Conclusion

Analyzing plays by five modern British playwrights, one finds different kinds of women portrayed in their works. The plays analyzed also show a pattern of development and change.

Alison on *Look Back in Anger* represents the traditional woman. She has moulded herself according to her husband's needs and his lifestyle and effaced her identity completely. Jimmy, the husband is a raging pugnacious bore, but the patriarchal system and the sexist society allow him to stand on a higher pedestal. There is clearly a war of the sexes going on, but it is a one sided affair as Alison just remains a dumb recipient. She is totally marginalized and is given no voice. This play reveals that aspect of traditional marriage, where wife is never treated as an equal partner and is deprived even of her individuality. She is treated as a possession and is considered a liability. Her voice is never heard and she is totally marginalized. Woman in this case also becomes the dust bin and the dumping ground, where the husband can dump in all his faults and then condemn them as hers. The ending of the play only serves to confirm Jimmy's male-chauvinistic attitude. Alison returns to the husband- a poor lost, suffering woman- and worst of all, begs forgiveness.
Arnold Wesker's Triology moves a step forward from this traditional male – chauvinist stand. The woman here is neither all that silent nor all that marginalized. In Chicken Soup With Barley, she rather appears to dominate, has a voice for her opinions and is on the helm of affairs. She is also exuberantly active and throbs with energy. Not ready to be confined to the boundaries of her home, she has moved out of the confines and participates in politics. All through it appears as if it is she who is dictating terms both inside and outside home thus proving true the feminist slogan "personal is political". In Roots, the woman discovers herself interestingly by finding her own voice and the moment she realizes it she takes a new birth. The final triumphant statement comes from the stage directions. As Beatie stands alone, articulate at last, the curtain falls. Thus whereas in plays like Look Back in Anger woman is not given any space, socialists like Wesker do give her some breathing space. But the ending of Chicken Soup with Barley again leaves one baffled and sad. Almost everybody raises questioning finger at Sarah. Her unflinching faith is now mocked at and she is shown to be an ignorant fool working with blind optimism. And though Beatie has found her voice she is never the less alone, desperately looking for some support which even her family refuses to give. Interaction, sharing and communication between the two sexes is still conspicuous by its absence. Partnership is absent and only sublimated conflict is apparent.
Each His Own Wilderness and Play with a Tiger are different as they come from a woman's pen. They are a sensitive portrayal of a woman's suffering, her agony and her final loneliness. The women characterized in the play are so called free woman as they do not have husbands to cater to. In Each His Own Wilderness both Myra and Milly are single. But if there are no husbands, then the sons take up the job of pestering, abusing and questioning the mother. Tony the son, approves neither of his mother's work nor her friends. What he demands vehemently for, is total allegiance from his mother. Towards the end Myra comes to the sad realization that it is impossible to appease him. Myra owns a house, runs it and has a genuine friendship with another woman, but she still has a shaky family base, no satisfying sexual relationship and sadly no appreciation for all her well meaning attempts. Hence by the time the play draws to an end one feels that realization of a woman's individuality is not possible while staying within the present family setup. Play with a Tiger was also an important play as it was for it shows anger, frustration and sexual drive as motive forces to be as strong in women as in men. And on the stage it was for the first time that anger and sexuality were accepted not only as attributes of realistic characters but also as sources of female power. It also focused on the premise that for men loving involves lies, hypocrisy and even secrecy, whereas women demand a basic honesty in the relationship.
The fourth playwright, Caryl Churchill’s main contribution is to further the cause of feminists and broaden traditional views of gender roles. Through her plays *Owners* and *Top Girls* Churchill is successful in highlighting the arbitrariness of gender roles which are imposed on both sexes by patriarchy. Marion, the protagonist of *Owners*, is a completely liberated woman. A prosperous property dealer, she is fully in command of situations, events and people. She is in fact, every inch a replica of a successful business executive and an embodiment of all the masculine values upheld by the patriarchal system. She is capable of dictating terms both to her lover as well as her husband. Abounding in self interest and working for self gratification, she is cold, callous, commanding and decisive. It is thus that Churchill criticizes the arbitrary characterization of gender roles by reversing the conventional expectations of male/female; a completely passive male versus a very active female figure. It has been noted that another strategy that Churchill uses to manifest the arbitrary notion of gender roles is cross-casting, which challenges the assumptions that gender definitions are natural ramifications of physical difference. And what Churchill also attempts is to draw attention to the issue that women should and must avoid being trapped by essentialism in irrelevant categories like superwoman and this is beautifully done in both her plays taken up for analyses. She shows how it becomes the worst kind of oppression when one starts imitating the oppressor. What is needed on the other hand is the erasure of power-division and replacement of slavery, brutality and callousness with equality, sweetness, love and concern.
Thus in the five plays analyzed one finds different types of women. Alison the absolutely docile, subservient wife, is a dumb recipient; Sarah, Beatie and Anna are relatively more vocal; Myra and Milly are single and relatively more free, but are still bound to the sons and the extreme case is of Marion and Marlene who are ruthless and cruel but then also successful in the world of men.

Viewing these different kinds of women portrayed in these plays one can see that the total subservient position like that of Alison's does call for liberation. But surely the conduct of Marion or Marlene is not true liberation. These are women that are still trapped by the categories of patriarchal essentialism like superwoman, even while they are rejecting gender roles imposed on them. The damaging effects of masculinist organizational structures bite so hard that women feel they have to be better and work harder than men to achieve recognition. Therefore, they assert that they can do all and everything. Moreover, they claim that they are “free” and “equal” to men but they miss the point that these terms belong to the dominant male culture. Being equal to men requires internalizing patriarchal values and accepting male models of successes. As a result, women who are trying hard to cope with inequality through male modeling transform into superwomen, or surrogate men. They become oppressors of other women and men they deal with. This proves that their position is ironic because while trying to eliminate patriarchy,
they become a part of it. Thus true liberation can be achieved only when there is a healthy interaction between the two sexes and this can be achieved when power politics does not remain the basis of woman-man relationship.