Richard Woodbury as sound designer, Ana Kuzmanic as costume designer, Chuck Coyl as fight choreographer, Edward Sobel as dramaturg, Cecilie O'Reilly as dialect coach, Deb Styer as stage manager, Michelle Medvin as assistant stage manager, Martha Lavey as artistic director and David Hawkanson as executive director, casting for this production is done by Erica Daniels.

In addition to Pulitzer Prize, *August: Osage County* also won 5 Tony Awards (out of 7 nominations) for Best Play, Best Direction of a Play (Anna D. Shapiro), Best

Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play (Deanna Dunagan), Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role in a Play (Rondi Reed) and Best Scenic Design of a Play (Todd Rosenthal). It also won a number of accolades from Drama Desk Award, New York Drama Critics' Circle, Drama League Award, Theatre World Award and Outer Critics Circle Award.

Jean Doumanian Productions, Smokehouse Pictures, Battle Mountain Films, Yucaipa Films and The Weinstein Company produced the film version of this play, which was released on December 27, 2013. Adapted by Tracy Letts (based on his original screenplay) and directed by John Wells, the film featured a strong ensemble cast including Sam Shepard (Beverly Weston), Meryl Streep (Violet Weston), Julia Roberts (Barbara Fordham), Ewan McGregor (Bill Fordham), Abigail Breslin (Jean Fordham), Julianne Nicholson (Ivy Weston), Juliette Lewis (Karen Weston), Margo Martindale (Mattie Fae Aiken), Chris Cooper (Charlie Aiken), Benedict Cumberbatch (Little Charles Aiken), Misty Upham (Johnna Monevata), Will Coffey (Sheriff Deon Gilbeau) and Dermot Mulroney (Steve Heidebrecht). Both Streep and Roberts were nominated for Best Actress in a Leading Role and Best Actress in a Supporting Role respectively at the Academy Awards in 2014.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction to Feminist Theatre

In this chapter, the researcher incorporates the literature review of related materials concerning feminist theatre (including its evolution and the scholarly studies done by theatre academicians)⁹ and selected readings on Pulitzer Prize winners in the ‘Drama’ category. This helps the researcher to select the appropriate frameworks and principles as these ideas would help the researcher to structure the tools for analysing the winners of Pulitzer Prize from 2000 to 2009. At the same time, prospective readers will also be able to ascertain the brief history and progression of feminist theatre in general. Towards the end of this chapter, some limited literature review on Pulitzer Prize in the ‘Drama’ category.

The Second Wave of Feminism in the United States (henceforth known as the US) led to the formation of a number of women’s theatre groups that attracted a good deal of interest from feminist theatre practitioners and scholars to theorise their practice. The year 1969 was known as the most pivotal year for modern performing arts followers as the first group of women theatre organizations were formed. However, there had been a dispute between the New Feminist Theatre from New York City and the Los Angeles Feminist Theatre (of Los Angeles, California) over the credit as the first group ever, cited a renowned feminist scholar Patti Gillespie.¹⁰ This phenomenon of women searching to create their own “landscape” or “experimental space” in opposition to male-dominated theatre solidified the perpetual demand from female performers to advocate their own agendas and identities, thus plays and performances were created in the context of a new aesthetic based on the transformation (as another scholar Helene Keyssar noted as “mirror social change”) in the society.

⁹ Some content in this section (2.1) and the subsequent section (2.2) were also included in the researcher’s Master’s thesis.

¹⁰ Quoted from Elaine Aston’s *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (1995).

Nevertheless, the participation of women in theatre is not as contemporary as the feminist movement in theatre. Rosamond Gilder writes that the history of women in theatre began in a faint primeval grave where “our first forbear, priestess of life, protectors of fertility, propitiated the unknown in mystic dances of magical intent,” as described in *Enter the Actress: The First Women in the Theatre* (1960). She concurs that the duties of primitive women including activities of those head women of the tribes enacting the dance-drama of their needs, with costumes and mimicry in order to help expurgate evil spirits. In fact, this created the first tragic chorus in performance and later became the prototype of the first actress-priest of the primitive grove, such as Isis, Queen of Heaven in Egypt, Cybele the Great Mother of the Gods in Phrygia and Ishtar in Babylonia. Her attributes are the symbols of fertility and the band of attendant women dancing the drama of birth, death and resurrection.

Women’s participation in theatre did not begin until the 17th century. The Greek and Roman festival theatres had featured only male actors, and the whole of Europe had prohibited women from appearing on the stage, except for religious women during the Middle Ages, and female mime performer during ancient Rome. Women were only permitted to appear on stage in 1661 (in England), but still did not get the opportunity to write their own script, as documented by Brockett and Ball in 2004. On the other hand, Japanese Kabuki started out as a female form around 1600s, but was later outlawed by the shogunate¹¹ due to its ribald and suggestive elements; in addition, the actresses were also moonlighting as prostitutes. Male artists wrote and performed female characters in classical theatre, thus propagating the mysterious aura of female identity during the performance to male audiences, as observed by Aristotle in his *Poetics*, written in the fourth century BC where women performers did not exist. In her book *Feminism and Theatre*, published in 1988, feminist theatre scholar Sue-Ellen Case noted that

¹¹ The government of the shogun, or hereditary military dictator, of Japan. Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/shogunate>.

pioneering feminists began to challenge Aristotle's "patriarchal principle". She proposed an alternative "poetics" (Case, 1988, p. 60), which discusses non-linear structures and located women as subjects rather than objects of the dramatic narratives.¹²

Most theatre practitioners, historians and scholars agree that the most striking person representing the earliest feminist works is Hrosvitha (also known as Hrosvita, Hrotsvitha, Hroswitha or Hrotsvit) of the Benedictine Abbey of Gandersheim, as it is impossible to name the first ever feminist-themed piece written in the history of performing arts. Gilder (1960) describes that Hrosvitha, a religious leader and noblewoman, wrote seven plays in rhymed Latin verse in honour of holy maidens who were living in chastity, and never once concealed her identity. Her works were rediscovered and reintroduced by Conrad Celtes, a German poet, in 1501, and hers were still intact in a period where recorded or documented scripts were non-existent. She categorised her works into three different books: *Liber Primus* (which contained *Maria*, *Gongolfus* and *Theopilus*); *Liber Secundus* (which contained *Pafnutius*, *Dulcitius* and *Abraham*); and *Liber Tertius*. The recurring theme in her plays was largely based on female characters defying impious and aberrant desires from male characters. At present time, her traditional values may be incoherent with the visions and aspirations of many modern feminist playwrights' interests, but exploration of comic structure and laughter as a survival tactic for the female characters to challenge male aggression in her plays is considered a milestone by theatre practitioners as among the first in providing positivity of participation from women in theatre. Gilder concluded that Hrosvitha is a proof of an intellectual continuity from Rome to the Medieval Period.

In English literature, Aphra Behn was recognised as the first professional female playwright. According to the Poetry Foundation, she was known primarily because of

¹² As explained in Sue-Ellen Case's book *Feminism and Theatre* (1988).

her "scandalous" plays, which she claimed would not have been disparaged for indecorum and vulgar if the aforesaid plays were written by a man. Before she became a writer, Behn worked as a spy for King Charles II in Antwerp, the Netherlands. After a few years, Aphra Behn left behind the world of espionage in exchange for theatre. Her first performed play was *The Forc'd Marriage*, 1670, by The Duke's Company, which turned out to be popular and financial success. Her other plays including *The Amorous Prince* (1671), *The Dutch Lover* (1673), *Abdelazar* (1676), *The Town Fop* (1676), *The Debauchee* (1677), *The Counterfeit Bridegroom* (1677), *The Rover* (1677), *Sir Patient Fancy* (1678), *The Feigned Courtesans* (1679), *The Young King* (1679), *The Revenge* (1680), *The Second Part of the Rover* (1681) and many others. After her death in 1689, two of her plays were produced and staged posthumously: *The Widdow Ranter* and *The Younger Brother*.

Helene Keyssar (1984) argued the concept of a play in feminist drama should uplift the piece as "a landscape that de-emphasises the plot and embodies the importance of texture and detail" as the notion of feminist drama is also the quintessence of the playwright's attention in creating a number of characters. Characters in feminist plays grapple with and attempt to reorder the ordinary activities of everyday life. Feminist playwrights considered themselves as explorers who are responsible in sending back maps for their audiences of who are immersing themselves in apparent but uncharted territories, as Keyssar stated that "the lands and cities they reveal are not remote or exotic; they are the places of women and they have been there all along".¹³ In other words, in the original concept, feminist drama is about female issues and agendas written exclusively by women. This 'definition' would soon change as male playwrights were beginning to write plays about women and their issues.

¹³ Keyssar, 1984, p. 2.

Many of these earlier feminist-themed plays exploited the nature of theatre to demonstrate the distinction between gender and sexuality – not in biologically defined sexual identity but in social gender roles that power were allocated and enacted on stage.¹⁴ A significant list of feminist playwrights and performers took a drastic approach by relying on their own lives for the stories and characters that become the backbone of their stage performances. They proclaimed that these recount of experiences as an important assertion of presence rather than attempting to disguise tendency of being up close and personal in re-telling these stories and experiences. For example, It's All Right to be a Woman, a renowned New York performance group, acknowledged this situation in their common belief:

We make theatre out of our lives, our dreams, our feelings, our fantasies. We make theatre by letting out the different parts of us that we have pushed inside our lives.... Making theatre out of these private parts of ourselves is one way we are trying every day to take our own experience seriously, to accept our feelings as valid and real.....¹⁵

Companies and performers often created their own scripts for performance; they frequently finalized the scripts through the collaboration of everyone involved rather than assigning the task of scripting to one person only. These collaborations unmask a very radical gesture of feminist theatre that is to minimize the distance between playwright and actress, actress and character and character and audience members. Feminist theatre, Keyssar concluded, is “to build without distortion or protection the stories told on stage from the experiences of those who make theatre”.¹⁶

2.2 The Evolution of Feminist Theatre

Since the 1960s, feminist theatre has been striving to serve alternative modes of theatre making, designed to empower women performers and address the female audiences. Feminist theatre practitioners continue to work against the oppressions

¹⁴ Keyssar, 1984, p. 3.

¹⁵ Quoted from Patti Gillespie's scholarly article “Feminist Theatre”, published in 1981.

¹⁶ Keyssar, 1984, p. 5.

imposed on them by the theatrical conventions. In her book *Feminist Theatre in the USA*, author and theatre practitioner Charlotte Canning (1996) identified two primary sets of performers within the feminist theatre groups: those already involved or working in the theatre who sought alternative channel for their artistry and those not previously working in the area but found theatre as “a locus for political agency”. Owing to its close rapport between performers and audience members, Patti Gillespie wrote that feminist theatre is “an example of a grassroots movement seldom witnessed in the American theatre”.¹⁷

Women who participated in the Second Wave of Feminism could easily be related to the first sect, as they struggled to achieve their own identity apart from the new experimental theatre group that they used to be involved with in the early 1960s. They dealt with the rejection of “the standard ‘Method’ approach”, which was quickly followed by the recognition that “the labour of women was devalued” (Canning, 1996, p. 42). Synchronously, the political movements in the early 1960s, such as Civil Rights movement, mirrored the struggle of women’s rights activists. These feminist theatre practitioners supported the anti-bureaucratic, non-hierarchical structures that would inspire people to liberate; they embraced the so-called ‘new left emphasis on community’ and voiced their criticisms towards bourgeois family structure, racism, poverty, imperialism and nuclear armament. As a result, beginning in 1969, a number of theatre companies that were exclusively producing female-themed performances were formed: New Feminist Theatre, It’s All Right to be a Woman, The Looking Glass Theatre, New Georges, Six Figures Theatre Company, Voice and Vision, Women Seeking..., Spiderwoman Native American Theatre, Westbeth Feminist Playwrights Collective, Women’s Experimental Theatre, The New York Feminist Theatre Troupe, and the Women’s Project and Productions (New York); Theatre of Light and Shadow

¹⁷ Gillespie, P. (1978). Feminist theatre: A rhetorical phenomenon. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 64, 284-294.

(New Haven, Connecticut); Chrysalis Theatre (Northampton, Massachusetts); Perishable Theatre Women's Playwriting Festival and the Rhode Island Feminist Theatre (Providence, Rhode Island); Horizons Theatre (Arlington, Virginia); The Oh Sooo Politically Correct Players and The Theatre Conspiracy (Washington, D.C.); Red Hen Productions (Cleveland, Ohio); Footsteps Theatre Company (Chicago, Illinois); Circle of the Witch, the Alive and Trucking Theatre Company and At the Foot of the Mountain (Minneapolis, Minnesota); Root Wym'n Theatre Company (Austin, Texas); Brava! For Women in the Arts and Women's Will (San Francisco, California); the Latina Theatre Lab (Oakland, California); the Los Angeles Feminist Theatre (Los Angeles, California) and the Omaha Magic Theatre (Omaha, Nebraska). Improvisation, process, environment, transformation and relationship with audience members were the keywords of these companies and theatres, as stressed by Keyssar in 1984. Nonetheless, most of these theatre groups have ceased operations, largely due to the shift of interest among the practitioners as the popularity height of feminism began to decline starting from the early 1980s.

The process of producing a performance in feminist theatre begins with the act of narrating one's own life experiences through brainstorming sessions. Then, the playwrights and the female actors shared and explored the experiences that are common among women such as abortion, contraception, mother-daughter relationship, sexual liberation, work and parody of female characters. The structure of their performances was created after the amalgamation of these experiences. The artists involved would then spend considerable time in improvisations and games, because they need to explore the shared stories through theatrical means. As a result, specific roles would be developed and a script would be recorded.¹⁸ Honor Moore, a feminist theatre scholar, stresses that this method of scripting is known as "choral plays", or dramas focusing on

¹⁸ According to the outline provided by the Alive and Trucking Theatre Company of Minneapolis, as documented by Dinah Leavitt in 1980.

groups of women rather than a female protagonist in which a variety of equal voices are encouraged rather than a single point of view. Many of feminist playwrights sought to write almost exclusively to their peers and shunned a broader audience. Along the way, feminist theatre practitioners do not just rely on choral plays anymore as newer batches of playwrights experimented with performance that involved a single performer who assumes multiple roles. These plays provide a minimal sufficient structure and language for a company to begin work while leaving many specific dramaturgical and performance mode to a limited number of performers.

There has been a great deal of dispute whether men could be a part of feminist theatre. While no official guideline over this matter has ever materialised, in the original context of feminist theatre, plays by women playwrights with strong-female-characters-only were considered in the realm of the definition (as explained by Hélène Cixous through her *écriture féminine*, which will be highlighted in Chapter 3 of this thesis), while male characters were only present in the characters' conversations. Nonetheless, this would soon change as feminist playwrights such as Viveca Lindfors, Megan Terry, Caryl Churchill and Ann Jellicoe started to add male characters in their respective plays. However, the storyline now focused on the retelling of history or daily life from the perspective of women, instead of men. In 1972, Maria Irene Fornes, Rosalyn Drexler, Julie Bovasso, Adrienne Kennedy, Rochelle Owens and Megan Terry co-founded the Women's Theatre Council in New York in order to encourage and support women feminist playwrights to expose or familiarise their works to the mainstream audience. Later, the group evolved into Theatre Strategy, a council that would include male playwrights such as Ed Bullins, Sam Shepard and John Ford Noonan.

Theatre scholar Janet Brown introduced four rhetorical devices in defining and applying critical analysis of feminist drama in 1979. Brown construes that in studying feminist drama, one should consider to discern or apply these following devices: the

sex-role reversal device; the presentation of historical figures as role models; satire of traditional sex roles, and the direct portrayal of women in oppressive situation. These devices have been used by the early theatre practitioners while reviewing or conducting research on plays written by women, as they were studying the aspects of feminism and feminist dramas. Alas, the aforesaid devices are rather limited and generic, thus making it impracticable for studies that require more aspects in theoretical framework.

Robert Barton, a thespian and theatre scholar, offers totally different criteria than the devices concluded by Brown in 1979. In his book *Style for Actors*, published in 1993, Barton believes that a feminist drama has female actors who look and sound stronger; alternative casting is seriously considered as actors are likely to rehearse all roles; a very minimum technical effect (except lighting), but maximum emotion playing; the monologue that address the audience directly and narration interspersed with episodes; language is vernacular and associative, with close attention given to the natural rhythms of women's speech; and preconceptions of what is appropriate are substituted in favour of what women actually share (269). Barton's elements of feminist dramas are more suitable for theatre practitioners who are embarking on the process of staging a new play, where his principles could be used as guidelines for developing a new play rather than for researchers who are attempting to study elements of a renowned or staged play. As for prerequisites required for performers in a feminist drama, Barton argued that these performers must break the barrier with the audience at ease, play simultaneity while linearity is discarded, work in communal, non-hierarchical collaboration discover and enlarge creative and impassioned rituals and have a flair for transformational playing, with immediate embracing of new actions, identities and contexts (270).

In addition, the notion of feminist theatre as 'a study of persuasion' was developed by Elizabeth J. Natalle in 1985, where she illustrates the points in the

communication process where persuasion is likely to take place: in the period of research for a play when group members may need to interrogate their own feminist beliefs; in the play as a feminist message; in the collaboration of the audience in the feminist messages performed; the act of performing as a further means of persuading the actresses of their feminist beliefs; and both performers and the audience may be persuaded of feminist ideas in a post-performance discussion.¹⁹ Aston (1995) explains that it is possible to accomplish the aforesaid persuasion tactics by collective, non-hierarchical persuasion between performers and audience, thus leads to implications for feminist theatrical practice; it was premeditated not only to influence the feminists or supporters of feminist causes in the theatre, but also encouraged them to take action after the performance, in order to enhance or revolutionise the status of women in society (60-61).

Feminist theatre tragically succumbed to the prominence of post-feminist ideology, as many of the production houses mentioned earlier in this section had ceased operation. Besides being unprofitable, many of the playwrights were plagued with the fact that no acknowledgements to ideas of the real feminism. The monumental misreading(s) of feminist performances adds insult to the already injurious recuperative mechanisms of commodity-driven capitalism. Leading feminist playwrights had moved to other matters, and feminist theatres were beginning to be in limbo by 1990. Some had ceased producing, or moved away from feminism to other interests, while the others moved in directions newly pointed to by feminism itself – emphasising differences among women (Patterson, Hunter, Gillespie & Cameron, 2009, p. 322). The aforesaid playwrights and practitioners renewed explorations of the function of gender in life and art, investigating through performance the ways in which society and theatre construct gender (Patterson et al. 2009). Moreover, feminism is no longer an exclusive to women

¹⁹ Natalie's points on 'a study of persuasion' were mentioned in Elaine Aston's *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre* (1995).

only; many male writers who do not belong to any feminist-led companies successfully staged their performances independently. Nevertheless, women's issues are still being staged and highlighted in performances around the world. For example, the overnight success of *The Vagina Monologue*²⁰ by Eve Ensler (an Off-Broadway play) verified that feminist theatre, regardless of criticisms thrown by post-modernists and post-feminists, is germane and still needed in order to push forward imperative and substantial issues regarding women.

Throughout the peak of Second Wave Feminism, there have been many women playwrights who have made significant contribution to the field. The list includes many familiar and great female playwrights: Caryl Churchill, Gretchen Cryer, Maria Irene Fornes, Amy Freed, Ketti Frings, Pam Gems, Susan Glaspell, Lillian Hellman, Beth Henley, Tina Howe, Adrienne Kennedy, Myrna Lamb, Doris Lessing, Jane Martin, Robbie McCauley, Marsha Norman, Suzan-Lori Parks, Ntozake Shange, Anna Deavere Smith, Megan Terry, Paula Vogel, Wendy Wasserstein, and Ruth Wolff.

2.3 Literature Review on Pulitzer Prize Winners

Paul A. Firestone, a respected educator and theatre aficionado, mentioned that the essence of American life played a major role in selecting the winners for the 'Drama' category. His book, *The Pulitzer Prize Plays – The First Fifty Years 1917-1967: A Dramatic Reflection of American Life*, takes into account many different elements – characters, plots, symbolism, the historical context in which the plays emerged and their relevance on sociological, political, familial, psychological and spiritual levels. Firestone stresses that the jurors were under the duress in selecting a proper play to be named as the winner, as they were expected to choose “a best play that reflected good morals, good taste and good manners.” He further reports that the jurors had selected a diverse list of plays that had endured five decades of vast political, social and economic

²⁰ *The Vagina Monologue* is now staged every year on February 14 to remark the celebration of V-Day.

changes, as America had endured two world wars (plus another two regional/ideology wars) and several economic depressions. In his book, Firestone studies all 42 winners (there were eight years when no winners were named) and divided them into five themes. Firestone mentions that each theme “reflects a social institution within the construct of a culture and may serve as a basis for a dramatic exploration of that culture's mores and beliefs” and his analysis basically touches on social infrastructures of all modern cultures. The first theme, “Family Life”, deals with familial issues in the twentieth century; adolescent individuals seeking independence from parental authority due to differences sparked between an idealistic child and an authoritarian parent. Under the same theme, Firestone also highlighted the plight of unmarried women, where these characters flourished as “the efficient manager of the house and the true caregiver of the family's offspring”²¹ and their presence and contribution to the plays paralleled the historical evolution in which most feminists recognised as the new form of liberation for women in America. The other aspects pointed out by Firestone including the conflict of the genders, the significance of married love and creating the next generation (for inheritance and continuity of bloodline) and instability in interpersonal relationships between family members. The second theme discussed by Firestone is “Social Protest”; first, Firestone highlights the characteristics of 'the rebel outsider' - “the behaviour and life experience of protagonists who are alienated from society, hostile to authority, uncertain of their own identities and somewhat self-destructive.”²² Other elements of “Social Protest” including the idea of sacrificing one's will on ambition to ensure better outcome for society; rejection of America's idealistic capitalism and simultaneously criticising “the indifference of the government toward its citizens (while remaining loyal to America's principles of freedom)”²³; protesting “the bitter injustices of bigotry

²¹ Firestone, 2008, p. 21

²² Ibid, p. 69

²³ Ibid, p. 93

and the denial of individual liberty”²⁴ and protesting war as the unacceptable norm for the human condition where human life and human rights must prevail over political oppression, racial prejudice and genocide. Another theme is “Political Heroes”, where Firestone acknowledges the charismatic historical heroes (based on real-life figures) who reflected “the essential character of America and shaped American politics”²⁵, in which these heroes successfully opposing “traditional authority based on intangible personal appeal”²⁶. At the same time, fictional political heroes who “will establish a national harmony in time of economic discord, legislate prudently for the general welfare and champion democratic justice”²⁷ are also recognised another important aspect. Next, Firestone delves into “Morality and Survival in a Materialist Society”, where he accedes the concepts of the agrarian hero and the capitalist hero. The former represents the trial and tribulation of farm life – the substantial trials of farming the soil, struggling with families, land and their own longing for the excitement of the world beyond farming. The latter exemplifies the culture of corporation in the twentieth century – the relationship between corporate players and capitalism in the forms of job security, health benefits, provisions for retirement and faithful service. The final theme, “The Spiritual Condition of Humankind”, deals with morality and religion. The first principle surmised by Firestone is “carnal sinners who have damaged or destroyed the lives of others will be punished severely by Divinity.”²⁸ He further explores the significance of creation and the character of God; “obedience to God, the problem of evil and injustice in the world and the promise of an afterlife.”²⁹

Carolyn Casey Craig, a theatre and women's studies professor at Loyola University in Chicago, wrote *Women Pulitzer Playwrights* in 2004. In this book, which

²⁴ Firestone, 2008, p. 111

²⁵ Ibid, p. 171

²⁶ Ibid, p. 171

²⁷ Ibid, p. 193

²⁸ Ibid, p. 253

²⁹ Ibid, p. 267

derived from her doctoral thesis, Craig highlights the eleven female winners who have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama from its inception in 1917 until 2004. Her analysis is not bounded by any performing arts theories; Craig is more of a historian writing in the form of a retrospective and divides her book into five parts. The first part, “Family Lies and the Unwed Woman: Gale, Glaspell and Akins”, Craig tracks back to the not-so-good old days of women in the first half of the twentieth century. Zona Gale, the first female playwright to win Pulitzer Prize in Drama, wrote *Miss Lulu Bett* in 1921. The play was written in the same year when women were allowed to vote. *Miss Lulu Bett*, in a retrospect, condemns a set of hypocrisy in family and society about women. Gale boldly illustrates Lulu, the protagonist in defying these “myths” about women's roles: that rules of behaviour are different for women than for men; that a woman's inherent role is to serve; that men's pursuits in the public sphere are of value while women's activities in the private sphere are not – and that a woman's place *is* the private sphere; and that the pivotal event in a woman's life must therefore be her marriage (Craig, 2004, p. 41). In *Lulu*, Gale provides possibilities for women the determination to break free when an unmarried woman is viewed as valueless in the eyes of the world. Susan Glaspell, the 1931 winner for *Alison's House*, wrote the play from her own personal experience – her intimate relationship with writer George Cram Cook before he finalised his divorce. Scandalous enough for a play written in the 30s, Glaspell “binds love and art together by suggesting that both are specifically ordained, and must stand outside normal rules or understanding.”³⁰ Glaspell has injected the idea of a woman's right to choose her lover and shares her love with anyone in any circumstances, and that pre-marital affair is as sacred as marriage. The next winner, Zoe Akins, is a woman with a remarkable career on both New York stages and Hollywood productions. *The Old Maid*, the 1935 winner, challenged the family and social restraints that were stifling

³⁰ Craig, 2004, p. 58

women. This melodrama on “the life of an unmarried woman who sacrifices everything to remain near her illegitimate daughter” again offers yet another grim images of life for unmarried woman in the first half of the twentieth century. Craig mentions that Zoe Akins reminded audience that “material ease is no substitute for ease of spirit.”³¹ The issue of becoming a mother out of wedlock is another taboo at that time, but Akins successfully weaves the subject to raise the society's consciousness. Craig concludes that these playwrights shared one thing in common – all three successfully suggest that women have been subject to controls that are not only unjust but counter-productive to family and society as a whole (Craig, 2004, p. 80). It would take another 10 years before another female playwright was named a winner in the Drama category. In the second part, “Domestic Wars: Chase and Frings”, Craig discusses two winners from the decades of 40s and 50s. In 1945, Mary Coyle Chase wrote *Harvey*, a play about a man named Elwood and his relationship with an invisible, 6 foot 1 rabbit named Harvey. Chase juxtaposes the battle between the real and the ideal - “the open-hearted dreamer can perceive much beauty and wonder that is denied to the close-minded realist.”³² Through *Harvey*, Craig observes that Chase ask the audience to have compassionate understanding of its rebellious, non-conformist protagonist who rejects traditional responsibility and in the process, alienates those who are related to him – family members and society. In the end, the protagonist-cum-dreamer wins. Later in 1958, another female playwright won the coveted award; Ketti Frings' *Look Homeward, Angels* is also about dreamers – three dreamers waging personal battles for their lives. Craig writes that this play exhibits the most brutal example of a family of strangers. Frings' message throughout the play is “self-nurturing is far better than abuse at the hands of family.”³³ The protagonist, Chase argues, successfully overcomes entrapment, breaking free and accepts reality after escaping any form of tyranny. The trifecta of

³¹ Craig, 2004, p. 81

³² Ibid, p. 107

³³ Ibid, p. 126

female playwrights who won the Drama Pulitzer in the 1980s wrote plays that deal with self-esteem and self-determination in an era when feminism was “waning but still palpable.” (Craig, 2004, p. 139). Under the topic “Whose Woman is She? Henley, Norman and Wasserstein”, Craig first notifies that there was a huge lapse between the last female winner (Ketti Frings) and Beth Henley, the winner in 1981 for *Crimes of the Heart*. Despite the fact that “feminism had begun to break up and decline”, *Crimes of the Heart* deals with the insights about the love-hate relationship between 4 sisters struggling with self-esteem and self-determination in “ways that are both deadly serious and wildly funny.”³⁴ Craig mentions that Henley's play explores “the struggles of women as they search for family, love and belonging”; the play trumpets on “self-esteem is the only thing that can save a woman from the traps of other people's definitions.”³⁵ Relationship between family members is further explored in 1983 winner *Night, Mother* by Marsha Norman. The play illustrates the intensity on mother-daughter relationship – about a mother, Thelma, who tries to discourage her daughter, Jessie, from taking her own life. Unlike the sisters from *Crimes of the Heart*, *Night, Mother's* Jessie does not have strong support system until before she decided to end her life. Norman injects the idea of a collective, helping spirit to foster “the self-confidence and drive required to forge a satisfying place in the world.”³⁶ In this play, self-determination overrules self-esteem. *The Heidi Chronicles*, the third winner, centres on the life of one Heidi Holland and her milestones; how Heidi has undergone the movement of consciousness-raising groups, demonstrations for women's art, publication of her book and various personal crises. In Heidi, Wasserstein shows how one woman is determined “to uphold her principles around women around her, who have traded feminism spirit for status-grasping individualism.”³⁷ In the end, Wasserstein, according to Craig,

³⁴ Craig, 2004, p. 139

³⁵ Ibid, p. 151

³⁶ Ibid, p. 182

³⁷ Ibid, p. 192

finishes Heidi's chronicles on a positive note; she invokes future in which women are active, recognized leaders and closes on a vision of Heidi at her most optimistic. The similarity between the winners in 1998 and 1999, discussed in detail in section "Lessons Driven Home: Vogel and Edson", is that both plays have a female protagonist who narrates her story by directly addressing the audience, introducing flashback scenes and later stepping into them, just like Tom Wingfield, the male protagonist of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*. Paula Vogel's *How I Learned to Drive*, the 1998 winner, centres on paedophilia, where a young girl's coming of age at the hands of her uncle as both mentoring and molesting. In *L'il Bit and Uncle Peck*, Vogel provides a key metaphor for the play: they give each other gifts that are the wrong gifts...but with great love (Vogel, 1998). In the play, Craig highlights that Vogel tries to share her idea about gifts – great gifts that can also be inside that box of abuse. In the end, *L'il Bit* becomes a survivor with survival skills she 'learns' from her uncle; eventually, this allows her to continue "in the ability to withstand the shocks of living and keep going – and the importance of that power comes with driving."³⁸ The winner in 1999, *Wit* by Margaret Edson, centres on the protagonist's journey from subject to object - "from one who smugly teaches lessons to one who must learn a lesson"³⁹ as it depicts a woman and her life as a patient of ovarian cancer. In *Wit*, Edson offers a lesson in grace that her central character learns belatedly and most painfully. In *Vivian*, the protagonist, Craig argues that Edson has written a character that puts on intellect before the human touch. She has lived a very cerebral and independent life, and even though her confidence is "shattered by the breakdown of her body and her change into hapless specimen,"⁴⁰ Vivian believes that her cancer becomes a blessing in the most painful disguise and this process brings about her much-needed repair to spirit. In the final part "History in the Staging? Suzan-Lori Parks and the Sisterhood of Black Playwrights", Craig highlights

³⁸ Craig, 2004, p. 230

³⁹ Ibid, p. 231

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 246

that Suzan-Lori Parks becomes the first woman to win the Drama Pulitzer in the millennium, as well as the first African-American woman to claim the prize. Ironically, in her play there are no female characters; only two brothers with occasional mention of a couple of women. Craig believes that in the new century, women are turning the tables on men. In Parks' play, the characters are entangled in a lethal rivalry and as a result, it includes more images of aggression, violence, vulgarity and unnecessary competition. According to Craig, even though Parks insisted that *Topdog/Underdog* does not represent any metaphors, her characters and their sibling status “evoke metaphors and speculation about Parks' symbolism.”⁴¹ Craig further adds that through this play, Parks successfully depicts the weaknesses and indulgent violence of black men without degrading women.

Carol Schafer applauds David Auburn's *Proof* as one that resembles a fairy tale, where he creates an optimistic ending to the aforementioned play. In her article *David Auburn's Proof: Taming Cinderella*, Schafer argues that *Proof* educes noteworthy comparisons to a renowned fairy tale, *Cinderella*; in the latter, the protagonist is a browbeaten damsel who is transformed into a princess through magic. Subsequently, Schafer also observes that the two protagonists, sisters Catherine and Claire, have distinct personalities and characterisations; reminding her of Shakespeare's contrary sisters in *The Taming of the Shrew*. Catherine in *Proof* and Katherina in *The Taming of the Shrew* were portrayed as women whose ‘transgressive’ rebellion challenges patriarchal authority. However, this article continues to view Catherine and her predicament as rather pessimistic. Schafer describes Catherine as “an uneducated woman”, even though she has had a couple of years in college before she dropped out to care for her ailing father. Schafer went on that at the end of the play, when Catherine appeared calmer after Claire went back to New York, she succumbed to the affection of

⁴¹ Craig, 2004, p. 278

Hal as they went through her formula; it is as if Catherine is getting the endorsement of a man in recognising her gift. This is similar to Katherina who has finally being tamed by the patriarchal society. The researcher disagrees with this notion, as he believes that that Catherine explaining her formula to Hal not as an act of surrendering her independence, but an act of superiority, as it was her explaining the complex finding to Hal, not the other way round.

Elizabeth Cullingford looks at *Doubt, A Parable* as a play interweaving genre and sexuality, as comparison to *Deliver Us from Evil*, an award-winning documentary by Amy Berg, and *Sin (A Cardinal Deposed)*, a verbatim drama by Michael Murphy. In her article *Evil, Sin or Doubt? The Dramas of Clerical Child Abuse*, Cullingford argues that *Doubt, A Parable* is an imaginative drama that is generically better-suited to execute the ambiguities of religious and sexual catastrophe, even with its absence of forensic evidence or victim testimony, freedom to embrace contradictions and dynamically fluctuating engagement with audience. Audience members were expected to reconsider their assumptions about the scandal involving a priest, whether a possibly gay priest whose intense interest in a young African American boy from a hostile environment should be transferred to another parish, or banished altogether from the clerical world. Cullingford believes that John Patrick Shanley, the playwright of *Doubt, A Parable*, deploys but ultimately feed emancipation from the judgment of its audience. However, Cullingford only discusses her intense interest in the play playing around the subject of abuse, and declares Sister Aloysius as an antagonist who relied on her gut instinct.

Karen C. Blansfield studies the influence of science and technology in four different plays that delve into the developments of the aforesaid fields, while maintaining moral, ethical and humanist concerns, in her article *Atom and Eve: The Mating of Science and Humanism*. The four works are *Closer* by Patrick Marber, *Wit* by

Margaret Edson, *Proof* by David Auburn and *Copenhagen* by Michael Frayn. Each of the drama explores unlikely dramatic subjects such as computer technology, ovarian cancer, algebraic geometry, nonlinear operator theory, particle physics and quantum mechanics. Blansfield delves into how theatricality can be exploited to turn potentially remote or uninviting matters into compelling drama. In *Closer*, the playwright focuses on creating four diverse characters (a stripper, a photographer, a would-be author and a dermatologist) from numerous geographic background (town, suburb, city and country). It delineates on the relationships between four needy, damaged, and detached characters dealing with sex, lies and cyberspace. The most interesting part of the play is its deliberate sexuality, erotic conquests and graphic language, as technology is used as a metaphor for the truth and darkness of human behaviour. Moreover, in *Closer*, Blansfield argues that the exploitation and progression of technology enables and encourages the characters to explore many subjects considered as taboos in the society, such as committing cybersex, experiencing virtual orgasm and casual rendezvous, all initiated by the exploration of technology via the usage of computer. The next play in her article, *Wit*, written by Margaret Edson, focuses on the final hours of a woman who is battling ovarian cancer. Vivian Bearing is a scholar of seventeenth century poetry, who is known to be indomitable and commanding, suddenly becomes vulnerable and hanging on the mercy of medical science. Emulates on the theme of isolation, as Vivian is always restricted to only speaking from her bed, thus detaching her away from love, family, poetry and the outside world, and only surrounded by people who are not from her world – doctor and nurse. Her illness has been deemed to be significant in contributing knowledge to the medical world, even though none of the medical terms used around her are something that she is familiar – her forte is more on poetry and words. In the end, through the acknowledgement of her own mortality, Vivian, who continually engage with the audience (thus breaking the Fourth Wall), finally comes to

identify her own humanity. *Proof* by David Auburn provides a very human route into the world mathematicians, but it isn't all about mathematics as Auburn focuses on family connections, the relationship between genius and insanity, and the quest in searching for love and the truth. Blansfield states that mathematics infuses the language of *Proof*, and the "proof" in question is a revolutionary mathematical equation having to do with prime numbers. As opposed to the previous dramas, *Proof* is considered to be elegant, as it depicts the sophistication of connections between science and life, and the language is simple to gain more audience, thus it is understandable why this play has been chosen to win a Pulitzer in 2001. The final play, *Copenhagen*, deals with nuclear physics, quantum theory, Uncertainty Principle and Complementarity that are infused with tales of friendship, morality, ethics and responsibility and limitations of scientist. Michael Frayn speculates on a supposed meeting between Werner Heisenberg, a German atomic physicist, and Niels Bohr, his Danish mentor in 1941, when Heisenberg visited Bohr and his wife, Margrethe. *Copenhagen* "incorporates and embodies the scientific concepts it raises, elucidating them and illustrating their inherence to everyday life" in its theme, structure and linguistic. Frayn dramaturgically enacts his own interpretation of scientific principles, where "the actors are atomic particles, circling one another round the spherical stage like electrons around a nucleus; the stage is a reactor, and the audience is the beam of light that affects each performance" legitimising its foray into science as a legitimate field for drama. In conclusion, the infusion of science and technology into drama provides modern audience the nature of the new drama, where Blansfield concludes that "the plays are simultaneously reductive and resonant, specific and suggestive, scientific and humanist", as each play is informative, appealing, enlightening and fresh.

