

DE-COLONIZING BODIES:  
THE TREATMENT OF GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY DRAMA AND FILM

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## DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my family (Laura, Dwayne, Amy, Michele, Jeremy), my partner Ty, my mentor Maureen, and to my Nonie who encouraged and believed in me throughout.

This is also dedicated to all the women, men, and children who have to struggle daily for their freedom.

## ABSTRACT

Dramatic literature and film are often political and work to deconstruct and dismantle some of the assumptions of a dominant ideology. Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*, and Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game*, show how gender roles are used in oppression and show that other social categories like race, class, and sexuality are interrelated and constructed. This shows the hollowness of the so-called inherent categories that cause "naturalized" divisions between people and groups. Through exploring these works I hope to draw attention to how these artists use theater and film to educate their audiences, as well as challenge them to take control over complicated issues surrounding power and oppression. These writers encourage their audiences to employ social criticism and to re-evaluate the social order that is often naturalized through dominant ideology and discourse.

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## Introduction

Marginalized people are those who are not accepted by the centre of a social order. They are pushed to the fringe of society, and the dominant culture only acknowledges their needs, values, and concerns on the same terms that the dominant culture grants itself. These groups are often “othered” and excluded from the centre of society by operations of power. By studying drama and film that reflect the issues of those denied a voice in dominant society, we are able to get a more holistic viewpoint of our social systems, which can help illustrate the damaging and destructive forces of dominant culture and colonization on all people in society. These works demonstrate the constructedness of social categories like gender, race, class, and sexuality, which shows the falsity of the so-called inherent categories that cause “naturalized” divisions between people. These works also show their audiences that along with being constructed these categories are interrelated. They illustrate the danger and results of dichotomous gender ideals or other dualisms that result from these categories, which work to empower one group while weakening another. Through the works I discuss, I will show how Western patriarchal gender norms may be deconstructed and presented more “impurely” or as hybrids. I hope to illustrate how these works attempt to encourage fluidity and social change regarding the treatment of rigid gender, race, class, and sexual roles in society.

In Tomson Highway’s *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*, and Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game*, the authors show how gender roles are used in oppression and how the characters can weaken the system by choosing to reorganize these roles based on personal autonomy and preference. These works all show the complicated relationships between imperialism and race, gender, sexuality, and class.

Furthermore, they display how trying to rise within the system by mimicking the oppressor is not only self-defeating, it instead further adds to their own oppression and weakens an anti-colonial agenda. I argue that the works cause their audiences to question and analyze these systems and their roles within them, and they indicate that perhaps a better answer to destabilizing may be found in rejecting dichotomous roles and by accepting fluidity in social structures.

I chose to branch across the genres of theater and film as contemporary drama and film can effectively educate audiences and invoke social change. Both medias are performed and have the ability to stir audiences' consciousnesses on political issues while motivating change within social structures. The film and theater explored are cultural expressions which have the power to question and deconstruct social issues. Edward Said, in *Culture and Imperialism*, uses the word "culture" to convey practices, "like the arts of description, communication, and representation," which "exist in aesthetic forms, one of whose principal aim is pleasure" (xii). Said also refers to culture as "a sort of theatre where various political and ideological causes engage one another" (xiii). Both the drama and film explored in this thesis are arguably part of what Said designates as "culture" and work to dismantle some of the assumptions of dominant ideology.

The works in this thesis are not ordered chronologically, but rather each chapter builds on issues that have been raised in the previous chapter. The first work presented, *Dry Lips*, lays the foundation for issues explored around gender and imperialism while the following work, *Cloud Nine* introduces race and, although it was touched on in *Dry Lips*, the question of sexual orientation. *The Crying Game* deals with all of those topics

and introduces questions of ethnic and national identity, suggests that sex is performative, and advocates freedom of choice for all ideological categories of identity.

## **Chapter One: Theoretical Background**

Language, power, and ideology organize gender. In his article, “Gender Treachery,” Patrick Hopkins argues that “a threat to established gender categories, like most other serious threats, is often met with grave resistance, for challenging the regulatory operations of a gender system means to destabilize fundamental, social, political, and personal categories” (132). Hopkins further states that “being regulated by a binary sex/gender system means that the one identity must be different from the other identity; a situation requiring that there be identifiable, performative, behavioural, and psychological characteristics that allow for clear differentiation”(132).

Dramatic literature and film are often political and work to deconstruct and dismantle some of the assumptions of a dominant ideology. In the preface to his book, *Decolonizing the Stage*, Christopher Balme discusses how post-colonial theatre and drama can be seen as a method of resistance to oppression. He explains that this means that “post-colonial theatre is always implicitly and very often explicitly political” (viii). Similarly, Hee-Won Lee says that the theater is used as a political medium. While discussing Caryl Churchill’s theater and Brechtian techniques,<sup>1</sup> Lee comments that this “is a place for learning appealing to spectator’s reason, instilling in him or her a questioning attitude, and forcing him or her to see that theatrical representation is a metaphor for a political condition” (755). Lee talks about how “the art of theater has a real political dimension” (755). Lee further points out that Churchill’s work “attempts to surprise the audience into a critical appreciation of the causes and processes underlying patriarchy, imperialism, and capitalism, to analyze the dynamic power relations based on

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<sup>1</sup> Hee-Won Lee discusses Brecht as challenging “the conventional theater of illusion to discuss current political issues” (755). He discusses Churchill as employing a similar technique, and extending and elaborating on Bertolt Brecht’s principal innovations.

gender, class, and race” (755), a statement that can be applied to all three of the works I analyze. Through exploring Tomson Highway’s *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*, and Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game*, I hope to draw attention to how these artists use theater and film to educate their audiences, as well as challenge them to take control over complicated issues surrounding power and oppression. These writers encourage their audiences to employ social criticism and to re-evaluate the social order that is often naturalized through dominant ideology and discourse.

R.W. Connell points out that the privileged who endorse the norm “create the impression that the conventional sex role is the majority case, and that departures from it are socially marginal and likely to be the result of some personal eccentricity, produced by imperfect or inappropriate socialization” (52). Connell points out that variations from the gender norms prescribed by the dominant society are treated as personality problems of the abnormal and unnatural. Similarly, *Cloud Nine*, *The Crying Game*, and *Dry Lips* portray how the dominant society treats as deviant those who do not fit their standard gender roles.

Judith Lorber states that “[t]he status of women and men is as much an issue of power and privilege as is the status of people of different races and social classes” (284). Lorber adds, “To *not* ask why a social category called ‘men’ has power over a social category called ‘women’ is to accept the assumption that men’s domination is natural” (284). Lorber advocates questioning gender roles, most importantly by querying why one is dominant over another. The works show that by questioning these roles and their constructedness we can deconstruct them and begin to endorse change.

