CHAPTER - II

CAROL BOLT: WOMEN IN POLITICS AND FEMALE EMPOWERMENT

I'm a political writer and I want to change people's minds about issues.... I prefer to think idealistically even if that defies logic.

Carol Bolt

With the burgeoning of the feminist movement during the last two decades, women playwrights began to articulate a new voice in the Canadian theatre. Canada in the seventies had witnessed the flowering of many marginalized women writers trying to assert their presence and thus find a 'space' for themselves. Feminist dramas attempted to secure for women on the stage what had been denied to them in the traditional male-dominated theatre. Canadian women playwrights began to emerge on the theatrical scene in the 60's in increasing numbers, integrating feminist sensibility with dramatic form in their plays. Feminist theatre retrieved women from the misrepresentation she had been subjected to in the traditional theatre. Michelene Wandor observes, "However, it is true so far that on the whole, women playwrights have tended to choose to write about their own sex-and actually, there is nothing at all unusual about that". (8). Women
playwrights were concerned with women's struggle to discover themselves leading to their self-fulfilment.

Women playwrights in Canada dealt with woman's encounter with the world, her efforts to define herself on her terms as Canadian and to find viable ways of living in a patriarchal power structure. Toril Moi observes, "In the late 1960's women were increasingly starting to form their own liberation groups, both as a supplement and an alternative to the other forms of political struggle in which they were involved". (75). Since 1960, a generation of self conscious feminist writers had emerged on the theatrical scene, whose political perspectives and experimental dramatic approaches to the practice of writing had dramatically changed the course of Canadian drama. The women playwright's work involved details about the dynamics of sexual politics, the social construction of gender and the conditions under which women lived and wrote in contemporary society. Toril Moi points out, "The implication is not only that the feminist critic should turn to 'gynocritics', the study of women's writings, precisely in order to learn, 'what women have felt and experienced, but also that this experience is directly available in the texts written by women". (11).

The playwrights used their experimental texts to theorize on the nature of women's oppression in patriarchal culture and to
delegitimize male authority by undermining the rigid forms of its discourse. But the critic, Rosalind Coward observes that the works which explored the questions of gender, power and sexuality are not axiomatically labelled feminist. According to Rosalind Coward, "Feminism must always be the alignment of women in a political movement with particular political aims and objectives. It is a grouping unified by its political interests, not by its common experiences". (163).

Carol Bolt was one of the important female playwrights to emerge in Canadian drama in the 70's whose plays could be termed Feminist plays. "Women often write in waves, repeated climaxes and collages" (Rudakoff and Much 68). Carol Bolt was born in Winnipeg on 25 August 1941, as the only child of a school teacher and miner. Carol Johnson spent her early years in various towns across the country. Bolt’s whole family was involved in theatrical activities. When they moved to Vancouver, they attended whatever road shows or play series appeared. Bolt got her Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature from the University of British Columbia in 1961. After living in England, for a while, she moved over to Canada and settled down in Montreal where she was employed as a market researcher. Many of Carol Bolt’s plays were produced at theatres throughout Canada.
including Theatre Passe Muraille, Black Box Theatre Universities and Summer Theatres.

Jon Kaplan questions, "Has the generation of playwrights that includes Carol Bolt, Erika Ritter and Sharon Pollock resulted in different sorts of roles for women"? (20). Carol Bolt started her dramatic career by writing plays like Buffalo Jump and Pauline which could be categorized as plays of collective creation. The theatre of collective creation which formed part of the Alternative Theatre Movement opposed the established values and theatrical conventions. It rejected the traditional author–actor–director triangle, represented the non–traditional space – a new approach to the audience improvisation and collective creation and was much concerned with ‘process’ rather than ‘product’. Brian Parker and Cynthia Zimmerman comments, "Collective Creation is a sort of theatrical poster art: it combines subject matter that is usually realistic with a self-consciously theatrical presentation". (208). This process involved the directors and the actors starting with an idea or a general subject to be explored in the frame work of the play. The scripting was done in an egalitarian way. Each member of the cast participated in the production of the play, which meant the play was collectively conceived and produced. 'Carol Bolt's Buffalo Jump and Pauline that were collectively conceived were staged by
Passe Murraile. The play Buffalo Jump was a play about a political and social indictment of Canadian Society of the thirties. It deals with the worker’s protest march to Ottawa with a herd of buffalo about to be stampeded off a cliff. In an interview in 1977, Bolt mentioned some production techniques that the collectives had devised to make the documentary more theatrical and entertaining.

*There were songs and dances and funny stories and we didn’t really go deeply into the politics of the event. It was more of a comic strip, very episodic and highly coloured. Paul wanted to turn it into something very picaresque, a journey across the country. He wanted to experiment with as many different theatrical forms as he could; there was a scene based on a Marx Brother Film, another scene was a highly structured improvisation there was also a highly operatic scene.* (quoted in Lister 147).

The Local Initiatives Programme and opportunities for Youth Grants gave an energetic and supportive environment to people committed to producing together and it charged Bolt’s own creative energies as a writer. Young People’s Theatre in Toronto had premiered many of her children’s plays *My Best Friend is Twelve Feet High*, *Cyclone Jack*, *Jangle Flags*, *Maurice* and *Finding Bumble*. Carol Bolt had a particular affinity for the small Alternate Theatres, where she
found an environment that allowed her room to explore and grow. In the early stages of her career, she worked at Toronto Workshop Productions and Bolt loved working in a professional theatre. After her first professional production with Toronto Workshop in 1970, she became a regular writer for Toronto Free Theatre, which she considered as her spiritual home, for it provided an encouraging atmosphere for all the playwrights who liked to work. Martin Kinch, one of the founders of the Toronto Free Theatre, felt that as a group, it possessed some ideal conditions for fostering a new theatre.