David Auburn's *Proof* seems to be the popular (if not the most) among academicians, as the play appears in another study by Elizabeth Klaver. In "*Proof*, π ,

and Happy Days”: *The Performance of Mathematics*; π is henceforth to be referred to as *Pi*, its language pronunciation. Klaver decides to study if an abstract subject like mathematics can be represented in performance, and comparing the inclusion of mathematics in three different mediums: the aforementioned Pulitzer Prize-winning play; *Pi*, a film written and directed by Darren Aronofsky; and *Happy Days*, written by Samuel Beckett. In *Proof*, Klaver deduces that the inclusion of mathematics in the play is limited, as the audience never learn what mathematical conjecture she has proved, or her idea of potential establishment of a mathematical proof. The play, Klaver argues, does not teach the audience much of anything new about mathematics, even though Auburn creates an amusing connection between Catherine and Sophie Germain, another renowned mathematician in the nineteenth century. It focuses more on the cultural assumptions in contemporary Western society about the aforementioned subject and the people who are practicing it, which Klaver recognises as “the gender tracking of mathematicians, scepticism of woman’s mathematical ability, the competence of an informally trained amateur, the connection between genius and madness, and the genetic passing of intelligence, mathematical talent, or madness.” In the end, prime numbers were mentioned and became a focus, but their appearance is considered arbitrary and not essential in any structural, formal or narrative, as the play briefly gives information on the aforesaid set of numbers, but never actually performs the mathematics or display of how they may be expressive of nature’s patterns. Darren Aronofsky’s *Pi* presents discrete areas and applications of mathematics, as well as something of the entire edifice, where the protagonist, Max Cohen, is dealing with three assumptions: mathematics is the language of nature; everything can be represented through numbers; and the graphs of number systems produce patterns; in his review, film critic Rob Blackwelder from *Spliced Wire* concludes that *Pi* “is a movie about *nothing but* math.” The film explains the Fibonacci sequence of numbers and the

Golden Mean, where the latter is demonstrated using the illustrations the geometrical pattern of the former. In *Happy Days* by Samuel Beckett, the protagonist, Winnie, is stuck to her waist in a mound of dirt in the first act, and later stuck to her neck in the same mound in the second act. Klaver presumes that the entire play performs the concept of mathematical, as she quotes Hugh Culik, who argues that “Beckett uses mathematics as the means of making metaphors for his art.” The amount of mathematics that can be recovered from *Happy Days* depends on the proficiency of the viewer involved. In the end, Klaver concludes that mathematics is a highly instinctive and aesthetic discipline, where the substantive difference is the degree of symbolic abstraction, as mathematics creates a far greater stack of semiotic domains. Therefore, literary works and discourse can perform mathematical concepts and problems because of their similar constitution as semiotic domains.

Comparing two doomed matriarchs from two Pulitzer Prize winners is the focus of the next scholarly article, written by Elizabeth Fifer. In *Memory and Guilt: Parenting in Tracy Letts’s August: Osage County and Eugene O’Neill’s Long Day’s Journey into Night*, Fifer focuses on the similarities of the two families, the Tyrones from *Long Day’s Journey into Night*, and the Westons from *August: Osage County*, from the aspects of family disintegration, the children’s individual failures on the parents who are also victims, idealism sacrificed for survival and dysfunctional characters using each other as targets for private grief. The first similarity between the two plays is the anguish of both matriarchs having to deal with alcoholic husbands; second, both matriarchs are addicted to drugs; and finally, both mothers take out their frustrations on their respective children. Fifer highlights that Mary Tyrone is addicted to morphine, which was first prescribed for her pain after the birth of Edmund (her third child), while Violet takes the modern equivalent prescribed for her by a number of physicians in order to battle mouth cancer. Both women blame their doctors for their addictions, and

both appear onstage in a drugged haze, either being distant and withdrawn, or combative and slurring words. The characterisations of both characters are compared; Fifer explains that “Violet screams where Mary grieves, and her anger is always directed outward, making her more selfish, bitter, insensitive and openly hostile,” while Mary offers “a running critical commentary on the family.” Meanwhile, both patriarchs from both plays fail themselves and their respective families, while thinking that their families disappoint them. James Tyrone, Sr. is a fine Shakespearean actor whose career was doomed when he took the job in a play that performed poorly at the box office, while Beverly Weston was recognised for his collection of poetry, where he won an award, but was never able to recapture the same glory as he has stopped writing due to the pressure of success. While James Senior has a more commanding presence, where he supports the culture of alcohol in his household, Beverly is considered as baffling and ghostly figure; James Senior has more stage presence as he survives in the four acts of O’Neill’s play, while Beverly only appears in the ‘Prologue’ part of Letts’ play, and appears in passing as he is always mentioned throughout the whole play. Both sets of parents experienced memories of brutal childhoods, and why they are fiercely grasping for money and security, which apparently erode their emotional ties to their respective children, but in the end they refuse to give up on these children they love. It is also vital to highlight that in both plays, family secrets and concealment become the driving force of the plots, while the family provides the context for conflict. Both O’Neill and Letts use the perennial breaking points of guilt and regret, tied with an incapacity to affect future consequences. Both parents accepted the inevitability of decay and death, understand their dwindling lives, and become absent and present simultaneously. Through the mediation of the past, characters recover memory, reinforce and remind themselves the importance of parents while revealing the effects of their parenting on

children. Fifer concludes that both plays “demonstrate the power and influence of the original family, bowed but not broken.”

Susan Verducci’s motivation in writing *Self-doubt: One Moral of the Story* is her quest to explain the value of self-doubt in moral inquiry and moral education. Verducci uses *Doubt, A Parable* (henceforth to be referred to as *Doubt*) by John Patrick Shanley to illustrate on the initiation of self-doubt, shifting focus from the traditional moral question ‘am I right?’ to dispute for the value in moral enquiry and education of the much-neglected question, ‘am I wrong?’ Verducci proposes that self-doubt manifests humility and alerts human beings to the danger of humility’s opposites – pride, arrogance, dogmatism and self-righteousness. For her, doubt is generally connected to moral scepticism and placed squarely within a debate on cynicism and objectivism. She uses Margaret Walker’s *Moral Understandings: A Feminist Study in Ethics* to examine self-doubt, as she views self –doubt as one of many practices that humans use to traverse the world of good ethics. Self-doubt recognises individual human epistemic limitations, which can connect a person to the virtue of humility, Verducci argues, in which she believes that *Doubt* works on several echelons to disclose the limits of humans’ aptitude to discover the truth. The narrative works to stimulate humans’ own doubts about their epistemic abilities, while its structure, content and characters directly concatenate many areas in self-doubt. This works well as Shanley, according to Verducci, leaves the audience with an equivocal ending – no one knows the truth about the relationship between father Flynn and Donald Muller. Verducci later explains as to why the audience are delved into doubting the outcome of the play:

We mirror Sister James, as she responds first this way and then that to the ambiguities Shanley sculpts, finally concluding with, ‘Everything seems uncertain to me’ (58). We see Sister Aloysius’ character, reflected in her traditional and rigid rule of all she encounters, perceiving, thinking and acting in ways that follow naturally from her character and position and in ways that cut her off from other interpretations. We see Father Flynn, embodying the radical changes that Vatican II brought to Catholicism, threaten Sister Aloysius’ authority.

As a result, the practice of self-doubt offers some protection against the awakening aspect of certainty and the comfort of belief, as it is actively recognising and negotiating humans' epistemic limitations. Furthermore, it also protects against the blindness brought about by arrogance, which is characterised by an extreme lack of self-doubt, as any human being cannot easily be self-doubting and arrogant; it is more connected to humility. Thus, persistent modesty is not just a position on being right in any cases. It is a position that recognises a variety of limitations that make human beings realise and cautious in exercising control over others. Verducci later explains that both Aristotle and Christianity connect humility with temperance, in order to restrict desires and moderate ego. Supposedly, when humility refers to modesty and a vigorous respect for human, personal and established restrictions, it detaches anyone from concerns for prominence, honour and pride. This stance identifies that one's position and fallibility have the potential to harm others, and later affects one's moral understandings and judgements. Subsequently, Verducci mentions that self-doubt does not eliminate or limit probe in the way belief and inevitability can. In addition to provide protection from the epistemic consequences of certainty and arrogance, self-doubt is also helpful to turn any human beings both epistemologically and personally humble. However, there are challenges to self-doubt in moral inquiry: prioritising self-doubt over moral and prioritising self-doubt over believing. In the end, Verducci argues that although self-doubt as a social phenomenon may seem paradoxical at first, social exploration and dialogue are helpful in order to identify the most suitable moral understandings that deserve to be called into question. A diverse school in terms of racial, cultural and economical is the best place to see how human beings see themselves best in the light of those who different than them.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Methodology

In this chapter, the researcher will discuss the research methodology and theoretical framework that will be utilised in analysing the selected Pulitzer Prize winners in the category of 'Drama.' The researcher has included the principle elements of feminism derived from various feminist writings published during the era of Third Wave Feminism, which began from 1991 onwards.

As the researcher has mentioned in Chapter 1, this is a qualitative research, where the researcher has conducted his research by studying feminism and its many schools of thought, as well as studying the scripts of the case studies. The scripts were sold in various bookstores, so ordering or buying them off the shelves were not problematic as compared to sourcing related materials for literature reviews. The researcher had done extensive library research and script analysis of each selected play. As this topic is concerning international playwrights (Americans to be exact), attempts to get an audience with the four playwrights are impossible, as one has to go through their agents, and contact details of literary agents are not widely available for general public. Moreover, attempts to conduct interviews via e-mail are also unmanageable. As a result, the researcher relies heavily on the theoretical framework in analysing the selected plays. Nevertheless, the researcher successfully located and viewed the taped performances, courtesy of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center in Manhattan, New York, the United States of America; these recordings are held in reserve in the Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (TOFT) department. According to the official statement obtained from the library, these recordings were made possible "with the consent and cooperation of the theatrical unions and each production's artistic collaborators." However, these recordings can only be viewed once as they were protected by copyrights law (protecting the best interests

of the producers and benefactors), as well as regulations by Actors' Equity Association.⁴² Owing to the austere directive, the researcher decided to also rely on the motion picture version of the selected plays as secondary references, after the scripts and notes from the viewing of the recordings of the plays' live performances.

For this thesis, there are three feminist theories that the researcher had mentioned in the two previous chapters: liberal feminism, cultural feminism, and socialist feminism. Hence, for each theory, the researcher highlights important principles that will guide the analysis on each production; these principles consist of amalgamation of elements relating to feminism reviewed in the following section.

The researcher studies each performance by observing and looking into themes and elements of feminist theories, as well as character and characterisation. The researcher then utilises principles drawn from these selected feminist theories: liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism. First, "themes" can be associated with the third basic element of a play according to Aristotle – thought. Themes can be found in all plays, as the aforesaid element deals with a playwright's point of view. Brockett and Ball (2004) argue that any playwrights "react in some respect to the broader social point of view from which they emerge." They continue to reason that any reaction by the playwrights may be expressed in several ways; they cannot "avoid expressing some attitudes because events and characterisation always imply some view of human behaviour." (Brockett & Ball, 2004, p. 48). In exploring themes in a play, one has to look into several factors, such as character relationships, ideas associated with unsympathetic and sympathetic characters, the conflicts and their resolution and spectacle, music, and song.

⁴² Established in 1913, Actors' Equity is the U.S. labour union that represents actors and stage managers; its main objective is "to foster the art of live theatre as an essential component of society and advances the careers of its members by negotiating wages, working conditions and providing a wide range of benefits, including health and pension plans." (Actors' Equity Association, 2016).

As the researcher had mentioned his primary reliance on script analysis, he utilises the first three factors (character relationships, ideas associated with unsympathetic and sympathetic characters and the conflicts and their resolution) as part of his analysis procedure. Subsequently, one must never abandon the fact that there is an absolute interpretation for each play. Brockett and Ball believe that most plays permit multiple understandings, as different productions of the same play clearly indicate; nonetheless, the interpretation should be supported by evidence found in the play – inserting excerpts from selected scripts is the best method of presenting one's case in exploring themes of a play.

The second aspect of this research is looking into character and characterisation. By definition, character is “the primary material from which plots are created, because incidents are developed through the speech and behaviour of dramatic personages.” (Brockett & Ball, 2004, p. 46). In a play, a character is revealed through descriptions in stage directions, prefaces, or other explanatory material not part of the dialogue, what the character says, what others in the play say about the character and what the character does. In the interim, characterisation is anything that delineates a person or distinguishes that person from others. Brockett and Ball suggest that characterisation operates on four levels. The first level is physical or biological, where a character is defined through gender, age, size, colouration, and general appearance. The second level is societal, where a character is defined through economic status, profession or trade, religion, family relationships and all of the factors that place a character in a particular social environment. This is later followed by psychological, where one is able to study a character's habitual responses, desires, motivations, likes, and dislikes (the inner workings of the character's mind). Finally, the moral aspect of a character, where a character's value system is observed through choice and actions, revealing what characters are willing to do to get what they want.

Brockett and Ball explain that a playwright sometimes put an emphasis on one or more of the aforesaid levels and may cultivate many or few traits, solely based on “how the character functions in the play” (Brockett & Ball, 2004, p. 47). Moreover, a playwright also realises that he or she in some way create characters that are either sympathetic or unsympathetic. While sympathetic characters are usually given major virtues and lesser idiosyncrasies, the opposite is anything but; either “completely good or bad is likely to seem unconvincing as a reflection of human behaviour.” (Brockett & Ball, 2004, p. 48).

3.2 Theoretical Framework

When feminism first came to prominence during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, the activism focused on the promotion of equal contract, marriage, parenting, and property rights for women. Later, the activism had shift to focus predominantly on acquisition of political power, especially the right of women's suffrage, even though some activists were vigorous in championing other causes such as women's sexual, reproductive, and economic rights as well.

Before the resurgence of feminism (in the form of Second Wave Feminism), the most influential writing for the movement at that time was *The Second Sex*, written by French existentialist philosopher Simone de Beauvoir. Miriam Schneir considers *The Second Sex* as large in scope, grand in design and purpose, with a goal to describe the creation of woman. In general, Beauvoir encapsulates that men are normative human beings, also known “the One”, while women are considered as “the Other”. Beauvoir utilised philosophy to discuss the history of humanity (in which Beauvoir deconstructed as a history of patriarchy) and the history of an individual woman’s whole life as it plays itself out from birth to old age (Bakewell, 2016, p. 208). Essentially, Beauvoir amalgamated the elements of her own experience with other first-hand narratives that she collected and recorded from other female friends and acquaintances, and she

discussed these real-life anecdotes from the perspectives of history, sociology, biology and psychology. Female humans resumed a subordinate position in society because they have been taught to accept masculine authority. There were indisputable essential differences between men and women after studying biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism, but unfortunately no proper justification provided to explain the purported inferior states for women. Beauvoir later explained about tracing female development through its formative years: childhood, youth and sexual initiation. Women, she argued, were not born to be feminine but their demeanours and survival were shaped by a number of external factors such as upbringing, denial of independent work and creative fulfilment. Furthermore, they accept a dissatisfying life of housework, childbearing and servitude. This reflects the typical life of bourgeois women, as they are expected to postulate the roles of wife, mother and entertainer. As women get older, they are encountering the trauma of old age, especially when they are facing the prospect of losing their reproductive capability. Beauvoir concluded the book with a controversial claim: a woman's situation is not a result of her character, but her character is a result of her situation. She exposed that choices, influences, and habits are accruable throughout a woman's lifetime in order to create a construction that becomes hard to break out of. Sarah Bakewell initiates that *The Second Sex* was never elevated into among the pantheon of one of the great cultural re-evaluations of modern times, possibly due to the following reason:

If sexism and the existentialist language were not to blame, another reason for *The Second Sex*'s intellectual side-lining might be that it presents itself as a case study: an existentialist study of just one particular type of life. In philosophy, as in many other fields, applied studies tend to be dismissed as postscripts to more serious works.

Nevertheless, since the publication of the prominent book, a number of feminists found the key ideas offered by Beauvoir offensive to the real struggle of feminism. For example, in 1953 historian Mary Beard commented that Beauvoir was wrong when she

stated that the female sex had been subordinated throughout time, as women had played an essential part in building civilisation and also had been a force in all human history.

In 1963, another renowned book on the plight of women was published. *The Feminine Mystique* was written by former journalist Betty Friedan, and later became the catalyst that started the Second Wave of Feminism. Friedan gained the idea to release the book when she attended her 15th college reunion in 1957, where she piloted a survey among college graduates, where she concentrated on their education, subsequent experiences and satisfaction with their present lives. Later, as she received the feedback from her subjects, Friedan went on to publish a series of articles about what she termed as "the problem that has no name," and received impassioned reactions from many housewives, who were grateful that they were not alone in experiencing the aforesaid problem. Inspired by the feedback, Friedan later expanded the topic into the aforementioned book. Friedan commented that women are marrying at younger age as the years went by, and less women pursued tertiary education as becoming a wife and a mother became priority. However, they became less happy, but can't discuss their happiness openly. Friedan later highlighted the depiction of women in prints – magazines spearheaded by male editors, who had the final say in the content of magazines published for women; as expected, male editors focused on highlighting the happiness of women as housewives as opposed to working women, who received unfavourable depiction. Friedan related this concept to her own life, as she decided to quit her job as a journalist in order to stay at home and raised her children; she was not the only one who felt compelled to fulfil her "feminine" duty as most women at that time succumbed to the idea of functionalism – where women were reduced to their biological capability. She later described the impact of education prepared for women, as subjects taught in schools between 1940 to 1960 focused more on housekeeping, instead of matters that would prepare them to face mental and emotional challenges.

Even during World War II and Cold War, women were yearning (and expected to yearn) for home comforts, where men acted as breadwinners; even during the period when women had to join the workforce when men went to war, they immediately returned to domesticity once their husbands came home. Moreover, Friedan also mentioned that housewives were also looking for sexual fulfilment, but housekeeping and children became obstacles, and finally when all these women became disinterested or disillusioned with their own lives, they were likely to have impact on their children, who would become disinterested in emotional growth and lack of personal identity. In conclusion, Friedan advocated a new life plan for her readers, where she encouraged them to not view housework as a career; that total fulfilment in life through marriage and motherhood should be one's life goal; and start searching for significant work that allow them to utilise full mental capacity. Miriam Schneir highlighted a number of shortcomings from the book: there were no precise "remedy" for the homemakers who wished to get out in the world; the subject of men's self-interest in sustaining their privileged position was neglected; and the subject was only narrowed to educated American housewife, not touching on the plights of poor and immigrant or minority women, who had to work out of necessity, not just for personal fulfilment.

French feminist Hélène Cixous proposed *écriture féminine*, which is the call for 'woman to write herself'. Her proposal was to suggest how women should resist and alter their position as marginalised Other; she called for a 'new insurgent' writing that would contain two inseparable parts⁴³:

(a) Individually – by writing herself, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions. Censor the body and you censor breath and speech at the same time...

(b) An act that will also be marked by women seizing the occasion to speak, hence her shattering entry into history, which has always been

⁴³ The description is taken from a translation version of her work, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, which was published in 1981.

based on her suppression. To write and thus to forge for herself the anti-logos weapon. To become at will the taker and the initiator, for her own right, in every symbolic system, in every political process.

For that moment, it seemed that the possibility of staging a feminine language exclusively belonged to women; Cixous proposed a transformation of the stage “so that a woman’s voice could be heard for the first time”, further implying that “if the stage is woman, it will mean riding this space of theatricality. She will want to be a body-presence; it will therefore be necessary to work at exploding everything that makes for ‘staginess’”. However, as the plays selected for this thesis written by men, the researcher believes that Cixous’ *écriture féminine* to be outdated, perhaps when this theory was coined, many male playwrights at that time did not focus much on women issues. Moreover, in the era of Third Wave, many men were and are becoming sympathetic to the feminist ideologies and movements. Thus, for this thesis, the researcher is focusing on studying and focusing on writings done by feminist scholars in the era of Third Wave, which began from 1991 onwards, or writings on feminist dramas that are more neutral in nature, such as the writings of Patti Gillespie.

3.2.1 Liberal Feminism

Liberal feminism derived its idea from liberal enlightenment thought, rationalism and natural rights philosophies. The ideas were built on the foundation concluded by liberal male theorists, who argued that the ability to exercise rational judgment is every man’s right. Men should also exercise the rights to obtain certain inherent rights, including dignity, life, liberty and wealth. Liberal feminists adapted these ideas to champion equal status especially the same inherent rights to succeed productive individual choices, as well as anticipating the same opportunities and social contract as men. Thus, women must receive the same treatment as men. Using objective, critical and rational thinking as ways of solving problems, liberal feminists highlighted the ideas of individual dignity, autonomy, equality and the right to seek self-fulfilment. In order to demolish

oppression within women, liberal feminists argued that the solutions to the problems must be achieved through local argument, corrective educational experiences and reformed gender policies that guarantee all individuals can gain equal opportunities in exercising their free choice and skills (Enns & Sincore, 2001, p. 470). In dealing with liberal feminist theory, one must encounter these six words or concepts: freedom, choice, rights, equality, rationality and control.⁴⁴

Sally J. Scholz explains in her book *Feminism* that liberalism focuses on freedom or liberty for the individual, with roots taken from social contract theory based on the classical versions of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke. Liberalism guarantees that each human being has the right to be free in order to pursue his or her own version of what is considered as 'the good life.' Feminists who build on this foundation of classical liberalism are able to identify the roots of the oppression of women, which lie in the lack of legal rights and equal opportunities accorded to women. The oppression of women might be improved by observing at how the state views women and addressing those areas where women are disadvantaged. Obtaining equal opportunities and awarding legal rights for women is more complex than it might appear at first glance, as throughout the history (surprisingly, even in the West) women were only recognised as full citizens rather than merely members of families represented by the male chief of the family, or they were prohibited from owning properties or signing contracts; at one point, they were protected from sexual assault as the property of their husbands or fathers, not as persons. Scholz observes that most liberal feminists adopt the traditional epistemological position that knowledge is objectively verifiable and value neutral, which she explains further in the following example:

If, for example, we could all adopt the point of view of the impartial observer, then we should all come up with the true knowledge about the world. However, if women are not admitted to the realm of 'knowers' in the

⁴⁴ Zalewski, 2000, p. 6.

same manner as men, then women's education will be structured differently than men's.

Scholz continues that in today's world, liberal feminists are still campaigning on several issues, such as placement for women into higher learning institutes and workplaces on a par with men; demands for equal pay and equal work or workloads; demands to gain admission to social roles, clubs and events reserved exclusively for men, and other efforts to acquire equal right to pursue woman's own vision of their concept of good life. She concludes that liberal feminism champions the cause of individual fulfilment free from the strictures of gender roles, but at the same time accepts the aspect of shielding private life and sexuality should not be subject to regulation by society, which is a total opposite from radical feminists. Liberal feminism believes in suppressing male's sexual lust towards women.

In the book *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism*, author Gayle Austin contends that liberal feminist theory aims to minimise differences between men and women, work for success within the system. Through theatre, liberal feminists would promote identities of women, increase awareness of feminist issues and advocate corrective change. For example, Aston quoted that feminist theatre practitioners who declared themselves "liberal" would produce plays reflecting ideas on how to change the social system and reinforce a positive self-image for being women. They believed that theatre could provide at least a partial solution to certain problems arising from unfair discrimination based on gender.⁴⁵ Aston then incorporated the study done by Patti Gillespie: liberal theorists added that by choosing theatre, women could avoid violent confrontation and symbolic protest as a means of persuasion because they believed that the act of violence was based on male-dominated values, which the liberalists questioned and strived to change (Gillespie, 1978, p. 288). A liberal performance permits revelation of events, characters and ideas without any threats imposed on both

⁴⁵ Gillespie, P. (1978). Feminist theatre: A rhetorical phenomenon. *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. 64, 284-294

participants and viewers while utilising rhetorical values as self-reflection and empathy are encouraged in proclaiming equality and enforcing solidarity through the characters. Theatre allows a woman to persuade the curiosity of audience members without violating either her own past conditioning toward passivity or society's expectations in enforcing appropriate behaviour on her (Gillespie, 1978, p. 289). A liberalised female character is free to decide, take action, attack contemporary practices and ignore any sort of renunciation or retribution from the audience towards her personally. The attack, while using highly critical words, is more pacified as compared to confrontational violence in a conflict between men, or between radical feminists and their nemesis.

Carrie Sandahl supported the ideas by stating that liberal feminism and the politics of disability can productively inform and complicate one another when they are taken into consideration simultaneously.⁴⁶ Often, liberal feminist playwrights invoke negative images of disability to describe the oppression of women⁴⁷; an observation that is concurrence when one examines feminist dramatic theories. Likewise, there is an unbreakable ally between gender oppression and disability metaphor; in the theory of performativity introduced by feminist scholar Judith Butler, gender “freakishness” and deformed bodies are associated when disability (or the deformed, abject body) is used as a metaphor for gender and sex difference. Based on these illustrations, liberal feminist theory and the struggle of people with disability are truly linked, thanks to the performative⁴⁸ parallel, as they represent acts of survival in a hostile, patriarchal and capitalist society.

Josephine Donovan (2012) concurs that liberal feminists shared the following tenets: a faith in rationality, where the individual's reason is the divine spark within – the individual conscience is regarded as a more reliable source of truth than any

⁴⁶ Sandahl, 1991, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 15

⁴⁸ A concept based on speech-act theory, which is an utterance that linguistically performs the action to which it refers (such as ‘I do’ in a marriage ceremony), rather than describing a state of affairs. Later, feminist theorists use this term to explain how identities are constructed through frequentative and complex citational processes that negates the possibility of the freedom to ‘choose’ gender.

established institution or tradition (as agreed by feminists Frances Wright and Sarah Grimké); a belief that women's and men's souls and rational faculties are the same and ontologically identical; a belief in education as the most effective means to effect social change and transform society; a view of the individual as an isolated being who seeks the truth apart from others, who operates as a rational, independent agent, and whose dignity depends on such independence; and the natural rights doctrine – the demand for the vote and not only limited to demanding political rights (7-8). Women are entitled to attain better personal achievement, but should be less aggressive in their pursuance.

In 1999, Elaine Aston introduces her concept of feminist theatre practices, focusing on three different schools of feminism: liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism. First, the researcher will explain Aston's concept of liberal feminist performance. The political aim in a liberal feminist performance is to increase opportunities for women in society. In studying the dramatic text, Aston divides the observation or study in three aspects: form/narrative, characters/roles/subjectivity and dialogue; in form/narrative, Aston believes that a liberal performance should be realist, linear and closed; forward moving; and mimetic representation of 'real' time. The characters/roles/subjectivity should include strong roles for women often represented within domestic and familial spheres, while the dialogue uses naturalistic speech forms. Aston believes that the empowerment of women through liberal feminism performances is to be accomplished predominantly by means of progressive legislation in respect of women's rights. A female performer finding a piece to demonstrate her talent will inevitably look for performance material which offers a 'strong' woman's role, but one which in terms of form and ideological content can be assimilated into dominant artistic and political values (Aston, 1995, p. 65).

For the elements of liberal feminism, the researcher is proposing these following highlighted principles from the amalgamation of theories that he discussed earlier: ideas

of individuality and the right to seek self-fulfilment; promote a positive self-image for being a woman; free to take action that is beyond physical aggression; having access to increase opportunities and suppressing male's sexual desire towards female.

3.1.2 Cultural Feminism

Cultural feminism is an approach to feminist thinking and action that claims that either by nature and/or through nurture, women “gradually developed the characteristics ‘feminine’ or ‘female’ as perceived by the society” (Tong, 2000, p. 274). Cultural feminist theorists heralded the unique and different qualities of women as they acknowledge “the importance of ‘revaluing’ intuitive, non-rational aspects of human experiences” (Aston, 2001, p. 35). Women must reclaim their care giving and nurturing roles that have been devalued within a patriarch's industrialized society (translated as antonym for characteristics of ‘masculine’ or ‘male’); in overcoming the problems of society, women must empower the basic nature of their God-given behaviour. Social transformation will occur when there is an infusion of feminine or maternal values into the culture by injecting harmony, appreciation for non-violent or peaceful negotiation and ethics of care and corrected-ness (Enns & Sincore, 2001, p. 471). In other words, cultural feminists were sentimental in negotiating gender relationships by extending their interests to include eco-feminist concerns in order to build positive and connected relationships with their physical environment; they positioned philanthropic and cooperative aspects of human experience as the firsts.

One influential theoretical example of the attempts to facilitate more compassion throughout every sphere of social existence is *Maternal Thinking*, written by Sara Ruddick in 1995. Ruddick argues that women engage in the practices of protection, nurturance and training. As these practices arise out of the needs of children, much of the works are considered ‘social acceptability.’ Inspired by her own mothering experience, Ruddick recalls many wisdoms she encountered while communication or

exchanging rapport with other mothers at different locales such as schools, child-centred activities and playgrounds. Knowledge obtained from the different practices of mothers are seen as constantly changing, as mothers practicing their maternal thinking must change in order to meet new challenges imposed by the ever changing circumstances and environment. Moreover, maternal thinking provides the catalyst for a specifically feminist peace politics. The motivation and methods brought a different focus to peace politics, and this why maternal thinking is more pacifist than other forms of thinking. Many feminist cultural theorists proposed that women have rights to experience communal values; women must achieve personal and intellectual growth in the context of relationships and empower themselves to understand that they are also capable of acting, being knowledgeable and creative.⁴⁹ To achieve self-fulfilled goals, women therefore must learn to 'think like a man', where women must have the sense to equate themselves on the same level as their counterparts as a moral paradigm built upon transactions between equally informed and powerful adults (Enns & Sincore, 2001, p. 472).

The majority of cultural feminists upheld the "connection" theory by stressing the fact that women are related to all of human life; women are connected to all human life materially (pregnancy, intercourse and breast-feeding) and existentially (moral and practice life). However, only recently a sect of cultural feminists voiced out their criticism towards the connection thesis. They believed that the effects of 'being connected to others' led to their exploitation and violation - heterosexual intercourse, pregnancy, prostitution, sexual harassment, rape, forced contraception and pornography. On the other hand, a more positive observant of cultural feminist theory emphasized that the best things that can contribute to a better social life are "women's capacities for sharing, giving, nurturing, empathizing and connecting" (Tong, 2000, p. 278).

⁴⁹ The authors referred to as "actors, knowers and creators" (Enns & Sincore, 2001).

Connection is about life as most people experience it every day and not about separate individuals bounded by social contracts. Women must celebrate their elements of “woman-ness”, something that is not shared with masculine males. On the other hand, oppression is assumed as a catastrophe in appreciating the idea of caring and nurturing as central to human existence.

In analysing cultural feminist theory in performance, one must look into the connection between cultural feminism and the theory of feminist embodiment. The theory of feminist embodiment reflects a maternal ideal, a contrast between the ideal female body (feeding others, thus inhabiting the feminine space of the symbolic mother) and the body that imagines and nurtures itself, “thematizing the desire to be a body in sequence with the pleasures of having one” (Epstein, 1996, p. 21). Epstein adds that both Jill Dolan and Judith Butler agreed that the physicality of female bodies erodes in the construction of gender for the “sexing” of these bodies (21), while Peggy Phelan illustrated that thoroughly bodies inhabit signifying systems and the way the systems are always organized as bodies (21). Josephine Donovan (2012) argues that significant physical events experienced by women such as menstruation, childbirth and breastfeeding, give them a better edge over men as the latter do not experience the essence of livelihood. “Woman-ness” is unquestionably an important aspect to highlight in any discussion pertaining to issues of cultural feminism.

In relation to cultural feminist standpoint, the “theatricality” paves the way for the aspect of performativity where actors and their repetitive and mimetic nature of physical bodies are more important; any non-theatrical bodies are undermined by illusion, gesture and body language. Physical embodiment contributes to the awe-inspiring and possibly emancipating movement of performance theories toward bodies before gender and physical nourishment is central to the ‘theatricalisation’⁵⁰ of cultural

⁵⁰ The process of adapting to the theatre display in showy fashion, derives from the word ‘theatricality’, which means “of or relating to the theatre or the presentation of plays.

feminist roles. Physicality specifies body conditions that presuppose an “inhabited” and internal system, while materiality suggests the almost exclusive search for external and relational factors in the constitutions of body (Epstein, 1996, p. 22).⁵¹

Returning to the Aston’s feminist theatre practice, the researcher is now highlighting the principles in a cultural feminist performance. The political aim in a cultural feminist performance is to contest the patriarchal organisation of society. In studying the dramatic text, Aston divides the observation or study in three aspects: form/narrative, characters/roles/subjectivity and dialogue; in form/narrative, Aston indicates that a cultural feminist performance should be women-identified forms of ritual, myth; open, contiguous; collective and cyclical cultural memories. The characters/roles/subjectivity should indicate ‘Woman’ as ‘Other’, as communal, universal, subject; intra-feminine relationship with emphasis on mother/daughter relations, while the dialogue shows resistance to logocentrism. Aston adds that the personal response on its own is not enough, the physical memory is needed to keep it controlled so that it can be performed, or can be shown and shared with others. The female body in this context is not used as a hypostatisation of women’s creativity, but as a recollection of personal histories of women, which may have been culturally, socially, and politically repressed (Aston, 1995, p. 72-73).

For the elements of cultural feminism, the researcher is proposing these following highlighted principles from the amalgamation of theories that he discussed earlier: injecting harmony, maternal or feminine values into everyday lives; the capability to relate to life and nature; celebrate the elements of ‘woman-ness’, especially as caregivers and nurturers; the concept of intra-feminine that emphasises on mother/daughter relations or sisterhood; and woman-centred action in contesting the patriarchal organisation of society.

⁵¹ It is imperative to highlight that there is a drastic shift in cultural attitudes towards feminist embodiment – a woman’s body and her material essence (nurturer-agent) has been reduced to the Freudian symbolic of the desired feminine body.

3.1.3 Socialist Feminism

Another sect of feminism avows that the world should be replaced with utopian societies in which men and women share domestic tasks, household chores and childcare as an opposition to economic competition and exploitation. Just like their radical counterpart, socialist feminists agreed that the central form of oppression is gender oppression; unlike radical feminists, socialist feminists endorsed that class, economics, nationality, race and history shape the oppression. Scholars agreed that socialist feminism integrates “an analysis of the structure of production, class and capitalism⁵², the control of women’s bodies, reproduction and sexuality and its patriarchy influence⁵³ and the effect of gender role socialization”⁵⁴ (Cosgrove, 2002, p. 97). To explain individual (in this case, a woman) experience, socialist feminists use social realities - they viewed that human beings are born in a given economic and social structure that determine them to shape their own personal experience.

In studying socialist feminism, one must be familiar with these six central features of the aforementioned theory: class/capitalism, revolution, patriarchy, psychoanalysis, subjectivity and difference.⁵⁵ Alienation is hailed as the central idea in relating women’s experiences in their own society. According to socialist feminists, women have experienced three types of alienations: alienation from their own sexuality through sexual objectification and being treated as sexual commodities, alienation from motherhood through the control of obstetric science and other “experts” and alienation from their intellectual strengths by being confined by definitions of intelligence and competence set forth primarily by men.⁵⁶

Maggie Humm (1989) reports that a theory of epistemology plays a significant role in understanding socialist feminism. All knowledge represents the interests and

⁵² Marxist perspective.

⁵³ Radical feminism.

⁵⁴ Liberal feminism.

⁵⁵ Zalewski, 2000, p. 17.

⁵⁶ Enns & Sinacore, 2001, p. 474.

values of any social groups, specifically women, must be observed through historical variations in practices and in the categories by which the aforesaid values are understood. Socialist feminists proposed that structural transformation in educational life and institutions should be implemented as they are concerned over the matter in which sexism, class-ism and racism are injected within economic means. To achieve the goal of redistributing power through the transformation of economic structures, socialist feminists believe that everyone (both men and women) must prepare himself or herself to accept their assigned roles consistently with their gender, class and racial backgrounds.⁵⁷ This leads to a belief that in achieving the equal distribution of growth, all gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity must be integrated to attain the same accomplishment. Socialist feminists believe that freedom from the social and historical class and gender roles as liberating. There should be more emphasis on an equilibrium between an individual and her community, as both are considered equally important, and individual rights should not impede communal obligations.

Heidi Hartmann (2006) notably contends that the concept of patriarchy is a material condition or economic relation that functions as the collective effort of men trying to dominate women. The gender division of labour sustains women's subordination in all aspects of society, such as the task of women caring for children while men are working in the public sphere. Owing to this, patriarchy can only be defeated if and only if capitalism is deposed. This claim is supported by Sally Scholz, who supports Hartmann's opinion by stating the following statement:

Capitalism and patriarchy are two different ideological systems that run parallel to each other. Each oppresses women in different ways and each requires different approaches for overcoming that oppression. For instance, one might analyse sexism much like the radical feminist noting the biological roots of women's role in the family and exclusion from

⁵⁷ Enns & Sinacore, 2001, p. 474

public and political activities. That same feminist might see capitalism as accounting for some of the economic exploitation of the work that women do in the home.

(Scholz, 2010, p. 24)

The exploitation also denies women from obtaining or maximising their potential to improve their livelihood, and only relying on the mercy of equal opportunity in order for their potential to be recognised.