According to behavioural scientist Gregory Herek,

Social roles and their attendant psychological identities are not “given” by nature. Variables such as race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are human creations, based on certain observable phenomena that come to be defined in certain ways through social interaction over time. (567)

Lynn Weber also points to the constructedness of social roles when she states, “Race, class, gender, and sexuality are social constructs whose meaning develops out of group struggles over socially valued resources” (125). Similar to Herek and Weber, while discussing sex and gender, Judith Butler points out that gender is constructed and performative. She says that the body “is figured as a mute facticity, anticipating some meaning that can be attributed only by a transcendent consciousness, understood in Cartesian terms as radically immaterial” (129). Butler states that a “sedimentation of gender norms produces the peculiar phenomenon of a ‘natural sex’ or a ‘real woman’ or any number of prevalent and compelling social fictions” (*Gender Trouble* 140). Butler argues that

[g]ender is, thus, a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions--and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believing in them; the construction “compels” our belief in its necessity and naturalness. (*Gender Trouble* 140)

Anne McClintock defines gender as a system of power that has long been used as a tool of maintaining colonial order. One of the founding assumptions of McClintock’s book, *Imperial Leather* is that “no social category exists in privileged isolation; each comes into being in social relation to other categories, if in uneven and contradictory

ways” (9). Based on this, she states that “power is seldom adjudicated evenly” and that this is the case when it comes to race, gender, and class (9). McClintock is clear in pointing out that “gender dynamics were, from the outset, fundamental to the securing and maintenance of the imperial enterprise” (*Imperial Leather* 7). She argues that “race, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience, existing in splendid isolation from each other; nor can they be simply yoked together retrospectively like armatures of Lego” (*Imperial Leather* 5).

McClintock also declares that imperialism and nationalism – as displayed in *Cloud Nine* and *The Crying Game*– is a “gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power” (“No Longer” 90). She applauds the importance of Edward Said’s work in *Orientalism* on imperial relations, but regrets that “he does not systematically explore the dynamics of gender as a critical aspect of the imperial project” (*Imperial Leather* 14).

In *Orientalism*, which is credited as one of the founding works of post-colonial theory, Said describes the “Orient” as one of Europe’s oldest colonies, and one of its deepest and most recurring images of the “other.” He says that Orientalism should be examined as a discourse in which the West/ Europe has used its depiction of the “Orient” as a contrasting image and experience where western culture gained in strength and identity by setting itself off against the Orient. It is an integral part of European material civilization and culture (*Orientalism* 3). Said believes that the Orient is a valuable sign of European –Atlantic power, and he discusses Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient (*Orientalism* 5). The relationship between the West and the “Orient” is one of power, of domination, and of

varying degrees of a complex hegemony. *Orientalism* can be used as a means to understand how people are “othered,” dominated, and exploited. The “Orient” can be compared to the positions of “other” that I am studying in my texts, more specifically to women and to marginalized people.

Said has also applied his work in *Orientalism* to the Irish and their situation within the UK. Said states, “For its British settlers and rulers, Ireland was not a geographical entity dominated by an offshore power, but also a history, geography, culture, and population written and represented by what the British and many of their European and American counterparts said about them” (178). Said points out that what drew him to his studies on the Irish in the first place were the many unmistakable and common features between the treatment of the Irish and the treatment of many other oppressed colonies. His work here is valuable to understanding the oppression illustrated in *The Crying Game*.

Audre Lorde states, “Much of Western European history conditions us to see human differences in simplistic opposition to each other: dominant/subordinate, good/bad, up/down, superior/inferior” (526). While discussing current Western economic structure and its difficulty in recognizing less dominant cultures, Lorde points out that “[i]nstitutionalized rejection of difference is an absolute necessity in a profit economy which needs outsiders as surplus people” (527). This is especially relatable to the structure portrayed in *The Crying Game*, where the Irish are working hard labour positions in England underneath powerful executives, or in *Cloud Nine* where the black servant is exploited in the first act as is the working-class soldier in the second.

Val Plumwood in her book, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, argues that dualism, like the binary oppositions Lorde and Said highlight, “results from a certain kind of denied dependency on a subordinated other” (41) and that “[t]he logic of colonisation creates complimentary and, in advanced cases, complicit subordinated identities in and through colonisation” (61). While discussing dualisms, Plumwood says, “in systematised forms of power, power is normally institutionalised and ‘naturalised’ by latching on to existing forms of difference. Dualisms are not just free-floating systems of ideas; they are closely associated with domination and accumulation” (42). Discussing oppression and colonialism, Plumwood argues that “the dualisms of male/female, mental/manual (mind/body), civilized/primitive, human/nature correspond directly to and naturalise gender, class, race, and nature oppressions” (43). Weber also points out that “dominant culture defines the categories within race, gender, and sexuality as polar opposites” (125). She gives example of oppositions similar to Said’s, Lorde’s, and Plumwood’s, and further points out that “dominant groups define race, gender, and sexuality as ranked dichotomies where whites, men, and heterosexuals are deemed superior” (125). She explains that “dominant groups justify these hierarchies by claiming that the rankings are a part of the design of nature – not the design of those in power” (125).

According to Barbara Diane Miller, a hierarchy by definition involves “more than one person or thing” that are “related to each other systematically, one above the other” (7). Miller states, “[t]he concept of hierarchy, added to sex and gender studies, is important. It forces us to think relationally, to consider the links between individuals and groups, and to examine the nature of those links and relationships” (7). Highway’s,

Churchill's, and Jordan's works try to do what Miller supports and examine the makeup of repressive relationships.

Plumwood points out that “[a] further important feature of dualistically construed opposites is that the underside of a dualistically conceived pair is defined in relation to the upperside as a lack, a negativity” (52). Plumwood explores colonialism and dualistic relationships, and she also discusses how they may be broken down. She states, “Dismantling a dualism based on difference requires the reconstruction of relationship and identity in terms of a non-hierarchical concept of difference” (60). Similarly to Highway, Churchill, and Jordan, Plumwood advocates that an answer to the oppression caused by colonial hierarchies based on dualism is in the rejecting of the ‘master’(59) and re-structuring binary relationships by implementing more fluid roles and structures. The framing narrative of *The Crying Game*, “the scorpion and the frog,” portrays the oppressed frog sinking with its oppressor the scorpion, which is an example of how both roles are destructive and ultimately self-defeating. As Weber says, “There can be no controlling males without women whose opinions are restricted; there can be no valued race without races that are defined as ‘other’” (127). These are examples of the destructive dualisms that Plumwood describes which colonization thrives on. By not mimicking or supporting the oppressor and instead rejecting the dualistic framework that is passed off as “natural,” the system can be destabilized.