*We were in the right place at the right time. We had a centre and a purpose. As a group it possessed within itself ideal conditions for fostering a new theatre - Communality of interest in essentially dramatic issues, strong desire for live experience and a corresponding distrust of artifice and the synthetic... a need to 'come together' and a deep alienation from official culture. And culturally, this group in Canada severely disenfranchised. One could not ask for better conditions. (5).*

Carol Bolt wrote all her plays for the Entertainment Media. She felt that in film, there was a problem for the writer, in terms of artistic control. The director was permitted to change the script and shape it. In theatre she encountered specialized audience. She was a
political writer and wanted to change the People's minds about various issues. She enjoyed working in all the four media-film, theatre, radio and television. Beyond her writing talents, Carol Bolt had made a strong commitment to the theatre community. She was one of the founding members of the Playwrights co-op in Toronto and had been involved in a number of Community Programmes concerning herself with the growth and recognition of the Canadian Performing arts.

Bolt's productivity after *Buffalo Jump* (1972) was remarkable. She had two productions at the Young People's Theatre - *My Best Friend is Twelve Feet High* in July 1972, and *Cyclone Jack* the following November. In 1973, *Gabe* was at the Toronto free in February and *Pauline* at Passe Murraile in March and *Jangle flags* at Young People's Theatre in September. In 1974 there seemed no limit to Bolt's creative outpouring - *Red Emma* in February (Toronto Free), *The Blue Bird* the same month (St. Lawrence Centre) followed by *Maurice* (Young People's Theatre) *Blue* (Young People's Theatre) and *Shelter* (Fire Hall Theatre). Zimmerman points out, "Those early years, that Bolt recollects with such nostalgia, were hectically creative ones for her and for many of the others who were part of the emerging alternate scene" (56). Bolt after her under graduation wrote a trio of one-act plays called *One Plus One Plus one*. These short original plays, although staged
by amateurs in a civic building were reviewed. Critics spoke of the playwright’s ‘Promise’ and complimented the younger writer on her skill with dialogue and her adept dramatic construction.

Bolt after writing a number of historical plays like Buffalo Jump and Gabe decided to switch to dramatizing imaginary characters in her political plays. She wanted to introduce a popular person’s story on stage and she provoked the interest of the audience by portraying Emma Goldman in the play Red Emma. Later she wanted to portray herself in the plays that led her to write Shelter. Carol Bolt’s play Gabe deals with the constant interplay between memory images of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont and shows how the contemporaries Louis and Gabe are refined by time. Ann Wilson talks about the Canadian women playwrights, “While each person should feel free to articulate her identity along the axis which she feels important whether that be as a native woman or as a gay woman or as a black woman. I’m not convinced that rancour helps the various feminisms reach a point of efficacy”. (3). Then Bolt started writing thrillers.

The play One Night Stand by Carol Bolt was a polished spare comedy thriller opened at the Tarragon Theatre. Bolt had also written comedies like Escape Entertainment. The play was a comedy about the Americanization of Canadian film industry. Bolt dealt with
women's issues in her plays. The play Ice Time was about sex-role stereotyping that directly addressed a topical case of prejudice against women. Bolt was fascinated by Freudian Psychology and she presented Freud's theories in her three plays. Unconscious (1986), the award winning Yellow Ribbons (November 1987) and Baby Machines (December 1988) were based on Freudian theories. Most of the women playwrights who were the active members of the theatre community, did not feel discriminated against the male community, because of their gender. As Carol Bolt recalls,

Sharon Pollock once said in an interview we were doing together in a way, we were both really lucky because when we started writing, theatres could produce our plays and get both a Canadian and a woman in their season in one shot. So we were a minority, but it didn't necessary work against us. That was part of our 'Charm'. (quoted in Rudakoff and Much 188).

Carol Bolt in all her plays created characters like the adventurers, the seekers, the idealists who fought for certain principles and attained heroic status. Bolt's early works deals, with the lives of political idealists and her later protagonists were part of the film industry. Bolt presented an idealized state of women in society. Ellen Moers, points out, "There is no single female style in character, though in
every county and every period it has been wrongly believed that a female style exists." (62). Carol Bolt had taken male and female protagonists from history and artistically presented them on stage. Her early plays were rooted in history. Even though the plays contained historical facts, Bolt did not think of her plays as documentaries and she was not interested in presenting a fair and true picture of events or persons. Bolt’s extrapolations from real persons to dramatic characters combine investigative reporting with creative credulity. The creation of myth and the re-shaping of myth were more important to Carol Bolt than the documentation of history. She believed that people go through horrible situations and finally emerge better and stronger in the world. Her main aim was to entertain and to instruct the audience. James quotes Bolt’s view of her own approach to the making of theatre as a very collaborative one.

Once a play goes into rehearsal, I spend most of my days and nights at the theatre .... That’s where the best part of my work is done. Sitting at home at my typewriter is not only boring, it’s lonely. Rehearsals are where the exciting things happen. Seeing your work come to life before your eyes is what’s best about being a playwright. It’s also the most fun. (16).
As a politically conscious woman, Bolt was aware of the problems faced by women in society, especially in the political sphere. *Red Emma* had her first female protagonist ‘Emma’ to espouse a feminist ideology. In her play *Shelter*, her protagonist Jory, attained female identity in the midst of a male-dominated society. Thus Carol Bolt had chosen to deal with historical, political and women’s issues in her plays. Both the plays of Carol Bolt *Red Emma* and *Shelter* deal with the issues of women’s identity which helps women to acquire empowerment in the world of politics. Moi points out, “For it still remains politically essential for feminist. She defended women as women in order to counteract the patriarchal oppression that precisely despises women as women”. (13). These plays trace the women protagonists’ heroic efforts of fight against a rigid patriarchal structure leading to their empowerment.