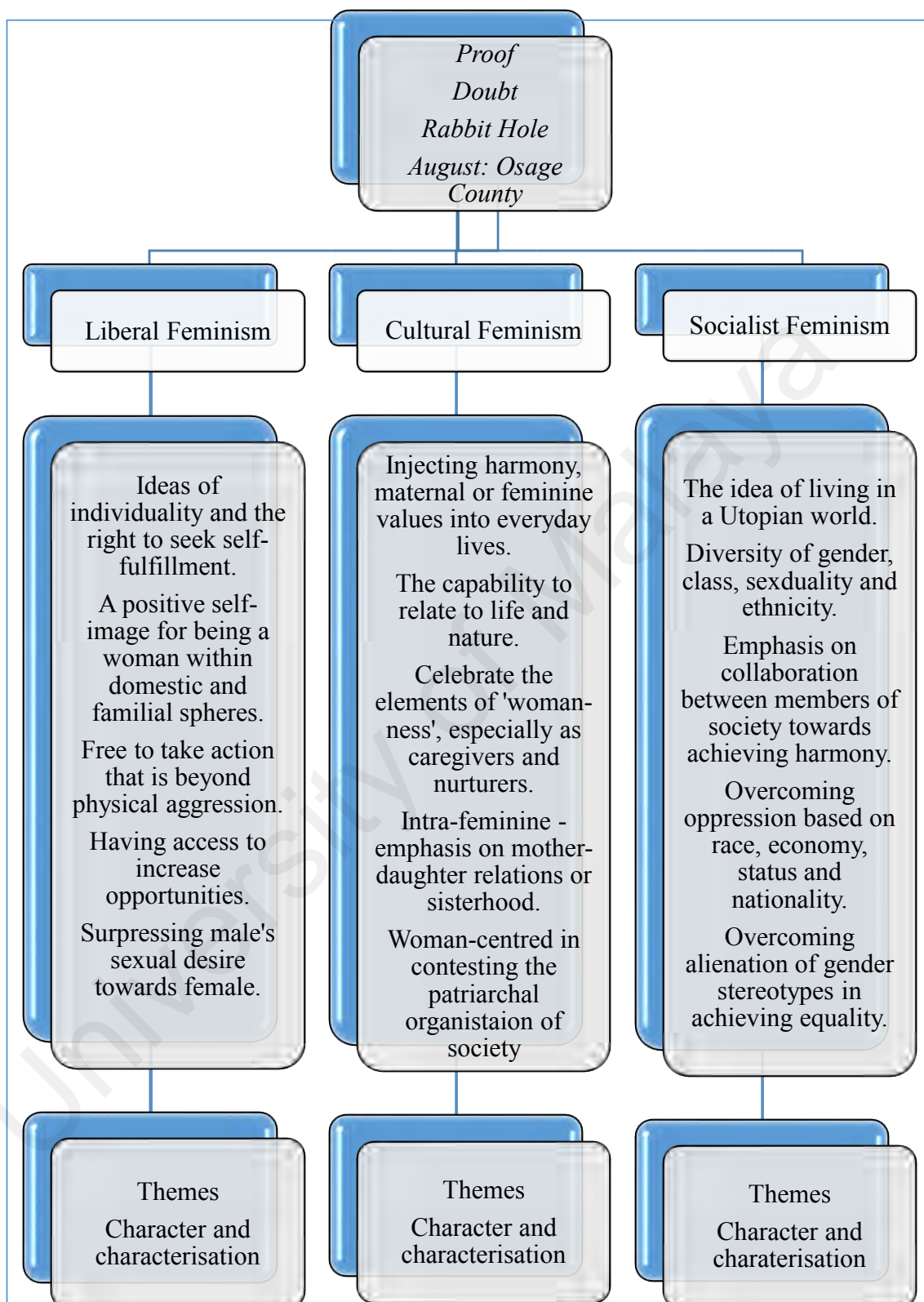
The ideas of achieving an ideal living condition where class, economics, nationality, race and history are not suppressed by one existing power (translated as masculinity or patriarchal) led to the performance theory introduced by Jill Dolan, where a performance carries a utopian gesture with the notion of using performance as a tool for making the world better by inciting people to profound responses that shake one's consciousness. Dolan (2001) endorses that theatre and performance create populaces engaging democracy as a participatory forum in which ideas and potentials for social impartiality, as well as mutual justice. Her utopian ideas and the uplifting of social feminism continues when she expressed her interest in the material conditions of theatre production and reception that evoke the sense that boundless "no-place" might ameliorate the social scourges plaguing our society, such as poverty, famine, cancer, inadequate healthcare, AIDS, racial and gender discrimination (460-461). While the grand idea of living in a place without conflict or dissension seems obnoxious, the utopian performative theory helps socialist feminists to implement their own, uniquely devised utopian foundations within societies. In a theatrical performance, a process without conflict, opposition and contradiction are not the right ingredients for theatre, but it is important to remember that theatre helps in understanding the possibility of something better so that an incremental cultural change would be achieved.

Once again, the Aston's feminist theatre practice will be highlighted, this time indicating the principles in a socialist feminist performance. The political aim in a socialist feminist performance is to transform social, cultural, economic and gender-

based systems of oppression. In studying the dramatic text, Aston divides the observation or study in three aspects: form/narrative, characters/roles/subjectivity and dialogue; in form/narrative, Aston indicates that a socialist feminist performance should be epic; episodic arrangement of scenes; alienation of linear; disjunction of time zones and worlds. The characters/roles/subjectivity should be unfixed, with state of change and flux in order to reconfigure and contest social arrangements; characters are marked by difference and diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity, while the dialogue shows alienation of linguistic sign-system. Foregrounding the working class woman's oppression as different to that of women from the upper and middle classes was also a feature of socialist feminist drama based on an identity politics of regionalism, and the alienated position of the working-class woman in relation to the feminist movement is criticising capitalist production and class exploitation (Aston, 1995, p. 76).

For the elements of socialist feminism, the researcher is proposing these following highlighted principles from the amalgamation of theories that he discussed earlier: the idea of living in a Utopian world; emphasis on collaboration between members of society towards achieving harmony; overcoming oppression based on race, economy, status and nationalities; overcoming alienation of gender stereotypes in achieving equality; and diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity.

Table 3.1 Analysis Method



CHAPTER 4: ANALYSIS

4.1 Liberal Feminism

In studying the elements of liberal feminism in the themes and character and characterisation in *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable* (henceforth to be referred to as *Doubt*), *Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County*, the researcher is utilising these following as elements: ideas of individuality and the right to seek self-fulfilment; promote a positive self-image for being a woman; free to take action that is beyond physical aggression; having access to increase opportunities and suppressing male's sexual desire towards female.

4.1.1 Ideas of Individuality and the Right to Seek Self-fulfilment

Female characters striving for establishing individuality in an organisation dominated by men. Through these characters, they attempt to show their individual dignity and capability in seeking self-fulfilment while expected to perform their duties in a male-dominated environment. These characters are proving that they are able to commit to a task as good as their male counterparts, if not better. Simultaneously, they are also venturing into their own personal choices without expecting any approval from others, in line with their quest for autonomy and equal opportunity in pursuance of liberty.

As the protagonist of *Proof*, the researcher finds Catherine to be the symbol of liberation and a woman who breaks the status quo in a male-dominated world. She is a gifted mathematician in her own right, a talent which she inherited from her equally genius father. Moreover, as she has shown her capability to care for her father until his death on her own, Catherine is determined to stay in Chicago all by herself even after her sister Claire is coaxing her to move to New York. Catherine's determination to remain in her childhood home can be perceived as her intent to prove her independence, even though her sister Claire has provided for her well-being while taking care of their

father. Living alone can be seen as another symbol of strength for an individual who apparently has shown some symptoms of mental illness. Unlike Robert, her father, who has to rely on someone else (even after a period after Catherine returns to Northwestern University, thus leaving Robert on his own in a short period of time), Catherine, whose intelligence rivals only to her father's, vows not to succumb to the same fate as her father. It happened when Catherine returns home to visit her father, only to find him freezing himself outside their home when the temperature is dipping haphazardly. She is also inspired by another renowned mathematician, Sophie Germain, a Parisian woman who did some proofs during the French Revolution; the inclusion of Germain and her achievement in this play serves as a foretell that another character's intelligence will be unveiled later in the play.

Catherine's rather wayward attitude could also be driven by her long kept secret about her own intelligence, which has not been properly revealed or shared with others. Surreptitiously, she successfully completes a mathematical proof, which she conceals from the knowledge of others until a few days after her father's funeral. Her work is not aided by anyone else; Catherine divides her time between nursing her ill father and finalising a theorem which she started some time ago (the author, David Auburn, did not mention specifically when Catherine begins her work). This is revealed when Harold Dobbs, a protégé of Robert (father of Claire and Catherine), was given access to a drawer once used by Robert, after both Harold (henceforth to be referred to as Hal) and Catherine spend a night together.

HAL
What's this?

CATHERINE
It's a key.

HAL
Ah.

CATHERINE

Try it.

HAL

Where?

CATHERINE

Bottom drawer of the desk in my dad's office.

HAL

What's in there?

CATHERINE

There's one way to find out, Professor.

HAL

Now? Okay.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 35)

Short after this conversation, Catherine and Claire are intertwined in another conversation regarding Catherine's future (more on this later), when Hal enters the living room with a notebook believed to be Robert's, much to Claire's dismay.

HAL

How long have you known about this?

CATHERINE

A while.

HAL

Why didn't you tell me about it?

CATHERINE

I wasn't sure I wanted to.

HAL

Thank you.

CATHERINE

You're welcome.

CLAIRE

What's going on?

HAL

God, Catherine, thank you.

CATHERINE

I thought you'd like to see it.

CLAIRE

What is it?

HAL

It's incredible.

CLAIRE

What IS it?

HAL

Oh, uh, it's a result. A proof...a very...important...proof.

CLAIRE

What does it prove?

HAL

It looks like it proves a theorem...a mathematical theorem about prime numbers, something mathematicians have been trying to prove since...since there were mathematicians, basically. Most people thought it couldn't be done.

CLAIRE

Where did you find it?

HAL

In your father's desk. Cathy told me about it.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 40)

By this point, both Hal and Claire assume that Robert had done something miraculous about a theorem equation with a ground-breaking proof. They do not expect the following revelation, which becomes the turning point of this play.

CLAIRE

You know what this is?

CATHERINE

Sure.

CLAIRE

Is it good?

CATHERINE

Yes.

HAL

It's historic. If it checks out.

CLAIRE

What does it say?

HAL

I don't know yet. I've just read the first few pages.

CLAIRE

But what does it mean?

HAL

It means that during a time when everyone thought your dad was crazy...or barely functioning...he was doing some of the most important mathematics in the world...newspapers all over the world are going to want to talk to the person who found this notebook.

CLAIRE

Cathy.

HAL

Cathy.

CATHERINE

I didn't find it.

HAL

Yes you did.

CATHERINE

No.

CLAIRE

Well you did find it out or did Hal find it?

HAL

I didn't find it.

CATHERINE

I didn't find it. I wrote it.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 41)

Earlier, the researcher included a part when Catherine and Hal were discussing Sophie Germain and the theory of Germain Primes. The researcher believes that Catherine takes this as an indication to reveal herself as a genius in her own right, as Hal has responded positively about a historical woman who had found one of the most important theorems in the history of mathematics. Alas, just like Germain, Catherine's revelation was met with tepid and appalling response from both Hal and Claire. That is to say, just like the Ecole Polytechnique in Palaiseau (near Paris) had denied admission to Sophie Germain, both Hal and Claire have rejected that the book and its treasured

contents belongs to Catherine. Feeling dejected by the display of caginess from the only people she cared for, Catherine begin to reconfigure and contests social arrangement to claim her invention in the mathematics academia community, which is a perceived patriarchal organisation in this play.

In *Doubt*, Sister Aloysius is the draconian principal of parochial Catholic school, an organisation where the upper echelons of Catholic Church are filled with men. In the beginning of the play, one of her teachers, Sister James, fails to her hide her doubts over an alleged improper rapport between Father Flynn, one of the likeable priests in the aforesaid parochial school, and Donald Muller, an African American student. She shares her observation with her superior Sister Aloysius.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

There is a statue of St. Patrick on one side of the church altar and a statue of St. Anthony on the other. This parish serves Irish and Italian families. Someone will hit Donald Muller.

SISTER JAMES

He has a protector.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Who?

SISTER JAMES

Father Flynn.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

What?

SISTER JAMES

He's taken an interest. Since Donald went on the altar boys. I thought I should tell you.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I told you to come to me, but I hoped you never would.

SISTER JAMES

Maybe I shouldn't have.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I knew once you did, something would be set in motion. So it's happened.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 23-24)

As a result, Sister Aloysius is pressing for more evidence in order to look into this suspicion of misbehaviour. Discussing the matter with Sister James, Sister Aloysius believes that the investigation has to be done quicker, even though the evidence is scarce. Simultaneously, the allegation against Father Flynn is thought to be uncertain since both of them seem to be at lost on how to launch the investigation, as in reality, priests are well protected from the fraternity of parishioners. Sister Aloysius' determination to get to the bottom of the suspicion as to prove her fulfilling her duty as the guardian of the aforesaid school, as well as its reputation and students.

SISTER JAMES

But I feel. Wrong. And about this other matter, I don't have any evidence. I'm not at all certain that anything's happened.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

We can't wait for that.

SISTER JAMES

But what if it's nothing?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Then it's nothing. I wouldn't mind being wrong. But I doubt I am.

SISTER JAMES

Then what's to be done?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I don't know.

SISTER JAMES

You'll know what to do.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I don't know what to do. There are parameters which protect him and hinder me.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 24)

Sister Aloysius' attitude towards sexual misconduct is the exact sentiment of any women fighting against sexual exploitation throughout the history, and becomes more apparent during the Third Wave feminism, when Anita Hill accuses Judge Clarence Thomas of sexual harassment in 1991. Judge Clarence Thomas was then a nominee for Supreme Court Justice in the United States, and this case becomes the opening of

floodgates for more sexual harassment cases. For example, Governor Bill Clinton, a Democrat candidate for Presidential election in 1992, was accused of sexual harassment by two random women he met throughout his career as the Governor of Arkansas, Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones. Both cases were settled out of court and Governor Clinton was elected as the President of the United States in November 1992; he was re-elected in another Presidential election in 1996, and stayed in the Oval Office until 2000. These cases are renowned examples of women fighting to restore their dignity and defending their honours from sexual exploitation. In *Doubt*, Sister Aloysius represents the symbol of this crusade against sexual misconduct among men in powers.

While both Sister Aloysius and Sister James are seen to getting along fine in the earlier scenes, the latter is known for being soft-spoken and gentler in manner, while the former is anything but. In *Doubt*, Sister James is distancing herself from the usual imagery of parochial school educators, as she represents the younger generation of women coming of age in the 1960s, a period when the Second Wave of Feminism took place in the United States. In reality, younger women who were heavily influenced by the uprising of Civil Rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*, were distancing themselves from the norm and etiquette of their predecessors; Sister James is distancing herself from the generalisation of the qualities of a teacher, especially in a parochial school, imposed by her superior and predecessors. Later in the play, after a tensed but quiet exchange between Father Flynn and her, Sister James somewhat has a change of heart when it comes to Father Flynn's innocence. Earlier, when she first reported her suspicion on Father Flynn to Sister Aloysius, Sister James does what other responsible individual would do: bringing up the matter to one's closer superior. After the aforementioned conversation between her and Father Flynn, Sister James, trusting her own judgement, concludes that Father Flynn may not be guilty after all, much to the dismay of Sister Aloysius. As an

individual believing in her own conscience, Sister James never once changes her decree on Father Flynn even though she was challenged by Sister Aloysius to state her case, and instantaneously manages to fend off Sister Aloysius' influence and belief in the abovementioned matter.

As Becca, one of the protagonists from *Rabbit Hole*, is proud with her status as a mother (some of this part has been explained earlier in this section), one must apprehend that in becoming a full-time mother to Danny, Becca gave up her lucrative full-time career at Sotheby's. In other words, Becca sees "motherhood" and the responsibilities that come along with the duty is an irreplaceable job. Even though she has the opportunity to return to work after the death of Danny, Becca decides that returning to work as a betrayal to her choice of career – motherhood. While she is barely coping with the loss of her son as everything in her house reminds her of Danny, she sees leaving her house as a manner to deal with her son's passing is abysmal. As a result, she proposes to Howie that they should move to another house where she may continue to overcome her grief in her own terms by seeking refuge in a brand new place without many mementos from Danny's presence.

BECCA

He's everywhere, Howie. Everywhere I look, I still see Danny.

HOWIE

We love this house.

BECCA

I can't move without – I mean, Jesus, look at this. Everywhere. Do you even know? Here: *Runaway Bunny* for godsake. The puzzles. The smudgy fingerprints on the doorjambs.

HOWIE

I like seeing his fingerprints.

BECCA

Because you don't have to sit and stare at them day in and day out. You get to escape. You get to go to work.

HOWIE

Well, if you want to go back to work, Becca—

BECCA

I don't.

HOWIE

--you can call up Sotheby's.

BECCA

No I can't. That's not who I am anymore. I left all that to be a mom.

HOWIE

Well...

BECCA

Well what? Well that didn't work out?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 46)

Becca believes that the best way to move on is to slowly giving away old clothes, taking down old photographs and paintings. The researcher believes that Becca's actions are not implying her weakness, but she is taking necessary steps to move on. These strides are taken as long as she does not succumb to chronic emotional turmoil. As a dedicated mother, Becca knows that rearing a child is a privilege. Therefore, any mothers or mothers-to-be must have certain standards in their daily conduct.

Izzy, Becca's younger sister, lives her life as a total opposite of her sister's. While Becca is considered prim and proper, a woman who once had an established career with a renowned organisation, Izzy is anything but. Early in the play, Izzy's rebellious streak was introduced to the audience, as she confesses to Becca that she just walked away from a heated exchange with another bar patron.

IZZY

And she's harassing me, and blowing her stank-breath in my face. And cussing. My God, you wouldn't believe the words that came out of this lady's mouth.

BECCA

And you don't even know who she's talking about.

IZZY

She's talking about her boyfriend.

BECCA

No, I know but –

IZZY

Auggie.

BECCA

Oh, I thought you didn't know who she –

IZZY

No, at the time I didn't know who she was talking about, because I didn't know he was there. But then I figured it out later, "Oh, she must be Auggie's girlfriend."

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 7)

For the record, Auggie is Izzy's latest boyfriend, who she barely knows for a few months before they are taking their relationship to the next level. The assailant in question is Auggie's former girlfriend; they broke up but still live in the same house when Auggie begins pursuing Izzy.

IZZY

So she's all, "You bitch, you. Fuck you, you bitch."

BECCA

Izzy –

IZZY

Sorry: "F-U, you B," and all that. Just talking like a maniac...And people are looking at us, so I'm starting to feel self-conscious...And she's just going off, and I can't really do anything because the place is so crowded, you know? And she's a big lady. Real hefty. More chins than – what does Mom say?

BECCA

More Chins than a Chinese phone book.

IZZY

Exactly. So I can't even get around her to escape or whatever. And I'm starting to feel violated, you know? My personal space, and my dignity, or what have you, so I just made a fist, hauled off, and BOOM!

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 8)

Izzy's aggression does not come without provocation; as she had mentioned, she was verbally assaulted by her boyfriend's former flame in a crowded, public area. In order to defend her honour and reputation, as she believes she was assaulted for no reason (at the beginning), Izzy's action can be considered as a protection for her individual dignity.

Later, it is known that the aforesaid aggressor is upset when Auggie informs her that Izzy is pregnant; perhaps, she believes that Izzy allows herself to be pregnant in order to solely win Auggie over.

IZZY

Because she's a lunatic! And Auggie told her I was pregnant.

BECCA

Why would he--? Oh my God, Izzy.

IZZY

I know, right?

BECCA

You are not. Oh my God.

IZZY

He's a really good guy, Bec. You're gonna like him. He's a musician.

BECCA

That's terrific.

IZZY

No, not like you think. He gets work. He's a working musician.

BECCA

Is that why you're here? To tell me you're pregnant?

IZZY

Pretty much.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 20)

Speaking of her pregnancy, Izzy is also another example of a liberalised woman who believes in her own autonomy in taking action to shape her own destiny. Despite of only seeing Auggie for a few months, Izzy takes the brave (and risky) decision to continue with her pregnancy, even though it is unplanned from the beginning. The researcher believes that this pregnancy is Izzy's way to substantiate that she is a woman who can be as motherly as her sister; she is capable of bringing another life to the world, and fulfil her motherly instinct.

HOWIE

Everyone is excited about the baby, Iz. But you gotta understand that there's other stuff going on around here.

IZZY

I'm not talking about the other stuff. I'm talking about me being a capable person who can raise a child, and look after it and protect it. I resent the feeling I get from her, and you too sometimes, honestly, that I don't deserve the baby. Or that I'm not mature enough, or smart enough or something, to take care of it. I mean, my God, if my mother could do it, how hard could it be?

HOWIE

You'd be surprised.

IZZY

Hey, that's not what I...I just want to feel like you guys have some faith in me, because I'm up to it.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p.96)

Barbara Fordham (nee Weston) is the protagonist of *August: Osage County*; she is the eldest daughter out of three Weston girls. She is married to Bill Fordham and together they are raising a precocious but defiant teenage daughter, Jean. At the beginning, Barbara is seen as an obedient wife, simply fulfilling her husband's wish to relocate from Oklahoma to Colorado, where she was also offered a teaching post. When Beverly vanishes, Barbara returns to Oklahoma and resumes her role as the eldest daughter (to Violet) and sister (to Ivy and Karen), bringing along her now estranged husband and daughter. Even though she is regarded as an absent daughter to her mother, Barbara never forgets her responsibility as a child. Her presence is seen as the pillar to the volatile family, especially when dealing with Violet, her mother. The moment she receives the news of Beverly's disappearance, she rushes back only to find that Violet's lackadaisical attitude towards the misfortune; unlike her sisters, Barbara is the only one who stands up if she can't get better response from her mother.

BARBARA

That was the last time you saw him.

VIOLET

I went to bed Saturday night and got up Sunday morning...still no Beverly. I didn't make much of it, thought he'd gone out on a bender.

BARBARA

Why would he do that? Not like he couldn't drink at home. Unless you were riding his ass.

VIOLET

I never said anything to him about his drinking, never got on him about it.

BARBARA

Really.

VIOLET

Barbara, I swear. He could drink himself into obliv-uh, obliv-en-em...

BARBARA

Oblivion.

(Letts, 2008, p. 35)

As the eldest child, Barbara has the privilege of spending more time with her parents, thus she is able to fathom the attitude of her parents, both positive and negative, more than her sisters. She knows her father's love for liquors, at the same time she understands Violet's penchant for driving people away with her nagging. Barbara is showing an exemplary of a person who is able to connect to life owing to her observation of her parents' flaws; simultaneously, this ability is also a reflection of thinking and behaving rationally. Moreover, she believes that her status as the eldest child means she is taking charge of the household when a crisis arises, especially with Violet's health condition, and her addiction to her pills.

BARBARA

Are you high?

VIOLET

No.

BARBARA

No, are you high? I mean literally. Are you taking something?

VIOLET

A muscle relaxer.

BARBARA

Listen to me: I will not go through this with you again.

VIOLET

Go through what?

BARBARA

These fucking pills.

VIOLET

They're muscle relaxers –

BARBARA

I will not do this again.

VIOLET

I don't know what you're talking about.

(Letts, 2008, p. 40)

Barbara suspects that her mother is once again addicted to prescriptive pills thanks to her incoherent speech and capricious mood, not to forget her own lack of judgement when Violet exposes that she fails to alert Barbara earlier regarding Beverly's disappearance. Barbara is also showing another resilient trait, as she is planning to divorce her unfaithful husband, Bill. Instead of playing victim as the result of her husband's infidelity, Barbara takes matters into her own hands and plans her separation, and later files for divorce. She has witnessed how both her mother and maternal aunt (Mattie Fae) are both trapped in a loveless marriage, and as a result, she grows up in a rather dysfunctional household even though she has both parents living under the same roof. Moreover, she believes that her decision to leave Bill is justified, as the latter is responsible to violate her trust and ignore her sacrifices in the early days of their marriage.

BARBARA

They're all symptoms of your male menopause, whether it's you struggling with the "creative question," or screwing a girl who still wears a retainer.

BILL

All right, look. I'm here for you. Because I want to be with you, in a difficult time. But I'm not going to be held hostage in this room so you can attack me—

BARBARA

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hold you hostage. You really should go then.

BILL

I'm not going anywhere. I flew to Oklahoma to be here with you and now you're stuck with me. And her name is Cindy.

BARBARA

I know her stupid name. At least do me the courtesy of recognizing when I'm demeaning you.

(Letts, 2008, p. 46-47)

Barbara's wrath towards Bill is not only because of his infidelity but also for his insensitivity and sometimes misogynistic behaviour. Bill is trying to pin down that it is normal for men of a certain age to experiment with extramarital affair, and Barbara is not taking down the "norm" lightly. Earlier, she has given up her talent as a writer to move away in order to be with her husband, or more likely to please him, and raise their daughter together in Colorado, which is a place of her husband's choice, not hers.

BILL

You want to argue? Is that what you need to do? Well, pick a subject, all right, and let me know what it is, so I can have a fighting chance –

BARBARA

The subject is me! I am the subject, you narcissistic motherfucker! I am in pain! I need help!

BILL

You called me a narcissist! And when I try to talk about you, you accuse me of psychoanalyzing you --!

BARBARA

You do understand it hurts, to go from sharing a bed with you for twenty-three years to sleeping by myself.

(Letts, 2008, p. 47)

His betrayal with a student barely out of her teens is a form of subjugation from the patriarchal member and unlike her mother, who chooses to turn a blind eye to her father's infidelity; Barbara is turning her back on this morbid relationship without offering any hints of forgiveness and reconciliation. This may lead some people to think that Barbara is selfish and adamant for not trying to make amends with her husband, but an educated woman like Barbara is supposed to make her decisions on her own without trying to please anyone (especially men), and moving forward with divorce proceeding is the best step for her to recover her dignity. Later, she reveals that she has some

feelings left for Bill, but she is accepting the fate that Bill is also looking forward to his own freedom.

Simultaneously, in choosing her life partner, Ivy is adamant to not allow anyone to interfere with her personal choice. After a couple of failed relationships in the past (where she was blamed for her plain appearance), Ivy finds herself falling in love with her first cousin Little Charles Aiken; while falling in love with a cousin is not a societal taboo in the west, the relationship is viewed as “incestuous” by Barbara owing to the fact that they grew up together. At first, she is trying to be discreet about the relationship not because she is worried of other people’s approval, but more on protecting her privacy and guarding her personal space as her right to seek self-fulfilment as an independent woman.

BARBARA

Is there something going on between you and Little Charles?

IVY

I don’t know that I’m comfortable talking about that.

BARBARA

Because you know he is our first cousin.

IVY

Give me a break.

(Letts, 2006, p. 101-102)

Both Ivy and Little Charles plan to relocate to New York City, much to the dismay of Barbara. Later, when Mattie Fae reveals to Barbara that Little Charles is, in reality, their half-brother, Barbara tries to convince Ivy to change her affection towards him but to no avail as Ivy refuses to believe the revelation and insists that her feelings for Little Charles is genuine and it is her right to choose any man as her companion.

BARBARA

That’s not a good idea.

IVY

“A good idea.”

BARBARA

For you and Little Charles to take this thing any further.

IVY

Where is this coming from?

BARBARA

I just got to thinking about it, and I think it's a little weird, that's all.

IVY

It's not up to you.

BARBARA

Lots of fish in the sea. Surely you can rule out the one single man in the world you're related to.

IVY

I happen to love the man I'm related –

(Letts, 2008, p. 129)

(Later after the revelation from Violet at the dinner table)

IVY

I won't let you change my story!

BARBARA

Goddamn it, listen to me: I tried to protect you –

IVY

We'll go anyway. We'll still go away, and you will never see me again.

BARBARA

This is not my fault. I didn't tell you, *Mom* told you. It wasn't me, it was *Mom*.

IVY

There's no difference.

(Letts, 2008, p. 134-135)

Ivy's adamant attitude can be seen as her individual trait, as she refuses to even scrutinise Barbara's admission about Little Charles; Ivy believes that Barbara is further escalating her attempt to discourage Ivy from engaging in a romantic relationship with Little Charles, as Barbara is sceptical about her love for their cousin/half-brother. Ivy sees Barbara's old-fashioned belief about "cousins should not fall in love" as a threat to her quest for individual contentment; Barbara's scepticism probably hails from the fact that Ivy falls for Little Charles as they spent plenty of time together during Ivy's

recuperation from cancer. Barbara believes that her revelation will normalise the family's somewhat dysfunctional circumstance. Alas, it turns into the final nail to the coffin for the Westons, as Ivy is determined to carry on with her relationship.

Karen, the youngest child in the Weston household, is forty years old. She oozes the aura of perkiness and positivity, and much more free-spirited as compared to her elder sisters. As she has spent her lives away from the family for a few years, Karen leads her own life according to her ideas of perfection and takes many risks, such as making quick decision to marry a man she barely knows.

KAREN

Yes, exactly, and finally one day, I threw it all out, I just said, "No, it's me. It's just me, here and now, with my music on the stereo and my glass of wine and Bloomers my cat, and I don't need anything else, I can live my life with myself." And I got my license, threw myself into my work, sold a lot of houses, and that's when I met Steve. That's how it happens, of course, you only really find it when you're not looking for it, suddenly you turn around and there it is. And then the things you thought were so important aren't really important. I mean, when I made out with my pillow, I never imagined Steve! Here he is, you know, this kinda country club Chamber of Commerce guy, ten years older than me, but a thinker, you know, someone who's been around, and he's just so good. He's a good man and he's good to me and he's good *for* me.

BARBARA

That's great, Karen –

KAREN

He's got this great business and it's because he has these great ideas and he's unafraid to make his ideas realities, you know, he's not afraid of *doing*. I think men on the whole are better at that than women, don't you? *Doing*, just jumping in and *doing*, right or wrong, we'll figure out what it all means later. And the best thing about him, the best thing about him for me, is that now what I think about is *now*. I live now. My focus, my life, my world is now. I don't give a care about the past anymore, the mistakes I made, the way I *thought*, I won't go back there. And I've realized you can't plan the future, because as soon as you do, you know, something happens, some terrible thing happens –

BARBARA

Like your father drowning himself.

KAREN

Exactly! Exactly, that's exactly what I mean! That's not something you plan for! There's no contingency; you take it as it comes, here and now! Steve had a very important presentation today, for some bigwig

government guys who could be very important for his business, something he's been putting together for months, and as soon as we heard about Daddy, he called and canceled his meeting. He has his priorities straight.

(Letts, 2008, p. 60-61)

In fact, she chooses a man ten years older as a sign of security, and she believes that her fiancé Steve is the right person to offer her the security she tries to obtain when she grows up. As a result, she hopes that her sisters would accept her choice as this was her own prerogative to choose her life partner, and not being dictated by others.

KAREN

I know you only just met him, but did you get a read off him? Did you like him?

BARBARA

We said two words to each other –

KAREN

But you still get a feel, don't you? Did you get a feel?

BARBARA

He seemed very nice, sweetheart –

KAREN

He *is*, and –

BARBARA

-- but what I think about him doesn't matter. I'm not marrying him –

KAREN

You'll come to the wedding, won't you?

BARBARA

Yeah, when is it again?

KAREN

New Year's Day. One reason we chose New Year's is because I know you and Bill have a break from school and it's important to me that you're there.

(Letts, 2008, p. 61-62)

Even though she has made up her mind about marrying the man of her choice, being the youngest in the family causes Karen to pine for her sisters' approval. Throughout the play, Karen is always seen as only a filler in the family; Violet admits that Ivy is her favourite, while Barbara is Beverly's, and nowhere in the play is Karen favoured by

anyone. The researcher considers her genial attitude towards her sisters is her affirmation that she is still a part of the tempestuous Westons; even if she is always being dissipated, Karen never does abandon her family, especially in times of need such as Beverly's abrupt disappearance, and subsequent suicide.

Jean Fordham, the daughter of Barbara and Bill Fordham, is also trying to pass herself as a nonconformist, someone who is also not afraid to reveal her own individual traits, with or without approval from her parents or other older family members in the household. This is not only because of her age (teenagers are always striving to strike out on their own, especially self-image), but Jean is also a precocious person possibly due to her own upbringing; her parents are working in a university, before her mother decides to quit and stay at home). She drowns herself into classic movies (which is rare among common teenagers) and turns herself into a vegetarian in the middle of beef-consuming family.

CHARLIE

You mean you don't eat meat of any kind?

JEAN

Right.

CHARLIE

And is that for health reasons, or...?

JEAN

When you eat meat, you ingest an animal's fear.

VIOLET

Ingest what? Its fur?

JEAN

Fear.

VIOLET

I thought she said –

CHARLIE

Its fear. How do you do that? You can't eat fear.

JEAN

Sure you can. I mean even if you don't sort of think of it spiritually, what happens to *you*, when you feel afraid? Doesn't your body produce all sorts of chemical reactions?

(Letts, 2008, p. 87)

While proudly proclaiming of her vegetarianism, Jean has gone philosophical about “fear”, which foreshadows about one of the mishaps that befalls the Weston household – the fear of being caught (Violet and her drug addiction; Steve's lust and wandering eyes) or being exposed (Ivy and Little Charles' relationship; Bill's infidelity; Mattie Fae's indiscretion). The researcher believes that Jean incidentally has opened the Pandora's Box by going in depth into her discussion on fear of animals.

JEAN

Your body goes through this whole chemical process when it experiences fear –

LITTLE CHARLES

-- yep, and cortisol –

JEAN

-- particularly like strong mortal fear, you know when you sweat and your heart races –

LITTLE CHARLES

-- oh yeah –

CHARLIE

Okay, sure.

JEAN

So when you eat an animal, you're eating all that fear it felt when it was slaughtered to make food.

(Letts, 2008, p. 87)

Later, when Jean and Steve sneak out to smoke pot, and Steve is seducing or making sexual advances towards her, her parents are trying to protect her, while discouraging her from dwelling deeper into marijuana habit.

JEAN

We smoked pot, all right? We smoked a little pot, and we were goofing around, and then everything just went haywire.

BARBARA

What have I told you about smoking that shit?! What did I say?

BILL

Then Johnna just chose to attack him with a frying pan? I don't think so.

JEAN

Look at you two, you're both so ridiculous. It's no big deal, nothing happened.

BILL

We're concerned about you.

JEAN

No, you're not. You just want to know who to punish.

BARBARA

Stop it –

JEAN

You can't tell the difference between the good guys and the bad guys, so you want me to sort it all out for you –

BARBARA

You know what, skip the lecture. Just tell me what he did!

JEAN

He didn't do anything! Even if he did, what's the big deal?

BILL

The big deal, Jean, is that you're fourteen years old.

JEAN

Which is only a few years younger than you like 'em.

(Letts, 2008, p. 120)

Right after that, Barbara slaps her daughter; in her mind, Barbara refuses to let Jean to be insolent towards Bill as this would further make her a failure in her marriage. For Jean, the slap comes in as a betrayal from her mother, as she is chastising her father by getting back at him about his affair. As the two female units in the Fordham household, they should have bonded together to punish Bill, or at least reduce him to further humility. Moreover, as a liberalised young woman, Jean feels that she could protect herself from Steve's sexual advances, and having her parents meddling in her personal matter is a challenge to her "sovereignty" as a nonconformist young woman.

4.1.2 Promote a Positive Self-image for Being a Woman

Female characters showing their progressive self-esteem of being women overall, with or without any specific female duties or womanhood elements (unlike cultural feminism). They are able to contravene norms, pursue their career to the highest possible rank, or become a stay-at-home mother at their own choice, or a rearing a child out of wedlock. Furthermore, a woman with positive self-image has equal capacity of rationality possessed by a man, thus allowing her to be fully human and autonomous individual, as discussed in the previous section. While the previous section focuses on the concept of individuality and the right to seek self-fulfilment, this section focuses on the positive traits of being a woman, who is able to maximise her self-interest and adopts the conceptions of human nature, and using both of these to express a vision for liberation.

As the protagonist of *Proof*, the researcher finds Catherine to be the symbol of liberation and a woman who breaks the status quo in a male-dominated world. She is a gifted mathematician in her own right, a talent which she inherited from her equally genius father. Furthermore, her familial connection with her father is not limited to their shared virtuosity and love for mathematic. In her mind, Catherine is able to communicate with her father (or rather the spirit of her deceased father) on the eve of her birthday.

ROBERT

What are you going to do on your birthday?

CATHERINE

Drink this. Have some.

ROBERT

No. I hope you're not spending your birthday alone.

CATHERINE

I'm not alone.

ROBERT

I don't count.

CATHERINE

Why not?

ROBERT

I'm your old man. Go out with some friends.

CATHERINE

Because in order for your friends to take you out you generally have to have friends.

ROBERT

What about Claire?

CATHERINE

She's not my friend, she's my sister. And she's in New York. And I don't like her.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 6-7)

On the outlook, this may look as a symptom of mental illness, as in reality people can't communicate with any deceased person. The researcher believes that Auburn is not normalising Catherine's peculiar behaviour, but more of a sign of invincibility of a young woman who has sacrificed her own ambition and vulnerability to care for an ailing father; obviously, the death of Robert affects Catherine's emotions and demeanour, up to a point where this imagined conversation between her and Robert takes place. This is simply translated as a sign of yearning, from a daughter to her parent. She doesn't even have any friends to communicate with when she devotes her time to care for her father, solidifying the fact that she is a positive character who cherishes her familial duty more than enhancing her social circle.