In the Western patriarchal hierarchy, the “masculine” white male occupies the highest and thus most powerful position in society, while women and “others” are placed underneath and thus “feminized” and exploited. According to McClintock, women “were figured as a black ‘race’ within the white race, akin to the ‘degenerate’ darker races,

while men of color were seen to represent the ‘female’ type of male gender” and because of this “[f]emale sexuality became ‘primitivized’ and the colonies became ‘feminized’” (“Double Jeopardy” vii). Similarly, theorist Ashis Nandy discusses how the colonized become feminized, which he says can lead to the hyper-masculinity and aggression of the colonized. In *The Intimate Enemy* Nandy explores the relationship between masculinity, femininity, and colonialism in India. He examines the “homology between sexual and political dominance which Western colonialism invariably used,” and he argues that colonialism denied psychological bisexuality<sup>2</sup> in men and “legitimized Europe’s post-medieval models of masculine dominance, exploitation and cruelty as natural and valid” (4). Nandy discusses how many Indian men “saw their salvation in becoming more like the British, in friendship or in enmity” (7). In “the colonial culture of politics” that he investigates, “femininity-in-masculinity was now perceived as the final negation of a man’s political identity, pathology more dangerous than femininity itself” (8). In *Imperial Leather* McClintock argues that disputing race as a fixed and essential identity does not belittle the terrible effects of the “baroque inventions of racial difference” (8). Rather she states, “[o]n the contrary, it is precisely the inventedness of historical hierarchies that renders attention to social power and violence so much more urgent” (8)

According to Weber, it is important to understand that “race, class, gender, and sexuality are historically specific, socially constructed hierarchies of domination – they are power relationships” (127). She explains that in these power hierarchies, one group controls another to secure its position of dominance in the system. She adds, “[t]he centerpiece of these systems is the exploitation of one group by another for a greater

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<sup>2</sup> Although Nandy refers to psychological bisexuality that colonialism denied, it can also be presumed that sexual bisexuality was restricted as well.

share of society's valued resources" (127). Being placed in the feminine or exploited realm of the dominated causes the subjects of oppression to see colonialism as a "product of one's own emasculation and defeat in legitimate power politics" (Nandy 10).

One way that many colonized men salvage some of their self-esteem is by becoming hyper-masculine, compensating for their loss of power "by becoming the counterplayers of the rulers according to the established rules" and thus discovering a "frame of reference within which the oppressed do not seem weak, degraded and distorted men" (Nandy 11). Instances of hyper-masculinity are seen in all three works. For instance, *The Crying Game* shows hyper-masculinity from male and female characters in the IRA who are trying to rise from their degraded space as Irish. As well, in *Dry Lips*, Highway depicts some Natives who are resentful and violent toward others because they are degraded in society. Joshua and Edward in *Cloud Nine* are violent and attempt to be aggressive as resistance to their feminized roles imposed on their race and sexuality.

In his research exploring masculinity, Herek defines contemporary masculinity as embodying "success and status, toughness and independence, aggressiveness and dominance" (568). He states, "Being a man requires not being compliant, dependent, or submissive; not being effeminate" (568). Similarly, while discussing Western colonialism in India, Nandy points out how colonial culture relied on Western ideals with "built-in fears about losing potency through the loss of activism and the ability to be violent" (55). The colonized learn this brand of masculinity and try to embody this violent activism. Nandy says that the fantasies underlying these fears are of "rape and counter-rape, seduction and counter-seduction, castration and counter-castration" and that

they have “accompanied the Western concept of manhood whenever Western man has gone beyond his narrow cultural borders to civilize, populate or self-improve” (55).

According to Mrinalini Sinha, “systematic study of the formation of masculinities in relation to nationalisms will show that the anti-colonial agenda has in fact been limited or subverted by patriarchal politics” (181). She further explains, “colonial masculinity reveals not only the patriarchal politics of the nationalism of indigenous elites, but also the limits of a nationalist politics based on the defence of indigenous patriarchy” (181). Sinha discusses how the exploited indigenous only thwart their own agenda to gain control or power in this system. As in the case of the IRA in *The Crying Game*, the “feminized” lower classes and the colonized are often the colonizer’s resources for carrying out their own oppression in the form of violence. Masculinity, therefore, is state-controlled and something the colonized can only avoid if they refuse to buy into it. In works like *The Crying Game*, we can see that initially Jody and Fergus buy into this system by being violent and fighting, and by their choice to be soldiers for the sake of their nations. This is similarly seen in *Cloud Nine* through Joshua, the black man who mimics his colonizers and Bill, the working-class soldier who is killed in Ireland fighting for the British. As well, in *Dry Lips*, Big Joey’s and Simon’s violence and Spooky’s religious fanaticism support the colonial oppressor’s national politics that Sinha describes.

In *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power*, Laura Ann Stoler states that in the late nineteenth century/ early twentieth century, “imperial authority and racial distinctions were fundamentally structured in gendered terms,” and “gender-specific sexual sanctions and prohibitions not only demarcated positions of power but also prescribed the personal

and public boundaries of race” (42). She defines colonial authority as being built on two powerful but artificial premises:

The first was the notion that Europeans in the colonies made up an easily identifiable and discrete biological and social entity – a “natural” community of common class interests, racial attributes, political affinities, and superior culture. The second was the related notion that the boundaries separating colonizer from colonized were thus self-evident and easily drawn. (42).

Stoler also points out that “sexual control was more than a convenient metaphor for colonial domination. It was a fundamental class and racial marker implicated in a wider set of relations of power” (45). Furthermore, Stoler ties sexual control to the economy, stating, “[t]he regulations of sexual relations was central to the development of particular kinds of colonial settlements and to the allocation of economic activity within them” (47). This is especially applicable to *Cloud Nine*, where Churchill links sex to the economy implying that the two are inseparable. Stoler also discusses how the lower-class Europeans spread “racist rationales” despite “[e]fforts to prevent their emergence in the colony” (25).

She also discusses another category, white women, who were excluded from early colonial endeavours, yet there was “heightened racism” accompanying their entry to colonial society (25). Stoler states, “[a]ttitudes toward poor whites and white women were not unrelated. Both categories marked and threatened the limits of white prestige and colonial control” (26). This displays that class, gender, and race were inseparable categories, as McClintock also argues, in imperial thought. Furthermore Stoler points out that “class distinctions, gender prescriptions, cultural knowledge, and racial membership

were simultaneously invoked and strategically filled with different meanings for various projects” (84).

When explaining how these meanings were perpetuated, both Stoler and McClintock draw on the family. For instance, Stoler points out, “[c]olonial authorities with competing agendas agreed on two premises: children had to be taught both their place and their race, and the family was the crucial site in which future subjects were to be made and loyal citizenship was to be learned” (84). In addition, McClintock states,

[t]he metaphoric depiction of social hierarchy as natural and familial – the ‘national family,’ the global ‘family of nations,’ the colony as a ‘family of black children ruled over by a white father’- depended in this way on the prior naturalizing of the social subordination of women and children within the domestic sphere. (*No Longer*’ 91)

Both McClintock’s and Stoler’s work here is especially applicable to *Cloud Nine* where the treatment of women, children, and blacks in colonial Africa is portrayed. Churchill shows how all three, as well as homosexuals, are treated as inferior and threatening to the colonial agenda. As well, McClintock’s ‘national family’ may be seen in the portrayal of the IRA in *The Crying Game*. The IRA, although fighting due to the oppression of the Irish, has a patriarchal structure itself. Similar to Sinha’s statements, the IRA ultimately subverts the anti-colonial agenda through its patriarchal politics. Irish are also portrayed as children ruled over by the “father” or English “motherland.” As well, the Canadian Aboriginals were treated as the children of a white English father and mother. In all of these cases, real children and so-called “children” are assimilated into the dominant culture and trained to be “proper” heterosexual men and women and conform to the patriarchal and capitalistic structure. Supposed “children,” as in those who are

infantilized or feminized through imperial discourses, may consist of those who deviate from the central figure of upper-class, white males. They threaten this system with the possibility of their “impure” and “improper” socialization into colonial society, which in turn could lead to the collapse of the colonial/ patriarchal/ capitalistic agenda.