Carol Bolt with her knowledge and interest in theatrical activities uses theatre as an accessible medium to merge political and women’s issues to be publicity explored. She focuses her attention on women’s identity and freedom to avoid marginalization of women on the stage. Even though Bolt has portrayed her women characters in many spheres like history, society, family, psychology and culture, her female characters in political sphere are more assertive than in other
spheres. The women characters, who are involved in the political movement in her plays, perceive and bring out the injustices done to women in society. Bolt has merged political and women's issue in her plays Red Emma and Shelter to give voice to feminist perspective. Kate Millet observes, "Social revolution, has the largest alienated element in our society, and because of their numbers, passion and length of oppression, its largest revolutionary base, women might come to play a leadership part in social revolution, quite unknown before in history" (363). Bolt in her plays presented the growth of her women protagonists who move from their immature state to emerge as confident individuals and thereby they try to assert their identity.

Bolt deals with many issues affecting women in Politics and shows how the female protagonists encounter their problems in the society by articulating their own ideas and achieving success. These two plays exemplify the creative consciousness of Carol Bolt which places her work both in a literary and feminist frame work. The plays, Red Emma and Shelter articulated women's search for cultural and psychological identity in the political sphere leading to their empowerment in politics.

The play Red Emma, 'Queen of the Anarchists', was first produced at the Toronto Free Theatre, on 5 February 1974. The play
deals with one part of Emma’s story and Bolt had in mind a Toronto actress, Chapelle Jaffe, to play the role of Emma. The film of Red Emma was directed for the CBC by Martin Kinch and Allan King and was broadcast in January 1976. The play is set in New York in 1890, and it glorifies the myth of freedom fighters. The theme of the play is made clear from the subtitle, “Queen of the Anarchists”. Red Emma had as its source the real life of the Russian born immigrant Emma Goldman (1869-1940) who arrived in North America in 1885. Emma Goldman had her link with Canada in 1939, when several of her Italian friends, were arrested for possessing subversive literature with them. She came to Toronto, where she died of a stroke in February 1940. Bolt intended to write a sequel which dealt with Goldman’s later life. Bolt was fascinated by the charismatic character of Emma Goldman. An American playwright Rochelle Owe was similarly inspired by Goldman’s autobiography and created Emma Instigated Me (1976). As Bolt said,

I wanted that play to be a homage to her personality, not to the struggle for an eight hour workday, which was the main political issue she was involved in at that age, she fell in love with different people on page one, three and five of her autobiography and that was what mattered. (quoted in Lister 150).
Bolt is more interested in the drama of Goldman's life than in her politics. The motivating force of the play is romantic idealism. With *Red Emma* Bolt created a complicated portrait of an idealist and she also created her first stage hit. The plot of *Red Emma* centered on the early years, five years after Emma's arrival in New York in 1890. The stage setting of the play helped for quick scene changes. A two level set made it possible to switch quickly from scene to scene. A table placed on the lower level was used for Sach's cafe, the Freiheit office and the anarchist commune and a podium was placed on the upper level.

The play *Red Emma* deals with the early life of Emma, her arrival in New York, and her meeting with anarchists' comrades with a view to change the existing society. Emma in this play is presented as a young anarchist and union fighter motivated by the philosophy of romantic idealism. Her jealousness, urgency, her hopefulness and her firm belief in the right of self expression makes her a determined woman. This play traces the growth of Emma who learns to fight for personal freedom, and who finally succeeds in carving out a space for herself in political sphere. This act of Emma expresses the assertion of her female identity leading to her empowerment. In the Toronto star, Kareda wrote, "*Emma Goldman is a wonderful subject for the theatre, Red*
Emma is wonderful play” (3). The opening song of the play makes it quite apparent that the play deals with young people and politics. Helen Sings.

I was young at Sach’s cafe
I drank my coffee black
You could find me talking politics
At a table in the back
All my friends were beautiful
All the talk was good
The rooms were always smoky
And I never understood
Half the things I found I said (131)

The play deals with the aspirations and frustrations of Emma who fails to conform to the conventional pattern of life prescribed by a biased and imperfect male dominated society. The play examines the political issues in conjunction with the female’s search for identity. Emma is a young idealistic woman given to histrionic poses and flamboyant gestures. Even though Emma is not favoured by her social background, she raises her voice against political and women’s issues without fear. In the political realm, Emma has a clear definition of self. She expresses her conviction,
"Emma is not bound to any man" (133). By striving to achieve an integral feeling of belonging to the anarchic movement, she attempts to acquire recognition of her own powers in the anarchic movement. By interiorizing her struggle for survival against men in the anarchic movement, Emma takes on the responsibility for her own process of development. This brings out Bolt’s search for her own distinct voice. "Emma accepts the status of inferiority conferred upon her by phallocentric perceptions" (quoted in Zimmerman 22).

The feminist quest for alternatives to women’s traditional position provokes Emma to choose politics. Emma’s inertia epitomizes her severest state of oppression by men in politics and she attempts to organize her new life by freeing herself from the traditional female role. She displays her ingenuousness in the early stages of her role in the anarchic movement. With her artlessness and immaturity she believes the words of Johann Most, the revolutionary pamphleteer. Bolt comments "I don’t think, I would like to live in a world that didn’t include people like Emma Goldman, even if she is dangerous". (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 220).

Emma is a potential threat to the biased and male-dominated society. As an adventurous person she learns about the role of anarchy in transforming the lives of individuals. When Most
criticizes that woman do not have revolutionary zeal to work like men. Emma as a confident and self assured person, challenges him that women can perform better than men, in reforming the world.

\textit{Emma} : There are women here in New York

\textit{Most} : Stupid women

\textit{Emma} : Women can work for anarchism.

\textit{Most} : I don’t believe women have revolutionary zeal. Do you?