Claire, who has moved to New York to pursue her own career after graduating from college, is another positive role model in *Proof*. Even though she is anywhere but around Catherine when Robert was ill, Claire does her part in contributing to the household by assisting her sister and father financially, while supporting herself in the aforesaid New York. Both New York and Chicago are recognised for exorbitant costs of living, so for a single woman who is able to provide for two households in both cities is indeed considered successful in her career. While her sister is known for her penchant in

mathematics, Claire is a currency analyst working for a high-performance company. One may predict the reason why Claire stays out of Chicago for five years and only provide financial assistance in her absence: she has seen the similarity between her father and younger sister, and in order to be a woman of her own affluence, she carves her own career in another affluent city where she would be regarded a genius in her own field. This is not a negative trait; Claire can be seen as another woman who relocates herself in order to be out of the shadow of her family, and this is indeed a positive trait.

Sister Aloysius is known to her students for her tyrannical ways around students. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that such attitude is required, as Sister Aloysius is the principal and her duties are managerial and pastoral. Shanley creates a misunderstood character – feared yet protective of her students. Before she becomes a nun, Sister Aloysius was a married woman; her husband was killed after he was enlisted in World War II. The researcher believes that her decision to abandon worldly pleasures in exchange for solace in religion is a way for her to re-invent her function as a woman after the demise of her husband. Rather than mourning her tragic loss, Sister Aloysius turns to religion to become a stronger person, and later works her way to be appointed as the principal in a Catholic school, a position that is usually reserved for men. The researcher also believes that her strict adherence to the traditional way of education is a reflection of her own traditional upbringing; at once, since she is responsible for the well-being of the students at St. Nicholas. Moreover, it is imperative for her to uphold rules and regulations, so that she won't be blamed for being too lenient or for not implementing the moral values embedded in the Bible. In this case, her nurturing ability is put to test when she has to deal with the bureaucracy. In the Father Flynn-Donald Muller affair, she decides to be hard-hitting to both Father Flynn and Donald Muller, as she has revealed in her conversation with Mrs. Muller.

MRS. MULLER

It's just till June. Sometimes things aren't black and white.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

And sometimes they are. I'll throw your son out of this school. Make no mistake.

MRS. MULLER

But why would you do that? If nothing started with him?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Because I will stop this whatever way I must.

MRS. MULLER

You'd hurt my son to get your way?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

It won't end with your son.

MRS. MULLER

Throw the priest out then.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I'm trying to do just that.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 45)

Previously, the gentle demeanour of Sister James as her individual trait has been discussed in studying her individuality. This time, the researcher would like to on elaborate her gentleness when dealing with people around her as a positive image of a woman who is under the strictest supervision of Catholic diocese. First, when communicating with Father Flynn after he was confronted by Sister Aloysius supposedly on his improper behaviour with Donald Muller. Rather than avoiding Father Flynn or deriding him, Sister James stops for a conversation, and making her stand on the accusation lingering around Father Flynn.

FATHER FLYNN

I noticed you didn't come

SISTER JAMES

No. I went to Monsignor Benedict. He's very kind.

FATHER FLYNN

I wasn't?

SISTER JAMES

It wasn't that. You know why?

FATHER FLYNN

You against me?

SISTER JAMES

No.

FATHER FLYNN

You're not convinced?

SISTER JAMES

It's not for me to be convinced, one way or the other. It's Sister Aloysius.

FATHER FLYNN

Are you an extension of her?

SISTER JAMES

She's my superior.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 37)

From the conversation, Sister James' behaviour reflects her neutral stand on the matter. Even though she is responsible for conveying her suspicion to Sister Aloysius, she leaves the further actions or investigations to the hands of Sister Aloysius. In her case, she did avoid Father Flynn at the confessions, not only due to her respect towards her superior, Sister Aloysius, but also because of her concern for Donald Muller. Later, when the conversation becomes slightly heated, Sister James states her stand on the aforesaid case.

FATHER FLYNN

How can you take sides against me?

SISTER JAMES

It doesn't matter.

FATHER FLYNN

It does matter! I've done nothing. There's no substance to any of this... The only reason I haven't gone to the monsignor is I don't want to tear apart the school. Sister Aloysius would most certainly lose her position as principal if I made her accusations known. Since they're baseless. You might lose your place as well.

SISTER JAMES

Are you threatening me?

FATHER FLYNN

What do you take me for? No.

SISTER JAMES

I want to believe you.

FATHER FLYNN

Then do. It's as simple as that.

SISTER JAMES

It's not me that has to be convinced.

FATHER FLYNN

I don't have to prove anything to her.

SISTER JAMES

She's determined.

FATHER FLYNN

To what?

SISTER JAMES

Protect the boy.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 38)

While being genial in her responses to Father Flynn, Sister James guards her poise when being pressed about her stand on the accusation. Instead of acceding to Father Flynn's mild threat, she affirms that Donald Muller's safety is her priority. Her attitude reflects the positive composure of a woman when one is facing intimidation from a member of the opposite sex.

Simultaneously, she lets her guard down when she is expected to be firmer while dealing with her students. While readers may perceive her attitude to be rather naïve and meek, the researcher believes that Sister James is a female character that exudes a positive stance. Previously, the researcher explained that her rather gentler and warmer attitude towards her student represent her individuality; instead of becoming of the sterner and stand-offish person, attitudes that are always associated with teachers in parochial schools, Sister James chooses to be rather lenient and not to be distant, as she is exhibiting her individuality, distinguishing herself from the other teachers, or isolating herself away from what is perceived to be the norm of a teacher. This can also be translated as a positive attitude of a young woman in the 1960s, just around the time

when women were becoming more conscious of their rights and the need to be more positive and genial, especially when dealing with children.

Mrs. Muller is a mother who would do anything for her son to acquire better education, in the wake of Brown vs. Board of Education 1954 case, where the Supreme Court outlawed segregation in public school, and in the dawn of Civil Rights Act 1964. As an African American, Mrs. Muller is struggling to provide a better future for her son, thus Sister Aloysius' allegation about her son's illicit conduct with Father Flynn will hamper her ambition.

MRS. MULLER

Whatever the problem is, Donald just has to make it here till June. Then he's off into high school. If Donald can graduate from here, he has a better chance of getting into a good high school. And that would mean an opportunity at college. I believe he has the intelligence. And he wants it, too.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I don't see anything at this time standing in the way of his graduating with his class.

MRS. MULLER

Well, that's all I care about. Anything else is all right with me.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I doubt that.

MRS. MULLER

Try me.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I'm concerned about the relationship between Father Flynn and your son.

MRS. MULLER

You don't say. Concerned. What do you mean, concerned?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

That it may not be right.

MRS. MULLER

Uh-huh. Well, there's something wrong with everybody, isn't that so? Got to be forgiving.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I'm concerned, to be frank, that Father Flynn may have made advances on your son.

MRS. MULLER

May have made.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I can't be certain.

MRS. MULLER

No evidence?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

No.

MRS. MULLER

Then maybe there's nothing to it?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I think there's something to it.

MRS. MULLER

Well, I would prefer not to see it that way if you don't mind.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 41-42)

Mrs. Muller is protecting her son from her abusive husband, who is not interested about Donald's progress as a student. Moreover, she is also trying hard to conceal his son's inclination towards homosexuality as any exposure about his taboo will not only ruin her son's reputation and future plans, but also instigate the wrath of her abusive husband; in 1964, homosexuality was not acceptable in the society. However, at the same time, Mrs. Muller is accepting her son's tendency towards homosexuality, an attitude that is rather ground-breaking for an African American woman in the 1960s. This is why she insists that her son should be allowed to stay, as she is powerless to change her son's inclination. Mrs. Muller's defiance is translated as her positive attribute; instead of "fixing" her son's homosexuality (in general, an action that most parents would try to commit whenever a child declared his or her sexuality, or caught with the tendencies), she is focusing hard on Donald's education and future.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

This man is in my school.

MRS. MULLER

Well, he's gotta be somewhere, and maybe he's doing some good too. You ever think of that?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

He's after the boys.

MRS. MULLER

Well, maybe some of them boys want to get caught. Maybe what you don't know maybe is my son is...that way. That's why his father beat him up. Not the wine. He beat Donald for being what he is.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

What are you telling me?

MRS. MULLER

I'm his mother. I'm talking about his nature now, not anything he's done. But you can't hold a child responsible for what God gave him to be.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Listen to me with care, Mrs. Muller. I'm only interested in actions. It's hopeless to discuss a child's possible inclination. I'm finding it difficult enough to address a man's deeds. This isn't about what the boy may be, but what the man is. It's about the man.

MRS. MULLER

But there's the boy's nature.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Let's leave that out of it.

MRS. MULLER

Forget it then. You're the one forcing people to say these things out loud. Things are in the air and you leave them alone if you can. That's what I know. My boy came to this school 'cause they were gonna kill him at the public school. So we were lucky enough to get him in here for his last year. Good. His father don't like him. He comes here, the kids don't like him. One man is good to him. This priest. Puts out a hand to the boy. Does the man have his reasons? Yes. Everybody has their reasons. You have your reasons. But do I ask the man why he's good to my son? No. I don't care why. My son needs some man to care about him and see him through to where he wants to go. And thank God, this educated man with some kindness in him wants to do just that.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 44-45)

It seems that Mrs. Muller was first in denial about the possible tryst between her son and Father Flynn, as she is hoping that Donald would be allowed to stay on as a

parochial school like St. Nicholas has better set of ethics when it comes to discipline and academic rigour. As a mother, Mrs. Muller is hoping that a better education is the only way for Donald to escape the stigma of poverty, and perhaps about being gay. This is why she is willing to not implicate Father Flynn in an accusation of sexual abuse, as she sees Father Flynn as a replacement father figure to her son, a man who is able to guide him throughout his adolescence. This is because Mrs. Muller is only trying to provide the next best protection to her son's predicament. When she indicates that Donald was assaulted in a previous public school, the researcher believes it is related to Donald's sexuality, not just a bully case.

In reinforcing an affirmative self-image of being a woman, the three female protagonists in *Rabbit Hole* are portrayed as strong support systems to one another, especially in the moment of catastrophe and grief. Throughout the play, both Izzy and Nat are constantly keeping Becca occupied with their presence. When they are around, they are trying to insert some sense of normalcy around Becca and within her household; she is less emotional and combative as compared to her condition when is she is alone with Howie, or any random stranger. First, this can be seen in a scene just after Izzy reveals her pregnancy to Becca, where the latter, while still in shock due to the revelation, is still able to spare her happiness with her younger sister.

BECCA

I think there's a girl in there.

IZZY

I hope there is. That's what I want. I mean, either way, so long as it's healthy obviously, but if I had to pick, I hope it's a girl.

BECCA

Me, too. What'd Mom say?

IZZY

She was happy.

BECCA

Really?

IZZY

I know. I thought she'd lay into me but...

BECCA

Huh.

IZZY

Thanks for the crème caramel.

BECCA

Sure.

IZZY

I'm sorry, Bec. If this is hard. I know the timing really sucks.

BECCA

Hey. What can you do? I'm glad you told me. And I'm really happy for you.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 26-27)

Given the circumstances they were in, the fact that Becca doesn't break down and becomes hysterical or emotional solidifies the researcher's view that women are more supportive of each other in times of needs. Another example is when Becca gets into a heated argument (which turns slightly physical) with another shopper while doing groceries with Nat. The latter tries to protect Becca by explaining the tragic death of Danny in order to persuade the stranger at the supermarket not to press charges.

NAT

Luckily she had read about it in the papers--

BECCA

Of course she did.

NAT

--so when I explained it, she realized who you were.

BECCA

You should've gotten her phone number. We could've had her over for cocktails.

HOWIE

Heyyy, they're back.

NAT

I was just trying to help.

BECCA

Well I don't need you chasing after me cleaning up my messes.

HOWIE

What happened?

BECCA

Or apologizing for me.

NAT

That's not what I was doing...I had to do *something*, Becca...If I didn't say something, she would've had the cops there.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 102-103)

Nat is doing her part to provide continuous support to her daughter, who loses her temper when she sees a child is neglected, and later violated, by his mother. Owing to Nat's explanation, the woman does not proceed with calling the police to solve the chaos at the grocery store. The tragic death of Danny becomes an invisible amulet to Becca, as both Nat and the stranger believe that Becca is still troubled by the sudden death of her son and should get any types of support and understanding when she behaves incoherently.

Becca is a woman in her late thirties who just lost a son in a tragic accident that takes place right in front of her house. She is carrying this burden not just as a victim's mother, but also as the 'unsung perpetrator' as she places the blame of the tragedy on her. In other words, the researcher views Becca as a strong woman who is coping from tragedy at her own pace – a slow recovery that leads her to commit some questionable acts, such as trying to give away her son's clothes, planning to move to another house and even avoiding her close friend Debbie. Referring to the latter, Becca believes that Debbie should be the one to contact her, not the other way round as she refuses to be seen as someone in desperate need of sympathy. While this sounds egocentric, the researcher believes that Becca's attitude is a symbol of courage rising from the phase of adversity in life, as she is fighting her own grief without soliciting empathy from others.

HOWIE

You can call her, you know. You can call Debbie and ask her these questions yourself.

BECCA

I don't wanna call her. She should call me.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

Why can't she call me?

HOWIE

I don't know.

BECCA

No?

HOWIE

She's uncomfortable, Bec.

BECCA

Is that what Rick said?

HOWIE

Rick didn't say anything. But obviously if she hasn't called you it's because she doesn't know what to say.

BECCA

How about, "Hey, Becca, how you doing? Haven't seen you in a while."

HOWIE

If you're pissed, you should call her and tell her.

BECCA

No, Howie, it's her job to call me.

HOWIE

Okay.

BECCA

I would've been there for her if God forbid something had ever happened to Robbie or Em.⁵⁸ I wouldn't have vanished the way she did.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 35-36)

In addition to her belief on shedding despondency without relying on others, Becca believes that as a friend, Debbie should be the one to reach out for her, as women must

⁵⁸ They are the children of Rick and Debbie.

be able to relate with each other in facing adversary. For one, a woman should understand how a grieving woman feels, therefore the former should oblige to reach out and offer her compassion to the latter, instead of the other way round by waiting for the latter's cry for help. Becca also shows her displeasure with anyone who doesn't know how to respond to grief appropriately, as if these people are not able to connect with life and nature.

HOWIE

People get weird, you know that.

BECCA

Hard for *her*?

HOWIE

I'm just saying. Look at my brother. Spent the whole funeral talking about the Mets. Obviously he couldn't deal. He'd talk about anything *but* Danny. And that's my brother.

BECCA

Yeah, well, your brother's an asshole. I should drop her a note.

HOWIE

Maybe you should.

BECCA

"Dear Debbie – just so's ya know, accidents aren't contagious."

HOWIE

Okay, let it go.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 36)

Concurrently, despite her so-called vulnerability, Becca is also intent to meet Jason, the teenager who accidentally ran over Danny. Once, Jason turns up at Howie and Becca's open house for prospective buyers, much to the chagrin of Howie (more on this later). At another time, he sends a short story (which he authors) to the couple, which Becca reads and seems to be enjoying.

BECCA

I think I'm gonna see him actually.

NAT

Who?

BECCA
Jason Willette.

NAT
Why?

BECCA
I don't know. I just...want to.

NAT
What about Howie?

BECCA
Howie's not really into it.

NAT
Well I thought it was weird. The way he walked in like that. Creepy. You don't think that was creepy?

BECCA
Not really.

NAT
Well I think it was creepy. You should ask Howie what he thinks.

BECCA
I don't have to ask him what he thinks. Frankly I don't care what he thinks.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 125-126)

Becca's own prerogative to meet Jason is one of the many steps she is embarking in trying to move on from Danny's tragic death. Becca believes that by meeting Jason, she is conquering her lethargic grief. She does not need anyone's approval, especially her husband's, as she is determined to defeat her woe at her own terms (as per her other manners such as giving away Danny's old clothes and putting away any Danny's mementos). Confronting (or rather facing the demon) her son's "assailant" (or someone who technically destroys her family's happiness) is the biggest step in accepting Danny's tragic fate. Consequently, Becca proves that she is indeed stronger than Howie, heralding her own dignity as an independent woman. During the meeting, one can't help to notice that instead of being aggressive towards Jason, Becca remains calm and motherly in her conversation

JASON

It's a nice house. I hope you find one as nice as this.

BECCA

We'll probably go smaller. This is too big. I'm sorry Howie couldn't be here.

JASON

That's okay.

BECCA

He's, uh...

JASON

Not ready?

BECCA

I was gonna say working, but yeah, *that* too.

JASON

He seemed mad. The other day.

BECCA

No, he was just surprised that you dropped by. You just scared him a little bit.

JASON

He didn't seem scared.

BECCA

Yeah well...Maybe that's not the right word. But...Howie's not mad at you. What happened was an accident. Howie knows that. You know that, too, right?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 133)

When Becca re-affirms that Jason is not responsible for the death of her son, she is slowly letting go her own guilt of running inside her house to answer Izzy's phone call. The meeting between her and Jason helps Becca to be more positive in accepting the fate of her son. Given the fact that Howie's proclivity for attending support group meetings has finally dwindled, Becca sees this development as an opportunity to share her own personal growth. She does not push for Howie to meet Jason, as she believes that her husband has his own way of dealing with his grief. Concurrently, she reaches out to her best friend Debbie, whom she has not contacted in months.

HOWIE

And then on Sunday we go to the cookout, and we give her the gift, and we talk to Rick and Debbie, and to make them feel comfortable we ask the kids a bunch of questions about what they've been up to...And maybe that'll go on for a little while. And after that we'll come home.

BECCA

And then what?

HOWIE

I don't know. Something though. We'll figure it out.

BECCA

Will we?

HOWIE

I think so. I think we will.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 156-157)

In the play, Becca takes Howie's hand and they hold on tight until the lights slowly fade. The researcher takes this last act as an indication of Becca's becoming more positive in her life; she is ready to socialise with her circle of friends and reaches a truce with Howie.

Izzy, Becca's younger sister, is currently pregnant with her first child; this pregnancy is unplanned as Izzy leads a rather blithe lifestyle. Nevertheless, she values her unplanned pregnancy as something positive in her life, which is why she decides to keep her baby instead of terminating her pregnancy. This is rather startling as Izzy, as the researcher has written earlier, is a total opposite of Becca in terms of demeanours and intelligence. She decides to keep her baby even though she only starts her affair with her boyfriend Auggie, a struggling musician.

BECCA

What are you gonna do?

IZZY

Well I'm gonna keep it, if that's what you're asking. Auggie want to, too. We're excited about it. This is exactly the kind of thing that gives a person clarity.

BECCA

Izzy...

IZZY

Look, I'm sure this is really hard for you, for a bunch of reasons, but can I just say...? I don't need any advice right now. Or any lectures or whatever it is you're composing inside your head at the moment. I just need you to pretend to be happy for me. Okay? Even if you don't feel that right now. I'd like you to pretend that you do. All right?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 22-23)

From the conversation, one could see that Izzy sees her pregnancy as a way to prove her merit as a respectable woman despite of her usual antics.

The Weston sisters in *August: Osage County* could be considered as successful women in their respective career, if not so much in their personal life. Barbara Weston Fordham, Ivy Weston and Karen Weston were raised by their schoolteacher father, Beverly Weston, who later became an award-winning poet, and his wife Violet Weston, who is an irascible but witty person, only to be under the influence in her later years. In one of her many outbursts throughout the play, Violet reminds (or chides, depending on one's interpretation) her daughters of their more privileged upbringing as compared to what she and Beverly endured during their childhood.

VIOLET

Do you know where your father lived from age four till about ten? Do you?

BARBARA

No.

IVY

No.

VIOLET

In a Pontiac sedan. With his mother, his father, in a fucking car! Now what else do you want to say about your rotten childhood? That's the crux of the biscuit: we lived too hard, then rose too high. We sacrificed everything and we did it all for you. Your father and I were the first in our families to finish high school and he wound up an award-winning poet. You girls, given a college education, taken for granted no doubt, and where'd you wind up? Jesus, you worked as hard as us, you'd all be president. You never had real problems so you got to make all your problems yourselves.

(Letts, 2008, p. 95)

Violet's anger is more on her frustration that her daughters did not become more successful as she had desired, but her daughters are complacent and happy with the way they lead their respective life; instead of having someone shaping what they should and should not do (except in Barbara's case, who had to move to Colorado to be with her husband, but she was also offered a vacancy in the same college, so the researcher believed that Barbara did not lose out to a man's order), her daughters become independent and able to support themselves without relying on assistance, financial and emotional, from their parents.

Throughout her marriage, Barbara has compromised with her husband in a number of decisions. First, she agrees to relocate from Oklahoma to another state as per husband's request, as Bill received another teaching position with a more lucrative salary in Colorado. As she become pre-occupied with her own job, and later as a mother once Jean was born, Barbara only manages to keep in touch with her parents via correspondence while visiting trips have been far and in between. This, the researcher reckons, is driven by Barbara's quest to be an independent wife and mother, raising her child away from her mother's (Violet) observation and criticism. However, her world was rattled when Bill was caught sleeping with his student, someone half her age. As the researcher discussed in the previous section, Barbara plans to file for divorce from Bill as she, like most liberal feminists (and most non-traditional women), could never tolerate any forms of infidelity. Even though she is still in love with him, as professed before they go on their separate ways when Bill and Jean are returning to Colorado while Barbara stays behind to look after Violet, whose health issues become Barbara's main concern after Beverly's death. Her idea of divorcing her philandering husband is a trait that a liberal woman with a positive outlook should consider in reality: it is acceptable to depose an unfaithful spouse as the latter does not take his marital vow seriously, as a marriage is an equal partnership between a man and a woman, and Bill's

unfaithfulness echoes the posture of men who are being fraudulent and insolent to women in general.

BARBARA

What? Say it. You must realize there's nothing can say that would hurt me any more than I'm already hurting. The damage is done.

BILL

I think you're wrong. I think you get in this masochistic frame of mind that actually desires to be hurt more than –

BARBARA

WHAT?!

BILL

Barbara, please, we have enough on our hands with your parents right now. Let's not revisit all this.

BARBARA

Revisit, when did we visit this to begin with? You pulled the rug out from under me. I still don't know what happened. Do I bore you, intimidate you, disgust you? Is this just about the pleasures of young flesh, teenage pussy? I really need to know.

(Letts, 2008, p. 48)

Barbara's embittered confrontation is not vulgar or obtrusive at all; instead, she is hoping that Bill would come clean, and she was able to do so while maintain her composure. Just like any other liberal feminist, Barbara is questioning a man's prerogative as to why they are vulnerable to sexual attraction, and the disgraceful encounter is likely to involve someone way younger than their age. Her attitude reflects the notion that a woman must be capable to confront a man for his transgressions, and not just becoming a silent bystander. Moreover, as she is vigorously juggling her chore as a dutiful daughter and concerned mother, Barbara is least likely to be considered as a scornful to Bill.

BARBARA

You're never coming back to me, are you, Bill?

BILL

Never say never, but...

BARBARA

But no.

BILL

But no.

BARBARA

Even if things don't work out with you and Marsha.

BILL

Cindy.

BARBARA

Cindy.

BILL

Right. Even if things don't work out.

BARBARA

And I'm never really going to understand why, am I?

(Letts, 2008, p. 122-123)

Barbara takes one last opportunity to clarify with Bill about the future of their attenuating marriage, before acceding the fact that any opportunity to reconcile with Bill is out of question, even if Bill decides to end his relationship with his mistress. Positively, she allows Bill to return to Colorado, taking Jean along as she decides to stay behind and care for Violet, alongside Ivy and Johnna. Simultaneously, she allows herself to start experiencing life as a newly-independent woman, breaking away from a dull, loveless marriage and keeping a man who took her for granted at bay. Ironically, it is the decision that her own mother could have made once she discovered that Beverly was having an affair; however, unlike her daughter, Violet decided to stand by her husband and raised her daughters, which is considered as "un-feminist."

Simultaneously, Barbara is also seen as the most diplomatically person in the Weston household, as she is thoughtful and respectful of others, including Johnna. She reprimands her mother for not using a politically correct term when it comes to describing Johnna's ethnicity, as it is imperative to be respectful of others who do not belong to the same ethnicity.

VIOLET

I don't know what she's doing here. She's stranger in my house. There's an Indian in my house.

BILL

You have some problem with Indians, Violet?

VIOLET

I don't know what to say to an Indian.

BARBARA

They're called Native Americans now, Mom.

VIOLET

Who calls them that? Who makes that decision/

BARBARA

It's what they like to be called.

VIOLET

They aren't any more native than me.

BARBARA

In fact, they are.

(Letts, 2008, p. 37)

Barbara's attitude reflects the quest of a positive woman who believes that women are fully human, just like men, therefore women should have the same capacity of rationality in recognising the existence of others, and simultaneously be reverential of other women regardless of their backgrounds. In one of the later scenes in *August: Osage County*, Barbara, like her daughter Jean, does not seem to mind to hang around Johnna, showing that there are no boundaries between her, one of the heirs to the Weston household, and Johnna, the domestic help of the house. In this situation, Barbara is seen as a woman who views another woman of different ethnicity and social class as equal, not an inferior to her privileged existence.

Ivy Weston is another independent female character who does not need anyone's approval on how to lead her life. Only two years younger than Barbara, Ivy is depicted a person who doesn't care if she is a favourite child of either Beverly or Violet, but at the same time she tries to be useful in trying time when Beverly was declared missing. Even

though she is not close to her mother, Ivy was the first person to be informed by Violet when the tragedy strikes as she stays the closest; in other words, Ivy is the catalyst to the somewhat fragile relationship between Violet and her daughters.

VIOLET

Did you call Barb?

IVY

Yes.

VIOLET

When'd you call her?

IVY

This morning.

VIOLET

What'd she say?

IVY

She's on her way... I called Karen.

VIOLET

What did she say?

IVY

She said she'd try to get here.

(Letts, 2008, p. 24)

Even though they seem to be getting along, that is not the nature of this relationship as later, Ivy lets out her displeasures over Violet trying to meddle with her personal life, such as her appearance as Ivy is a simple person and spending time for grooming is the last thing on her mind. She has been criticised for not making an effort to put on some makeup and for Beverly's funeral, Ivy wears something unconventional.

VIOLET

This is a beautiful dress and it's very modern.

IVY

It's not my style, Mom –

VIOLET

You don't have a style, that's the whole point –

IVY

You mean I don't have your style. I have a style on my own –

VIOLET

Honey, you wore a suit to your father's funeral. A woman doesn't wear a suit to a funeral –

IVY

God, you're weird; it's a black suit.

VIOLET

You look like a magician's assistant.

IVY

Why do you feel it necessary to insult me?

(Letts, 2008, p. 63-64)

Violet reveals to Barbara once that Ivy has always been her favourite, but she lacks the sass and audacity as compared to Barbara. This could be the reason why Violet is more interested in prying into Ivy's personal life. Ironically, they have one thing in common: both Violet and Ivy are cancer survivors, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

Johnna Monevata is a twenty-six years old housekeeper who works for the Westons. A Native American who studied nursing at Tulsa Community College, she was hired just a few weeks before Beverly's disappearance. The researcher believes that Johnna brings sense of normalcy to the otherwise dysfunctional Weston household. First, she is a responsible caretaker who helps to manage the daily chores of the house, especially after Violet is coping with the effect of chemotherapy. She was recommended by the family's doctor, and she is willing to work for the Westons as she has been struggling to secure a job, probably due to her background and the locale scenario. Due to her predicament, Johnna has to settle for babysitting and cleaning houses in order to support her mother and grandmother after her father passed away; both her mother and grandmother later passed away as well.

BEVERLY

Dr. Burke says you've been struggling for work.

JOHNNA

I've been cleaning houses and babysitting.

BEVERLY

He did tell you we wanted a live-in.

JOHNNA

Yes, sir.

BEVERLY

We keep unusual hours here. Try not to differentiate between night and day. I doubt you'll be able to maintain any sort of a healthy routine.

JOHNNA

I need the work.

BEVERLY

The work itself...pretty mundane. I myself require very little personal attention. Thrive without it, in fact, sort of a human cactus. My wife has been diagnosed with a touch of cancer, so she'll need to be driven to Tulsa for her final chemotherapy treatments. You're welcome to use that American-made behemoth parked in the carport. You're welcome to make use of anything, everything, all this garbage we've acquired, our life's work. If you're going to live here, I want you to live here. You understand?

JOHNNA

Yes, sir.

(Letts, 2008, p. 15)

The matriarch of the Weston family, Violet, is also a cancer survivor just like her daughter Ivy. Alas, unlike Ivy who fought her own battle quietly (with support from Little Charles), Violet drowns herself in a number of drugs to numb her pain and agony as a cancer victim. However, the researcher believes that her addiction is not to nurse her pain in fighting cancer; Violet is taking the many types of drugs to ease her own pain as the long-suffering wife of Beverly Weston. Unlike her daughters who are stronger and more independent to make choices and lead their lives, Violet is a woman from an earlier generation who allows herself to be a victim of the patriarchal organisation. Since divorce is out of question owing to the stigma that a divorced woman may face, Violet stays in the marriage even after her three children are now in the forties.

JOHNNA

What pills does she take?

BEVERLY

Valium. Vicodin. Darvon. Darvocet. Percodan. Percocet. Xanax for fun. OxyContin in a pinch. Some Black Mollies once, just to make sure I was still paying attention. And of course Dilaudid. I shouldn't forget Dilaudid. My wife. Violet, my wife, doesn't believe she needs treatment for her habit. She has been down that road once before, and came out of it clean as a whistle...then chose for herself this reality instead.

(Letts, 2008, p. 16)

Looking at the list of the drugs outlined by Beverly, the researcher believes that those drugs are consumed not only to help Violet overcome her mouth cancer and its repercussions, but also to alleviate her woes as a wife who has been standing by her man for as long as they were married. Throughout their time together, Violet has tolerated her husband's proclivity for alcoholic beverages, as well as a well-guarded family secret – an affair that produced an illegitimate child, plus a number of affairs and other activities that left Violet feeling neglected and lonely.

4.1.3 Free to Take Action Beyond Physical Aggression

Female characters are taking matters into their hands, but NOT aggressively. Showing a disposition to resist any interference without physical aggression, though the act itself may include outspokenness and candour criticism. Female characters protecting another woman or child from aggression or violation from male characters. Simultaneously, some are defending their rights in safeguarding their territory or belonging.

While perceived as a disturbed person, Catherine is still able to hold the fort of her territory – her home and belongings. At first glance, it seems that Catherine is in daze and numbed by her father's passing. When Hal appears and becomes ecstatic about his wish to spend more time going through Robert's collection, the Catherine requests to inspect Hal's backpack; however, nothing is found at that time of the inspection. Her suspicion towards Hal is proven warranted as Hal did try to smuggle out a notebook (hidden inside his jacket) perceived to be Robert's latest formula. She causes a ruckus

when she catches Hal trying to leave the house with the aforesaid book, and then proceed with making a call to the police.

CATHERINE

Get the fuck out of my house.

HAL

Listen to me for a minute.

CATHERINE

You stole this!

HAL

Let me explain.

CATHERINE

You stole this from ME, you stole it from my FATHER—

HAL

I want to show you something, will you calm down?

CATHERINE

Give it back.

HAL

Just wait a minute.

CATHERINE

I'm calling the police.

HAL

Don't. Look, I borrowed the book, all right? I'm sorry, I just picked it up before I came downstairs and thought I'd—

CATHERINE

Hello?

HAL

I did it for a reason.

CATHERINE

Hello, Police? I – Yes, I'd like to report a robbery in progress.

HAL

I noticed something – something your father wrote. All right? Not math, something he wrote. Here, let me show you.

CATHERINE

A ROBBERY.

HAL

Will you put the fucking phone down and listen to me?

CATHERINE

Yes, I'm at 5724 South—

HAL

It's about you. See? YOU. It was written about you. Here's your name:

CATHY. See?

(Auburn, 2001, p. 19)

However, after Hal offers his own reasons in his bid to secure Catherine's trust, she forgets to contact the police to inform them that her dispute has been settled. As a result, the police arrives only to find out that Catherine is sitting by herself, thus raising concern about her mental condition (as mentioned in her conversation with Claire, who arrives the next morning). One has to look into the factor that Catherine has been the sole caretaker of Robert; therefore, it is not surprising that she is affected by the death of her father, leaving her in a more fragile situation. However, one's fragility in the wake of a tragedy does not impede one's mental competence, as the researcher has mentioned in the previous paragraph. In the end, Catherine is still able to distinguish the thin line between right and wrong. Even though her choice of words is uncouth, Catherine is able to avoid physical aggression while confronting Hal. She has been thinking rationally without getting too emotional, thus distinguished herself from others who may bear the same leverage of mourn after the passing of a parent.

Later, when confronted by Claire about this incident, Catherine defends herself, once again, that she suspects Hal is trying to steal something from the house. However, Hal manages to mitigate her suspicion, Catherine, who had already made a call to the police, decides to accept Hal's explanation on why he has a book that belonged to Robert with him. After a few moments, when two policemen arrived at her house, Catherine realises that she has not called the police to inform them that the dispute has been settled.

CLAIRE

Katie, some policemen came by while you were in the shower.

CATHERINE

Yeah?

CLAIRE

They said they were “checking up” on things here. Seeing how everything was this morning.

CATHERINE

That was nice.

CLAIRE

They told me they responded to a call last night and came to the house.

CATHERINE

Yeah?

CLAIRE

Did you call the police last night?

CATHERINE

Yeah.

CLAIRE

Why?

CATHERINE

I thought the house was being robbed.

CLAIRE

But it wasn't.

CATHERINE

No. I changed my mind.

CLAIRE

First you call 911 with an emergency and then you hang up on them –

CATHERINE

I didn't really want them to come.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 24)

In her justification, Catherine contacts the police in order to protect herself and her possession; she does not resort to physical aggression when she confronts Hal over the book. She realises of her capabilities, or lack thereof, to defeat Hal should any altercation ensues, so her decision to contact the aforesaid public safety members is just,

proving that she is in sound mind. Nevertheless, when the policemen instigated Catherine for calling them when nothing happens and trying to make her file a report, she becomes verbally abusive.

CLAIRE

The police said you were abusive. They said you're lucky they didn't haul you in.

CATHERINE

These guys were assholes, Claire. They wouldn't go away. They wanted me to fill out a report...

CLAIRE

Were you abusive?

CATHERINE

This one cop kept spitting on me when he talked. It was disgusting.

CLAIRE

Did you use the word "dickhead"?

CATHERINE

Oh I don't remember.

CLAIRE

Did you tell one cop...to go fuck the other cop's mother?

CATHERINE

NO.

CLAIRE

They said you were either drunk or disturbed.

CATHERINE

They wanted to come in here and SEARCH MY HOUSE –

CLAIRE

YOU called THEM.

CATHERINE

Yes but I didn't actually WANT them to come. But they did come and then they started acting like they owned the place – pushing me around, calling me "girly," smirking at me, laughing. They were assholes.

CLAIRE

These guys seemed perfectly nice. They were off-duty and they took the trouble to come back here at the end of their shift to check up on you. They were very polite.

CATHERINE

Well people are nicer to you.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 26-27)

Even when she feels threatened by the presence of two men in uniform, who believe that Catherine is rather aggressive, she makes the correct decision to not go beyond verbal altercation. She insists that her “abusive” demeanour is caused by her original idea on why the police was called in the first place: protecting her space and possession.

Claire, in her part, tries persuading her sister Catherine to move with her to New York; this is and will be discussed and mentioned throughout this chapter. After the incident when Catherine finally goes hysterical when she is trying to convince both Hal and Claire that the mathematical theorem found in a book labelled “Katie” is hers and not Robert’s, Claire extends her stay and takes a few more days off from her hectic job at a renowned financial company. Once Catherine is able to be on her feet again, Claire manages to change Catherine’s mind as the latter packs her belongings to follow her sister to New York.

CLAIRE

You’re all packed.

CATHERINE

Yes.

CLAIRE

If you missed anything it doesn’t really matter. The movers will send us everything next month. I know this is hard.

CATHERINE

It’s fine.

CLAIRE

This is the right decision.

CATHERINE

I know.

CLAIRE

I want to do everything I can to make this a smooth transition for you. So does Mitch.

CATHERINE

Good.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 65)

Nevertheless, Catherine continuously becoming more sarcastic and infuriating, saying things like getting electroshock, prescribing lithium, working in the phone sex industry, and seeing an imaginary therapist that finally pushes the threshold of Claire's patience to the brink. As a result, Claire decides that she returns to New York by herself, and Catherine is free to do anything at her own will.

CLAIRE

Don't come.

CATHERINE

No, I'm coming.

CLAIRE

Stay here, see how you do.

CATHERINE

I could.

CLAIRE

You can't take care of yourself for five days.

CATHERINE

Bullshit!

CLAIRE

You slept all week. I had to cancel my flight. I missed a week of work – I was this close to taking you to the hospital! I couldn't believe it when you finally dragged yourself up.

CATHERINE

I was tired!

CLAIRE

You were completely out of it, Catherine, you weren't speaking!

CATHERINE

I didn't want to talk to you.

CLAIRE

Stay here if you hate me so much.

CATHERINE

And do what?

CLAIRE

You're the genius, figure it out.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 66-67)

Claire's attitude is outstanding, as she avoids physical altercation with her emotionally volatile younger sister. While Catherine has never been hostile This reflects the belief that while men are sometimes solving their problems with fistfights or other forms of violence, Claire walks away from her aggravating sister by leaving her with a few words. Prior to the day they are supposed to fly to New York, Claire is worried about Catherine's condition, but could never bring herself to hospitalise her sister by force. Moreover, she has always been patient with Catherine's antics, possibly due to her guilt for not returning sooner to help Catherine to look after their father, or out of maturity since Claire is the older sister.

Upon finding out that Sister Aloysius goes the distance to meet Mrs. Muller, Father Flynn feels threatened and confronts the former in order to supposedly defend his honour and innocence, as any men would defend a system controlled by them without any intrusion from members of the fairer sex.