The colonial system, though, is not only there to keep “others” in place, it also operates to keep the colonizers and authority figures from straying from their “proper” positions. Stoler suggests we take the idea seriously “that colonialism creates both the colonizer and the colonized” (40), something Churchill explicitly shows through the first act of *Cloud Nine*, as does *The Crying Game* through Fergus and Jody.

In the case of *Dry Lips*, *Cloud Nine*, and *The Crying Game*, the authors show how gender roles are used in oppression and how by choosing to reorganize these roles based on personal autonomy and preference, the characters can weaken the system. These theoretical perspectives help demonstrate, as the works show, the complicated relationships between imperialism and race, gender, sexuality, and class, and how these categories are interrelated. The film and plays show, as many of these theories do, that those who try to mimic the oppressors to rise within the system are only self-defeating and further add to their own oppression. The theories discuss the relationship between the body and history, in which the body becomes a political text which can accept its inscription or one that can work to reject it. Thus these theorists, like the works, influence their audiences to question and analyze these systems and their roles within them, and they indicate that perhaps a better answer to destabilizing the structure may be found in rejecting dichotomous roles and by accepting fluidity. They show, similarly to David Waterman’s claim, that “[r]ace, gender and sexual orientation have meaning

primarily in how they are performed, resisting and/or accommodating social pre/proscriptions, thereby exposing the power relations which are often disguised by cultural constructions such as race and gender” (86).

**Chapter 2: Tomson Highway's *Dry Lips Oughta Move to  
Kapuskasing***

In many North American Native traditions, fluid gender roles destabilized binary gender structures put in place through European and Western imperialism. Colonizers enforced their binary sex/gender roles on Natives in order to control them, redefine their morality, and assimilate them.

When the Americas were colonized in the fifteenth century, the settlers found that many North American Natives' traditional gender roles threatened the roles that Europeans had deemed "natural" because many Indigenous people had less rigid roles to define proper behaviour for men and women than they did. For instance, Will Roscoe explores how, prior to colonization, multiple gender roles were accepted by some tribes and often embraced. He points out that sometimes men dressed like women and did what was defined as women's work, and women led men to battle and were respected as chiefs. He also gives examples of Natives who occupied both "male" and "female" roles at the same time. He states that "The original peoples of North America, whose principles are just as ancient as those of Judeo-Christian culture, saw no threat in homosexuality or gender variance. Indeed, they believed individuals with these traits made unique contributions to their communities" (4). Although gender-role crossing occurs in Western/European cultures, it was not accepted by the dominant ideology of the imperialists who colonized the Americas from the fifteenth century on. The European explorers found instances of homosexuality and gender-crossing immoral. In fact,

Roscoe explains how two-spirited<sup>3</sup> males were tortured and put to the dogs in Panama in 1513, something an historian one hundred years later called, “a fine action of an honourable Catholic Spaniard” (qtd. in Roscoe 4).

In *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Tomson Highway shows that gender and power are inseparable categories within the Western patriarchal system, and he warns of the dangers of the dominant society’s imposing gender binaries on Native people. Furthermore, he shows the detrimental results of rigid gender “rules” on society as a whole. Highway portrays the danger of polarized femininity and masculinity in his work, while also depicting more fluid gender roles. He exposes gender categories as less stable, fixed, and “natural” than Western culture maintains. His play also shows that binary gender norms are used in colonizing and oppressing Native people as well as in upholding power structures. Highway does this in order to show his audience the frightening effects of colonization and assimilation on Native people in Canada. He also shows the audience that the gender dichotomy of masculine/feminine is used in assimilation and that embodying the polarities of this dichotomy can be dangerous.

When European white men colonized the Americas, the Indigenous of the land became “feminized” to maintain the colonial order of things. Sheila Rabillard comments that “First Nations peoples have been constructed--in a North American version of Orientalism--as fixed and ‘feminized’ Other”(6). Masculinity was and still is associated with power. By “feminizing” the Natives, power was secured by the colonizers and taken away from the Natives. Many of the men in Highway’s play, and in much of Native

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<sup>3</sup>Among many Aboriginal peoples it implies that there is a masculine spirit and a feminine spirit living in the same body. The term originated in Winnipeg in 1990 during the Third Annual International Native American/ First Nation Gay and Lesbian Conference.

society, appear to have tried to resist losing power by becoming hyper-masculine and doubly taking on the role of what it is to be a man in Western culture.

McClintock discusses how gender was essential in securing the imperial enterprise, and Plumwood points out that dualisms like “male/female” and “civilized/primitive” are used to naturalize the domination of one group over another (43). In *Dry Lips*, Highway depicts the hyper-masculinity of some Native males who appear to be trying to compensate for their “emasculatation and defeat in legitimate power politics” (Nandy 10). This hyper-masculinity is similarly portrayed in *Cloud Nine* and *The Crying Game*. Highway shows through characters like Big Joey that some Native-Canadian men become hyper-masculine and try to empower themselves in a society that leaves them powerless.

Comparing traditional Native gender roles to the Western, patriarchal, Christian gender dichotomy of the North American colonizers shows us how the gender issues that Highway demonstrates within his play operates. In his nightmare-framed play of a week in the life of an Ontario reserve, Highway shows multicultural audiences the dangers of assimilation and rigid structures. In *Dry Lips*, Highway gives us insight into how power is unevenly distributed between men and women. He gives us a glimpse of the uneven distribution of power due to class and race and shows how these categories are inseparable when examining imperialism and oppression, and he leaves us with some hope for moving forward.

*Dry Lips*, which explores the lives of seven men on the Wasaychigan Hill Reserve, is the “flip-side” of his first play, *The Rez Sisters*, which illustrates the lives of seven Wasay Hill women. Many of the male characters in *Dry Lips* are mentioned in, but none

materialize on the stage of, *The Rez Sisters*. The men who occupy the stage of *Dry Lips* deal with many contemporary issues like alcoholism, misogyny, suicide, and rape which stem from Native colonization and assimilation. They are also struggling with the shocking news of the birth of an all women's hockey team on the reserve. As Pierre St. Pierre, the team's new referee, tells the men in the first part of the play, "Them women from right here on this reserve, a whole batch of 'em, they upped and they said: 'Bullshit! Ain't nobody on the face of this earth gonna tell us women's got no business playin' hockey. That's bullshit!'"(29).