\textit{Emma} : of course I do (139).

The present section brings within its compass, the study and interpretation of all facets of Emma’s life and experiences. Bolt by portraying Emma, aims at a non-hierarchical egalitarian social structure which would guarantee individual fulfilment to all its members. “Yet pleas for the inclusion of women within such political theories are likely to be met by objections that they are sectional, sectarian and certainly distracting pleas” (Miller 133). The way in which she is treated in the midst of the patriarchal power structure drives her to oppose the traditional views about the role of women in society and in politics. She refuses to be subdued and oppressed by male domination. When Berkman treats her as a child, she condemns him,

\textit{Berkman} : (Ignoring her) He is her teacher. He is the king of
Anarchists

Emma: You treat women very badly, don't you? A woman is never your comrade. A woman is always your child (142).

Emma integrates the rational and intuitive modes of consciousness and strives to evolve an identity in the anarchic movement by encouraging Berkman to write about political issues. Kaplan writes, "Feminism has developed... a political language about gender that refuses the fixed and trans historical definitions of masculinity and femininity in the dominant culture" (6). Apart from being adventurous, she projects herself as an energetic and flamboyant romantic. Besides her commitment to anarchic movement, Emma wants the anarchists to show interest in other aspects of human life like admiring flowers, listening to music and going to the theatre.

Emma's charismatic personality inspires her friends to enjoy the beautiful aspects of life. In the early stages of her role in the anarchic movement, she appears as a naïve woman and she is attracted towards Most by reading his newspaper. With her artlessness and immaturity she believes the words and ideas of Johann Most. Later on she learns the art of public speaking and expresses her ideas effectively. She addresses "We have dedicated our life to the cause and the
work is our joy. We have no concern for personal comfort. We will work as long as we must. We will not stop working until we reach our goal” (155).

Emma rejects the feminine way of accepting the gender roles and enslavement in the society. Her desire for self-empowerment includes the reassessing of social issues and political systems. Her treatment of capitalistic issues confronting the society, expands the limits of traditional role imposed on women. She is persuading the workers to destroy the capitalist system, “We must work together to destroy the capitalist system” (154). The struggle for survival and recognition as an individual comprises the theme of the play. Green Keith and Le Bihan points out that “Feminists have argued that women’s writing is not inferior to men’s writing, merely that it does not correspond to the same evaluative criteria” (232) Carol Bolt has depicted the character of Emma as a committed individual who worked for the anarchic movement.

Emma’s progress towards self-maturation, gives her a clear insight into her own nature and a better understanding of her own aims and requirements. She seeks satisfaction in her self-chosen project and uses her energy towards achieving freedom and independence. “To alter the stereotyped visions of women, female characters are depicted as strong, active heroes rather than passive sidekicks to the great
male protagonist" (Green and Li Bihan 235). Most is enchanted by her enthusiasm and wants to spend his time with her. Most says, “You will have to choose between us” (168). Emma’s inner world and her external world is threatened by her love affair with Most and Berkman. This reminds her of the deviation from work in the realm of politics. Emma accuses Most for treating her like a silly woman and training her to talk like a trained dog. She becomes aware that the struggle of selfhood in mainstream society is stunted by male domination. This sense of failure is paramount when Most calls her to repeat his words. Emma’s development is cloistered by Most’s definition of her as a woman. She is forced by Most to perceive her self-identity through the limitations of the patriarchal system, which excludes women’s role from politics. Her lack of vision in the early stage of her work in the movement makes her inactive and she could not express her search for her female potential and autonomy. Emma accuses Most:

Emma : I will not be treated like a silly woman. You sent me out to speak for you like a trained dog. I’ve made a fool of myself. I didn’t speak for myself I said your words. I’ve said pretentious, pompous things. (159).

Emma’s stifled individuality becomes illuminated by her unfulfilled ambitions to take her own decisions in an independent
manner in the anarchic movement. She reveals her feeling of failure and her longing for self-fulfilment. She comments "I speak for you but will not say your words"(150). She expresses that she has learnt more from a factory worker than from Most’s speeches. “Feminism is called as ‘Politics’: These power relations structure all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure”. (Weedon 1).

Carol Bolt foregrounds the problems of accommodation and adjustment faced by Emma in her struggle to find a space in a restrictive environment. Emma points out Most’s inability to understand the problems of the workers, who are, “Breathing foul air, cramped in a space beside a machine” (159) and she voices out the traumatic experiences of the workers through her speeches. Through her solitary contemplations about the hardships of women’s life in politics, Emma voices out her anger that women are considered inferior to men. She is very firm in exhibiting her artistic talents through posing for an epic canvas. Though this idea is opposed by her comrades in the movement, she wants to live as an independent being by admiring beautiful and radiant things in life.

*Berkman*: I will not take you with this stupidity, Emma, I try not to criticize, although we are so different.
Emma: Because I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everyone's right to the beautiful' radiant things(165).

The focus of the play shifts to Emma's personal life. She wants to give more attention to her public life than to her personal life. She is forced to undergo an operation to experience full sexual pleasure. But she renounces the doctor's advice by striving to lead an independent life to achieve her autonomy. Her inner reflections about her free life in politics detach her from her marriage and motherhood. She focuses her attention on the catechism of the Russian Revolution that the revolutionary should give up his home, his parents, his lover and children and tries to follow it in politics. Emma discards the patriarchal notion of women as mere emotional beings and argues that women can succeed in traditionally male centred realms.

Emma: No child of mine will be unwanted. No child of mine will be unloved. I won't have a child. I will live for my ideal. I will suffer for my ideal. I will not have the operation.(166).

Amidst Emma's faithful presumptions and revolutionary sentiments, Emma's speech on women's emancipation deserves careful consideration. She makes a confident and convincing declaration to the audience about women's freedom. Carol Bolt's women centred
drama explores the female experiences in the society. "Gyno critics begin at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition, and focus instead on the newly, visible world of female culture". (Showalter 31).