FATHER FLYNN

You and me are due for a talk. You have to stop this campaign against me!⁵⁹

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You can stop it at any time.

FATHER FLYNN

How?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Confess and resign.

FATHER FLYNN

You are attempting to destroy my reputation! But the result of all this is going to be your removal, not mine!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

What are you doing in this school?

⁵⁹ At this time, Sister Aloysius only communicate with Father Flynn, Sister James and Mrs. Muller regarding this matter. Father Flynn's accusation towards Sister Aloysius is just an overreaction as he thinks that as a priest, he is above the law and protected by the Archdiocese, a committee made up by only men.

FATHER FLYNN

I am trying to do good!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Or even more to the point, what are you doing in the priesthood?

(Shanley, 2005, p. 46)

Back in the day, it is impossible for any women to question or challenge men to confess their wrongdoings; in *Doubt*, Shanley creates Sister Aloysius as a woman back in the 1960s who dared to be different than any women at that time and stands out to speak against a man; this is a symbol of an uprising against an oppression created by a patriarchal society. Simultaneously, Father Flynn's response to Sister Aloysius' action as a threat to his masculinity, as well as a challenge to his male ego. As a woman, Sister Aloysius is expected to follow the guidelines in case of investigation, or at least consult the Catholic clergy or executive parish council rather than taking matters into her hand (even though her intention is to protect a child away from a sexual predator).

FATHER FLYNN

You have not the slightest proof of anything

SISTER ALOYSIUS

But I have my certainty, and armed with that, I will go to your last parish, and the one before that if necessary. I will find a parent, Father Flynn! Trust me I will. A parent who probably doesn't know that you are still working with children! And once I do that, you will be exposed. You may even be attacked, metaphorically or otherwise.

FATHER FLYNN

You have no right to act on your own! You are a member of a religious order. You have taken vows, obedience being one! You answer to us! You have no right to step outside the Church!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I will step outside the Church if that's what needs to be done, though the door should shut behind me! I will do what needs to be done, Father, if it means I'm damned to Hell! You should understand that, or you will mistake me. Now, did you give Donald Muller wine to drink?

(Shanley, 2005, p. 480)

The indignant Father Flynn even threatens Sister Aloysius that the latter's effort in proving his guilt will only jeopardise her own career, hinting that a clergyman accused of any wrongdoings may escape further investigations and proceeding as the parishioners are trying to protect the sanctity of a Catholic organisation. Hence, any possible smear campaign to the good reputation of the church must be eliminated, and Sister Aloysius, who may bring upon the unwanted attention from the public regarding this matter, will face the consequence of being expelled due to her overzealousness. This scenario verifies that in a religious organisation, men are taking charge.

As her battle with Father Flynn ensues, Sister Aloysius is left with no choice but to start interrogating Father Flynn about his past. She is driven by her female instinct to get rid of a man who may have committed a sex crime within the church ground. As a result, Sister Aloysius confronts Father Flynn about his previous tenure at another parish before he moved to St. Nicholas.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

What are you writing now?

FATHER FLYNN

You leave me no choice. I'm writing down what you say. I tend to get too flustered to remember the details of an upsetting conversation, and this may be important. When I talk to the monsignor and explain why you have to be removed as the principal of this school.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

This morning, before I spoke with Mrs. Muller, I took the precaution of calling the last parish to which you were assigned.

FATHER FLYNN

What did he say? The pastor?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I did not speak to the pastor. I spoke to one of the nuns.

FATHER FLYNN

You should've spoken to the pastor.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I spoke to a nun.

FATHER FLYNN

That's not the proper route for you to have taken, Sister! The Church is very clear. You're supposed to go through the pastor.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Why? Do you have an understanding, you and he? Father Flynn, you have a history.

FATHER FLYNN

You have no right to go rummaging through my past!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

This is your third parish in five years.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 47-48)

Sister Aloysius is indomitably ordering Father Flynn to resign, while Father Flynn is more concerned with his reputation. In the end, Sister Aloysius prevails as she threatens to expose Father Flynn's past to the parishioners. She has done this without being physically aggressive, even though there is a hint of assertiveness and arrogance. Besides coercing Father Flynn to resign, Sister Aloysius has technically overruled the patriarchal organisation of the church when she uses a trick to expedite Father Flynn's transfer.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You lie. Very well then. If you won't leave my office, I will. And once I go, I will not stop.

FATHER FLYNN

Wait!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You will request a transfer from this parish. You will take a leave of absence until it is granted.

FATHER FLYNN

And do what for the love of God? My life is here.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I don't want you.

FATHER FLYNN

My reputation is at stake.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You can preserve your reputation.

FATHER FLYNN

If you say these things, I won't be able to do my work in the community.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Your work in the community should be discontinued.

FATHER FLYNN

You'd leave me with nothing.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

That's not true. It's Donald Muller who has nothing, and you took full advantage of that.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 49)

Later, during a private conversation between Sister Aloysius and Sister James, the former reveals that Father Flynn moves to St. Jerome, and he is promoted as a pastor.

SISTER JAMES

I wish I could be like you. Because I can't sleep at night anymore. Everything seems uncertain to me.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Maybe we're not supposed to sleep so well. They've made Father Flynn the pastor of St. Jerome.

SISTER JAMES

Who?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

The bishop appointed Father Flynn the pastor of St. Jerome Church and School. It's a promotion.

SISTER JAMES

You didn't tell them.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I told our good Monsignor Benedict. I crossed the garden and told him. He did not believe it to be true.

SISTER JAMES

Then why did Father Flynn leave? What did you say to him to make him go?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

That I had called a nun in his previous parish. That I had found out his prior history of infringements.

SISTER JAMES

So you did prove it!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I was lying. I made no such call.

SISTER JAMES

You lied?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Yes. But if he had no such history, the lie wouldn't have worked. His resignation was his confession. He was what I thought he was. And he's gone.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 51)

Sister Aloysius' confession into tricking Father Flynn about a questionable past is a hoax, but raises a question as to why Father Flynn is terrified about his previous tenure before St. Nicholas being exposed. The researcher is astounded when Father Flynn receives promotion even though Sister Aloysius has reported the incident between him and Donald Muller to the Monsignor, further confirming the public's perception that the Catholic Church is always protecting sexual predators among the clergymen.

In *Rabbit Hole*, the researcher would like to go back to the time when Becca agrees to meet Jason, the teenager who accidentally ran into her son Danny. Jason, the final character in the play, is presumed as the troublemaker as he is the driver of the car that killed Danny. Nevertheless, Jason is a younger man who dares to own up his own mistakes and seeks forgiveness from the victim's parents, at the behest of his own consciousness after a couple of people suggested him to do so. Lindsay-Abaire creates Jason as the more rational male member who fathoms the consequence of his act. First, he writes to the couple to make them realise his intention of meeting them.

JASON

I wanted to send you my condolences on the death of your son, Danny. I know it's been eight months since the accident, but I'm sure it's probably still hard for you to be reminded of that day. I think about what happened a lot, as I'm sure you do, too. I've been having some troubles at home, and at school, and a couple people here thought it might be a good idea to write to you. I'm sorry if this letter upsets you. That's obviously not my intention.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 77)

Instead of being defensive (a sign of egoism, especially male ego), Jason admits that he too is having his own shares of problems. His courage to approach both Becca and Howie leads to his sudden appearance at the couple's open house, much to the chagrin of Howie. After the plan foils, Jason tries to be in contact with Becca, as he realises that the best way to validate his effort to extend an olive branch is through the mother, who has shown her positive traits as compared to her husband. As he has witnessed on Becca's calmer reaction as compared to Howie's when he decides to drop by at the couple's open house, Jason agrees to meet Becca when the latter extends an invitation to meet her. Around Becca, Jason is more open to share his insight and personal story; Jason is responding well to a motherly figure. In fact, he finally opens up about the devastation that took Danny's life several months before.

JASON

I might've been too fast. That day. I'm not sure, but I might've been. So...that's one of the things I wanted to tell you. It's a thirty zone. And I might've been going thirty-three. Or thirty-two. I would usually look down, to check, and if I was a little over, then I'd slow down obviously. But I don't remember checking on your block, so it's possible I was going a little too fast. And then the dog came out, really quick, and so I served a little to avoid him, not knowing, obviously...So that's something I thought you should know. I might've been going a little over the limit. I can't be positive either way though.

BECCA

I'm gonna get you some milk. You don't have to drink it if you don't want it.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 137)

Right after the disclosure, Jason shares more about his personal life, especially his commencement day and plans after graduation, as he plans to pursue creative writing. Jason's openness allows Becca to be more open and kinder. Owing to his thoughtfulness and determination, Jason is able bridge the gap between him and Becca, thus solidifying the fact that people of opposite genders are able to live in peace. However, one could see that Becca is calmer and resorts to making peace with her surroundings. Her inner peace allows herself to be more positive towards Jason, and

later her friend Debbie, Nat, Izzy and Howie. This is because she is using her rationality instead of delving into fury, and avoiding physical aggression at any costs.

As her sister's keeper, Izzy is also protective of her sister's well. She bravely confronts Howie over his dinner outing with a female companion; Izzy is in suspicion that Howie is committing adultery behind Becca.

IZZY

Well, Reema works at Calderone's. In New Rochelle. You know that restaurant?

HOWIE

Yeah.

IZZY

Well Reema, even though you don't remember her, remembers you pretty well from the barbecue, and she said she waited on you a couple weeks ago.

HOWIE

Did I stiff her on the tip? Because I had remembered her, obviously I would've –

IZZY

She said you were with a woman.

HOWIE

I was with another parent from the support group. Two weeks ago, right? We grabbed a bite after the meeting. If Reema had identified herself, I would've introduced them.

IZZY

Her husband doesn't attend the meetings?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 98-99)

Apparently, Howie is attending meetings for a support group for parents who lose their children to early death. Izzy believes that Howie attending the meetings without Becca would pave the way for him to commit an extra-marital affair as things aren't rosy between him and her sister. Her interrogation of this so-called affair is a sign of her solicitousness of Becca and her well-being.

IZZY

Why were you holding hands? Reema said you were hands.

HOWIE

And Reema's what exactly, your spy?

IZZY

No, she's a waitress. She was just at work. You were the one sneaking around.

HOWIE

Okay, now I am mad.

IZZY

I told you, you weren't gonna like it.

HOWIE

That woman is a friend of mine whose daughter died of leukaemia six months ago. Jesus, Izzy, what are you trying to --?

IZZY

I'm just asking a question. You don't have to get defensive.

HOWIE

Just because I was holding a person's hand doesn't mean –

IZZY

I know you and Becca are having troubles –

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 99)

The Weston family seems to be afflicted with cancer. As the matriarch of the family, Violet is battling mouth cancer, her middle daughter Ivy has been diagnosed with cervical cancer. As a result, she had her uterus removed in order to curb her cancer from spreading to other parts of her body. Instead of contacting her sisters, Ivy decides to defy her cancer on her own; she did receive moral support from her cousin Little Charles. While other women may fall into depression as a result of losing one of the most vital organs for a woman, Ivy's decision to quietly remove her uterus symbolises a battle that is quietly won in a non-aggressive confrontation. While any medical procedure (such as operation) can be risky and life-threatening, the researcher is using the term "non-aggressive" to describe her choice to be discreet about her battling cancer. For the record, according to the National Women's Health Network official website, hysterectomy is the second most frequently performed surgical procedure for women, right behind caesarean section. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

reported that approximately 11.7 percent of women underwent the aforementioned procedure between 2006 to 2010. In the surgery, a woman's uterus (also known as the womb) is removed, and as a result, a woman will no longer experience menstrual period; possible pregnancy is definitely out of question. This denies Ivy a chance at motherhood, or maybe even marriage, but she decides to defeat her cancer her way, as she has seen how negative reaction to cancer can be detrimental to one's health: here own mother's drug addiction.

KAREN

You know you shouldn't consider children.

IVY

I'm almost forty-five, Karen, I put those thoughts behind me a long time ago. Anyway, I had a hysterectomy year before last.

KAREN

Why?

IVY

Cervical cancer.

KAREN

I didn't know that.

BARBARA

Neither did I.

IVY

I didn't tell anyone except Charles. That's where it started between him and me.

BARBARA

Why not? Why wouldn't you tell anyone?

IVY

And hear those comments from Mom for the rest of my life? She doesn't need any more excuses to treat me like some damaged thing.

(Letts, 2008, p. 102)

At the same time, she chooses life over death, unlike her father who chose to end his life due to unbearable circumstances. Her decision to be discreet about her ordeal is not a selfish decision, as the researcher believes that Ivy refuses to be seen as a destitute

victim. She does not need any sympathy from her sisters, as the loss of her uterus and her road to recovery are her personal issues, and she takes pride in her liberty to decide on those matters, without hurting anyone else physically or emotionally.

4.1.4 Having Access to Increase Opportunities

For women, things were better after the Second Wave of Feminism, when more women were accepted to reputable colleges, thus paving the way for them to pursue their choice of career. Simultaneously, if they haven't set their foot in any higher learning institutions, women are able to be independent by working and supporting themselves, without having to rely on a male companion. Moreover, women are also awarded with more rights in workplace (getting a promotion or better salary hikes, if not as competitive as their male counterparts), healthcare (legal abortion and Planned Parenthood) and ability to contribute to society.

As the researcher had indicated in the previous sections, both Catherine and Claire have experienced privileged, upper class upbringing, thanks to their Mathematics professor father. Owing to his possibly lucrative salary, Robert was able to provide both of them quality education, as both sisters were able to pursue their higher learning education. However, when it comes to increasing their opportunity in terms of achieving their ambition and enhancing personal life, Claire is seen as more successful than her younger sister. While they are both considered intelligent (at one point, Claire eventually admits that her sister Catherine is more brilliant), Claire has been able to finish her college education, which is something that Catherine is unable to accomplish as she resumes the responsibilities as a caretaker of her ailing father. She leaves Chicago without hesitating to pursue her career in New York. In the script, Auburn does not specify on the details of Claire's career, but some indications stated in *Proof* is giving some insights on her successful foray into financial career. First, she is able to provide prolonged financial assistance to Catherine, who quits college (or, in her own

words, “putting college on hold”) and moves back with Robert. As she is becoming rather distant due to her commitment to her soaring career, Claire’s financial assistance is presumed to be quite generous as she is able to support Catherine for a lengthy period, while supporting her own life in New York. Second, once Robert had passed away, Claire does not hesitate to propose to Catherine about relocating to New York. By and large, it is a well-known fact that the living cost in New York City and its five boroughs is preposterously exorbitant. In her suggestion, Claire recommends that Catherine moves to her own apartment and considers returning to college. In this case, the researcher believes that Claire is offering to provide financial stipends to Catherine, and under the provision that the relocation and other expenses in New York can be ridiculously expensive, it is best to deduce that Claire has reached the upper echelon of corporate world.

Catholic nuns are expected to fulfil a host of duties in their communities, in addition to observe their vow of chastity, poverty and obedient. Besides performing their roles as caregivers and humanitarians, nuns are required to teach the True Faith and the Holy Tradition of the Catholic Church. In *Doubt*, Shanley creates the characters of nuns and prioresses as teachers in St. Nicholas, as an indication that women are the most effective teachers as compared to their male counterparts. Since nuns are bounded by their solemn oaths, which separates them from the secular world as they must abide by the edict to pursue holy lives, becoming educators is the right way for them (in this case, Sister Aloysius and Sister James), to share their expertise and knowledge with their community. A liberalised woman has to reach out the potential to increase her opportunity for personal growth; in *Doubt*, Sister Aloysius becomes a principal, which the highest post in a school organisation, thus providing her the power to oversee the daily activities of a school. In the 1960s, this managerial role had always been associated with men, so Sister Aloysius is the symbol of the ground-breaking tradition

in a school, especially a parochial institution. Meanwhile, Sister James is granted the prospect to exhibit her new approach of teaching and dealing with students, thus allowing herself to prove her significance as a dedicated and endearing teacher. Simultaneously, the opportunity delving into education gives the opportunity to the nuns to live their lives like other women – they are related to the world outside of their convent.

When Beverly Weston in *August: Osage County* offers a vacancy to Johnna Monevata, he does not only provide monetary reward in exchange of her service. As Johnna had to drop out of her nursing course to care for her mother and grandmother following the death of her father, she is unable to be a certified nurse as she had wished for. Fortunately, Johnna is able to practice what she had learned from her time in Tulsa Community College as Beverly gives her the opportunity to care for her cancer-stricken wife, in addition to other housekeeping duties, including meal preparation and cleaning. Beverly's decision is not only providing a platform for Johnna to have access to improve her livelihood, he is also uplifting her status as she has not been treated not as an inferior, but as a reliable person that can be trusted in the Weston household. It is a renowned fact that the Native Americans have been experiencing social and economic hardship as they are likely to live around the reservation area, and not many young Native Americans are willing to jeopardise their lives away from their comfort zone. Moreover, many choose to be heavily dependent on welfare as the allocation is provided for them in lieu with the affirmative action in the United States. Owing to the aforementioned reason, many young Native Americans neglect to pursue better education; in Johnna, Letts has created a character that represents the face of a Native American who steps away from her cocoon to make ends meet, and become independent and totally relying on financial aid. In addition, Beverly's act in hiring someone who does not belong to his race is also considered as a good faith for giving

opportunity based on merit, not solely on physical appearance, as well as racial and social background; in this case, it was the family's physician, Dr. Burke, who recommended Johnna.

4.1.5 Suppressing Male's Sexual Desire towards Female

In the history of mankind, women have been exposed to physical and sexual abuse in the hands of men, and the assailants were not only strangers or occasional sexual predators, but could be someone within a family or among friends. Over the years, women have been subjected to unwarranted sexual assaults, or have been viewed as nothing but sexual objects. The first time the term "sexual harassment" was utilised in public was in 1974, when a forty-four-year-old woman in Ithaca, New York, had to involuntarily leave her job and filed for unemployment benefits in order to support her family. Carmita Wood was assisted by several feminist activists from Cornell University to raise public awareness of her plight, and the activists came up with the aforesaid phrase while describing Ms. Wood's situation. Alas, her claim was rejected, but opened the floodgates for other harassment claims around the US. As time goes by, women are now able to protect themselves from unwanted sexual advances; they are able overturn any sexual advances made towards them, instead of succumbing to sexual requests either by strangers or otherwise.

In *Doubt*, the act of celibacy among the clergymen is seen as an act of suppressing male's sexual desire towards female. Celibacy has been recognised as one of the major self-sacrifices that a Catholic priest must uphold. A clergyman is expected to relinquish a spouse, offspring and sexual fulfilment in exchange to strengthen his relationship with parishioners and God. The Catholic Church's Code of Canon Law states that celibacy is a "special gift of God", where practitioners are expected to be chaste, just like Jesus Christ. Supposedly, when a priest dedicates his life into service to God, the church becomes his utmost priority, and having a family would lead to

potential conflict between his spiritual and familial duties. Therefore, it is easier for unattached men to have more time for devotion, with fewer distractions. As a result, for centuries priests within the Catholic domination has been practicing celibacy, and this is also applied to the characters of clergymen in *Doubt*, including Father Flynn. In this case, the suppression comes in the form of an edict, not from the characters from the aforesaid play, including Sister Aloysius, Sister James or Mrs. Muller. The edict could also be a potential reason for Father Flynn to be a suspect in an inappropriate encounter with a student; in this case, Donald Muller. In reality, the suppression of desire sometimes is not observed wholeheartedly by the clergymen. Throughout the history, sexual abuses committed by Catholic clerics were reported and exposed by numerous organisations. Alas, these sexual misdemeanours were usually silenced and the perpetrators roamed freely without any prosecution. In any circumstances, the former situation is considered prejudicial and unreasonable. Lately, the issue of sexual abuse within the Catholic churches have been widely discussed, researched and documented. The best known example is the team of Boston Globe journalists depicted in the Academy Award winning film *Spotlight*, directed by Tom McCarthy. Based on a true story, *Spotlight* depicts how the Boston Globe uncovered the massive scandal of child molestation and subsequent cover-up within the local Catholic Archdiocese, thus shaking the entire Catholic Church much to the disbelief of its parishioners.

Even though she is portrayed as delicate and overtly sensitive, Becca from *Rabbit Hole* knows her strength lies in her own will to carry on with her daily life at her own pace. Not only she chooses to map her own steps of recovery, she also successfully suppresses her husband's lust by denying him an attempt to intimacy.

HOWIE

Maybe we should go somewhere. A cruise or something. You need to be pampered.

BECCA

You've taken off enough time as it is.

HOWIE

I'll talk to Alan. What's another week? I can handle most of my accounts from out of town anyway. *(He kisses her neck)*

BECCA

What are you doing?

HOWIE

I'm kissing your neck.

BECCA

Why?

HOWIE

I'm trying to relax you.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 38-39)

In the researcher's observation, Howie is trying to take advantage of Becca's delicate condition in order to fulfil his own lust. In an observation, the researcher believes that Howie is considering sex as an option for Becca to overcome her grief, especially since they have not made love in a while. On the other hand, as she is still unprepared for any act of intimacy, Becca instantaneously stops and confronts Howie about the latter's massage trick.

BECCA

I see what this is. Dimming the lights.

HOWIE

What? I can't massage my wife?

BECCA

You don't have eye strain.

HOWIE

So?

BECCA

"Oh I have been staring at that computer all day."

HOWIE

Well I do stare at that computer all day.

BECCA

You're trying to seduce me.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 39)

Becca feels it is absolutely inappropriate, and she is not shying away from voicing out her displeasure; in a way, she is taking control of her body and desire, and simultaneously defeats Howie's lust. While it is only natural for a married couple to be intimate, initiating the act without mutual agreement from another person is considered as an act of violation or suppression from a more dominant person; in this case, Howie. The researcher believes that a man must not take advantage on a woman's vulnerable situation, especially in the matters of sex and sexuality.

As responsibilities have been granted upon her to care for the Westons, Johnna even takes further precaution when she suspects something suspicious is happening around the kitchen area later that night, and she believes that Steve Heidebrecht, Karen's fifty-year-old fiancé is attempting to sexually harass Jean, who is only fourteen; both Steve and Jean are sneaking together to smoke pots.

KAREN

What happened?! Steve, what happened?! Tell me what happened.

JOHNNA

He was messing with Jean –

KAREN

Honey, you're bleeding, are you okay?

BARBARA

Jean, what are you doing up? What's going on --?

JEAN

We were, I don't know –

BARBARA

Who was? Talk to me, are you all right?

JEAN

Yeah, I'm fine.

BILL

What happened to him? Do I need to call a doctor?

KAREN

I don't know.

BARBARA

Johnna, what's going on?

JOHNNA

He was messing with Jean. So I tuned him up.

BARBARA

"Messing with," what do you mean, "messing with"?

BILL

What...what's that mean?

JOHNNA

He was kissing her and grabbing her.

(Letts, 2008, p. 118)

As she has been asked to look after the house and its occupants, Johnna takes her responsibility to guard and care for the surroundings seriously. She decides to brandish Steve with an iron-cast skillet as it is the only right thing to do when you suspect a helpless victim is being molested; in this case, a fifty years old man is trying to molest a fourteen years old young woman. As Jean has shared some personal thoughts with Johnna the moment they were alone earlier in the play, the latter's action is a reciprocal to the former for sharing some confidential matters with her (Johnna). Letts' inclusion of this controversial scene serves as a reminder that paedophilia exists even in the most civilised society, and its perpetrators could be from men from all walks of life, even those who are considered successful and retain a normal appearance by society's standards.

4.2 Cultural Feminism

In studying the elements of cultural feminism in the themes and character and characterisation in *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable* (henceforth to be referred to as *Doubt*), *Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County*, the researcher is utilising these following as elements: injecting harmony, maternal or feminine values into everyday lives; the capability to relate to life and nature; celebrate the elements of 'woman-ness', especially

as caregivers and nurturers; the concept of intra-feminine that emphasises on mother/daughter relations or sisterhood; and woman-centred action in contesting the patriarchal organisation of society.

4.2.1 Injecting Harmony, Maternal or Feminine Values into Everyday Lives

The first noticeable aspect of feminism in this play is the strong bond and kinship between two biological sisters. Even though they are very different in demeanours and daily routines, one can't deny that Catherine and Claire are gaining privileges of this relationship – Claire as the benefactor of Catherine (and Robert when he was alive) and Catherine as the sole caretaker of their ailing father. This relationship has proven the injection of harmonious and feminine values in their lives. It is obvious that Catherine is problematic and impossible to deal with; her mood swings and unanticipated acerbity can be very exasperating and reduce people to annoyance, but at the same time in a subliminal way she welcomes the attention showered by her older sister, who has relocated to New York. Nonetheless, Catherine's irreverent and disjointed demeanours are treated next-to-nothing by Claire (at least for a few days after her arrival in Chicago, where Catherine and their late father Robert lived). Putting aside all strains, Claire resumes her role as the older sibling – the guardian, which is a duty resembling any matriarch. At times, it seems that Claire is playing the role of a mother to a teenage girl and she does it with an utmost level of patience, symbolising the existence of maternal values in her life whilst helping Catherine to oversee the funeral and the estate of their late father.

CLAIRE
Feel better?

CATHERINE
Yeah.

CLAIRE
You look a million times better. Have some coffee.

CATHERINE

Okay.

CLAIRE

How do you take it?

CATHERINE

Black.

CLAIRE

Have a little milk. Want a banana? It's a good thing I brought food: There was nothing in the house.

CATHERINE

I've been meaning to go shopping.

CLAIRE

Have a bagel.

CATHERINE

No. I hate breakfast.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 21)

Earlier, the researcher discussed Sister James' personality and attitude from the perspective of liberal feminism; in *Doubt*, her friendlier approach is her individual trait, and at the same time it is one of a more positive attitude of a young woman. This time, from the perspective of cultural feminism, Sister James' pleasanter and calmer approach in educating her students can also be perceived as her way of injecting harmony and feminine values into everyday lives. Previously, Sister James was attached to Mount St. Margaret's, an all-girls school, where she learned to treat her students as equals as she alludes that all students, while different in nature and background, have their own potential to excel. This explains why she is more practical when dealing with students, besides the fact that she is young and rather inexperienced (as compared to Sister Aloysius and other elderly nuns in St. Nicholas). Moreover, she is also quite sensitive, but this does not impede her judgement and rationality in her daily conduct. As a result, it was Sister James who noticed the change in Donald Muller's attitude once he returns after meeting Father Flynn in the rectory.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Then why do you look like you've seen the Devil?

SISTER JAMES

It's just the way the boy acted when he came back to class.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

He said something?

SISTER JAMES

No. It was his expression. He looked frightened and...he put his head on the desk in the most peculiar way. And one other thing. I think there was alcohol on his breath. There was alcohol on his breath.

(Shanley, 2005, p.25)

Based on the conversation above, the researcher believes that Sister James is a more observant teacher with motherly figure. If she chooses to follow the suggestions outlined by Sister Aloysius (on becoming a colder, stricter teacher), Sister James would have missed or ignored the troubling signs from Donald Muller. However, as the researcher had mentioned numerous times, Sister James would rather be her own person by becoming more lenient and caring to her students. This attitude also reflects to the fact that as an abbess, it is not possible for Sister James to be a mother as she is bounded by the celibacy vow practiced widely by Catholic's prioresses, thus, Sister James is displaying her maternal instinct more explicit than her counterparts, or her superior Sister Aloysius.

Rabbit Hole renders the quality of motherly love, blending harmony and woman-ness into a domestic atmosphere. The three main female characters display this element throughout the play. As the researcher had mentioned in the previous section, Becca is a mother who has lost her son in a tragic accident. She is depicted as an anguished woman, whose grievances are dealt with in private and not explicitly shared with other characters. Truth is told that she has intentions to eliminate the memory of her son, but that is not an indication that she is a terrible or failed mother. Nevertheless, despite her personal tragedy, Becca has time to be on the guard for her loved ones. For once, whenever their mother Nat isn't around, Becca prefers to take charge in

expressing her concern for her younger sister's well-being. For example, she is astounded when Izzy confesses that she just punched an anonymous woman in a bar.

BECCA

I just worry about you.

IZZY

Don't worry about me. *She* was the one on the floor.

BECCA

That's not what I meant. You were in a bar fight.

IZZY

So?

BECCA

A bar fight, Izzy.

IZZY

She was up in my face!

BECCA

I know, but it's so...

IZZY

What?

BECCA

*Jerry Springer.*⁶⁰

IZZY

What's that supposed to mean? You think I'm trashy?

BECCA

You punched a woman in the face!

IZZY

She provoked me!

BECCA

Were you drunk?

IZZY

No.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 11)

Being a traditional mother (Becca used to work at an auction gallery before the birth of her son; she quits in order to be a stay-at-home mother as per her husband's request),

⁶⁰ *Jerry Springer* (or *The Jerry Springer Show*) is a daytime talk show in the US notoriously known for its tasteless contents.

Becca wishes her younger sister, who possesses a rather eccentric demeanour, would be more feminine, or behaves decently. When Izzy later announces that she is pregnant with her first child, Becca is more upset as Izzy does not exhibit a proper motherly behaviour; as a mother, Becca has a certain customary standard of a mother's demeanour, and she believes that Izzy's behaviour is very "un-motherly." She shares her displeasure in a conversation with her husband Howie later that evening.

BECCA

Ridiculous, right? Nine weeks pregnant. In a bar. Drinking.

HOWIE

You said she *wasn't* drinking.

BECCA

No, she said. But you know Izzy. Plus the place was probably clogged with cigarette smoke.

HOWIE

Not anymore. Clean Indoor Air Act.⁶¹

BECCA

She was in Yonkers. You think they enforce that in Yonkers?

HOWIE

I wouldn't worry about it. If the babies in France turn out okay, I'm sure this one'll be fine, too.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 28)

In order to be a good mother, Becca believes that a set of normative behaviours must be observed and practiced by expectant mothers, as she had gone through the experience of being a mother, even if it was only a brief period.

Nat, the mother of Becca and Izzy, is the equilibrium of the family. She represents the definitive intra-feminine emphasis on mother-daughter relationship, as she has always been supportive of her daughters' endeavours in life. Simultaneously, she has healthy relationships with both Becca and Izzy, even though they have opposing personalities and aspirations in life. She fully supports Izzy's decision to continue with her pregnancy, raising a child with a man she barely knows. At the same time, she is

⁶¹ New York State's Clean Indoor Air Act was introduced in 2003 to ban smoking in public and work places.

willing to be a temporary guardian for Taz, the pet dog chased by Danny shortly before succumbed to a car accident. That is one of the many efforts she commits herself into, hoping that Becca would finally emerge from her unusual self after Danny's tragic death.

HOWIE

We were feeding him Science Diet. They have this special low-fat mix.

NAT

Oh that stuff's so expensive though. He likes what I've been giving him.

HOWIE

Except it makes him fat.

NAT

He's not fat. He's just a little chubbier.

IZZY

I think the weight suits him.

NAT

Maybe he eats too much because he feels punished. That's what *I* do. I think he misses you.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 65-66)

From the quoted conversation, Nat re-affirming her status as the most experienced mother as compared to her daughters. First, she feeds the dog to what she thinks would be good for it, not by any prescription or suggestion outlined by popular demand. This shows that the notion "mothers know best" is in full effect, reflecting the injection of maternal values into everyday lives. Concurrently, Nat is also protecting Becca's feeling by alluding on the dog's guilt as the cause of the accident; earlier, Becca is still reeling from her own guilt as she partly blames herself as the cause of the accident. Bear in mind that Nat is not blindly implicating Taz as the sole motive of the tragic death of Danny. She is just trying to get her eldest daughter to move on with her assertion on Taz's role in the accident, as any mothers would do to offer solace to their children.

Nat has survived the death of her own child; her son Arthur, a heroin addict, committed suicide at the age of 30. In other words, she has experienced grief over the

death of a child before her daughter. However, instead of focusing on *her* family's tragedy, Nat chooses to talk openly about the plight of other families, particularly a renowned one. As an opinionated person with interest in politics and current events, Nat sets her sights on the tragedy that befalls on the Kennedy dynasty⁶²; her discussion on this matter is her way of foreshadowing that her own family's tragedy isn't as catastrophic as the Kennedys'.

NAT

Everybody says. That was my point. Everybody says it's a curse.

BECCA

Well nobody in this room.

NAT

You know what it is, really? Hype. Perpetuating the myth. That whole American royalty crap.

IZZY

It's good cake.

NAT

But the Kennedys aren't cursed. They're just really unlucky. And kinda stupid, a lot of them.

HOWIE

Cut me a piece, wouldja Bec?

NAT

Too much money, that's their curse. And too much time on their hands. If they had to go to work, like normal people, then most of those Kennedys would still be alive. Maybe if they stayed home and watched television once in a while, instead of zipping off to Vail, then none of that stuff would've happened.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 64)

Nat's behaviour is not an act of an abysmal rumourmonger – she is trying to engage her family to idle chat instead of focusing on their own tragedy; Lindsay-Abaire is designating a mother's attempt to inject harmony and steadiness to her family, even though she is not at her own home.

⁶² The tragedy of the Kennedys started with the lobotomy of Rosemary Kennedy, the eldest daughter of the family, followed by the death of Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr. (his plane exploded during World War II); the assassinations of US President John F. Kennedy and US Senator Robert F. Kennedy; and recently the tragic deaths of Michael LeMoyn Kennedy (Senator Kennedy's son – skiing accident) and John F. Kennedy, Jr. (plane crash). More tragedies were documented in the book "The Kennedy Curse: Why Tragedy Has Haunted America's First Family for 150 Years" by Edward Klein (St. Martin's Press, 2003).

Violet has every reason to be defiant, or seeking comfort in drugs. First, she has been recuperating from mouth cancer, but the disease itself does not hamper from being roguish and opinionated. More important, Violet has been holding on to a family secret, which deleteriously affects her status as Beverly's wife and Mattie Fae's sister. Unbeknownst to their three daughters, both Beverly and Violet had trial separations twice in the past. One of the reasons for this due to the illicit affair between Beverly and Mattie Fae. In her life, Violet believes that Mattie Fae has always been a favourite of their mother, thus creating a distance or rivalry between them. When Beverly slept with her own younger sister, Violet did leave her husband for a while, but decided to return to Beverly and raised their daughters together. In addition, the illicit affair resulted in a child, which was named Little Charles (after the name of Mattie Fae's husband, Charlie). Violet accepts the existence of Little Charles in her family, even allowing her daughters to be closer to their half-brother, under the guise that he is their cousin.

IVY

Little Charles and I...Little Charles and I are –

VIOLET

Little Charles and you are brother and sister. I know that.

BARBARA

Oh...Mom.

IVY

What? No, listen to me, Little Charles –

VIOLET

I've always known that. I told you, no one slips anything by me.

BARBARA

Don't listen to her.

VIOLET

I knew the whole time Bev and Mattie Fae were carrying on. Charlie shoulda known too, if he wasn't smoking all that grass.

(Letts, 2008, p. 133)

While some feminists may criticise Violet as a volunteer to her own suffering – allowing herself to be victimised in a disintegrating marriage – the researcher is more

fascinated in Violet's decision to not destroy her family, as she believes in injecting her maternal value in the form of forgiveness and moving on. While she has the choice to disown her sister and files a divorce from her husband, Violet decided that tearing up her marriage is more harmful for her daughters. She has been known for being outspoken and boorish, but keeping her family intact is more important than her own personal happiness. For Violet, her happiness is to witness her daughters grow up and attend college, so that they can pursue their interests. Concurrently, she decides not to be estranged from her younger sister, given the fact that Mattie Fae once rescued her from a brutal attack in the hand of one of their mother's boyfriends.

VIOLET

"Attack my family"?! You ever been attacked in your sweet spoiled life?! Tell her 'bout attacks, Mattie Fae, tell her what an attack looks like!

MATTIE FAE

Vi, please –

IVY

Settle down, Mom –

VIOLET

Stop telling me to settle down, goddamn it! I'm not a goddamn invalid! I don't need to be abided, do I?! Am I already passed over?!

MATTIE FAE

Honey –

VIOLET

This woman came to my rescue when one of my dear mother's many gentlemen friends was attacking me, with a claw hammer! This woman has dents in her skull from hammer blows! You think you been attacked?! What do you know about life on these Plains? What do you know about hard times?

(Letts, 2008, p. 94)

Owing to the aforesaid incident, Violet using her maternal values to ensues harmony in her family, so that she could move on with her life, and forgives both her sister and husband. It is only after the death of Beverly that Violet discloses the family's best kept secret.

4.2.2 The Capability to Relate to Life and Nature

As the gender closest to nurturing and mothering elements, women are anticipated to feel related to life and nature. In this case, women should incorporate the aspects of life and nature when dealing with daily issues and decision-making while facing grim or controversial situations. The state of emotive is best avoided in order for the characters to allow themselves to relate to life and environment. Some parts, these characters have to face their demons or temperamental characters, and refuse to succumb to situations that may cause them their sanity, safety or happiness.

Robert is portrayed as a loving parent, even though in the form of delirium (in a conversation between him and Catherine right after his death, on the eve of Catherine's birthday). Robert is a symbol of a father who loves his daughters unselfishly, as compared to some fathers in reality who can be indifferent towards their daughters; Robert shows that daughters can be loved, or should receive as much love as a parent is willing to offer and cherish. In return, Catherine sacrifices her pursuance of a better career just like her sister, as she discovers that her father's schizophrenic is getting worse and about to jeopardise his safety. One day, when she returns home for a visit, and to her horror, Robert is sitting alone at the driveway in the freezing temperature, where Robert confesses his fear of losing his ability to work, thus the reason why he supposedly exposing himself to the atrocious weather.

ROBERT

I think there's enough here to keep me working the rest of my life. Not just me. I was starting to imagine I was finished, Catherine. Really finished. Don't get me wrong. I was grateful I could go to my office, have a life, but secretly I was terrified I'd never work again. Did you know that?