Some Native and non- Native female critics have taken Highway's work in *Dry Lips* to be misogynistic and offensive material. For instance, Indigenous critic Marie Annharte Baker believes *Dry Lips* perpetuates racism and sexism and makes reference to "internalized racism and sexism [that] seems to get financial rewards, literary or artistic rewards" (88). White feminist Marion Botsford Frasier, in *The Globe and Mail*, also deems *Dry Lips* misogynist. She writes in her column that "[t]he two central events in the play are horrible abuses of women, unmitigated by compassion." She goes on to add that "*Dry Lips* is not only about misogyny but is a drama studded with misogyny. But I wonder how a native woman dramatist would tell this tale" (qtd. in Filewood 370).

However, it can be argued that Highway uses examples of misogyny and frames them in a nightmare to warn Native and Western culture of the dangers of misogyny resulting from strict gender rules. In fact, in an interview with *Toronto Life*, he stated, "I wrote it as a hymn--of pain, yes--but a hymn to the beauty of women and the feminine energy that needs to come back into its own if this world is going to survive" (qtd. in Wasserman 185). Without substantiating her views, Frasier fails to address colonial

violence. She speaks from the position of a feminist who may not be aware of the colonial origin of the “horrible abuses of women” that take place in the play’s world. Also, she fails to mention the cultural importance of the dream world in Native culture and the need for exposing pain in order to heal, something that Highway declares he is doing from the beginning. In fact, the epigraph of *Dry Lips*, by Lyle Longclaws, states, “before the healing can take place, the poison must first be exposed” (6). Highway uses what these critics perceive as upholding stereotypical beliefs in order to challenge and ominously warn his audiences. He is exposing the poison by portraying the Native peoples’ pain in order to promote change in the audiences of the play.

Rather than intending to abuse women, interviewer Bryan Loucks believes that “Tomson calls for the rediscovery of the sacred woman in all of us, a woman and land who have been raped, distorted and abused by centuries of exploitation, oppression and victimization” (11). In an interview with Highway, Loucks reports that Highway believes that the Indigenous community needs to look more deeply into the lives of its members, “rebalancing and healing our relationships through honouring and respecting once again women, men and the land in balance” (Loucks 11). The grotesque visions of Nanabush that Highway presents “urge us to move through our prisons of socialized meanings, form, mindsets, grief, and emotional discord to experience the harmony of mind, body, spirit” (Loucks 11). Helen Gilbert and Joanne Tompkins go further in *Postcolonial Drama* by saying that it can be argued that *Dry Lips* “actually refuses the power of rape by subsuming it within the mythological frameworks invoked, since Nanabush is above all, the great survivor and healer” (215).

Through his blending of genders and cultures, Highway may be hinting not only at how slippery and constructed borders are, but how we can take the good from different things and move forward into a new space. In fact, in an interview with Ann Wilson, he states,

It is the combination of the best of both worlds, wherein you take a symphony or a string quartet by Beethoven, study it, utilize the best of what you get from it [. . .] utilize it for the telling of Cree myth made contemporary--in downtown Toronto [. . .] taking the best of both worlds, combining them and coming up with something new-- I think that's the most exciting thing. (*Other Solitudes* 354)

Both Native and White culture may learn from the dream world of Tomson Highway. As

Denis W. Johnston says:

White society ought to watch carefully for this Native resurgence, because we need to learn from it. Our spiritual values have withered from neglect in our linear pursuit of progress. We are beginning to realize that we are poisoning ourselves physically as well, and we are not at all sure of our regenerative powers. We yearn for a society more in tune with that of Nanabush: more humorous, more visceral, less gender-bound . . . we must hope that Native values can regenerate themselves from their rape at the hands of white man's material objects. (263)

In the stage directions at the opening of *Dry Lips*, the audience is introduced to what they are told is the prominently placed “*life size pin-up poster of Marilyn Monroe*” (15). We are told that the image resides on the wall of Big Joey's shabby, messy reserve home. This poster of a Hollywood icon, who embodies the ideal of White femininity and implies the commodification of female sexuality in Western culture, is the most prominent object in the home of a Native man on a Canadian reserve. In *Heavenly Bodies*, Richard Dyer points out that Monroe, famous for her pin-up-girl sexuality, from

the beginning of her career was defined “solely by age, gender, and sexual appeal” (18). Dyer further points out that, throughout her career, “she is set up as an object of male sexual gaze” (20). She is also frequently “placed within the frame of the camera in such a way as to stand out in a silhouette, a side-on tits and arse positioning” (20).

The reserve women that Nanabush appears as denote highly sexualized figures defined distinctly by female body parts. In fact, two of the versions of Nanabush exaggerate their breasts and bottom just as Monroe did, one wearing a pair of large, false breasts and another a huge prosthetic bottom. This shows the audience the influence of Western femininity as “woman-as-body, woman-as-spectacle” (Dyer 20) on Native culture. We can see the biggest influence of Monroe in Gazelle Nataways, the girlfriend of Big Joey, the man who displays the Monroe picture. She is largely defined by her very female body, adorned with false large rubber breasts. She is also a stripper who appears as the spectacle that the men gaze at. Like Monroe, who played up to her commodified role in society, Gazelle puts herself in the male gaze by stripping in front of the men on the reserve.

Highway shows his audience throughout the play that the glamour and wealth of Marilyn Monroe is something very far away from the lives of the men and women on Wasy Hill Reserve. The symbolic poster of Marilyn Monroe may be interpreted as a metaphor for white patriarchal influence on the gender and sexuality of Native people. Dyer points out that Monroe conforms to and embodies the construction of what Western culture deems desirable in women. He states, “This is a set of implied character traits, but before it is that it is also a social position, for the desirable woman is a white woman” (40). Highway points out the strength of this icon’s influence on Native culture and how

it serves as a tool of Western imperialism. Dyer also states that in order to be the ideal, “Monroe had to be white, and not just white but blonde, the most unambiguously white you can get” (40). The fact that a Native man idolizes this hyper-feminine white woman and that his girlfriend mimics her exaggerated femininity by being incredibly sexual indicates that Western gender roles have extensively been absorbed in Native culture. According to Dyer, “the white woman is offered as the most highly prized possession of the white man, and the envy of all other races” (40). He further states, “Imperialist and Southern popular culture abounds in imagery playing on this theme, and this has been the major source of all race images in the twentieth century” (40).

When discussing the work of Dyer on Monroe, Randy Lundy points out, “Dyer’s remarks are significant in an informed reading of *Dry Lips* because female bodies, as objects of desire as well as fear and loathing, are an almost constant preoccupation of the male characters in the play” (106). He states, “If this male construction of a specifically White ideal of female sexuality is something white women cannot achieve, the question must be asked: how much more unrealistic is the ideal in relation to Indigenous women?”(106). Lundy further suggests,

The internalized racism and sexism, the obvious misogyny that the male characters of *Wasaychigan Hill* display must be read in the context of the presence of the male fantasy Monroe represents. The men’s behaviours and attitudes towards women in the play must be considered in relation to the prominently displayed poster of Monroe, the single dominant image of Whiteness in *Dry Lips*. Furthermore an investigation of the representation of Whiteness in the play must also consider how this dominant image of Whiteness relates to the two other major themes of the play, namely the language and the spiritual tradition of the colonizers. (106)

When women like Black Lady Halked and Gazelle Nattaways attempt to embody Western femininity, the results are negative. For instance, Black Lady Halked, impregnated and dumped by Big Joey, tries to be a pious woman by becoming a religious fanatic and idolizing the Virgin Mary, who is another model of Western femininity. This may be why when Nanabush appears as Black Lady, she wears a large prosthetic belly. After all, Mary, the famous virgin mother of Jesus often appears pregnant in images. Despite or because of her religious fanaticism, Black Lady is still so unhappy she drowns her sorrow in alcohol, causing her to give birth to a son with foetal alcohol syndrome.