Emma advocates that women should reject the stereotypical role of women which assigns domestic work to them. She feels that a woman's development, freedom and independence should be acquired by women through their rejection of sex role stereotypes within conventional society. Emma's understanding of self is expressed in the shaping of her identity and the defining of her female sense of place.

**Emma:** By making her life simpler, but deeper and richer.

That is by trying to learn the meaning and substance of life in all its complexities, by freeing herself from the fear of public opinion and public condemnation. Only that will set woman free, will make her a force hitherto unknown in the world, a force of real love, for peace, for harmony, a force of divine fire, of life giving, a creator of free men and women. (161).

Bolt uses the dictates and concerns of political drama to make the play more didactic. Bolt called the play a romance by portraying the lives, dreams of the people Most, Berkman and Emma and their search for great adventures and belief in heroism to
supercede the intricacies of political argument. All the characters in this play are inspired by Emma’s passionate approach to both life and politics and they gradually imitate her fervour and rhetoric. Kristeva points out “In ‘woman’ I see something that can be represented, something that is not said, something about and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies”. (137).

The open rebellion against the patriarchal society helps her to achieve an intellectual and emotional independence. The play shifts to the political conspiracy of Berkman and Emma to assassinate the oppressor Frick. When Most refuses to offer financial assistance to buy pistol, Emma challenges Most that she will succeed in her new venture. She is influenced by Dostoevsky’s novel Crime And Punishment where the female protagonist Sonja becomes a prostitute to help her family. In the same way Emma too decides to sacrifice her life for the political movement. She realizes her potential for individuality beyond the limitations of social expectations. The relationship and the power struggle between the sexes get ample exposition through Bolt’s effective presentation. Emma sings

Emma : Sonja In Crime And Punishment becomes a prostitute / to help her family / Sonja. Agreed to pay that price / could make that sacrifice/ so why not me? (175).
The play highlights the impact of unjust patriarchal discrimination on Emma and traces the transitional phase in her political career. Emma begins to comprehend ‘self-sacrifice’ as a way of achieving autonomy in her life. She is motivated by the desire to see the workers liberated from their oppressor and as a strong woman she takes her own decisions to earn money for the cause. But the attempt of political assassination proves hopelessly naïve. Emma feels that removing a tyrant is an act of liberation from the oppressive society. When the political ramifications of race and gender keep Emma on the perimetre of life, her female quest for identity makes her accuse her anarchist comrade Most. She becomes a brave and arrogant person and punishes Most with her belt. Even though Emma fails in her attempt to destroy the tyrant, she still remains optimistic to change the world. The play concludes with Emma’s Song:

Emma: I know I can show you wonder
I can paint the flags, I fly
I know dreamers can build castles
I know castles can have banner
I know dreams are going to flash across the sky
There are no countries
There are no kings

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Gender relationships have become an interesting area of exploration for contemporary women playwrights. Carol Bolt in this play scrutinizes the dynamics of human bonds and bondages with respect to adolescent romance and the sexual life of women. The play deals with the complexities of experiences undergone by Emma who finds herself trapped in a hostile patriarchal milieu. Bolt is able to project effectively the impact of different aspects of patriarchy on the female psyche of Emma at different points of time and how Emma articulates her female identity to overcome her problems.

Emma is an irrepressible idealist and her passionate intensity in politics entangles her in many adventures. Many critics consider her dangerous. (Ex) Urjo Kareda in his review of the Toronto Free Theatre Production suggests Emma as dangerous, because she is the kind of passionate, fierce and determined woman. With her daring ventures, she carves her own way in the realm of politics. Bolt herself expressed,

_I think Red Emma is a play about people who are very young and have all those ideals which are corrupted. I don’t think that assassination is a reasonable way of handling political disenchantments. But I think_
that I should be allowed to show that on stage. (quoted in Wallace and Zimmerman 269).

The play traces the radical change and growth in the character of Emma. When Berkman, Helen and Fedya compose a song to celebrate the victory of Emma in politics, she proves the subtitle of the play, ‘Queen of the Anarchists’ by her successful attempt in her new venture. Emma is also responsible for transforming the lives of other characters when they come into contact with her. Helen’s acquaintance with Emma makes her an independent and strong person to realize her potential in the realm of politics. Unlike her comrade Helen, who in the conventional way is looking for a man to believe in, Emma becomes a true revolutionary spirit, speaking from her own heart and her own experiences. But Emma’s extremism resulted in her becoming a prime example of what Bolt later called, “the Fascism of the Left, where people get so absorbed in a vision that the end justifies the means”. (quoted in RudaKoff and Much 187).

Red Emma as a feminist play deals with the oppression of women in the political sphere. As a way of liberating herself from the male dominated power structure, the protagonist Emma, by handling the political issues well and by rejecting the conventional roles of a
wife and mother reacts against the gender constructs imposed on her in the realm of politics leading to her empowerment.

**DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES**

Bolt's plays had in common a free form fluctuation of time, place and space, enhanced by a strong entertainment factor which smoothed into unlikely transitions with song, special lighting changes and the emphasis of a significant property. Even though Bolt scripted *Red Emma* herself, it still bears the imprint of the collective creation process. The play had minimum properties and a two level stage and a large cast of characters to make the play didactic. The rapid and episodic scene changes reveal the importance of the politics of the play. The woman protagonist's psyche is revealed through these rapid scene changes. These quick changes help Emma to take her own decisions to move out to address people. Bolt's theatrical world has its symbolic significance. The minimum properties on the stage suggest the circularity of this play's action with minimum settings and maximum effect.