CATHERINE

I wondered.

ROBERT

I was absolutely fucking terrified. Then I remembered something and a part of the terror went away. I remembered you. Your creative years were just beginning. You'd get your degree, do your own work. You were just getting started. If you hadn't gone into math that would have been all right.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 61)

He is becoming so weak in his judgment he needs to be coaxed by his daughter to get away from the cruel weather, providing the opportunity for his daughter to unveil her caregiving side, as well as proving her capability to connect to life and its surrounding when she returns quickly to care for her father.

CATHERINE

We can't do it out here. It's freezing cold. I'm taking you in.

ROBERT

Not until we talk about the proof.

CATHERINE

No.

ROBERT

GODDAMNIT CATHERINE OPENTHE GODDAMN BOOK AND READ ME THE LINES.

CATHERINE

"Let x equal the quantity of all quantities of X. Let X equal the cold. It is cold in December. The months of cold equal November through February. There are four months of cold, and four of heat, leaving four months of indeterminate temperature...The future of heat is the future of cold. The bookstores are infinite and so are never full except in September. It's all right. We'll go inside.

ROBERT

I'm cold.

CATHERINE

We'll warm you up.

ROBERT

Don't leave. Please.

CATHERINE

I won't. Let's go inside.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 62-63)

In the end, Catherine quits school as she feels that her father's well-being is more important than her quest to be a mathematician just like him. While taking care of her father, she never gives up on her ambition, which reinforces a positive image of a woman working independently; at the same time, Catherine is also acknowledging her own 'woman-ness' as she accepts to embrace her father's illness as part of her life, and by doing so she is relating her existence to what happens in life and nature.

Nat attempts to normalise tragedy, that deaths may occur even among the most respected family on the earth; Nat is exhibiting the capacity to connect to life as this is one of the positive ways to accept the loss of loved ones. Painful it might be, Nat believes that other people's sufferings could be more heartrending and detrimental, and her family isn't alone in experiencing the catastrophic loss.

NAT

You know who was cursed? Rose Kennedy.⁶³ A hundred and four years old. Living through all that death, one after another. She's the one I feel sorry for.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 59)

As her ability to connect to life, Nat is implying that women are stronger in dealing with death of their loved ones as compared to men, sending a hint to her daughter Becca that she should be as invincible as Rose Kennedy. Later, she tries to convince Becca that she has had her own troubles in getting over the death of Arthur.

NAT

You don't need to strike out at me, Becca. I know you're still in a bad place, but I'm trying to help you.

BECCA

Right.

NAT

I wish someone had sat me down when Arthur died. I wish someone gave me a little advice.

⁶³ Rose Kennedy was an American socialite, the wife of businessman Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr; the couple had nine children including the aforesaid Joseph P. Kennedy, Jr, Rosemary Kennedy, John F. Kennedy and Robert F. Kennedy.

BECCA

You know what I wish?! I wish you would stop comparing Danny to Arthur! Danny was a four-year-old boy who chased his dog into the street! Arthur was a thirty-year-old heroin addict who hung himself! Frankly I resent how you keep lumping them together.

NAT

He was still my son.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 74-75)

It is unfair and atrocious for Becca to chide Nat when the latter tries to remind her that she, too, had lost a child, but out of motherly love, Nat takes the dispute in stride and continues to support Becca in times of need. Nat does not flinch from her responsibility to be by Becca's side. Later, when Becca is involved with an altercation while doing grocery shopping, she comes to the rescue by convincing the other woman (who was assaulted by Becca – this incident was described earlier in this section) that Becca is still recovering from the loss of her son. She rationalises Becca's action to Howie and Izzy by supporting the fact that the woman is indeed ignorant to her child's plea.

BECCA

I smacked her.

NAT

She did. She smacked her. I couldn't believe it. Real hard too.

HOWIE

Becca...

BECCA

I know. It was awful, and then the boy started crying. I felt terrible, but she pissed me off.

IZZY

You hit that woman?

HOWIE

Izzy, don't.

IZZY

I'm just saying. Glass houses.

BECCA

She was *ignoring* him.

NAT

She was ignoring him. It was pretty bitchy.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 77)

Even though she does not support Becca's drastic action to slap the woman, she does not desert Becca to face the altercation by herself; instead, as the researcher had mentioned earlier, she reasons with the woman about Danny's death that made its way to the newspaper.

As she was raised to be proud with her heritage, it is vital to recognise Johnna's pride in keeping tradition within her, displaying her ability to connect with life and nature. The Native Americans are known for their tradition by displaying their views about nature in depicting their social manner and belief. According to the myth "How the World Was Made", the relationship between the Cherokee people and nature is clear, as they respect all creatures in the world, including animals. They believe that the Cherokee could not exist in the world without animals. Not only have the Cherokee people who respected nature but all of Native American's tribe did.

JEAN

I like your necklace.

JOHNNA

Thank you.

JEAN

Did you make that?

JOHNNA

My grandma.

JEAN

It's a turtle, right? It feels like there's something in it.

JOHNNA

My umbilical cord...it's a Cheyenne tradition.

JEAN

You're Cheyenne.

JOHNNA

When a Cheyenne baby is born, their umbilical cord is dried and sewn into this pouch. Turtles for girls, lizards for boys. And we wear it for the rest of our lives. Because if we lose it, our souls belong nowhere and after we die our souls will walk the Earth looking for where we belong.

(Letts, 2008, p. 44-45)

By practicing an ancient tradition within the Cheyenne community, Johnna is staying true to her cultural background as a Native American woman in a place surrounded by Caucasians. The tradition was passed from one matriarch to another; Johnna's grandmother made the necklace for her while her mother placed it around her neck since she was an infant. The relationship between these Cheyenne women is a testimony that the nature of their relationship is bounded by nature and tradition; Johnna is keeping the tradition alive as one has to be proud with her roots or ancestry background. Simultaneously, Johnna patiently explains the significance of her necklace to someone who is outside of her ethnicity, perhaps to avoid any possible cultural appropriation that may ruin the legacy of Cheyenne tradition and its relationship with life and nature.

4.2.3 Celebrate the Elements of 'Woman-Ness', Especially as Caregivers and Nurturers

Next is the further elaboration on women's role as primary caretakers, and resuming the role and its many consequences without any assistance from men or male characters. Catherine, the lead protagonist of the play, forgoes her ambition and aspiration as the next generation of mathematician in order to care for her father, Robert, who succumbs to depression and later a mild schizophrenia and unable to look after himself as she is the only next of kin who stays around Robert (her sister Claire has moved to New York). Before that, Catherine has to inform her father that after taking a year off, she is heading back to school to Northwestern; one can notice Robert's reluctance as his condition turns him into a highly reliant person.

CATHERINE

I'm going to school.

ROBERT

When?

CATHERINE

I'm gonna start at Northwestern at the end of the month.

ROBERT

Northwestern?

CATHERINE

They were great about my credits. They're taking me in as a sophomore. I wasn't sure when to talk to you about it.

ROBERT

Northwestern?

CATHERINE

Yes.

ROBERT

What's wrong with Chicago?

CATHERINE

You still teach there. I'm sorry, it's too weird, taking classes in your department.

ROBERT

It's a long drive.

CATHERINE

Not that long, half an hour.

ROBERT

Still, twice a day ...

CATHERINE

Dad, I'd live there.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 43)

Catherine is trying to get her father to get back on his feet after a breakdown, but it seems that Robert has become complacent with having his daughter around, even suggesting that her daughter continues the supervision by suggesting that she should continue her education at his workplace, University of Chicago. The researcher believes that Robert is foreshadowing his dependency on Catherine as he may be unable to

function by himself. In other words, Catherine's role as a caretaker has proven to be fruitful, a scenario where Catherine solidifies her capability to connect with life and nature, as she accepts her father's deteriorating condition while overseeing the daily routines of her father. Later, after a few weeks, Catherine finally returns home for good when she discovers her father's condition has gotten worse.

CATHERINE

Dad? What are you doing out here?

ROBERT

Working.

CATHERINE

It's December. It's thirty degrees.

ROBERT

I know.

CATHERINE

Don't you need a coat?

ROBERT

Don't you think I can make that assessment for myself?

CATHERINE

Aren't you cold?

ROBERT

Of course I am! I'm freezing my ass off!

CATHERINE

So what are you doing out here?

ROBERT

Thinking! Writing!

CATHERINE

You're gonna freeze.

ROBERT

It's too hot in the house. The radiators dry out the air. Also the clanking – I can't concentrate. If the house weren't so old we'd have central air heating but we don't so I have to come out here to get any work done.

CATHERINE

I'll turn off the radiators. They won't make any noise. Come inside, it isn't safe.

ROBERT

I'm okay.

CATHERINE

I've been calling. Didn't you hear the phone?

ROBERT

It's a distraction.

CATHERINE

I didn't know what was going on. I had to drive all the way down here.

ROBERT

I can see that.

CATHERINE

I had to skip class. Why don't you answer the phone?

(Auburn, 2001, p. 59)

Catherine's sense of responsibility as the primary caretaker is validated as she hurries back to her home (away from Evanston, where she lives as she pursues her studies at Northwestern) because her father couldn't care less about answering her calls, signalling his deteriorating mental condition. Subsequently, she quits everything, giving up her dreams to be a mathematic wunderkind just like her father in order to take up her responsibility. Claire, the older sibling, also plays her part as the sole relative that Catherine has right after Robert's passing, pursuing the part of Catherine's caretaker by flying back to Chicago. As the older sibling, Claire takes her role more seriously by planning a few things in order to help Catherine to get back on her feet again. First, Claire suggests, and later orchestrates - after an explosive episode between Hal and the two of them - Catherine's relocation to New York. As the researcher has mentioned earlier in this chapter, Claire resumes this role as she has skipped her duty to look after Robert; she only provides financial assistance to Catherine. Owing to the aforementioned situation, Claire believes that Catherine would be best to be near her and move to an unfamiliar territory.

CLAIRE

I'd still like you to come to New York.

CATHERINE

Yes: January.

CLAIRE

I'd like you to move to New York.

CATHERINE

Move?

CLAIRE

Would you think about it? For me? You could stay with me and Mitch at first. There's plenty of room. Then you could get your own place. I've already scouted some apartments for you, really cute places.

CATHERINE

What would I do in New York?

CLAIRE

What are you doing here?

CATHERINE

I live here.

CLAIRE

You could do whatever you want. You could work, you could go to school.

CATHERINE

I don't know, Claire. This is pretty major.

CLAIRE

I realize that.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 37)

When Claire proposes the idea of relocating Catherine to New York, she just got engaged to Mitch, her long-time boyfriend. The invitation, which first started out as an invitation to her City Hall wedding, morphs into a living arrangement as Claire feels that Catherine needs to relocate to a newer environment to overcome her problems.

Claire, the elder sister of Catherine, takes her role as the matriarch of the family once after she arrives in Chicago in the wake of Robert's death. While she has been everything but present throughout Robert's illness, Claire is supporting the family financially as she is building her own career in New York. However, once Robert passed away, she makes the right decision by flying straight home to assist Catherine in managing their father's funeral. Simultaneously, Claire is trying to help Catherine to get

back on the latter's feet by proposing a move to New York. Claire believes that leaving Chicago behind is the best remedy for Catherine's sour moods, and start all over again in New York to be closer to her and her fiancé. Claire offers to start the process of selling their childhood home, which is the best way for Catherine to leave behind her troubled life. As much as she loves her sister, Claire is determined not to let her sister's depression gets in her sister's well-being. This shows nurturer and caregiver side, and also reinforces a positive self-image as a woman who puts in her task as an elder sister a priority.

As the self-appointed caretaker, Claire has suspicion over Hal's presence and interest in Catherine. As she believes that her sister is in her most vulnerable condition, Claire believes that Hal is taking advantage over the vulnerability in order to gain or recover something from their family home.

CLAIRE

Why did you sleep with her?

HAL

I'm sorry, that's none of your business.

CLAIRE

Bullshit. I have to take care of her. It's a little harder with you jerking her around.

HAL

I wasn't jerking her around. It just happened.

CLAIRE

Your timing wasn't great.

HAL

It wasn't my timing, it was both of our—

CLAIRE

Why'd you do it? You know what she's like. She's fragile and you took advantage of her.

HAL

No. It's what we both wanted. I didn't mean to hurt her.

CLAIRE

You did.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 56)

As a result, Claire warns Hal directly, which represents the belief that men are preying predators and opportunists. This happens when Catherine admits that the formula in question is hers instead of Robert's, Claire becomes doubtful as she fails to corroborate the fact the handwritings of both father and sister are similar; furthermore, she is more apprehensive if this admission is yet another episode of Catherine's darker mood in relation to her depression. After the altercation, she decides to bring Catherine back to New York, with or without anyone's consent as she believes that Catherine needs to stay away from Chicago.

HAL

Are you taking her away? To New York?

CLAIRE

Yes.

HAL

Just going to drag her to New York.

CLAIRE

If I have to.

HAL

Don't you think she should have some say in whether or not she goes?

CLAIRE

If she's not going to speak, what else can I do?

HAL

Let me try. Let me talk to her.

CLAIRE

Hal, give up. This has nothing to do with you.

HAL

I know her. She's tougher than you think, Claire. She can handle herself. She can handle talking to me – maybe it would help. Maybe she'd like it.

CLAIRE

Maybe she'd like it? Are you out of your mind? You're the reason she's up there right now! You have no idea what she needs. You don't know her! She's my sister. Jesus, you fucking mathematicians: You don't think. You don't know what you're doing. You stagger around creating these catastrophes and it's people like me who end up flying in to clean them up. She needs to get out of Chicago, out of this house. I'll give you my number in New York. You can call her once she's settled there. That's it, that's the deal.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 57)

In the end, Claire returns to New York by herself as Catherine remains disinterested about moving, and unwaveringly decides to stay behind to rebuild her life on her own terms (even after Claire has sold the house), while trying to continue working to get her mathematics formula published. Nevertheless, during her stay in Chicago, Claire has exhibited her intra-feminine persona when she is appreciating her bond to Catherine; in some conversations, Catherine sounds tepid and blasé, but Claire continues to woo her to move to New York as she feels that Catherine would be better off relocating to a new locale. As for Catherine, her probable rational explanation for her reluctance to move to New York lies in the memory of taking care of her father, where she is able to balance her dutiful task as a caretaker, working on her mathematics formula and battling her own symptoms of manic depression. The researcher believes that Catherine truly takes pride in her capacity to manage all three instances at a time, showing her strength as a woman with her own individual dignity, and her familiarity of places in Chicago is her autonomy.

In *Doubt*, both Sister Aloysius and Sister James are portrayed as effective teachers, albeit different in their demeanours. Shanley is implying that female teachers are the better nurturers to children as opposed to men. While Father Flynn is known to be gentle towards a number of students, especially altar boys, his motivation behind this gentle nature is rather questionable. Moreover, his "concerns" over Donald Muller's misdemeanour has caused Sister James to be more alert. Speaking of Sister James, she exemplifies the most effective nurturer in this play. First, she is known to be more

lenient and caring towards her students. Sister James gives more spaces to her students to learn what they prefer over the strict parochial school syllabus. Moreover, this element shows that a well nurturing person is more concern about personal achievement and constructive potential in children.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

The children should think you see right through them.

SISTER JAMES

Wouldn't that be a little frightening?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Only to the ones that are up to no good.

SISTER JAMES

But I want my students to feel they can talk to me.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

They're children. They can talk to each other. It's more important they have a fierce moral guardian. You stand at the door, Sister. You are the gatekeeper. If you are vigilant, they will not need to be.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 18)

As much as Sister James is trying to be "the bad cop" as suggested by Sister Aloysius, she is having a troubling time to adjust to the stricter role. This is owing to the element of affection that a woman must have in herself regardless of her personal characters; a liberal or a radical woman must cultivate the sense of mothering and nurturing, and trying to be as cold and taciturn as men in general (representing parochial school system, created by Catholic men) could cause a breakdown in communicating with children.

SISTER JAMES

I've been trying to become more cold in my thinking as you suggested...I feel as if I've lost my way a little, Sister Aloysius. I had the most terrible dream last night. I want to be guided by you and responsible to the children, but I want my peace of mind.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You may not have it. It is not your place to be complacent. That's for the children. That's what we give them.

SISTER JAMES

I think I'm starting to understand you a little. But it's so unsettling to look at things and people with suspicion. It feels as if I'm less close to God.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

When you take a step to address wrongdoing, you are taking a step away from God, but in His service. Dealing with such matters is hard and thankless work.

SISTER JAMES

I've become more reserved in class. I feel separated from the children.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

That's as it should be.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 24)

To surmise, Sister James is trying to be more sensitive with the students' needs and behaviour, as she is displaying her 'woman-ness' through her nurturing and caregiving attitude. She is putrefying strong conservative values within Catholicism and its institution to a more liberal approach, such as esteeming personal choice and making students more interested in art. This is the phase of untangling traditional values to a more contemporary approach in the 1960s.

Putting her rebelliousness aside, Izzy from *Rabbit Hole* has a congenial caretaker attitude in her. She is very considerate in making sure that any actions or conversations will not hurt Becca directly or indirectly. Once, when the family gathers for her birthday celebration, Nat accidentally gives her gift certificates to a baby-related shop, thus triggering agitation in the kitchen as Becca, supported by Izzy, thinks that baby gifts should be given during an upcoming shower party.

BECCA

I thought we weren't doing baby stuff.

NAT

Who said that?

BECCA

For her birthday. I thought we'd wait until the shower.

NAT

I'll get her something else for the shower. What's the difference?

BECCA

Nothing. I just would've gotten her something different had I known we were doing baby stuff.

HOWIE

That's my fault. I told her to –

NAT

It's not baby stuff, it's mommy stuff. She's gonna need clothes.

BECCA

I know, that's why –

IZZY

This is perfect, Bec. I needed a bathroom set.

BECCA

I know you did, but you need baby stuff more.

HOWIE

So take it back. We can take it back.

IZZY

Don't tell her that.

BECCA

No, he's right. I should.

IZZY

Becca, please.

BECCA

I'll get you a basket of Mustela lotions instead. They prevent stretch marks.

IZZY

Becca, let go. I like the bathroom set. You can get the lotions another time.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 63-64)

Izzy is doing her part in safeguarding Becca's delicate emotions as any further discussions on baby and baby-related matters would remind the latter of her dead son. This is a killjoy to the celebratory mood in Becca and Howie's household, which is considered far and in between after Danny's death. Simultaneously, Izzy ascertains her gratitude towards Becca, who not only agrees to host the small gathering, but also takes

her time to bake Izzy's birthday cake. Izzy is injecting harmony and womanly values into the lives of the household.

Earlier, the researcher shares Becca's displeasure about Izzy's bar-hopping and her involvement in a bar fight, as well as getting fired from a job. Later in Act 2, Becca and her mother Nat do their groceries shopping, when Becca encounters a mother who she believes is mistreating her younger son openly; the boy is close to Danny's age. At this point, Becca is still trying to shake any images and mementos of Danny off her mind. Alas, some products in the supermarket were once Danny's favourite. Later, Becca comes across a boy who is in the midst of throwing tantrums as his mother denies his request for junk food. When she tries to convince the mother to accommodate the boy's request, the mother ignores her.

BECCA

What happened was we were in the same aisle as this kid and he wanted these roll-ups, fruit roll-ups, and his mother was being a hard-ass about it, saying she wasn't gonna buy them from him.

NAT

And it wasn't because she couldn't afford it, because you could tell she had money.

BECCA

But the kid was getting whiny about it. Which makes sense, because he's five years old and he really wants these roll-ups, but the mother wouldn't give in. In fact she starts ignoring him completely, just turns her face away and pretends he's not there. Just goes about her shopping, like that's gonna shut him up, or teach him a lesson or something. Case closed sort of thing. But that only gets him *more* upset. So that pissed me off for some reason.

HOWIE

What did?

BECCA

The way she was ignoring him, instead of trying to explain why he couldn't have them.

NAT

So she walked over to her.

HOWIE

What? Why?

BECCA

I don't know. I just did.

IZZY

What'd you say?

BECCA

I said, "It's only three bucks, why don't you just get him the fucking roll-ups?"

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 105-106)

On one hand, it is strongly believed that Becca loathes any mothers who aren't able to empathise with their child's temperamental conduct, as young children are prone to such behaviour if their needs are not met. For Becca, children's penchant for junk food is typical. If a mother fails to observe this proclivity, therefore she is not pertinent to be a mother. On the other hand, since the boy reminds her of Danny, she looks at the mother's ignorance to her child's plea as an act of ungrateful, for her child is still alive and needs her attention. For Becca, this churlish woman takes no pride of her status as a mother or a caretaker; she doesn't appreciate the significance of her child until she suffers a loss.

When the situation becomes less severe, Nat once again uses her status as a dedicated mother to auspiciously help Becca to remember Danny in a more positive scenario.

NAT

Hey you know what I was thinking of this morning?

BECCA

What?

NAT

Remember that gourmet basket you and Howie got me for Mother's Day last year, with the biscotti and the fancy biscuits? And I put the chocolates out when you came over for dinner, and Danny ate the entire bowl of chocolates when no one was looking?

BECCA

Yup.

NAT

And then Howie was like, “Where’d all the chocolates go?” And I said, “Danny ate them. Leave him alone, kids like candy.” And then Howie said, “But those were chocolate-covered espresso beans!” Remember?

BECCA

I do.

NAT

But Danny had eaten the whole bowl, so he was, you know, really really weird. And running in circles and climbing up the walls, and putting things on his head, and he was up until like three A.M. Remember that?

BECCA

Only too well.

NAT

I didn’t know what the damn things were. I just thought they were candy. You get me fancy baskets with all this crazy stuff in ‘em – espresso beans. I tell that story to everyone. People get a kick out of it.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 128-129)

Nat shares a nostalgic anecdote about Danny as an inspiration to Becca to reminisce about him whenever the situation isn’t favourable. By reliving the best moments when Danny was alive, Becca’s suffering won’t take a toll on her wholesomeness, and hopefully won’t ruin her marriage. In fact, shortly after the aforesaid conversation, Becca starts opening up to her mother about recovering from the loss of a child.

BECCA

Mom? Does it go away?

NAT

What?

BECCA

This feeling. Does it ever go away?

NAT

No. I don’t think it does. Not for me it hasn’t. And that’s going’ on eleven years. It changes though.

BECCA

How?

NAT

I don't know. The weight of it, I guess. At some point it becomes bearable. It turns into something you can crawl out from under. And carry around – like a brick in your pocket. And you forget it every once in a while, but then you reach in for whatever reason and there it is: "Oh right. That." Which can be awful. But not all the time. Sometimes it's kinda...Not that you like it exactly, but it's what you have instead of your son, so you don't wanna let go of it either. So you carry it around. And it doesn't go away, which is...

BECCA

What.

NAT

Fine...actually.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 129-130)

Surprisingly, the habitually exuberant Nat finally reveals that grieving is a long process, that she has her vulnerable moments and moving on from a tragedy takes time. Nat confesses that one has to learn to cope with the sudden disappearance of loved ones, but it is perfectly acceptable that the memory of the person gets back to you. However, it is not acceptable to eliminate the traces left behind by the deceased, reflecting her earlier recollection of Danny eating espresso beans. Above all, this is why Nat has been a strong pillar to Becca's predicament, that she is not as pushy as Howie. In conclusion, the researcher believes that Nat is exhibiting the aptitude to think rationally and logically in surviving tragedy.

Though her choice of words and tone could be considered as bawdy, Barbara is taking the responsibility of a caretaker in ensuring that her mother won't repeat her past mistakes. It is presumed that Violet may have been having drug troubles before, perhaps as her way to ease her own painful marriage. Back to Barbara, the researcher believes the sole reason why she is resuming her caretaking role is solely on the fact that she is the eldest daughter, and at the same time she has been the only daughter who has been able to withstand Violet's temperamental outbursts. First, she leads a collective raid on Violet's secret storage of drugs that she obtained legally from her physician. As she has been rather aggressive in her demeanour, Barbara extends her apology to Violet, as it is

imperative for her mother to know that her behaviour (or rather, misbehaviour) is triggered by quest to protect her mother from further damage that may be caused by the lingering addiction problem.

BARBARA

How's your head?

VIOLET

I'm fine, Barb. Don't worry about that.

BARBARA

I'm sorry.

VIOLET

Please, honey –

BARBARA

No, it's important that I say this. I lost my temper and went too far.

VIOLET

Barbara. The day, the funeral...the pills. I was spoiling for a fight and you gave it to me.

BARBARA

So...truce?

VIOLET

Truce.

(Letts, 2008, p. 108)

Soon after gains her mother's attention and goodwill, Barbara tries to coax her mother by suggesting that she should check in to a drug rehabilitation centre to get rid of her addiction.

BARBARA

Don't you think you should consider a rehab center, or --?

VIOLET

Oh, no. I can't go through that. No, I can do this. I'm pretty sure I can.

BARBARA

Really?

VIOLET

Yes. Well, look, you got rid of my pills, right?

BARBARA

All we could find.

VIOLET

I don't have that many hiding places.

BARBARA

Mom, now, come on.

VIOLET

If the pills are gone, I'll be fine. Just take me a few days to get my feet under me.

BARBARA

I can't imagine what all this must be like for you right now. I just want you to know, you're not alone in this.

VIOLET

I don't need help.

BARBARA

I want to help.

VIOLET

I don't need your help. I've gotten myself through some...I know how this goes: once all the talking's through, people go back to their own nonsense. I know that. So don't you worry about me. I'll manage. I get by.

(Letts, 2008, p. 108-109)

Violet's impetuous behaviour is driven by her belief that her daughters will abandon her again once she is checked into a drug rehabilitation facility, as she has always felt abandoned by them. Nevertheless, Barbara is determined to safeguard her mother's welfare, so she decides to allow Bill and Jean to return to Colorado while she stays behind to prove her candour in becoming her mother's caretaker, with help from Johnna and Ivy; simultaneously, she resumes the responsibility (or the burden) to protect her mother from harm's way now that her father has passed on.

It is a must to not overlook Johnna's contribution to the Weston household. While much about her characterisations have been discussed, the researcher feels it is essential to also discuss, albeit briefly, about her caretaking duty. It is known that Beverly hires her not only as a housekeeper, but also to look after Violet. However, right after Beverly's disappearance-cum-suicide, Johnna's caretaking responsibility has

expanded to almost everyone in the Weston family. Besides preparing meals in a larger quantity and facing truculent comments from Violet, Johnna successfully curbs Steve's attempt to seduce Jean Fordham and becomes a confidante to Barbara, when the latter becomes physically and emotionally exhausted and needs someone to converse with.

BARBARA

Johnna...what did my father say to you?

JOHNNA

He talked a lot about his daughters...his three daughters, and his granddaughter. That was his joy.

BARBARA

Thank you. That makes me feel better. Knowing that you can lie. I want you to stay on. Don't worry about your salary. I'll take care of it.

(Letts, 2008, p. 124)

Even though Barbara was being rather sarcastic when she stated that Johnna is a liar, the latter does not challenge the former's statement, as she has faith in letting Barbara to be in her own skin after too many tribulations in the house. In addition, at the end of the play, it is moving to discover that Violet, who has been relatively discourteous to Johnna, suddenly calls after her.

VIOLET

Barbara? You in here? Ivy? Ivy, you here? Barb? Bev? Johnna?! Johnna, Johnna, Johnna...And then you're gone, and Beverly, and then you're gone, and Barbara, and then you're gone, and then you're gone, and then you're gone –

JOHNNA

(Quietly sings to Violet)

"This is the way the world ends, this is the way the world ends, this is the way the world ends..."

(Letts, 2008, p. 138)

After yet another clash with her daughters (Ivy and Barbara), Violet was left alone in a dazed and confused condition. After both her daughters left abruptly, she was looking for someone whom she can turn to, and after a few moments of drivelling, she arrives at Johnna's room and immediately scrapes around into Johnna's lap. In return, Johnna holds her head, while smoothing her hair and singing a song to console her. Finally,

Johnna is able to commit what she is expected to do when Beverly hires her in the first place.

4.2.4 Intra-Feminine – Emphasis on Mother/Daughter Relations or Sisterhood

In *Proof*, both Catherine and Claire are still communicating with one another and do not shed any reference to estrangement even after Catherine is beginning to spiral into madness. Moreover, Claire has prepared in persuading Catherine to join her in New York foreshadows the fact that the former has been planning to welcome her younger sister to her own personal space and be the unofficial caretaker, perhaps to express her gratitude towards Catherine for sacrificing her own youth and sanity in order to care for their ailing father. First, she invites Catherine to be her guest at her wedding and offers to host her. By doing this, Catherine is able to unwind and tries to get overcome her own deteriorating health caused by the boundless stress of taking care of her father.

CLAIRE

Katie. Would you like to come to New York?

CATHERINE

Yes, I told you, I'll come in January.

CLAIRE

You could come sooner. We'd love to have you. You could stay with us. It'd be fun.

CATHERINE

I don't want to.

CLAIRE

Stay with us for a while. We would have so much fun.

CATHERINE

Thanks, I'm okay here.

CLAIRE

Chicago is dead. New York is so much more fun, you can't believe it.

CATHERINE

The "fun" thing is really not where my focus is at the moment.

CLAIRE

You look tired. I think you could use some downtime.

CATHERINE

Downtime?

CLAIRE

Katie, please. You've had a very hard time.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 27)

Throughout the play, most readers observed, including the researcher, that Catherine is rather hostile and cold to Claire, whose absence has caused her (Catherine's) chances of becoming a certified genius just like their father. Moreover, the fact that Claire returns to their family home and coaxes her to leave her comfort zone is another factor why she behaves rather aloof to her own sister, who has provided financial support throughout the time when she (Catherine) is caring for Robert. While the rocky relationships and frail communications are apparent and unveiled - any relationship has its ups and downs - one can't simply deny that the strong bond of sisterhood is flourishing, thus the intra-feminine aspect in this bond is proven throughout the play.

While both Sister Aloysius and Sister James in *Doubt* are not biologically related, their mentor-protégé relationship could be perceived as sisterhood in the name of Catholic alliance. Ever since Sister James confers her suspicion over the impropriety of Father Flynn, she spends more of her time with Sister Aloysius over her concern for Donald Muller and other students. In return, Sister Aloysius unconsciously creates an ally with Sister James in her effort to seek the truth, and eliminates any forms of sexual abuse. This alliance between them also allows Sister Aloysius to offer her insights on becoming a more effective teacher (adapting a more draconian method) and insists that Sister James must be stricter and firmer. Sister James, on her part, is free to air her views on effective teaching, where students must not be pushed over their brink. Even though they do not see eye to eye in this matter, they are able to express their opinion at their own will. Later, nearing the end of *Doubt*, Sister James returns from visiting her ailing brother in Wisconsin. Sister Aloysius immediately updates her on the fate of Father Flynn – he was transferred to another parish. This is the most exceptional part

about their intra-feminine communication: Sister James reaffirms her belief that Father Flynn may be innocent after all, while Sister Aloysius finally confesses that she has doubts on her judgement ability in this case. Nonetheless, it is imperative to note that both Sister Aloysius and Sister James are communicating better at the end of the play, especially after Sister Aloysius finally reveals that after the *mêlée* on Father Flynn and Donald Muller, she has doubts over the whole predicament. Her confession to Sister James is an indication that she believes in the kinship between two women, in relation to injecting harmony in the lives of women.

SISTER JAMES

I can't believe you lied.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

In the pursuit of wrongdoing, one steps away from God. Of course there's a price.

SISTER JAMES

I see. So now he's in another school.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Yes. Oh, Sister James!

SISTER JAMES

What is it, Sister?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I have doubts! I have such doubts!

(Shanley, 2005, p. 51-52)

Undoubtedly, one does not simply express her regrets over a deliberate matter to a casual acquaintance. However, seeing how Sister Aloysius and Sister James confide in each other over their disagreement and doubt, the researcher deduces that the relationship between both of them has reached the onset of sisterhood-like intimacy, which is a healthy representation of intra-feminine connection between women.

In *Rabbit Hole*, Becca implies that becoming a mother is a serious obligation and one must not simply take the upcoming responsibility very lightly. For her, a mother is not supposed to be caught in the act of violence or impudence, a sentiment

which is not shared by her husband, Howie. In Becca's point of view, a mother should not display any smidgeons of violence, impetuous and dissipation. As an expecting mother, Izzy should have also avoided visiting crowded and chaotic places, like a bar, where she could expose herself to cigarette smoke and alcoholic drinks that are extremely detrimental to any pregnant women. As they used to have a child before he was killed in an accident, Becca is hoping that Howie would understand her concerns.

BECCA

She was bragging about a bar fight.

HOWIE

It wasn't a bar fight.

BECCA

They were in a bar. *Fighting.*

HOWIE

Izzy hit someone, she didn't get into a fight. Blows were never exchanged.

BECCA

What is your point? It's okay for a pregnant woman to be punching people?

HOWIE

Well so long as they don't punch her back, it's probably all right.

BECCA

What are you--? Why are you defending her?

HOWIE

I'm not. I just think it's silly to get worked up about it.

BECCA

I'm not worked up. I'm just saying.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 28-29)

While Howie takes the bar fight very casually as long as Izzy is not assaulted, Becca expresses her concern that any types of fighting is not motherly – an aspect which is not agreed by members of the opposite sex. This may be caused by Howie's different set of values owing to his gender, where violence and bawdiness are sometimes viewed as

norms. Moreover, it seems that Howie is deliberately missing the point of Becca's contention – she is more concerned over the condition of the baby.

Nat, the mother of both Becca and Izzy, is the central pillar of their relationship as family. She makes herself available at most times, in order to look out for the best interests of her two children. She takes pride in her role as a mother throughout the play; even becoming a guardian to Taz, the family dog.

HOWIE

Hey, how's Taz.

NAT

He's good. The vet says he needs to lose some weight though.

HOWIE

Really?

NAT

Yeah, he eats like a trooper.

HOWIE

What are you feeding him?

NAT

Just regular dog food. Whatever's on sale.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 65)

For the record, Taz is the primary reason why Danny, the son of Becca and Howie, ran out and subsequently killed when a car driven by a high school student ran into him. As Taz serves as a painful reminder for Becca, Nat volunteers to look after the dog, as she is assuming her role as the matriarch of the family; not only she is looking after the best interest of her grieving daughter, but also offering shelter and continues caring for Taz, which is caught in the middle of an unpredictable tragedy. In one of her private conversations with Becca, she opens her heart and shares about her own grieving period when Arthur, her only son, died of a tragic suicide.

NAT

Do you remember Maureen Bailey?

BECCA

Sure.

NAT

Well I couldn't get rid of her after your brother passed away.

BECCA

I remember.

NAT

Always at the house. Always checking in on me. Eatin' up the cinnamon buns Uncle Jimmy brought me. I never had a moment to myself. And of course it was nice, I guess, but it didn't feel like it was about me...And finally in the middle of coffee one afternoon, I said, "Maureen, why are you here all the time?"

BECCA

What'd she say?

NAT

She said, "I want to be there for you, Nat, I want to share in your grief." And so I said, "Well it's not working. I seem to have it all to myself still. You plant your fat ass in that chair every frickin' day---"

BECCA

You did not say that.

NAT

I did – "and suck up all my coffee, and I don't see you leaving with any of this grief you're allegedly *sharing* with me. In fact the only thing you do take outta here are my cinnamon buns." So I never saw her again obviously. Which was too bad actually, because she was the only one who was willing to talk about Arth—

BECCA

You can say his name.

NAT

Can I? I don't know your rules, Becca. I don't wanna get scolded.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 122-123)

From the aforesaid conversation, the researcher finds that Nat is exhibiting two aspects of motherly love. First, her own admission of chasing away any support system in coping with her grief, which she never shared with her daughters. This act of sharing her own flaw in an intimate situation with her daughter is proving that a mother sometimes brings out her own imperfection in order to let her children learn that it is adequate to admit your own blunder, as mothers are only human. Then, Nat is also taking extra careful not to mention Arthur's name in relating her own experience as a

grieving mother, as Becca abhors the comparison between Arthur's death to her son's. Nat's respectful attitude is applauded as this would solidify the fact that motherly love and the act of mothering are privileges that only women could have access to. Nat is exhibiting her intra-feminine element in a relationship between her and Becca.

As her sister's keeper, Izzy is also protective of her sister's well. She bravely confronts Howie over his dinner outing with a female companion; Izzy is in suspicion that Howie is committing adultery behind Becca.

IZZY

Well, Reema works at Calderone's. In New Rochelle. You know that restaurant?

HOWIE

Yeah.

IZZY

Well Reema, even though you don't remember her, remembers you pretty well from the barbecue, and she said she waited on you a couple weeks ago.

HOWIE

Did I stiff her on the tip? Because I had remembered her, obviously I would've –

IZZY

She said you were with a woman.

HOWIE

I was with another parent from the support group. Two weeks ago, right? We grabbed a bite after the meeting. If Reema had identified herself, I would've introduced them.

IZZY

Her husband doesn't attend the meetings?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 98-99)

Apparently, Howie is attending meetings for a support group for parents who lose their children to early death. Izzy believes that Howie attending the meetings without Becca would pave the way for him to commit an extra-marital affair as things aren't rosy between him and her sister. Her interrogation of this so-called affair is a sign of her solicitousness of Becca and her well-being.

IZZY

Why were you holding hands? Reema said you were hands.

HOWIE

And Reema's what exactly, your spy?

IZZY

No, she's a waitress. She was just at work. You were the one sneaking around.

HOWIE

Okay, now I am mad.

IZZY

I told you, you weren't gonna like it.

HOWIE

That woman is a friend of mine whose daughter died of leukaemia six months ago. Jesus, Izzy, what are you trying to --?