The first time we see Nanabush as Black Lady, she is nine months pregnant, wearing a huge fake prosthetic belly and reciting the rosary while unsteadily drinking a beer. Highway's portrayal of a drunk and pregnant Native woman praying to Mary only gets more disturbing when, according to the stage directions, a very drunk Black Lady Halked/Nanabush goes into labour on the floor of a bar. Pierre describes the event, saying,

she kind of oozed down right then and there, right down on the floor of the Queen of Hearts Tavern. And Big Joey, may he rot in hell, he was the bouncer there that night, when he saw the blood, he ran away and puked over on the other side of the bar, the sight of all that woman's blood just scared the shit right out of him. And that's when Dickie Bird Halked, as we know him, came ragin' out from his mother's womb [. . .] right there on the floor, under a table by the light of the jukebox, on a Saturday night, at the Queen of Hearts. (93)

Highway paints a traumatic picture that, although not easy to read or watch, makes a compelling statement on the tragic results of colonization. After all, Black Lady tries to conform to Christianity and drowns herself in alcohol, which is also a legacy of

colonialism. It is also important to notice that Black Lady prays to Mary, who is an even more unrealistic role model than Monroe in that she is portrayed as a white virgin mother.

It becomes apparent through the men's dialogue that Big Joey is the baby's father and has done nothing to acknowledge it. Symbolic of his abandonment is the Kitty Wells song that plays from the jukebox while Gazelle strips, Big Joey watches, and Black Lady gets drunk. The song plays as follows,

It's a shame that the blame is on us women  
It's not true that only you men feel the same;  
From the start most every heart that's ever broken  
Was because there always was a man to blame. (78)

This song cannot be looked at only in terms of Black Lady and her abandonment; it also supports the clichéd gender roles that Big Joey, Black Lady, and Gazelle fulfill. They portray the scoundrel (Big Joey), who runs to another woman (Gazelle), from his responsibility to the tragic victimized woman (Black Lady). Basically, Big Joey abandons the mother of his child for a stripper. The fact that they are choosing this song rather than performing their own traditional music also points to Western imperialism and the success and devastating effects of it.

When Nanabush appears as Gazelle, her plunging necklines, lipstick traces, and highly sexualized body echo aspects of Monroe's femininity, something which she ultimately can not own. We can see that she is hyper-sexual because she never has the childlike qualities that Monroe was famous for, but only the sexual ones. As a result, Gazelle's whole identity in the play is defined by her being sexual. In the introductory stage directions, Nanabush, appearing as Gazelle Nattaways, is leisurely getting dressed over the naked sleeping body of Zachary Jeremiah. During this time she "*reaches under*

*Zachary's sleeping head, from where she gently pulls a gigantic pair of false, rubberized breasts*" (15). After putting on the prosthetic breasts, Nanabush wears a hockey sweater with a plunging neckline. She then "*plants a kiss on Zachary's bum, leaving behind a gorgeous, luminescent lip-stick mark*" (16). This lipstick mark left on the bare bottom of a Native male by Nanabush/Gazelle echoes Marilyn Monroe's famous signature puckered lips. This is another way that the influence of Monroe is made obvious. Gazelle's identity is so wrapped up with her sexuality that she leaves her own children to be with Big Joey, and through Act Two she appears as a stripper and the object of many of the men's gazes. The fake rubber breasts are an unnatural exaggeration of the female body and aid in making Nanabush's representation of Gazelle an incredibly sexualized parody. The women's hockey game is even momentarily put on hold when the hockey puck disappears down her exaggerated cleavage. Pierre comically speaks of the incident as if it were a legend, saying, "They say that puck slid somewhere deep, deep into the folds of her fleshy, womanly juices" (81). Here we can also see the female body described as a dangerous and sexual entity. Through these women, Nanabush also points to the constructedness of gender roles and how femaleness can be put on like a costume. For instance, Susan Billingham points out that "[t]he fact that we watch Nanabush put on Gazelle's fake breasts at the outset, highlighting the performative aspect of gender, might tend to support the notion of drag" (369).

Like Monroe, Gazelle is treated like a sexual commodity by some of the men on the reserve. She was once married to Creature Nattaways, who tells Big Joey after she has left him that, "I tole you once I tole you twice she's yours now. It's like I loaned her to you, I don't mind. I can take it. We made a deal, remember?" (25). Big Joey tells

Zachary after finding him naked on his couch that “[y]ou know, Zach, there’s a whole lotta guys on this rez been slippin’ my old lady the goods but there ain’t but a handful been stupid enough to get caught by me” (20). These two comments show that Gazelle is treated as a commodity by being something that one man owns and lends to another. Big Joey calls her “my old lady” to heighten his masculinity by placing her under him as his possession. Owning Gazelle is also something Creature claims to have done, although the text clearly states she left him. In fact, after stating that he “loaned” Gazelle to Big Joey, he says, “she grabbed her suitcase and she grabbed the kids, no, she didn’t even grab the kids, she grabbed the TV and she just sashayed herself over here. She left me” (26). In order to try to be as masculine as Big Joey, Creature pretends to have given his woman to him, but later contradicts himself.

The large, false, exaggerated breasts that adorn Gazelle point out her identification with sexuality. If Monroe has become a desire of the men on the reserve, then this idea of femininity obviously shapes and displaces the role of the Native woman. According to Susan Billingham, “[w]hen white womanhood is taken as the norm or standard of female beauty, women of colour are placed at an automatic disadvantage” (369). Marilyn Monroe was also a construct who was originally named Norma Jean, addicted to pills, and committed suicide. She has since been described as feeling trapped inside a purely sexual identity, one which she did not own. For instance, in her last interview for *Life*, she said “That’s the trouble, a sex symbol becomes a thing – I just hate to be a thing” (qtd. in Dyer 57). She also stated in her first press interview after a break with Hollywood, “I didn’t like a lot of my pictures. I’m tired of sex roles. I don’t want to play sex roles any more” (qtd. in Dyer 57). Through Nanabush’s appearances as Gazelle,

Highway appears to be pointing to how the Native women have become highly sexualized objects, something that leaves them susceptible to abuse.