Carol Bolt expresses her concern for the oppressed minorities and the gender discrimination that exists in the society. The emphasis of a significant property - the banner of anarchy becomes a
symbol in the play. Throughout the play, Bolt retains – as the subtitle 'Queen of the Anarchists' indicates – an ironic distance on her heroine's nature and aspirations and proves that Emma is histrionic, self-dramatizing and insensitive. The popularity of Red Emma is also due to some extra literary features appearing in the form of music, dance and songs. The elements of music make the play an exciting piece of theatre, creating a tremendous response on the audience. The opening song sets the mood and makes it quite apparent that the play is about young people and about romance. "I was young at Sachi's Cafe". (131).

The willing exhibition of the theatrical process was found in the fluid interchange of locations defined by property and emotional intensities. Most and Emma's direct audience address, people's marches, the union hall speeches of the politicians contribute to the grand success of the play. The use of songs in the play helps to develop further action in the play. Bolt stylized the action and accentuated romantic heroic or mock heroic stances by depicting scenes of social realism. The actions in the play are undercut by songs. The realistic character portrayals make the play more realistic. The play presented the free-wheeling presentation of reinterpreted historical material. Helen's speeches and her encounter with the anarchic friends show
that the play is filled with comic incidents and whimsical ironies which was Bolt's particular forte.

THE LANGUAGE

Bolt's plays are written in English and all her characters speak in English. Bolt's plays show immense poetic qualities and distinct dramatic effect. In Red Emma the speeches of Most the revolutionary anarchist is very effective to gather people for meetings. Emma is fascinated by the narrative skills of Most. When Most narrates "how the five martyr's were killed" (140). Emma who is seated among the audience moves to the stage and repeats the words of Most. Thus Bolt's use of language and the choice of words help in the growth of the play. Later on Emma delivers powerful speeches like the following:

Only that will set woman free, will make her a force hitherto unknown in the world, a force of real love, for peace, for harmony, a force of divine fire, of living giving, a creator of free men and women. (161)

This passage serves as an excellent example not only of the suppression of women but also of a powerful assertive approach of the protagonist Emma to gain power and politics. Throughout the play Emma's speeches are effective and deserve our careful consideration.
Any one who had keenly observed the history of English Canadian theatre would have noted the absence of women both in the writing and staging of plays. For centuries the theatrical achievement of women in Canada remained largely invisible. With the beginning of the feminist movement in the last three decades, women have begun to write their ‘self’ out as a process of exorcism, which is seen as a process of female empowerment. The Canadian feminist theatre presented the female protagonist's quest for self discovery besides carving out a unique female aesthetic in terms of Canadian socio-cultural space.

Feminist drama in Canada attempted to alter the 'gender constructs' to lend an equal footing and freedom to women in society. Feminist playwrights like Wendy Lill, Sharon Pollock, Erika Ritter and Carol Bolt insisted on 'decolonization' for women in a multi-layered sense, to liberate women from the shackles of patriarchy and marginalisation. These women playwrights depicted women as independent, intelligent and even heroic individuals in their plays. These women playwrights disproved the traditional belief that the public life is the property of men whereas women are to occupy the invisible private 'sphere'.

Carol Bolt, one of the well known playwrights in Canada, explores the nature of the female world in all her plays. Carol Bolt
represents a new direction in her play writing career, by deviating from writing historical works such as *Gabe* and *Red Emma* to comedies like *Shelter*. She considers the play *Shelter* more personal than her other plays. "A lot of my family is in that play" – but specifically, she was interested in "how women relate to each other’ and how women’s identity depended upon association with men... The Eva Peron syndrome". *(quoted in Rudakoff and Much 179).*

*Shelter* produced jointly by the university Alumni club and Young people’s Theatre, was commissioned with the assistance of the Ontario Arts Council through a Theatre Ontario training grant. It was performed at the Fire Hall theatre, Toronto. *Shelter* was Carol Bolt’s first play constructed from a fictionalized interpretation of her own experience and not based on historical research.

The play *Shelter* centres around the life of Jory, widow of the former Saskatchewan M.P. Howard. The protagonist of the play Jory, who appears like a collapsed victim after her husband’s death, later on emerges as a powerful individual in the political sphere. Jory opposes the idea of the treatment of women as mere sex objects and inferior ones in intellect and psyche in the society. Her self-awareness towards the pursuit of freedom and autonomy leads her to acquire power in politics. Her successful career in Politics proves that women
are bound to achieve success in their careers whether in private or public sphere. The play *Shelter* depicts the rapid socio-cultural changes taking place in Canadian life, influenced by the feminist movement. The play describes the struggle of the protagonist Jory to confound the gender stereotyping and resist the patriarchal perceptions cherished by Canadian culture. This serves as a pointer to the general theme - 'Female Empowerment' one finds in Carol Bolt's plays.

The play opens with the funeral party of the Saskatchewan M.P. Howard, the husband of Jory. Bolt effectively satirizes small town Canadian banality and political Shenanigans in the play. With this she pushed her free spirited social investigations and playful character creations into fresh imaginative areas. Bolt's plays *Red Emma* and *Shelter* illustrate the call for woman's emancipation. The critic Patricia Keeney Smith had made positive observation about the play as "Short on statement and long on entertainment and insight". (19).

*Shelter* deals with the lives of five women, the social rituals of funeral party, wedding arrangement, election campaign and one woman's decision to run for office. The play is a funny and a true Canadian comedy. The comic vein suppresses the seriousness of the
political issues discussed in the play. The conversation is very light in the funeral party;

*Calla:* Mrs. Godwin wonders why Howard’s coffin was closed.