IZZY

I'm just asking a question. You don't have to get defensive.

HOWIE

Just because I was holding a person's hand doesn't mean --

IZZY

I know you and Becca are having troubles --

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 99)

Going back to Izzy's persistence in interrogating Howie on his supposed fling with another grieving mother in his support group, the researcher strongly believes that Izzy is displaying a sign of sisterly love, as she wants to protect her sister's pride and fragile emotion. Usually, in the aftermath of a tragedy, a man may opt to walk away from facing complications, and as a result Izzy is likely to support this notion, thus ensuing in her confrontation with Howie, which is to serve as a reminder for him to not committing himself into the aforesaid scenario.

HOWIE

What are you *talking* about?

IZZY

-- but I'd like to think that if things got to a point where they were unsaveable, that you'd be man enough to fish or cut bait --

HOWIE

Who said we were having troubles?

IZZY

-- and not make things worse than they already are by fucking around behind Becca's back.

HOWIE

You are way off base, Izzy!

IZZY

And I know there's "other stuff going on around here" but that doesn't excuse it.

HOWIE

This so beyond ridiculous, I don't even know how to respond to you.

IZZY

I don't need you to respond. I just wanted to ask the question and say what I had to say. You can do whatever you want about it.

HOWIE

About *what*? I'm not having an affair!

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2000, p. 100)

Izzy's protectiveness towards Becca is the best display of sisterhood in action, but may be somewhat direct and blatant in her quest to get the truth out of a patriarch member. Defending the honour of another sister is a sign of solidarity in strengthening the bond of sisterhood among women, especially among real sisters.

At once, she is trying to keep her dignity by concealing her own impending divorce, as soliciting sympathy is the last on Barbara's mind. Besides playing tough on her mother, Barbara is also trying to be a better eldest sister to her two younger sisters. When Ivy later reveals she had undergone a hysterectomy, Barbara is not pleased when Ivy decides to conceal about the operation until after. For Barbara, as the eldest she is able to provide comfort for her ailing sister.

BARBARA

Why wouldn't you tell us?

IVY

And hear those comments from Mom for the rest of my life? She doesn't need any more excuses to treat me like some damaged thing.

BARBARA

You might have told us.

IVY

You weren't going to tell us about you and Bill.

BARBARA

That's different.

IVY

Why? Because it's you, and not me?

BARBARA

No, because divorce is an embarrassing public admission of defeat. Cancer's fucking cancer, you can't help that. We're your sisters. We might've given you some comfort.

IVY

I just don't feel that connection very keenly.

(Letts, 2008, p. 102)

Owing to her predicament, Violet has been rather churlish with her adult daughters. She feels that her husband shows more affection towards their children than her. Once again, she becomes a victim in a somewhat threatening environment caused by a man. As a result, without fail she provokes her daughter on how their father is always favouring one person over the other; her intention is to make any of her daughters feel uncomfortable or guilty for not acknowledging her sufferings throughout the year, or for leaving her alone.

VIOLET

But your father. You broke his heart when you moved away.

BARBARA

That is wildly unfair.

BILL

Am I going to have to separate you two?

VIOLET

You know you were Beverly's favourite; don't pretend you don't know that.

BARBARA

I don't want to know that. I'd prefer to think my parents loved all their children equally.

VIOLET

I'm sure you'd prefer to think that Santy Claus brought you presents at Christmas, too, but it just isn't so. If you'd had more than one child, you'd realize a parent always has favorites. Mattie Fae was my mother's favorite. Big deal. I got used to it. You were your daddy's favorite.

BARBARA

Great. Thanks.

(Letts, 2008, p. 38)

Violet's provocation is to remind her daughter that she feels neglected whenever they are not around. Early in her life, she has to compete with Mattie Fae, her younger sister, for their mother's affection; ironically, Mattie Fae would still haunt her with an unspoken rivalry over Beverly's affection. She is foreshadowing her daughter's failure to notice something peculiar with the family by mentioning Mattie Fae as a way to hint her daughter that as the eldest, Barbara has failed to be her support system. In other words, women who are not looking out for one another would break down circle of communication between them.

Concurrently, even though she has been under the influence when her three daughters are back again under one roof after Beverly's disappearance, Violet is determined to let her daughters know that she is still a functioning parent to them. As usual, besides chiding her daughters who are living out of state for not visiting regularly, Violet is prone to snoop around her daughters' private lives. As a mother, Violet feels that under any circumstances, she has the right to know as her daughters tend to be extremely secretive and tend to make her feel like an outsider, not like their mother.

VIOLET

Why are you so worked up? You're seeing someone, I think that's great –

IVY

Don't you dare –

VIOLET

You'd think you might be happy to tell your family some good news, on a day like today?

IVY

It's nobody's business.

VIOLET

Folks only want what's best for you.

IVY

It's nobody's business!

VIOLET

Why should I do you any favors?

IVY

Why not? Why *wouldn't* you?

VIOLET

You wouldn't even try on my dress –

IVY

I'm not bargaining with you!

VIOLET

You're so melodramatic.

(Letts, 2008, p. 78)

While being nosy is not one of the best human qualities, it is comprehensible that Violet is just being a mother who tries to relate and communicate with her daughter. By doing this, Violet is trying to put an emphasis on the unique mother/daughter relations. Concurrently, she is not afraid to let her guards down in order to let them (her daughters) know that she is also deserving the same affection and attention.

BARBARA

Are you in pain?

VIOLET

Yes, I'm in pain. I have got...gotten cancer. In my mouth. And it burns like a...bullshit. And Beverly's disappeared and you're yelling at me.

BARBARA

I'm not yelling at you.

VIOLET

You couldn't come home when I got cancer but as soon as Beverly disappeared you rushed back –

BARBARA

I'm sorry, I...you're right. I'm sorry.

(Letts, 2008, p. 40-41)

Even though her communication with her daughters can be testy, Violet lets it known that she adores her only granddaughter and anticipating her visit; this admission is an indication that Violet is trying to extend her nurturing nature to the next generation of her family, even if her daughters are moving away or turning their backs on her.

VIOLET

You're grown-up people, grewed-ups. You go where you want –

BARBARA

I have a lot of obligations, I have a daughter starting high school in a couple of –

VIOLET

That right? Last time I saw her she's grade school –

BARBARA

I won't talk about this –

VIOLET

I don't care about you two, really. I'd just like to see my granddaughter every now and then.

BARBARA

Well you're seeing her now.

(Letts, 2008, p. 38)

While she has been left in the dark in some personal matters (or maybe she is acting ignorant), Violet does not hesitate to drop her own bombshell when she needs confirmation on several personal issues. It is well known that she and Barbara have a rather unruly relationship, and it is only natural for her (Violet) to confront Barbara and Bill openly about their impending divorce.

VIOLET

Where are you living now, Bill? You want this old sideboard?

BILL

I beg your pardon.

VIOLET

You and Barbara are separated, right? Or you divorced already?

BILL

We're separated.

VIOLET

Thought you could slip that one by me, didn't you?

BARBARA

What is the matter with you?

VIOLET

Nobody slips anything by me. I know what's what. Your father thought he's slipping one by me, right? No way. I'm sorry you two're having trouble...maybe you can work it out. Bev'n I separated a couple of times, 'course, though we didn't call it that.

(Letts, 2008, p. 92-93)

While it looks like Violet is trying to embarrass both Bill and Barbara, her purpose in bringing this matter up (during dinner time) is to remind her daughters that nothing in the house will go unnoticed as she is, after all, their mother. Subsequently, she is hinting to her family members of more bombshells waiting to be uncovered much later in the next few days. As she is free to decide to take an action within her capabilities, Violet is determined to let everyone know that she is holding fort to her status as the matriarch of the Weston household. Reaffirming her independence, Violet is assuring Barbara that she is able to look after herself (Violet), as she has always been either when she was sober or under the influence of drugs. Now that Beverly is gone, Violet is finally able to reclaim her space. As she is used to live without her daughters' presence (only Ivy visits once in a while), Violet is finally becoming a woman out of the oppression caused by the patriarchal society.

Throughout the play, the researcher finds that Karen also doubles as a gregarious peacekeeper – someone who tries to pacify an edgy situation. For Karen, since she is always longing for a near perfection environment, the household must be in a pleasant order. Karen makes the effort to show her solidarity in sisterhood when the three of them (Barbara, Ivy and Karen) are alone together.

KAREN

I feel very connected, to both of you.

IVY

We never see you, you're never around, you haven't been around for –

KAREN

But I still feel that connection!

IVY

You think if you tether yourself to this place in mind only, you don't need to actually appear.

KAREN

You know me that well.

(Letts, 2008, p. 102)

Karen feels it is important for the bonds between them to flourish as it is important for sisters to be courteous and compassionate to each other. Even though she feels that they are getting more distant, the tragedy that affects the family is the only way for the family, especially the sisters, to bridge the gap between them. Moreover, even though she is the youngest, none of her parents paid special attention to her; as indicated in the previous section, Beverly adores Barbara, while Violet has been pining for Ivy. This is why it matters to Karen to feel as if she belongs to the family, and being alone with her sisters seems to reaffirm her belonging.

The relationship between Barbara and Jean is different as compared to the relationship between Barbara and Violet. As a daughter, Barbara is determined to keep her mother sober while battling cancer; as a mother, Barbara unwaveringly trying to guard Jean from the adverse effect of an impending divorce, as well as protecting her from turning into a delinquent. Jean, as the researcher had mentioned earlier, is going through the phase of experimenting with substance; in this case, Jean is beginning to smoke cigarette and marijuana. While her communication with Violet has been topsy-turvy – one moment it was hostile, the next time they were calling a truce - Barbara is severer when she is communicating with her daughter. The researcher believes that in addition to the factors that he had mentioned earlier in the paragraph, Barbara is afraid that she is turning into Violet if she becomes too relaxed with her daughter. Her apprehension takes a turn to the worse when Jean is almost molested by Steve, Karen's fiancé, as she believes that she had exercised every single precaution to protect her

daughter from harm's way. This is why she slaps Jean when the latter becomes impudent towards Bill, as she believes that Jean's brazen behaviour signifies her failure as a mother.

Both Violet and Mattie Fae seem to be getting along throughout the play; she, alongside her husband Charlie, is among the first to reach Violet's place when Beverly has gone missing for five days. This signifies that she is in a healthy relationship with her sister. This is later supported by Violet when she reveals that Mattie Fae once rescued her from an assailant when they were teenagers. However, as Violet can be both affectionate and truculent toward her daughters, Mattie Fae is always reacting negatively towards her son, Little Charles. One wonders why she is behaving in such a way, especially when he accidentally misses Beverly's funeral. Her uncouth attitude towards Little Charles finally exhausts the patience out of her husband, Charlie.

CHARLIE

Mattie Fae, we're gonna go get in the car right now and go home and if you say one more mean thing to that boy I'm going to kick your fat Irish ass onto the highway. You hear me?

MATTIE FAE

What the hell did you say? —

CHARLIE

You kids go outside. I don't understand this meanness. I look at you and your sister and the way you talk to people and I don't understand it. I just can't understand why folks can't be respectful of one another. I don't think there's any excuse for it. My family didn't treat each other that way.

MATTIE FAE

Well maybe that's because your family is a —

CHARLIE

You had better not say anything about my family right now. I mean it. We buried a man today I loved very much. And whatever faults he may have had, he was a good, kind, decent person. And to hear you tear into your own son on a day like today dishonors Beverly's memory. We've been married for thirty-eight years. I wouldn't trade them for anything. But if you can't find a generous place in your heart for your own son, we're not going to make it to thirty-nine.

(Letts, 2008, p. 111-112)

Charlie's untimely ultimatum becomes a rude awakening to Mattie Fae to rethink about her attitude towards her son. When Charlie discloses to Mattie Fae that her behaviour "dishonours Beverly's memory", the researcher apprehends that this is a signifier that Charlie recognises Beverly's "contribution" to his own family – owing to his wife's debauched tryst with her own brother-in-law, Charlie had his chance at fatherhood. This is when the audience (including the researcher) realised that Mattie Fae's behaviour towards her son is a sign of guilt and betrayal; "guilt" in a sense that she had had an affair with her own brother-in-law which resulted in the birth of a child, and "betrayal" in a sense that not only she betrayed the sanctity of her own marriage, she is also betraying her sister's trust. Nevertheless, even after the secret about Little Charles' parental background was revealed to Barbara (and later Ivy), Violet maintains that she has no reason to hate or despise Mattie Fae because blood is thicker than water, as what happened between four of them (Violet, Beverly, Mattie Fae and Charlie) were considered as a dent in her marriage, never mind that she allows herself to be addicted to a number drugs in order to heal her inner pain, not only from cancer but her husband's infidelity and her sister's treachery.

4.2.5 Contesting the Patriarchal Organisation of Society

Cultural feminism deals more with women becoming essentially women, concentrating on the aspects of protection, nurturance and training, while maintaining their femininity in dealing with any arising issues. Nevertheless, becoming feminine is not an excuse for women to abandon their rights to be better, if not as good, than men. As men tend to concentrate on issues that are benefitting their patriarchal organisation, women are expected to facilitate more compassion throughout every aspect of social existence. As a result, women are expected to challenge or defy the egocentricity of patriarchy, but using their essence of 'woman-ness' instead of radical act. In this case, the researcher believes that elements of contesting patriarchal organisation including criticism of male

characters, as well as their idiosyncrasies in characterisations. Simultaneously, any criticisms toward organisations controlled or led by men will also be emphasised.

Robert, a Mathematical professor at the University of Chicago (one of the top Mathematics faculty in real life) in *Doubt*, becomes too successful at a younger age. As he successfully deciphers more mathematical equations with proofs, he pushes himself to the limit as he grows older. As a result, he becomes depressed as nothing excites him. This later leads to his diagnosis of schizophrenia. His condition represents a weak component from the patriarchal society that has to be stabilised by his daughter (a female component), something which is far and in between. After he has recovered from the first bout with nervous breakdown and being tended by his younger daughter Catherine, Robert plans to return to work but later finds himself helpless as Catherine announces her plan to continue her studies at Northwestern. After she left, Robert becomes more depressed and slowly turning into a graphomaniac.⁶⁴ He starts working outdoors in freezing temperature and fails to answer his phone, prompting Catherine to leave everything behind and return.

ROBERT

Well I'm sorry, Catherine, but it's question of priorities and work takes priority, you know that.

CATHERINE

You're working?

ROBERT

Goddamnit I am working! I say "I" – the machinery. The machinery is working. Catherine, it's on full blast. All the cylinders are firing, I'm on fire. That's why I came out here, to cool off. I haven't felt like this for years.

CATHERINE

You're kidding.

ROBERT

No!

⁶⁴ According to Merriam-Webster dictionary, "graphomaniac" is a medical term for graphomania, which is a compulsive urge to write.

CATHERINE

I don't believe it.

ROBERT

I don't believe it either! But it's true. It started about a week ago. I woke up, came downstairs, made a cup of coffee and before I could pour milk it was someone turned the LIGHT on in my head.

CATHERINE

Really?

ROBERT

Not the light, the whole POWER GRID. I LIT UP and it's like no time has passed since I was twenty-one.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 59-60)

Robert is a character whose intelligence has propelled him to meteoric rise in his faculty. Alas, his intelligence is later overshadowed by his schizophrenia, and his career succumbed to his desperation. He becomes dependent to Catherine throughout the last years of his life, even though he tries to fight his way to feel better. His failed recovery is considered as a failed sign of male member, as compared to his daughter, who has shown early signs of the same proclivity, but still able to care for him; Auburn has without warning implies that his male character is frailer than his female's. Moreover, instead of trying to be all manly over his mental problems, Robert surrenders his fate and relies heavily on a woman to help oversee his daily needs; this proves that women are indeed the best caregivers or nurturers.

Later in the conversation, Robert confesses his fear of losing his ability to work, thus the reason why he supposedly exposing himself to freezing weather.

ROBERT

I think there's enough here to keep me working the rest of my life. Not just me. I was starting to imagine I was finished, Catherine. Really finished. Don't get me wrong. I was grateful I could go to my office, have a life, but secretly I was terrified I'd never work again. Did you know that?

CATHERINE

I wondered.

ROBERT

I was absolutely fucking terrified. Then I remembered something and a part of the terror went away. I remembered you. Your creative years

were just beginning. You'd get your degree, do your own work. You were just getting started. If you hadn't gone into math that would have been all right.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 61)

He is becoming so weak in his judgment he needs to be coaxed by his daughter to get away from the cruel weather, providing the opportunity for his daughter to unveil her caregiving side, as well as proving her capability to connect to life and its surrounding when she returns quickly to care for her father.

CATHERINE

We can't do it out here. It's freezing cold. I'm taking you in.

ROBERT

Not until we talk about the proof.

CATHERINE

No.

ROBERT

GODDAMNIT CATHERINE OPENTHE GODDAMN BOOK AND READ ME THE LINES.

CATHERINE

"Let x equal the quantity of all quantities of X . Let X equal the cold. It is cold in December. The months of cold equal November through February. There are four months of cold, and four of heat, leaving four months of indeterminate temperature...The future of heat is the future of cold. The bookstores are infinite and so are never full except in September. It's all right. We'll go inside.

ROBERT

I'm cold.

CATHERINE

We'll warm you up.

ROBERT

Don't leave. Please.

CATHERINE

I won't. Let's go inside.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 62-63)

Having to admit that he can't and won't survive on his own, Auburn is indicating that Robert, as intelligent as man could be, is incapable of taking care of himself and has to rely on a woman in order to continue living.

Harold Dobbs (henceforth to be known as “Hal”) is a protégé of Robert. Currently working at the University of Chicago as one of the instructors at the aforementioned department, Hal is more interested to look for any unpublished research or actuarial proof for his own benefit. The researcher believes that Hal is an opportunist who takes full advantage on Catherine’s fragile condition soon after the demise of Robert; this symbolises a form of subjugation by a member of patriarchal society.

HAL

When should I come back?

CATHERINE

Come back?

HAL

Yeah. I’m nowhere near finished. Maybe tomorrow?

CATHERINE

We have a funeral tomorrow.

HAL

God, you’re right, I’m sorry. I was going to attend, if that’s all right.

CATHERINE

Yes.

HAL

What about Sunday? Will you be around?

(Auburn, 2001, p. 13)

As anyone might notice, instead of giving Catherine space or time to mourn properly, he insists on finding Robert’s so-called valuable proof, displaying his side of insensitivity and insolence and he won’t stop at nothing, as exhibited in the next conversation.

HAL

I know you don’t need anybody in your hair right now. Look, I spent the last couple days getting everything sorted out. It’s mostly notebooks. He dated them all; now that I’ve got them in order I don’t have to work here. I could take some stuff home, read it, bring it back.

CATHERINE

No.

HAL

I’ll be careful.

CATHERINE

My father wouldn't want anything moved and I don't want anything to leave this house.

HAL

Then I should work here. I'll stay out of the way.

CATHERINE

You're wasting your time.

HAL

Someone needs to go through your dad's papers.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 13)

Owing to the conversations above, the researcher believes that Hal has anything but sympathy for the family, and simultaneously is trying to profiteer at a very incompatible time. Maybe he tries to deny other people, including Robert's own flesh and blood, from discovering a legit mathematical proof that can be published; even though he is only a protégé, Hal appointed himself as the heir to Robert's many notebooks and unpublished proofs. In Catherine's world, at the beginning Hal and his pushy antics in rummaging and later tries unsuccessfully to sneak out a notebook from Robert's collection represents the patriarchal organisation that ignores the plight of a woman in distress. Moreover, Hal is a symbol of intrusion in the lives of Catherine and Claire. As one of Robert's protégés, Hal feels that he is a better conservator of Robert's many works, journals and academic books. His appearance and quest to search something prized among the possessions of Robert could be translated into a rather greedy and selfish person, as he immediately turns up at Robert's house even before the latter's funeral. His unsympathetic character represents the principle of disturbing the harmonious life of women – a total opposite of the concept of Utopia; in other words, Hal is the threat to the Utopian created by Robert for his daughters. He is more concerned with the "survivability" or the conservatorship of Robert's possessions more than Catherine's grief over losing her father. Later, in a surprising turn, Hal falls for Catherine, even though this endearment is frowned upon by Claire as the researcher has

mentioned earlier. While Hal admits that his affection towards Catherine is genuine, it takes him awhile to realise that Catherine is the sole author to the formula found in an unlabelled book among Robert's collection in his library. Feeling remorse, he returns to Catherine after he admits that he successfully locates the evidence to support Catherine's claim over the authorship of the formula.

CATHERINE

What do you want? You have the book. She told me you came by for it and she gave it to you. You can do whatever you want with it. Publish it. Get Claire's permission and publish it. She doesn't care. She doesn't know anything about it anyway.

HAL

I don't want Claire's permission.

CATHERINE

You want mine? Publish. Go for it. Have a press conference. Tell the world what my father discovered.

HAL

I don't want to.

CATHERINE

Or fuck my father, pass it off as your own work. Who cares? Write your own ticket to any math department in the country.

HAL

I don't think your father wrote it.

CATHERINE

You thought so last week.

HAL

That was last week. I spent this week reading the proof. I think I understand it, more or less. It uses a lot of newer mathematical techniques, things that were developed in the last decade. Elliptic Curves. Modular Forms. I think I learned more mathematics this week than I did in four years of grad school. So the proof is very...hip.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 67-68)

Hal's readiness to admit his mistake is a sign of his "defeat" to the intelligence of a woman, thus consolidating the admission of an intellectual woman within the circle of academia, in this case fraternity of mathematicians, dominated by men; as the proof scribbled in the book is considered hip, obviously it needed someone who is younger

and able to work with the most current formula, and Robert doesn't fit the bill to claim the work. At last, Catherine successfully overcoming the gender stereotype, just like Sophie Germain.

Doubt also contains a struggle within a patriarchal organisation. As the researcher has pointed out earlier, the upper echelons of Catholic Church are filled with men. Once again, Shanley creates Sister Aloysius as a resilient symbol in battling an establishment full of men as decision-makers. As the principal, Sister Aloysius believes to take matters into her own hands without any interference or influence from other clergymen in the management of St. Nicholas.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Eight years ago at St. Boniface we had a priest who had to be stopped. But I had Monsignor Scully then...whom I could rely on. Here, there's no man I can go to, and men run everything. We are going to have to stop him ourselves.

SISTER JAMES

Can't you just...report your suspicion?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

To Monsignor Benedict? The man's guileless! He would just ask Father Flynn!

SISTER JAMES

Well, would that be such a bad idea?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

And he would believe whatever Father Flynn told him. He would think the matter settled.

SISTER JAMES

But maybe that is all that needs to be done. If it's true. If I had done something awful, and I was confronted with it, I'd be so repentant.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 25-26)

Even when Sister James is adamant about reporting Father Flynn to the powers that be in the organisation, Sister Aloysius is still reluctant as she believes it is impossible for her to override the hierarchy of the Catholic institution, especially for a woman like her.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Sister James, my dear, you must try to imagine a very different kind of person than yourself. A man who would do this has already denied a great deal. If I tell the monsignor and he is satisfied with Father Flynn's rebuttal, the matter is suppressed.

SISTER JAMES

Well then, tell the bishop.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

The hierarchy of the Church does not permit my going to the bishop. No. Once I tell the monsignor, it's out of my hands, I'm helpless. I'm going to have to come up with a pretext, get Father Flynn into my office. Try to force it. You'll have to be there.

SISTER JAMES

Me? No! Why? Oh no, Sister! I couldn't.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 26)

One can clearly see from the conversation between Sister Aloysius and Sister James that back in the day, to report a male counterpart on the ground of misbehaviour is anything but a delicate matter. Occasionally, most of these reports were met with lukewarm response and swept under the rug. Moreover, those who may have reported against a priest or any other cleric men would face immediate transfer to another parish, or worse, being demoted from the current post. To curb this discrimination, Sister Aloysius invites Father Flynn to her office under the pretence of discussing Christmas pageant later that year, with the presence of Sister James. This action symbolises an action of going against the unjust milieu of a patriarchal organisation.

FATHER FLYNN

Did you want to discuss the pageant, is that what I'm here, or is this what you wanted to discuss?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

This.

FATHER FLYNN

Well. I feel a little uncomfortable.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Why?

FATHER FLYNN

Why do you think? Something about your tone.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I would prefer a discussion of fact rather than tone.

FATHER FLYNN

Well. If I had judged my conversation with Donald Muller to be of concern to you, Sister, I would have sat you down and talked to you about it. But I did not judge it to be of concern to you.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Perhaps you are mistaken in your understanding of what concerns me. The boy is in my school, and his well-being is my responsibility.

FATHER FLYNN

His well-being is not at issue.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I am not satisfied that that is true. He was upset when he returned to class.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 32)

As one may observe from the exchange above, Father Flynn represents the patriarchal society, while Sister Aloysius represents the tidal wave trying to undermine the stronghold of male gender. From the conversation, Father Flynn sounds that he is above the authority of Sister Aloysius, even though the latter is the principal of St. Nicholas' school, thus the welfare and security of the students fall under her responsibility. Knowing the obstacles and uphill battles that she may face while trying to bring justice to this case, Sister Aloysius becomes more stalwart and belligerent in pursuing the truth out of Father Flynn. She invites Mrs. Muller to her office to share her apprehension about Donald Muller and Father Flynn, as this may transpire Mrs. Muller to file a formal complaint against Father Flynn.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

You're here because I'm concerned about Donald's welfare.

MRS. MULLER

You think I'm not?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Of course you are.

MRS. MULLER

Let me ask you something. You honestly think that priest gave Donald that wine to drink?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Yes, I do.

MRS. MULLER

Then how come the priest didn't get kicked off the altar boys if it was the man that gave it to him?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

The boy got caught, the man didn't.

MRS. MULLER

How come the priest didn't get kicked off the priesthood?

SISTER ALOYSIUS

He's a frown man, educated. And he knows what's at stake. It's not easy to pin someone like that down.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 43)

For Mrs. Muller, in a disreputable situation between Father Flynn and her son, the adult man should be blamed as he technically and supposedly has better judgement of a moral compass, possibly proficient at a set of Christian principles of conduct. Moreover, an adult man who is also believed to be religious is expected to refrain himself from illicit sexual act. She even questions on the unreasonable practice of only penalising the student, not the so-called adult; in her own way, this is also a form of going against a patriarchal organisation. – a clergy man in an organisation led by man and protected profusely by a large number of men in the name of religion sanctity.

Howie, Becca's husband, has a rather contrasting attitude as compared to Becca. Even though he convinces Becca and her family that he has moved on, his few actions are anything but. First, Howie is an insensitive person who can't linger around his wife's fragile mood as he thinks it has been going on too long, and eager for Becca to follow his so-called footsteps in recovery. He believes that Becca can successfully emulate his success in conquering fear and grief, if Becca listens to his suggestions, or complying with his needs. This is an example of how men can be oblivious and blasé in understanding a woman's emotions.

HOWIE

It's been almost eight months.

BECCA

But who's keeping track?

HOWIE

I am. I'm keeping track. I'm sorry. What? That makes me perverted?
Wanting to have sex with my wife?

BECCA

I didn't say that.

HOWIE

Well you give me these looks like I should feel guilty.

BECCA

Funny, I've been getting the same looks from you.

HOWIE

When have I ever made you feel guilty?

BECCA

I'm not just ready yet, Howie. I'm sorry if you think that's abnormal.

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2008, p. 42)

From the aforementioned scenario, Howie is coaxing Becca to make love to him, as he thinks Becca has been avoiding his "wifely" duty. His insensitivity reflects the stronghold of patriarchal organisation in a society, where "the fairer sex" is expected to adhere whenever a demanding male person is in need of something. He is the symbol of suppression from the patriarchal group, and Becca denying his attempt for sex is considered as an act challenging the patriarchal organisation.

At one time, he accuses Becca being irresponsible simply because the latter has initiated for the couple to move out from the house. Besides taking down photographs and drawings, keeping away toys, clothes and memorabilia of Danny, Becca insists that they should look for a smaller place, another house where they can start anew. All along, Howie thinks Becca is overreacting, but he gives in to Becca's wish as he thinks he is the more rational partner in the marriage. Alas, one night, he accuses Becca of totally in deep in eliminating traces of Danny when she accidentally erases a videotape recording of Danny's activities.

HOWIE

What'd you do here?!

BECCA

What's the matter?!

HOWIE

What is this?!

BECCA

What's *what*?!

HOWIE

The *television*. What is this?

BECCA

It's the Discovery Channel. The tornado program. You said you wanted to watch it. I recorded it for you. Why?

HOWIE

For *chrissake*!

BECCA

What's the matter?

HOWIE

It's Danny's tape. You recorded over Danny's tape.

BECCA

No, I didn't. *Pride and Prejudice* was on that tape. We were watching it last night.

HOWIE

I switched them.

BECCA

What?!

HOWIE

I watched Danny's tape later. After you went to bed.

BECCA

Why didn't you take it out of the machine?!

HOWIE

Why didn't you check to see what was in there?!

BECCA

I assumed it was the TV tape!

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p.79-80)

From the conversation, the researcher believes that Howie is responsible for the snafu that leads to the elimination of Danny's home movie. Instead of admitting his own mistake, he is trying to place it on Becca, as Becca purportedly has shown actions of trying to minimise the traces of Danny's life (or existence). Moreover, while he is pointing finger at Becca for literally "not moving on", it seems that Howie is also holding back. While Becca is more forthcoming and honest about her emotions, Howie is doing it behind of everyone; the researcher believes that Howie is not frailer than Becca altogether. He needs to be around support group (or relying heavily on others) and this gives him more excuse to be away from home and slowly works things over with Becca. His reservation about showing his emotions, or sharing his "human side", is a threat to his patriarchal status in the society.

During the open house, when Jason Willett shows up out of nowhere, Howie is the one who shows the strongest reaction. While most people expect Becca to lose her cool as she is the one who deliberately takes her own time to make amend with Danny's death, it was Howie who has nothing but anger and negative reaction toward Jason.

HOWIE

An open house sign doesn't mean we're holding walking tours in here.

JASON

I know that.

HOWIE

You can't just pop in because the door's open. We were conducting business.

JASON

That's why I waited until that couple left. It looked like things were finished here.

HOWIE

Well they're not.

JASON

Then I apologize.

HOWIE

We *live* here, okay? This is our *home*.

BECCA

All right, Howie.

HOWIE

You don't just walk into someone's home like that. Especially given the *circumstances*. You should show a little respect.

JASON

I'm sorry. I'm sorry I interrupted. Sorry.

HOWIE

You believe that? The balls on that kid? Walking in here?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 113-114)

The aforesaid scenario is rather surprising, as Howie (who is supposedly to be “the more rational other half”) blows his top when he realises that Jason walks in after a couple of possible buyers. Meanwhile, one could see that Becca holds her fort and tries to calm him down. In fact, later Becca agrees to meet Jason in person when Howie declines to be around (as the researcher has discussed earlier); apparently, Becca discloses that Howie “is not ready” to face Jason. It seems that once again, Howie has shown his vulnerability as compared to the indomitable Becca. While he was critical about Becca's reluctance to supposedly “move on” at the beginning of the play, Jason's sudden appearance at the open house (and his previous outburst about the accidentally-erased video tape) somehow exposes that like Becca, Howie himself has not quite “moved on” from the tragic death of his son; Lindsay-Abaire is entailing that both men and women are equal when it comes to grieving; they just react differently.

As a precocious teenager who has to grow up faster as she is facing the impending divorce of her parents, Jean Fordham is likely to not seeing eye to eye with her parents; at times, she is caught in loggerheads with her mother. This form of rebellion against her parents is, to some extent, translated as a challenge towards authority; in real life situation, the authority is seen as a patriarchal-based organisation. Nevertheless, as much as Jean is always feuding with her mother, she is even more critical of her father's extramarital affair.

JEAN

He and Mom are separated right now.

JOHNNA

I'm sorry.

JEAN

He's fucking one of his students which is pretty uncool, if you ask me. Some people would think that's cool, like those dicks who teach with him in the Humanities Department because they're all fucking their students or wish they were fucking their students. "Lo-liii-ta."⁶⁵ I mean, I don't care and all, he can fuck whoever he wants and he's a teacher and that's who teachers meet, students. He was just a turd the way he went about it and didn't give Mom a chance to respond or anything. What sucks now is that Mom's watching me like a hawk, like, she's afraid I'll have some post-divorce freak-out and become some heroin addict or shoot everybody at school. Or God forbid, lose my virginity. I don't know what it is about Dad splitting that put Mom on hymen patrol. Do you have a boyfriend?

(Letts, 2008, p. 42-43)

In the researcher's opinion, Jean not only loathes her father's affair, but also criticising his father's counterparts in the college for allowing and supporting her father's affair as they are likely to have their own rendezvous on the side. This is a blunt assertion that men or patriarchal members are always allowed to behave in a misogynistic manner, even if it would upset members of the opposite sex. Moreover, her father's adultery has caused her own freedom as her mother is beginning to be stricter in guarding her day-to-day activities. It is interesting to also learn that she is unhappy that her mother is not given enough respect from her father the moment the adultery was discovered, a hint that she is still an ally to her mother. Throughout the play, Jean has exhibited the norm usually displayed by a rebellious teenager; she starts smoking cigarettes shortly after her parents announced their separation and impending divorce, and later she starts experimenting with marijuana. Jean's rebellion is her way of affirming her liberty as a growing woman; she even dares to put her parents at risk with her mischievous attitude.

JEAN

Do you mind if I smoke a bowl?

⁶⁵ A reference to Vladimir Nabokov's controversial novel *Lolita*, which touches on a forbidden relationship between a middle aged man and a teenage girl.

JOHNNA

I. No, I –

JEAN

‘Cause there’s no place I can go. Y’know, I’m staying right by Grandma’s room, and if I go outside, they’re gonna wonder –

JOHNNA

Right –

JEAN

Mom and Dad don’t mind. You won’t get into trouble or anything.

JOHNNA

Okay.

JEAN

Okay. You sure? I say they don’t mind. If they knew I stuck this bud under the cap of Dad’s deodorant before our flight and then sat there sweating like in that movie *Maria Full of Grace*. Did you see that?

JOHNNA

I don’t think so.

JEAN

I just mean they don’t mind that I smoke pot. Dad doesn’t. Mom kind of does. She thinks it’s bad for me. I think the real reason it bugs her is ‘cause Dad smokes pot, too, and she wishes he didn’t.

(Letts, 2008, p. 41-42)

Jean’s attitude towards her father’s penchant for sex with younger woman suddenly takes a dramatic turn during her marijuana excursion in the kitchen with her Aunt Karen’s fiancé, Steve. This time, she almost becomes a victim to Steve’s own sexual craving, when he tries to grab her breasts.

STEVE

Here, let me feel.

JEAN

You’re just an old perv.

STEVE

No shit. Christ, you got a great set. How old are you?

JEAN

I’m fifteen, perv.

STEVE

Show ‘em to me.

JEAN
No, perv.

STEVE
Shhh. Yeah, show 'em to me. I won't look.

JEAN
If you won't look, there's no point in showing them to you.

STEVE
Okay, okay, I'll look then...I'll show you mine if you show me yours.

JEAN
I don't want to see yours.

(Letts, 2008, p. 116)

Steve is exhibiting the typical characteristics of sexual assailants, especially when their target is a supposedly young and inexperienced teenage girl. Moreover, they believe that because they are men and white, they can get away from troubles, should they ever get caught, as insinuated in the next conversation between Steve and Jean.

JEAN
You're gonna get us both in trouble.

STEVE
I'm white and over thirty. I don't get in trouble.

(Letts, 2008, p. 117)

Steve's admission about his profile reflects the arrogance of a white patriarch member in a society, where men are likely to get away from any accusations of sexual assaults. Sadly, even in the age of Third Wave Feminism, women are still threatened by the probability of sexual assaults around the world, even in the so-called most advanced society in the world. Alas, when he is finally caught by Johnna, his fiancé Karen is taking his sides as her personal goal to marry her idyllic companion is more imperative than keeping her allies with her fellow women; this is the consequence of an action caused by the patriarchal member that challenges the harmonious setting in a family between female members.

KAREN
I can do without a speech.

BARBARA

I beg your pardon?

KAREN

I'm leaving. We're leaving. Back to Florida, tonight, *now*. Me and Steve, together. You want to give me some grief about that?

BARBARA

Now wait just a goddamn –

KAREN

You better find out from Jean just exactly what went on in there before you start pointing fingers, that's all I'm saying. 'Cause I doubt Jean's exactly blameless in all this. And I'm not blaming her. Just because I said she's not blameless, that doesn't mean I've blamed her. I'm saying she might share in the responsibility. You understand me? I know Steve should know better than Jean, that she's only fourteen. My point is, it's not cut and dried, black and white, good and bad. It lives where everything lives: somewhere in the middle. Where everything lives, where all the rest of us live, everyone but you.

BARBARA

Karen –

KAREN

I'm not defending him. He's not perfect. Just like all the rest of us, down here in the muck. I'm no angel myself. I've done some things I'm not proud of. Things you'll never know about. Know what? I may even have to do some things I'm not proud of again. 'Cause sometimes life puts you in a corner that way. And I am a human being, after all.

(Letts, 2008, p. 121)

At first glance, Karen is passing herself as a submissive woman whose love and affection for man has blinded her from making a rational decision. However, she is making the decision on her own, without any pressure or influence from Steve. In fact, she admits that Steve is no angel; she is willing to accept him for what he is. Here, Karen is an example of a woman who may have achieved much in her life, but still becoming reliable on a man's presence in order to make her life complete, thus proving the fact that the existence of patriarchy can threaten a woman's progress; Steve's presence has threatened the femininity bond between women – in this case, between Karen and Barbara, as well as between Karen and Jean.