At one point, a mentally handicapped Dickie Bird Halked “*stands directly in front of and facing the life-size pin-up poster of Marilyn Monroe, also as though he were in a trance*” (107). This occurs after he has raped Nanabush, appearing as Patsy, with a crucifix. After Dickie Bird stares at the life-size poster of Monroe post-rape, “*his head drops down in remorse*” (107). Highway shows the audience a direct link between the imperialism Monroe represents and its dangerous effects on Natives. In fact, even the mentally handicapped boy is able to recognize the influence of Western patriarchy and its sexualisation of women. This is obvious because, after violently raping a Native woman, he stares entranced at Monroe’s picture and then drops his head in regret. Dickie Bird apparently recognizes that he has done something wrong to a woman and that it is related to the way Monroe is portrayed.

According to Paula Gunn Allen, the way that Native tribes viewed women varied: “Sometimes they see women as fearful, sometimes peaceful, sometimes omnipotent and omniscient, but they never portray women as mindless, helpless, simple, or oppressed” (44). In Western popular culture, the icon of Monroe was the epitome of mindlessness, helplessness, hyper-sexuality, and oppression. Highway emphasizes the plasticity of the poster of the pin-up icon and questions her validity in order to point us to where this gender trouble stems from. If, as according to Gunn Allen, the ideas of womanhood passed on from her own family were of “practicality, strength, reasonableness, intelligence, wit, and competence” (44), then the popular Western ideals that Monroe embodies must cause some gender displacement among Natives.

When analyzing the introductory stage directions in relation to Nanabush's apparitions, one could argue that Highway is making apparent the ridiculousness of certain gender stereotypes, as embodied by Mary and Monroe, and pointing out that they are cultural constructs. The apparition of Nanabush as highly sexualized and victimized Native women indicates the internalization of these stereotypes by Native women. Nanabush's guises may also be understood in relation to Highway's own notes on the nature of the figure of Nanabush who is "[e]ssentially a comic, clownish sort of character" whose "role is to teach us about the nature and the meaning of existence" (Highway 12). In the dream world that Highway portrays, Nanabush appears to educate the audience on the dangers of polarized gender through three different Native women, Gazelle, Black Lady, and Patsy.

Although Nanabush often portrays the harshness of misogyny, Highway admittedly uses this Trickster's humour in his works as a method of healing, just like the comical figure does. An example of this humour may be seen when the poster of "*Marilyn Monroe farts, courtesy of Ms. Nanabush: a little flag reading 'poot' pops up out of Ms. Monroe's derriere, as on a play gun*" (107). This comical interlude occurs moments after a very tragic scene where a young Native with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome tries to kill himself. Highway relieves some of the stress of this intense moment where Dickie Bird "*slowly walks over to Big Joey, kneels down directly in front of the barrel of the gun, puts it in his mouth*" (107). He is not making light of the situation with Dickie Bird, but rather using humour to aid in the healing process that he hints is possible between the father and son. The audience sees the beginning of this healing when "*[i]n the complete silence, the two men are looking directly into each other's eyes*" (107). This comical little "poot"

coming from Monroe also lends some of the Native humour that Highway discusses in the introduction to his play to the pin-up-girl icon and consequently alters the brand of femininity that she symbolizes by making her body more human.

Nanabush also appears as the spirit of Patsy Pegahmagahbow, “*a vivacious young girl of eighteen with a very big bum (i.e., an oversized prosthetic bum)*” (*Dry Lips* 38). While discussing the oversized prosthetic breasts, belly, and bum, Billingham says that “[t]his exaggerated sexuality, like the scatological humour and immense physical appetite, conforms to Trickster conventions” (367). Patsy’s oversized bottom also lends to the satirical burlesque that Roberta Imboden discusses (117). Patsy is a young pregnant girl who is dating Simon Starblanket. Simon is struggling to bring Native culture back to the reserve, and Patsy’s step-mother is a traditional medicine woman. When Nanabush is Patsy, she plays with some of the men by the moonlight in a forest of light and shadows. She mystically toys with them from afar, reminiscent of the fairies in Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*. In this way, *Dry Lips* may be seen as a parody of this Shakespeare classic, but it would rather be titled “A Midwinter Night’s Nightmare” because all of the action is at night and takes place as a nightmare in winter.

In one of the most pivotal moments of the play, Dickie Bird, the boy with Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, rapes Nanabush/Patsy with a crucifix. Highway may be illustrating the rape of Native culture by Western Christian patriarchal society with this scene. Highway is most likely using Patsy’s rape as a metaphor for the pain and bloodshed of colonization on Native people. Wasserman says that Dickie Bird’s terrible rape of Patsy is “begotten by and enacted with the symbolically loaded crucifix, the phallic weapon with which this patriarchal religion has ravaged Native culture” (185). Highway shows

the audience that patriarchal culture has literally raped the Natives, and, as Wasserman points out, “once again Big Joey stands by and does nothing” (185). Highway is not only condemning Western patriarchy for the tragic results of assimilation, but also the Natives who cowardly and passively allow it.

Gilbert asserts, “That the rape is performed with a crucifix by a victim of foetal alcohol syndrome suggests that Christian imperialism is at least partly responsible for the current schism between native men and women” (215). If the crucifix symbolizes Christian imperialism, Monroe’s poster and the Virgin Mary symbolize Western culture’s influence on Native gender relationships. The results of imperialism can most prominently be seen in the portrayal of Dickie Bird, who is obviously affected by the poster of Monroe, his mother’s alcoholism, and Spooky’s crucifix. Dickie Bird is the manifestation of the breakdown of Native society. He is handicapped, confused, and unable to balance between the two cultures. His violent actions toward a woman show that he is obviously affected by the polarity between genders that patriarchal culture promotes. Nandy argues that in order to become secure, colonialism “was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes,” and it “produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity” (Nandy 4). According to Wasserman, “The result of the mother’s drunkenness and the father’s evasion is Dickie’s fetal alcohol syndrome, made worse by Big Joey’s continued denial of his paternity” (185). Wasserman also points out that, seventeen years after his birth, Dickie Bird is “driven over the edge by his spiritual crisis arising from Spooky’s evangelism” (185). The play shows us that his confusion is caused by his two paternal influences, as represented by

the patriarchal cross and his biological misogynistic father, who, as Highway shows, turns his back on Dickie Bird. In this instance of abandonment, we see Highway's criticism of the patriarchy and misogyny that Dickie Bird and so many of the characters are victims of.

Through the poster of Monroe on Big Joey's wall to the Native trickster figure of Nanabush in different female guises, sporting fake prosthetic breasts, bum, and belly, we are introduced to the female body. It is necessary to notice that although Highway focuses on the female body, there are no female characters actually onstage. We are familiar with the female characters through the dialogue of the men and in the few times the stage directions allude to "*the eery, distant sound of women wailing and pucks hitting boards*" (65). It is interesting that the women's roles in the play seem so central to the action, and yet women are nearly invisible because this may serve as a metaphor of the women's role in patriarchal society. That is, women's actions are central to society and men's lives, yet they have been excluded from the center of much of Western patriarchal society and history. Yet when most female characters appear on Highway's stage, they are represented by the spirit of Nanabush, the "trickster" who is, as Highway tells us in "A Note on Nanabush," "as pivotal and important a figure in our world as Christ is in the realm of Christian mythology" (12).