*Win:* Mrs. Godwin is the one who made the brownies

*Vicky:* Mrs. Godwin wanted Howard propped up in a corner with a plate of cakes. (10)

The central character Jory, after the death of her husband faces isolation and domestic oppression. This leads her to restrict herself to gender-based social roles of women. She lacks self-awareness and has no authentic goals of her own to lead her life. Thus she is unable to articulate a sense of identity in the society. Later on, she reflects upon the future of her life within the patriarchal framework. Her inferior position as a woman in the society provokes her to realize her individuality outside the boundaries of social expectations. When Mr. Frank Rosie suggests her to take up Howard’s seat in the office, Jory who is quiet in the beginning, later on decides to run for office.

*Jory:* I’m going to run for parliament.

*Win:* You’re crazy

*Vicky:* shhhhh
Win : why should I sssh?

she's kidding, she hates politics.

Jory : I campaigned for Howard (13).

The recognition of her individuality and the realization of the need for her individual growth sharpen her feminist vision to encounter men in politics. Jory operates in men’s world and struggles to achieve success in her new venture. Moi points out the power struggle between the sexes, “The question of sexism is a question of the power relationship between the sexes and this power struggle will of course be part of the context of all utterances, under patriarchs”. (156).

The play focuses on the strength and clarity of Jory’s plans that reject the non-traditional choices in the pursuit of her ideals. She wants to expand her public and private boundaries by entering the realm of politics. Martin Kinch comments about the themes of Carol Bolt, “the concern for individual freedom, and the yearning for community, plus the nationalist desire to rewrite Canadian history – are all characteristic of her work” (5).

The progressive development of Jory’s psychological maturation helps her to compete as an independent candidate and thereby she tries to gain identity of her own in the gendered world. Jory’s revolutionary election strategies include discussion of
contemporary political issues like freight rates, the conspiracy on Bay Street, the beauty of the Northern lights and the effective way of removing the thieves from the east. Since Jory's knowledge and exposure in the new field is limited, she is discouraged by her friends and community people. Simone De Beauvoir observes that women should struggle for their identity: "I am feminist today, because I realized that we must fight for the situation of women, here and now, before our dreams of socialism come true". (32).

Jory's craving for independence is suggested through her dissatisfaction with her social status and environment. Her entry in politics is a challenge to her and she takes up the challenge to shape her own identity. Her friends raise the doubt whether she could perform like her husband Howard. They advise her to forget about politics to resign and so that she could lead a quiet life. Kareda praises the play, "that rarest of home grown scripts, a truly funny, truly contemporary, truly Canadian comedy, hilarious, thorny, observant and absolutely explosive with wit" (2).

Jory's self awareness, self esteem and some measure of autonomy helps her to plan for a new life. Jory says, "You compare what men are with what women can be". (15) She emerges as a bold and confident person to tackle her problems during the course of her
political career. She brings into the light the other face of her husband, who loved every teenaged girl in Saskatchewan. He loved adulation, courted beautiful girls, cheated people and uttered lies. She also remembers how Howard cried like a girl when he delivered his speech. She comments about her husband, “He would cheat and steal, and lie, all to get your respect” (14).

Jory is inspired by the liberating power of the feminist awareness and like all Carol Bolt’s protagonists Jory too wanted to change the world. She attempts a crusade against ‘marginalization’ of women in politics. She blames women who are oppressed by the patriarchal power structure and inspires them to face the challenges with confidence. Jory and Vicky wish that women should have growth in the political sphere and achieve success.

Vicky : You know I always thought, if we had a woman Prime Minister, she would be a widow .. I mean that feels right….. (116).

All through the centuries the masculine gender occupied a superior position in politics and relegated women to a secondary position. Bolt has created two protagonists in the play Jory and Vicky, who try to overcome the gender discrimination imposed on women in
politics. Jory protests against the gendered world directly and Vicky indirectly helps Jory to encounter men. Moi observes,

If patriarchy oppresses women as women defining us all as 'feminine' regardless of individual differences, the feminist struggle must both try to undo the patriarchal strategy that makes 'femininity' intrinsic to biological femaleness and at the same time insist on defending women precisely as women. (81)

Jory seeks freedom from the unjust and suffocating socio-domestic values, cultivated in andocentric and androphilist societies. Jory could not sit at home and feel morally superior to Howard. This leads her to enter men's domain politics. She is very firm in not using Howard's popularity to win the election. She plans new election strategies and communicate effectively to her community people. Jory by successfully planning to lead a new life in personal and political sphere sets a new direction in her career. She expresses, "And I wonder what it is a woman feels about power and property. If you feel as I do" (58).

The Election campaign is a challenge to Jory's stability in politics. She withdraws herself from stereotype life and fights for equality in politics. This quest for political independence awakens her woman's consciousness in conjunction with social progress. She faces opposition during her campaign but continues her efforts to achieve
her goal. Some people wanted Jory to dress up in black boots and bunny ear after her husband’s death. Even Luel criticizes Jory that she dresses like a modern woman and does not confine herself to the conventional pattern of life. Elaine Showalter writes, “If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles of women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but only what men have thought women should be”. (27). Jory opposes the traditional view about widow’s dress and rejects people’s criticism, in the pursuit of her ideal. She expresses that a woman of talent should not be bound by the conventions of the society. She feels increasingly anguished about the realities of contemporary issues and the dangers that are threatening women in politics. Since the other two male contestants Mr.Bill Kelleher and Mr.Frank Rosie deceive people by giving false information, Jory succeeds in reaching the minds of the people through her true and effective speeches. Vicky expresses her hope, “Jory is going to run for parliament. Our parliament makes our laws and guards our tradition”. (18)

Luel discourages Jory that politics is always taken up by men and women can never succeed in the new venture. She also expresses that the people who believe the conventional ideas, feel that women can not face the stresses and strains of public life. By facing
many difficulties, Jory tries to break the unwholesome, silence imposed on women in politics by a ‘gendered world’. Jory who is initially looking for help and shelter from others, later on tries to give solace and shelter to her friends. Her final ascension demonstrates her power and strength to confront the contemporary political issues. Carol Bolt brings into light the status of women.