4.3 Socialist Feminism

In studying the elements of socialist feminism in the themes and character and characterisation in *Proof, Doubt, A Parable* (henceforth to be referred to as *Doubt*), *Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County*, the researcher is utilising these following as elements: the idea of living in a Utopian world; emphasis on collaboration between members of society towards achieving harmony; overcoming oppression based on race, economy, status and nationalities; overcoming alienation of gender stereotypes in achieving equality; and diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity.

4.3.1 The Idea of Living in A Utopian World

The term “Utopia” was first invented by Sir Thomas More in 1516. It was coined from the Greek word *ou-topos*, which means 'no place' or 'nowhere'. Essentially, Utopia refers to an idyllic commonwealth whose populaces exist under seemingly perfect conditions. In socialist feminism, Utopia refers to a situation or a world where women are living in an unadulterated, perfect condition; hence, conflicts or disputes are non-existent, women are able to achieve their potential to succeed and men are not considered as threat to the presence of women.

Johnna’s willingness to be a part of the Weston household is not only her way to support herself in her quest to be an independent person, but her presence will contribute to peace-making element in the Weston household; in other words, Johnna’s presence and her commitment to the family (preparing meals, looking after Violet, etc.) would turn the Weston household into a Utopia. For once, after Beverly’s funeral, arguments erupt between Barbara and Bill, Violet and Ivy, and Mattie Fae and Little Charles. When Johnna appears to call them for dinner, all arguments cease immediately, returning the situation of the house to “normal” and peaceful. They do it out of respect for Johnna, who is an outsider (as she is not related to the family) and it is improper to

drag her into family acrimonies. It is a rather interesting observation that it takes a Native American from Cheyenne tribe to restore peace and stability in a house full of Caucasians; the researcher is looking at this situation in a relatively ironic situation: A Native American bringing restoration of order in a territory that initially belongs to her (and her ancestors) that has been explored by the forefathers of the Westons, who came as immigrants and took over the proprietorship of Osage County. Given the fact that the Cheyenne tribe is known for its intimacy with nature, Johnna's task as a Utopian agent in a turbulent and hostile household is fitting and reasonable.

4.3.2 Emphasis on Collaboration between Members of Society Towards

Achieving Harmony

Collective action is the activity of a group that is inclined to achieve a mutual objective. When women get together and take part in collective action, the strength of the group's resources, knowledge and efforts is combined to reach a goal shared by all parties. In some of the plays, the characters are collaborating in order to ensure the living condition or their environment are secured and safe from anarchism, delinquency or injustice, so others would live equally protected. This aspect focuses more on working together equally to achieve stability and harmony. Some characters spend their equal time either to keep company or to solve a prolonged addiction problem.

Both Claire and Hal in *Proof* are trying to provide a better living condition for Catherine, especially right after the confrontation between them after Catherine's revelation about her work on a theorem equation. While Claire's intention is solely based on her responsibility as Catherine's caretaker (as discussed in the section on cultural feminism), Claire's action in striving to provide Catherine a more stabilised living condition is best perceived as her quest to provide a harmonious situation for her younger sister. As the researcher had discussed earlier, Claire has been trying to

convince her sister to move to New York, and this episode of conflict is the final straw for her to take action. First, in protecting her sister from falling further in to depression, Claire discourages Hal from contacting her sister, as she believes that Hal is a threat to the aforesaid harmonious condition that she is providing for Catherine.

HAL

Is Catherine here?

CLAIRE

I don't think this is a good time, Hal.

HAL

Could I see her?

CLAIRE

Not now.

HAL

What's the matter?

CLAIRE

She's sleeping.

HAL

Can I wait here until she gets up?

CLAIRE

She's been sleeping since yesterday. She won't get up. She won't eat, won't talk to me. I couldn't go home. I'm going to wait until she seems okay to travel.

HAL

I'd like to talk to her.

CLAIRE

I don't think it's a good idea.

HAL

Has she said anything?

CLAIRE

About you? No.

HAL

Yesterday...I know I didn't do what she wanted.

CLAIRE

Neither of us did.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 56)

Claire's adamant about discouraging Hal from seeing her younger sister continues when she questions Hal's intention when they (Catherine and Hal) slept together, and after a while she finally convinces that Hal truly cares for her sister. In her last attempt to usher her sister away into a more stabilised living condition, Claire finally resolves her differences with Hal when she is convinced that Hal is no longer a threat to Catherine; in fact, Claire later asks Hal to join her in providing a more harmonious living condition for her sister, as she believes that Hal's feeling for her sister is genuine.

CLAIRE

I don't mean to be rude but I have a lot to do.

HAL

There's one more thing. You're not going to like it.

CLAIRE

Sure, take the notebook. Hold on a sec, I'll get it for you.

HAL

I thought this would be harder.

CLAIRE

Don't worry, I understand. It's very sweet you want to see Catherine but of course you'd like to see the notebook too.

HAL

It's – No, it's my responsibility – as a professional I can't turn my back on the necessity of the –

CLAIRE

Relax. I don't care. Take it. What would I do with it?

HAL

You sure?

CLAIRE

Yes.

HAL

You trust me with this?

CLAIRE

Yes.

HAL

You just said I don't know what I'm doing.

CLAIRE

I think you're a little bit of an idiot but you're not dishonest. Someone needs to figure out what's in there. I can't do it. It should be done here, at Chicago: my father would like that. When you decide what we've got let me know what the family should do.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 57-58)

Claire has offered the book in question for Hal's safekeeping, so that she can focus her attention and effort in turning newer pastures for Catherine. She does not totally surrender the book to Hal; she is perceived to keep away the book from her sister's sight as an effort to mollify her sister's furore, and Hal is now selected as her ally, or a willing participant, in preserving harmony in the family. It is fascinating to encounter that two people who are at loggerheads with each other finally come together.

Hal, in his part, extends the trust bestowed upon him by not taking advantage to claim the work for his sole benefit. Previously, when Hal was first introduced to the audience, he is rather devious and egocentric, looking for possibilities to discover unpublished works of his recently deceased mentor. After encountering Catherine, and later falls for her, Hal's aforesaid negative qualities slowly diminished. As his affection toward Catherine grows, so does his responsibility in ensuring her well-being, especially after Claire returns to New York. After Claire surrenders the book to him, Hal studies the theories cautiously. He is both surprised and perplexed with what he discovered, even sharing some of the theories with his close confidantes. Later, he returns to Catherine's place, shortly after Claire furiously returns to New York by herself. As he has willingly collaborated with Claire to safeguard Catherine's stability (as mentioned earlier), Hal confesses that he is convinced that the works in the much-disputed book is indeed done by Catherine.

HAL

I mean we have questions. Working on this must have been amazing. I'd love just to hear you talk about some of this.

CATHERINE

No.

HAL

You'll have to deal with it eventually, you know. You can't ignore it, you'll have to get it published. You'll have to talk to someone. Take it, at least. Then I'll go. Here.

CATHERINE

I don't want it.

HAL

Come on, Catherine. I'm trying to correct things.

(Auburn, 2001, p. 69)

Hal's mea culpa, as stated in the script, is another sign of his deed in a collaborative action to elongate Catherine's good spirits in the wake of her outburst just a few days earlier.

When Father Flynn finally succumbs to the pressure imposed on him by Sister Aloysius, it is pertinent to remember that it was driven by Sister Aloysius alone. Instead, it was a collaborative effort between Sister Aloysius and Sister James. Remember, in the beginning Sister James starts to express her doubt over a possible demeaning tryst between father Flynn and Donald Muller; as a result, Sister Aloysius decides to pursue an investigation over this matter. The collaboration between Sister Aloysius and Sister James has one sole intention: to eradicate any forms of sexual delinquency and mischief encounter within the Catholic society at St. Nicholas parochial school.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Sister James, my dear, you must try to imagine a very different kind of person than yourself. A man who would do this has already denied a great deal. If I tell the monsignor and he is satisfied with father Flynn's rebuttal, the matter is suppressed.

SISTER JAMES

Well then, tell the bishop.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

The hierarchy of the church does not permit my going to the bishop. No. Once I tell the monsignor, it's out of my hands, I'm helpless. I'm going to have to come up with a pretext, get Father Flynn into my office. Try to force it. You'll have to be there.

SISTER JAMES

Me? No! Why? Oh no, Sister! I couldn't!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I can't be closeted alone with a priest. Another Sister must be in attendance, and it has to be you. The circle of confidence mustn't be made any wider. Think of the boy if this gets out.

SISTER JAMES

I can't do it!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Why not? You're squeamish!

SISTER JAMES

I'm not equipped! It's...I would be embarrassed. I couldn't possibly be present if the topic were spoken of!

SISTER ALOYSIUS

Please, Sister, do not indulge yourself in witless adolescent scruples. I assure you I would prefer a more seasoned confederate. But you are the one who came to me.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 26)

As Sister Aloysius plots her plan to capture Father Flynn, and simultaneously stops any forms of sexual abuse in a school under her tutelage, she implores cooperation from Sister James, most importantly as a witness to a would be interrogation that Sister Aloysius plans in guise of a discussion on Christmas pageant. A witness is required for credibility purpose, that what Sister Aloysius is attempting to do is not a vain effort, but rather as a precaution to warrant the safety of her students; this is when a collaboration would be fruitful and highly required. After she fails to get Father Flynn to come clean, Sister Aloysius solicits another woman to assist her in solving the tantalising case. She invites Mrs. Muller to her office and conveys the possible inappropriate contact between father Flynn and Donald Muller. If she successfully persuades Mrs. Muller to share any possible information from Donald Muller, Sister Aloysius could use the information to strengthen her case in bringing the case to justice, thus removing Father Flynn from her school. Alas, Mrs. Muller has nothing to offer, except for her pleas to keep her son in St. Nicholas. The failed collaboration leads to nothing, as opposed to a successful effort.

Aside from highlighting the principles of intra-feminine relationship and becoming nurturers, the close relationship between Becca, Izzy and Nat can also be explained from the perspective of socialist feminism. Throughout *Rabbit Hole*, Becca is always accompanied by either Izzy or Nat; sometimes by both of them. In the researcher's observation, Becca is certainly calmer and more peaceful when she is around the aforesaid characters; in accordance to their aspiration to provide a more peaceable and soother situation at home, Becca gains her confidence and sagacity to finally meet Jason in person. In other words, the existence or company of another woman in (or women) in *Rabbit Hole* brings forward the elements of harmony in the life of a woman. After the aforementioned meeting, Izzy witnesses that Becca is even more tolerant while communicating with Howie, who suddenly returns early from a would-be support group meeting.

BECCA

I thought you had group.

HOWIE

I decided to skip it.

IZZY

Mom, we should get going, if you wanna get to bingo.

NAT

Why, what time is it?

IZZY

We gotta go. Auggie wants me to register for Lamaze, so I can learn how to shove a baby out of my body. Thanks for the stuff.

BECCA

You're welcome.

IZZY

Bye, Howie.

NAT

Bye, sweetie.

HOWIE

Bye, guys.

NAT

Bingo's just at Saint Catherine's, you know. What's the bum's rush for?

IZZY

Can we talk about this in the car please?

(Lindsay-Abaire, 2006, p. 148-149)

As Izzy listens that Howie decides not to attend the aforementioned support group meeting, she takes this as an indication that Howie is ready to fix his deteriorating marriage, and Becca's calmer response is also another hint. As a result, Izzy cheekily coerces Nat to leave both Howie and Becca alone. This collaborative effort in supporting Becca's road to emotional recovery has finally become fruitful; later, Becca decides not to move out and sell their house as she chooses to give a marriage a second chance.

The collaborative effort to assist in Violet's recovery in *August: Osage County* is somewhat more perplexing. When Violet's incoherent behaviour breaches the threshold of everyone's patience (especially Barbara's), Barbara decides to take matters into her own hand by wrestling down Violet in a physical altercation after the post-funeral dinner. Furthermore, Barbara plans to destroy or getting rid of Violet's secret stash or storage of drugs all over the house, and she successfully solicits the cooperation of others in the house. Shortly before the physical altercation that the researcher mentioned earlier, and before Barbara resolves to begin the raid on Violet's personal space, the situation in the Weston family home is heated as some family members are having issues among themselves: Barbara and Bill are still bickering over his affair with Cindy, and Violet suddenly declares that both of them are divorcing (much to everyone's surprise); Mattie Fae is still berating over Little Charlie's gaucheness for missing Beverly's funeral and his inept table manner; Ivy is demanding Violet to not prowl in her personal life; Violet talking gibberish about almost everyone at the table; and finally picks up a verbal fight with Barbara. This last incident forewarns Barbara that her

mother is too dependent on drugs, and directs everyone to assist her in disposing the remaining drugs.

BARBARA

Gimme those goddamn pills –

VIOLET

I'll eat you alive, girl!

IVY

Barbara, stop it!

VIOLET

Goddamn you...goddamn you, Barb...

BARBARA

SHUT UP! Okay, Pill raid. Johnna, help me in the kitchen. Bill, take Ivy and Jean upstairs. Ivy, you remember how to do this, right?

IVY

Yeah...

BARBARA

Jean, everything. Go through everything, every counter, every drawer, every shoe box. Nothing's too personal. Anything even looks suspicious, throw it in a box and we can sort it out later. You understand?

CHARLIE

What should we do?

BARBARA

Get Mom some black coffee and a wet towel and listen to her bullshit. Karen, call Dr. Burke.

KAREN

What do you want me to say?

BARBARA

Tell him we got a sick woman here.

VIOLET

You can't do this! This is my house! This is my house!

BARBARA

You don't get it, do you? I'M RUNNING THINGS NOW!

(Letts, 2008, p. 96-97)

It is highly unlikely for Barbara to act on her own, so this collaboration between her and other family members leads to intervention of Violet's protracted addiction. While

Violet becomes hysterical as she feels that her privacy is being violated and Barbara is trespassing her territory, which is a typical response to any addict who is in denial of her debilitating habit, Barbara and other family members believe that their action is justified and must be done in contending Violet's addiction, which becomes the main source of her aggressiveness and grievances.

4.3.3 Overcoming Oppression Based On Race, Economy, Status and Nationalities

From sociological aspect, oppression is a concept describing the connection between dominance and subservience among human beings in which one benefits from the orderly abuse, mistreatment, and inequality imposed toward another party. Throughout history, women had experienced a certain degree of oppression from the domineering patriarch organisation, or a society controlled by primeval beliefs that have been undermining the status of women in general. Nevertheless, women have been able to overcome oppression regardless of their race, economy, status and nationalities. This element ensures the characters are allowed to overcome many obstacles in their daily lives regardless of race and economy status. The characters are working their way to gain opportunity experienced by others, so that they are able to close the gap between them and others who are more privileged. Having access to better education and employment are two best elements representing this element.

Mrs. Muller in *Doubt* tries hard to secure a better future for her son in the height of Civil Rights movement. The link between her aspirations to the aforesaid social justice movement is the timeframe of the play. *Doubt* is set in the year 1964, the same year when the Act of Civil Rights 1964 came into fruition. According to the official website of Library of Congress, the enactment's eleven sections "prohibited discrimination in the workplace, public accommodations, public facilities, and agencies receiving federal funds, and strengthened prohibitions on school segregation and discrimination in voter registration" and protects American citizens regardless of their

ethnicity, religion, gender or national origin. Technically, African Americans in the North had been enjoying the same privileges just like their Caucasian counterparts, but there would be grey areas when discriminations were inevitable; the African Americans in the South were living in the worse situation; Jim Crow laws, state and local laws that enforced racial segregation in the Southern part, were fully enforced from the late 19th century until 1965, as it was repealed once the Act of Civil Rights was passed in 1964. Shanley has created Mrs. Muller as a symbol of recognition of the aforementioned enactment, which technically recognises all citizens equally, a trait that is parallel to the quintessence of socialist feminism.

MRS. MULLER

Please leave my son out of this. My husband would kill that child over a thing like this.

SISTER ALOYSIUS

I'll try.

MRS. MULLER

I don't know, Sister. You may think you're doing good, but the world's a hard place. I don't know that you and me are on the same side. I'll be standing with my son and those who are good with my son. It'd be nice to see you there. Nice talking with you, Sister. Good morning.

(Shanley, 2005, p. 45)

From the aforesaid conversation, Mrs. Muller is determined that nothing or no other external factors can derail her dreams of seeing her son succeeding well in life, who happens to be the first African American students in St. Nicholas. The time has come for underdogs or underappreciated people like her, or her family, to achieve a better future, and getting education from a reputable school is definitely the first step into that direction. Moreover, things were better for African Americans in general since the Act of Civil Rights were implemented – more access to quality education is one of the many benefits. In *Doubt*, Mrs. Muller wants Donald Muller to overcome the adversity after experiencing numerous years of oppressions, either due to his ethnicity, physical appearance and sexuality.

4.3.4 Diversity of Gender, Class, Sexuality and Ethnicity

Celebrating diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity is essential in life, since socialist feminism believes in equal representation of women (and men) from all walks of life. In these plays, characters made up from different ethnic groups are treated with respect and given the same reverence. The minority characters are treated like they belong to the community, (in this case, the majority characters are Caucasians), even though the aforesaid minority characters may exhibit a sense of apprehension as they still consider themselves outsiders. Class differences are to be minimised if there are discrepancies between the characters in the selected plays. Simultaneously, there should be recognition of all genders (not just the usual 'female' and 'male', may include 'transgender' or 'sexual fluidity' persons), encompassing many different types of sexualities.

Shanley includes an African American character (in fact, two to be precise, but Donald Muller is only mentioned throughout the play) such as Mrs. Muller to further illustrates the changing society in the 1960s. Besides highlighting a sensitive issue such as sexual abuses committed by clergymen (which were always denied or rather silenced in order to protect the Catholic officialdom), *Doubt* is also putting an emphasis on the turning point of race relations and the aforementioned Civil Rights movement, as indicated and much discussed in the previous sections. It is important for Shanley to include the aforementioned African American characters, because the real issue between the purportedly impropriety act between Father Flynn and Donald Muller would only be considered as more severe (thus offering more dramatic strain and conflict) as the purported victim is the first student of a minority ethnic in the school. As New Yorkers, both Mrs. Muller and her son Donald are spared from the draconian Jim Crow laws, as mentioned in the previous section, as the state of New York has never practiced the aforementioned laws. However, they are certainly facing limitations

when it comes to enrolment to a better school, as shown in *Doubt*, and this is the sole reason why Mrs. Muller is willing to do anything but remove her son (or allowing him being removed by the school administration), as her character is indicating that education is the only way out of poverty or appalling neighbourhood (since the location of St. Nicholas is in Bronx, New York, which is widely known for its ghetto status). Simultaneously, Donald Muller, as discussed in the previous sections as well, is exhibiting his homosexual tendencies; Mrs. Muller even acknowledges this while in a heated discussion with Sister Aloysius. As for Father Flynn, his sexuality is rather ambiguous, as he maintains his innocence throughout the play, but *Doubt* has put a spotlight on the liaison between homosexuality and Catholic clergymen.

Johnna Monevata in *August: Osage County* has been described as a Native American from the Cheyenne tribe. She is a reasonably important character in a play full of dysfunctional and neurotic characters; Johnna's characterisation is considered as the "most normal" as compared to others, as she is fulfilling her duty not only as a housekeeper, but also as a peacekeeper, protector and finally, pacifier. An interesting fact about the location of the play is that in reality, Osage County is located within the proximity of Osage Nation Reservation, which is one of the most renowned reservation areas for Native Americans around Pawhuska, Barnsdall and Bartlesville in Oklahoma.⁶⁶ The researcher believes that the inclusion of a Native American character in this play is an homage to the indigenous people of the aforesaid county, which at one time witnessed a bloody massacre known as "The Osage Indian" murders.⁶⁷ Moreover, Johnna is also seen as a purist to her cultural background. She decides to revert her surname from "Youngbird" to "Monevata", as she is proud with her heritage; earlier,

⁶⁶ This description is adapted from the official website of the Osage Tourism Board.

⁶⁷ According to the book *Bloodland: A Family Story of Oil, Greed and Murder on the Osage Reservation* by Dennis McAuliffe, Jr., the aforesaid murders were a series of assassinations of wealthy Osage people in Osage County, Oklahoma in the early 1920s; in his book, McAuliffe, Jr. described the increasing number of unsolved murders as the "Reign of Terror", which lasted from 1921 to 1925, as described in the newspapers at that time.

she is also described as wearing a necklace with a turtle pendant containing her umbilical cord.

BEVERLY

May I ask about the name? He⁶⁸ was Youngbird and you are...

JOHNNA

Monevata.

BEVERLY

"Monevata."

JOHNNA

I went back to the original language.

BEVERLY

And does it mean "young bird"?

JOHNNA

Yes.

BEVERLY

And taking the name that was your choice?

JOHNNA

Mm-hmm.

(Letts, 2008, p. 12-13)

Johnna's decision to revert her name to its native language is also an implication that she is a young woman who has the liberty to explore or establish her own identity while existing in a world where she is viewed or considered as "minority." Furthermore, being different than the rest of the Westons should not be a factor as to why she can't exercise her rights to be practicing some parts of her ethnic customs; after all, Osage County technically belongs to her people, therefore she should be allowed to hold on to her cultural beliefs. In addition, Johnna's inclusion in *August: Osage County* is also a reminder to general audience that Native Americans are part and parcel of American society.

⁶⁸ Beverly Weston was referring to Johnna's father, whom he knew as "Mr. Youngbird."

4.3.5 Overcoming Alienation of Gender Stereotypes in Achieving Equality

Theoretically, gender stereotypes are predetermined concepts in which characteristics and roles for women and men are subjectively defined and allocated by their gender. This stereotyping hampers the progress of the natural talents and abilities of both genders, as well as their educational and professional experiences and life opportunities in general. As a result, stereotypes about women may be utilised to rationalise and uphold the ancient practice of men exhibiting power over women, as well as sexist attitudes that impede women from advancing their cause. Owing to the aforesaid situation, overcoming alienation of gender stereotypes in life is one of the ways socialist feminists believed in achieving equality.

In *Proof*, Catherine's desire to excel in her study and defiantly working hard on her quantum theory reflects her determination to succeed in a territory dominated by men. Not only that she inherited her intelligence to excel in mathematics from her father, she is also driven to be as good as, if not better than, her father. Catherine pursues her tertiary education at Northwestern University, which in reality is a reputable private research university based in Evanston, Illinois, with a couple of branches opened in Chicago and Doha, Qatar. Based on the recent check at the university's official website, the Department of Mathematics, which is located at the Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences, has 57 faculty members; sadly, only 12 of the faculty members are women. This is a testament that men are still dominating the mathematical field, while women are still struggling in the aforesaid department. Ironically, the situation reflects Catherine's fortitude to continuously work on her quantum theory, and hoping to publish it one day, which is the reason why she is planning to stay behind in Chicago before she can relocate and restart her life in New York. The researcher assumes that once the theorem is published, Catherine is likely to follow in the footsteps of her father, pursuing her academia career in the same department where her father used to

teach for many years before his bout with schizophrenia. Catherine's struggle is also likely to be seen as her plea to be treated just as another whiz in mathematics, regardless of her gender. Performing excellently in the aforesaid field does not require physical strength, just capabilities of solving theories using one's intuition and intelligence, and as far as the researcher is concerned, the measurement of intelligence is not dignified or classified according to gender.

4.4 Conclusion

The researcher found that these elements are woven effectively in the aforesaid plays (by studying each respective text), even though 'feminism' was not on the mind of the playwrights when these plays were written; in fact, these plays were all written by male playwrights. The elements of liberal feminism, cultural feminism, and socialist feminism were discovered after studying the two different criteria of performance – themes and characters and characterisations. All elements of feminism studied for this research can be found in all four performances, thus become the frequent sphere of influences in all four productions.

Cultural feminists believe in injecting harmony, maternal or feminine values into everyday lives and the invaluable connection in relating to life, thus lead to the celebration of 'woman-ness' as caregivers and nurturers. Throughout the selected plays, the researcher was exposed to the optimistic attributes of family life, a highly favoured organisation within the lieu of this region. However, the familial atmosphere in these plays is observed from an alternative dimension, where female characters are regarded as equal participants rather than passive constituents. The cultural feminism in these plays also celebrates motherhood and sisterhood. Regardless of differences in these characters, most of the protagonists are indeed nurturers and caregivers, who are able to connect to life and nature. Cultural feminism concentrates more on familial environment; while not as outspoken as its liberal counterparts, cultural feminism

demands equal attention in issues pertaining to the essence of being female. The core element of liberal feminism is all about exploring opportunity to be oneself – proud of being a woman but not necessarily embodying femininity. Cultural feminism, on the other hand, place the embodiment of oneself with femininity and female attributes, as female-ness is something that women are born with, thus they must embrace it. This is the reason why elements of cultural feminism are present in the selected Pulitzer Prize winners, as the characters written by the male playwrights are also closely related to real-life situation, except for one element: “the capability to relate to life and nature” can’t be found in *Doubt, A Parable*. Throughout the analysis, it is revitalising to notice that the aspect of caretakers, as well as the concept of mothering and intra-feminine relationship between women in a family or an organisation are well-insinuated by the playwrights, given the fact that all playwrights whose works are studied in this thesis are men. The realistic issues of mental health, sexual abuse and drug addiction are too rampant to be ignored as they are still proliferating rather aggressively in the society around the world, and in the plays, the response to handle those issues are linked to women – a sister, a principal or a daughter is able offer resolution to the aforesaid problems. Moreover, the playwrights are also lucid in their creation of “mothering characters”; in the past, mothers are always being portrayed as meek and passive, but *Doubt, A Parable, Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County* are exhibiting powerful, beneficent and benevolent mothers. The same goes for an educator – a teacher is not only “teaching” but becomes a protector as well. Sisters may grow up and become apart, but catastrophe and tragic event will bring them back together, in order to not only offer moral support, but to assist one another to get back on their feet again. In a nutshell, cultural feminism is the most influential theory in the selected four plays for this research.

Liberal feminism has faith in ideas of individual dignity and the right to seek self-fulfilment; promote a positive self-image for being a woman; free to take action that is beyond physical aggression; having access to increase opportunities, and suppressing male's sexual desire towards female. From the researcher's point of view, all four productions have the aforesaid elements, whether in the themes or characters and characterisations, except for *Rabbit Hole* which did not have any elements on "having access to increase opportunities", while *Proof* did not have any elements on "suppressing male's sexual desire towards female." Major characters in all four have no qualms in displaying their own identity with dignity and non-rudimentary reverence and do not offer any jolting or discourteous qualities, as liberalised characters are leaning towards the positive outlook in voicing out their agendas. Their actions are audacious and full of self-confidence, but beyond physical aggression as liberalised characters promote identities of women that are associated with non-violence traits. It is an invigorating experience for the audience to witness that liberals exist in the form of a mathematics prodigy, ladies in habits, stay at home and working mothers and sisters with strong careers and also a precocious teenager instead of prostitutes, sexpots and mistresses, qualities that have been wrongly or foolishly associated with feminism. Realistic issues such as the rights of schizophrenics and minorities, the implementation of sexual harassment code in our society, the struggle for overcoming drug addiction and the capability to overcome grief due to the death of loved ones are inadvertently striking chords with feminists supportive of liberalism. The elements of the aforesaid theories also emulate the social conditions surrounding the society, and not something that is unfamiliar even with average audience. As for the highlighted principles, the researcher found that liberal feminism is the most influential in all selected plays. Playwrights are always striving to create the most memorable protagonists for their plays. Catherine and Claire are the yin and yang of a small family hailed from Chicago

– different temperament and aspiration, but they have been able to show the positivity of a mathematics wunderkind threatened by the effect of manic depressive and a career-minded woman who instantly administers the daily affairs of a sister in dire need of proper attention. Catherine's decision to stay behind is her act of declaration of independence, unlike what was declared by Carol Schafer. Sister Aloysius Beauvier, a draconian principal in a Bronx parochial school, has every description written all over her but likeable. Nevertheless, she is reinforcing the image of a powerful persona in an institution surrounded by men, especially when she has encounters a possible sexual encounter between a priest and a young African American boy, whose mother is willing to commit into anything just to keep him in a respectable school. A grieving mother who is willing to make amends with the person responsible for her son's tragic demise, while her sister is determined to raise a child on her own. A volatile household full of colourful characters located in the remote area of Oklahoma; colourful in the essence that the three sisters are independent and career-minded, and the live-in housekeeper who is proud with her roots. These positive images of fictional female characters definitely keep the aspect of liberal feminism alive in performing arts; these characters, from a liberal feminism point of view, are liberated in a sense that they could function not only in theatre but in all territories of life. After all, liberal feminism deals with realistic realm – especially on self-fulfilment and empowerment of a person is still a struggle to most women, while some of their counterparts have achieved the next echelon of independence. Therefore, the researcher declares that liberal feminism has the second biggest influence in these four selected plays.

On the other hand, socialist feminism is functional sporadically in the selected performances. The idea of living in a Utopian world; emphasis on collaboration between members of society towards achieving harmony; overcoming oppression based on race, economy, status and nationalities; characters marked by diversity of gender,

class, sexuality and ethnicity; and overcoming alienation of gender stereotypes in achieving equality are the highlighted principles for analysing these selected Pulitzer Prize winners. Alas, the limitation of socialist feminism is also due to the same justification mentioned above, as the idea of Utopian world and the act of overcoming oppression based on race, economy, status and nationalities-based systems of oppression are highly political than inspirational. The word 'socialist' alone is occasionally associated with economics, and rarely utilised in performing arts. Moreover, reaching Utopia means reaching perfection, and since these plays are rather realist in nature, the idea of perfection seems alienated and ambiguous. The other obvious reason for the lack of socialist feminism content in the selected plays is that in these plays are realists in their nature, and realistically contesting social arrangements and expecting diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity in a play can be unpredictable, especially if the winners selected for Pulitzer Prize are not based on the four aforesaid elements (gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity); in other words, most playwrights stick to what's familiar to them – Caucasians write about the lives of WASPs, Latinos write about their people and culture, etc. Inclusion of characters with equal amount of existence (something like the essence of Utopia) in script from different spectrums of life are far and in between. For example, in *Doubt, A Parable*, Mrs. Muller appears in a short (but memorable) scene while her son is only mentioned in conversations. The other non-white person in this research is Johnna Monevata, a Native American housekeeper in *August: Osage County*. Based on this research, perhaps the researcher can conclude that elements of socialist feminism are not the best principles in studying plays in general.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

Chapter 1 covers the statement of problem, objectives, research scope, rationale of study and limitations of study, and also the introduction to the Pulitzer Prize winners in the 'Drama' category. It includes the history of the renowned prize, followed by the list of productions that have won the coveted prize throughout the 2000s. Chapter 2 covers the literature review for feminist theatre, an alternative channel for theatre practitioners, especially women, to showcase their experimental works. Simultaneously, this chapter dictates the history of the movement, followed by the characters and the list of feminist theatre, as well as the renowned studies conducted by feminist and theatre scholars. Simultaneously, the researcher had unveiled some rare books written on the topic of Pulitzer Prize winning dramas. Chapter 3 discusses the methodology used in this qualitative research, where highlighted principles of the selected theories were outlined, as well as the selected principles of feminist theatre that were utilised to support the contention that the selected Pulitzer Prize winning plays were influenced by feminism elements, by studying the themes and character and characterisation of each play. Writings for selected theories, the origins and the influence of the aforementioned political ideology in the world of performing arts are also included. Chapter 4 provides the analysis of the selected plays – *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable*, *Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County* by detailed explanations about the findings outlined in the previous chapter, complete with examples taken from the scripts used for productions in order to support the presence of the highlighted principles. In the following pages, the researcher had prepared a summary for each type of feminism, and the highlighted principles found in the aforesaid plays. The tables were prepared in order to offer simplified account of the analysis of the thesis, which was discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 4).

Table 5.1: Liberal Feminism

Plays Elements of Liberal Feminism	<i>Proof</i>	<i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>	<i>August: Osage County</i>
Ideas of individuality and the right to seek self-fulfilment	√	√	√	√
Promote a positive self-image for being a woman	√	√	√	√
Free to take action beyond physical aggression	√	√	√	√
Having access to increase opportunities	√	√		√
Suppressing male's sexual desire towards female		√	√	√

Table 5.2: Cultural Feminism

Plays Elements of Cultural Feminism	<i>Proof</i>	<i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>	<i>August: Osage County</i>
Injecting harmony, maternal or feminine values into everyday lives	√	√	√	√
The capability to relate to life and nature	√		√	√
Celebrate the elements of 'woman-ness', especially as caregivers and nurturers	√	√	√	√

Table 5.2, continued

Plays Elements of Cultural Feminism	<i>Proof</i>	<i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>	<i>August: Osage County</i>
Intra-feminine – emphasis on mother/daughter relations or sisterhood	✓	✓	✓	✓
Contesting the patriarchal organisation of society	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 5.3: Socialist Feminism

Plays Elements of Socialist Feminism	<i>Proof</i>	<i>Doubt, A Parable</i>	<i>Rabbit Hole</i>	<i>August: Osage County</i>
The idea of living in a Utopian world				✓
Emphasis on collaboration between members of society towards achieving harmony	✓	✓	✓	✓
Overcoming oppression based on race, economy, status and nationalities		✓		
Diversity of gender, class, sexuality and ethnicity		✓		✓
Overcoming alienation of gender stereotypes in achieving equality	✓			

5.2 Conclusion

This section reflects on the objectives for this study and a conclusion based on the study of the four selected productions that have won the coveted Pulitzer Prize. The theories used in studying the selected productions are liberal feminism, cultural feminism, and socialist feminism. The elements of these theories can be found in *Proof*, *Doubt*, *A Parable*, *Rabbit Hole* and *August: Osage County*. Each drama carries the amalgamation of liberal feminism, cultural feminism and socialist feminism, where the elements were found in both themes and character and characterisation of each play, albeit a theory has more influences than the other.

The researcher found that these elements are woven effectively in the aforesaid plays (by studying each respective text), even though ‘feminism’ was not on the mind of the playwrights when these plays were written; in fact, these plays were all written by male playwrights. The elements of liberal feminism, cultural feminism, and socialist feminism were discovered after studying the two different criteria of performance – themes and characters and characterisations. The male playwrights who wrote these plays are heavily influenced by cultural feminism, where each quality does resemble the lives or aspirations of ordinary people. This is followed by the second most influential feminism, which is liberal feminism, and finally, socialist feminism. The playwrights whose works were selected for this research are male; therefore, influence of feminism is no longer exclusive to feminist activists and scholars. These days, more men are sympathetic and recognise the issues of women. The playwrights successfully express the influence of feminist elements, even though these plays were written, most possibly, without “feminism” pinned to the finished scripts. The similarities are inevitable, as any common drama or literature concerning women or social issues are heavily influenced with the movement of feminism, especially after the golden age of Second Wave feminism, through the backlash period during Reagan conservatism and the current

Third Wave feminism. Most of the principles highlighted from each feminist theory propitiously discovered in all four plays.

As for the future of feminist-themed plays, playwrights all over the world, especially in the United States, are not abandoning the idea of feminist influence in their works. While many feminist theatre companies have ceased operations due to various reasons such as declining profits or post-feminism backlash in the 1980s, other production houses continuously produce and stage plays with influences of feminism, as women and their never-ending issues are parts and parcels in our lives. To some, the word 'feminist' itself alienates many people from embracing feminist-themed performances, due to the towering influence of conservatism and alternative rights or ferocious pursuance of right-wing agendas either in this country or abroad; nevertheless, its philosophy on improving and championing the livelihood of women are still relevant in this new century. Feminism is always related to the ideas of going against the stream of nature, as believed by the society that are heavily influenced by patriarchy, therefore many people view it as an idea that is totally unfit within religion and traditional beliefs. It is significant to stress here that feminism as a political, social, intellectual, philosophical and artistic body of thought had introduced a way of putting in women's perspectives and of reminding how gender is a construction. This is an important contribution to the way people think whether in examining history, thinking about the present and all kinds of modern day living affairs and matters of the day. However, these positive outputs have been overlooked as conservatism rejects the philosophical and artistic needs and demands for lifestyle that are more spiritual and moralistic. The theories of feminism itself change frequently, either incorporating new ideas into the existing ones (like the many new ideas of postmodern feminism), or the creation of newer theories such as lesbian feminism, black feminism (for African American

Diaspora), LGBTQ feminism, transfeminism, New Age feminism, modern Chicana feminism and many others.

In conclusion, the researcher is positively contented to construe the conjecture that David Auburn, John Patrick Shanley, David Lindsay-Abaire and Tracy Letts have injected the theories of feminism in their plays, and Pulitzer Prize committee had recognised their plays. Even though this study comprises of only four out of nine winners, the researcher is confident that Pulitzer Prize and many contemporary authors (both male and female) are heading towards the same direction in enriching the world of theatre by recognising feminism elements. The researcher is hoping that there will be more studies done in the future on the subject of this significant genre. For example, other scholars may cultivate studies on the other plays that have won Pulitzer Prize by looking into winners from previous or current decades, studying them from the same or different feminist theories, as well as other performance theories such as post-modernism, surrealism, Dadaism and then some. There are other types of feminism that prospective researchers could utilise such as postmodern feminism, ecofeminism, postcolonial feminism, libertarian feminism and post-structural feminism. In Malaysia, prospective researchers could look into studying the winners of BOH Cameronian Awards, an award that recognises theatre, musical theatre, dance and music, or the *Hadiah Sastera Kumpulan Utusan* (or Utusan Literature Award) that recognises short fiction, poetry, novels for young adults, short fiction for young adults, literary article and literary research paper. Moreover, if there are more interests arise in Pulitzer Prize, future scholars may wish to consider researching influence of feminism in the finalists of the 'Drama' category, or the winners in the subsequent decade – from the year 2010 until 2019.

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