   Jory : I used to think that politicians were people, that it didn’t matter if they were men or women.

   Luel : Because they were always men.

   Jory : But you make me wonder Aunt Luel,

   Luel : You know I’m right

   Jory : Because you’re a woman you see yourself as a Woman. (58)

The major contemporary women playwrights are united in their common pursuit of the truth about the shifting roles of women in family and in politics. Carol Bolt who hails from the same socio-cultural milieu explores the growth of a woman in this play. In the end, Jory has become a successful public figure, by winning the polls. She is ready to communicate to great people in the world about serious political issues. She expresses her hope that she can change the world. The play deals with the strength of the woman Jory, who despite her
suffering and oppression in the society emerges as an independent person and becomes successful public figure in politics. She disproves the traditional myth which describes woman as the ‘weaker sex’. Carol Bolt portrays, in her plays a few women who are bound by stereotypical values and who are blind to existential crisis affecting their own lives or the lives of the other women around them. Shelter deals with such women characters like Win, Calla and Luel. These women are shackled and restrained by patriarchal domination.

The other protagonist in the play, Vicky wishes that women should occupy higher positions in politics. She talks about three kinds of women in society. 1. Those who can depend on like Calla and her mother, who are always, ready to give help and shelter. 2. Those who looked forward for help and shelter like Win. 3. Those who go beyond the stereotypes like Jory and Vicky. She criticizes Win as a woman of unrealized potential, who could not see beyond the confines of the kitchen. Vicky is very serious about the election and warns Jory that she should not be playful.

Vicky : I don’t want a shower.

Jory : I get hiccups when I have to keep from laughing.

Vicky : you are a candidate in federal election Jory.
You can’t sit around playing hand-clapping games (60)

Vicky blames women who are worried about their recipe rather than their identity. She wants to devote her time to help Jory in her campaign by avoiding her wedding shower. When Vicky’s mother Luel is making wedding arrangements, Vicky spends her time for the election campaign. She plans out various new strategies and writes ‘Political speeches’ for Jory. With her new plans she feels that she lives in a sheltered workshop. Towards the end of the play, Vicky realizes that Anthur, her fiancé is a kind of father figure and does not have sense of humour. She finds the whole idea of wedding as stupid and decides to sacrifice her personal life for political work.

Thus the play, Shelter focuses on the various stages through which the two women Jory and Vicky carve their political agendas and challenge the society’s assumptions. The play deals with the choices the women characters make that shape their lives. Jory, who in the early stage of her life is incapable of dealing with the reality after her husband’s death, becomes a strong individual leading to her empowerment in the realm of politics. The breakdown of her world, has given her the chance to become a person in her own right to create her own ‘space’ in politics. Jory by opposing the stark reality and the
degraded condition of women in the Canadian society adds a new dimension to women's rights and freedom. With the invigorated sense of power, she asserts her individuality. The repressed, marginalized and decentered Jory becomes a free, powerful and successful woman in politics.

A Feminist reading of the plays Red Emma and Shelter reveal the strength of Bolt's women protagonists' choices in the pursuit of their ideals. They succeeded in their attempt to voice their anger and protest against patriarchal power structure. In the process towards female empowerment they break the hard shell of oppression and marginalization to assert their freedom in the realm of politics. Inspite of their being suppressed in the society, the women protagonists emerge as successful individuals in politics. In their attempt to succeed in their struggle, Emma, Jory and Vicky try to disprove the traditional belief of the bourgeois gender ideology that the sexes were predisposed by biology to operate optimally in distinct domains – men in the public sphere and women in the private sphere. As feminist plays Red Emma and Shelter depict the restrictions of women's role in politics imposed by the society and the feminist emphasis of transformation from their repressed status to successful feminists leading to their empowerment in politics. These two plays put women
at the centre as the authors of their history and also create significant and challenging roles for women performers in Canadian theatre.

DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES

Shelter was a true Canadian comedy, hilarious, thorny and absolutely explosive with wit. The conversation is very light in the funeral party, "Mrs. Godwin wanted Howard propped up in a corner with a plate of cakes". (10) As a comedy this play represents a new direction in Bolt's work. The play has no historical base - it's a piece of pure fiction set in the present, includes no music and suits a realistic production style. Bolt's style moved from the flamboyant theatricality of Red Emma to the modified naturalism of Shelter. Bolt with a single set and a naturalistic style has portrayed this serious subject in a humorous vein. Modern cinematic and television techniques are used with a careful plan. Jory talks to the public through television in a live programme. The observation of the community people is directly revealed to Jory. Bolt's portrayal of the character Win reveals her light mind. But Jory who is very serious remains the same till the end. But the other characters Win, Calla, Jory and Luel's conversation is filled with wit. The dramatic monologue of Vicky during the tragic situation in her life not only highlights the suppressed women's anxiety but also
the expressionist technique of the playwright. Thus the dramatic techniques and symbols in these two plays of Bolt show her rich dramatic experience besides highlighting how women are suppressed and marginalized in politics.

THE LANGUAGE

_Shelter_ is filled with wit right from the beginning of the play. Even though it is a funeral party Win could not contain herself but keeps talking about chocolates and other silly issues. The serious issues in the play are suppressed by mockery, "Mrs. Godwin wonders why Howard's coffin was closed". (10). The conversation of the characters reveal that it is true Canadian comedy explosive with wit, "I get hiccups when I have to keep from laughing". (60). Like _Red Emma_, Jory in _Shelter_ asserts her identity by saying, "I can change the world". Thus Bolt's use of language highlights the problems faced by women in politics. The dialogues spoken by the women characters show not only their assertive power but also their love for skilful comic moments which was Bolt's forte.