The only other instance a woman is present is during the final moments of the play, when Zachary awakens from his nightmare to find his wife, Hera, carrying their naked baby and placing a kiss on Zachary's naked bottom. When the first real woman onstage speaks, it is in the Ojibway language. This is important because it shows a hopeful model to the audience; it is one which incorporates both cultures. This scene

ends with a Native man, who is a Cree speaker, symbolically holding his newborn baby and learning Ojibway happily from his wife. The child points toward the opportunity of new beginnings and re-birth, which include blending English, Ojibway, and Cree and in the importance of the family. Highway shows two different Native languages within play, which also shows Western audiences the diversity of Native culture.

This scene contrasts with the opening one, where Zachary Jeremiah is similarly woken up, but rather by another woman. In this scene, Zachary also contrasts with Big Joey, who abandons his child and its mother. Rather Zachary is shown happily interacting with his wife and their newborn daughter. Highway uses this scene to paint his audience a picture of hope, and he gives Native people a solution for moving forward and gaining strength in society. Instead of hockey on TV, we see the child-oriented *Smurfs*, and the poster of Monroe is now covered by a powwow bustle. He may also be subverting patriarchy's traditional denial of women as the father holds up a daughter in celebration, and we hear Hera laugh with the "*silvery Nanabush laugh*" (130). In his dream, Zachary betrays his family with Gazelle, and now he is given a new option, one which celebrates family rather than misogyny.

Herb Goldberg speaks of contemporary Western culture and its definition of masculinity. He states:

In our culture all human attributes tend to be over-defined and become a basis of self-consciousness. The behavioural sciences collaborate with the mass media in making a man anxious about his sex status; both then provide him with models of aggressiveness by which to correct his deficiencies. Yet the present uneasiness about masculinity, coupled with theatrical devices for attaining it, may be more harmful than any actual curtailment of manliness discovered by researchers and editorialists. (47)

Since masculinity is aligned with power and prestige in Western culture, the men in *Dry Lips* try to resist feminization and gain some power back by becoming “hyper-masculine” and, as Nandy explained in his work, doubly taking on the role of what it is to be a man in Western culture. In the play, Big Joey and Creature Nataways display what Goldberg discusses, and they try to be masculine by employing aggressive behaviour modeled by Western patriarchal culture. For instance, it is obvious from the beginning of the play that Creature tries to perform manliness and toughness like Big Joey. For example, in the first scene where Big Joey discovers a naked Zachary on his couch, Creature Nataways mimics Big Joey’s tough attitude by trying to be threatening. When Big Joey is chasing a naked Zachary around the room, Creature is “[i]n the background, like a little dog” encouraging Big Joey by saying “Yah, yah” (20).

Throughout the play, we witness violence and anger towards women from some of the male characters. The offstage women are referred to as “terrible” (29) and “bitches” (120). The very first spoken line of the play is “Hey bitch!”(16), yelled at Gazelle, Big Joey’s “old lady,” when Big Joey comes home late and drunk. Some of the men in this play have taken on the masks of powerful men as illustrated by their colonizers. They are destroying themselves trying to fulfill traditional Euro-Western Christian definitions of masculine-appropriate behaviour. Not only do they destroy themselves, but they destroy the lives of the women and the children around them. For instance, Big Joey’s abandonment of pregnant Black Lady for the stripper, Gazelle, at least partly influences her self-destructive behaviour that leads to the gruesome birth of Dickie Bird. Big Joey embodies Highway’s most powerful example of this role-playing masculinity. He objectifies women, drinks a lot of alcohol, and is aggressive with other

men. Creature Nataways, who is in love with Big Joey and is less macho, still tries very hard to be the man that Big Joey is.

Highway points out through Creature and Big Joey that masculinity can be used to compensate for insecurities around men's sexuality. Creature tries to perform toughness like Big Joey because he is in love with him and wants to be like him. Big Joey is a role model for Creature, who states, "I love the way he stands. I love the way he walks. The way he laughs. The way he wears his cowboy boots" (104). Creature appears to be more than in love with Big Joey, when he tells Spooky that he loves "the way women fall at his feet. I wanna be like him. I always wanted to be like him, William. I always wanted to have a dick as big as his" (104). Creature shows here how a man's status and power revolve around his sexuality. In this instance, we can see an obvious correlation between sex and power.

The connection between gender and power is also apparent when Big Joey discusses being beaten by the FBI. Big Joey describes his experience at Wounded Knee, where many Natives protested and fought for their rights, as emasculating. While being confronted about his involvement in the rape of Patsy, he raises his arms, as if in battle cry and yells,

This is the end of the suffering of a great nation! That was me.  
Wounded Knee, South Dakota, spring of '73. The FBI. They beat  
us to the ground. Again and again and again. Ever since that  
spring, I've had these dreams where blood is spillin' out from my  
groin, nothin' there but blood and emptiness. It's like I lost myself  
(119-120).

Big Joey describes feeling emptiness and blood coming from his genitalia, showing that his experience protesting Western oppression literally left him feeling emasculated. Big

Joey feels “feminized” by his experience at Wounded Knee, and this experience deprived him of his power, which he associates with his male genitalia. It is important that this vision of blood spilling from him parallels Black Lady giving birth in a bar, another instance relating to his masculinity where he felt powerless. Big Joey bases his role in society on being a sexed male; he believes he lost himself because he defines himself by his gender role. He continues to say, “when I saw this baby comin’ out of Caroline, Black Lady . . . Gazelle dancin’ . . . all this blood . . . and I knew it was gonna come . . . I . . . I tried to stop it . . . I freaked out”(119-120). This passage shows that Big Joey’s loss of power and the suffering of his people in society directly influence his current attitude. Here Highway confirms that masculinity is associated with power, and because the power was taken from Big Joey he appears to have become hyper-masculine in an attempt to get some power back. He has tried to become like the aggressors who beat him down. In the end, though, rather than appearing dominant, controlling, and powerful, Big Joey emerges as weak and cowardly.

From the “Big” in his name, we can see Highway’s portrayal of exaggerated masculinity in Big Joey. However, the name Big Joey, itself, is an ironic name and an oxymoron: “big” insinuates a grown man, but the diminutive “Joey” implies a young boy. This, similarly to the male obsession over female breasts, points out that, for all its effort to be dominant, the Western male role is sometimes infantile. The obvious misogyny displayed by Big Joey appears as a direct result of his exaggerated masculinity and his trying to “correct his deficiencies” (Goldberg 47). When admitting to the other men why he let Dickie Bird rape Patsy, Big Joey says, “Because I hate them! I hate them fuckin’ bitches. Because they – our own women – took the fuckin’ power away from us

faster than the FBI ever did” (120). We can see from this comment that Big Joey resents the women for threatening his masculinity and, thus, why he feels deficient. He is also displacing his shame from Wounded Knee onto the women. According to Billingham, “Big Joey sees Wounded Knee only as a defeat,” and he “links the blood and violence of the military conflict with the blood and pain of Black Lady’s labour and Dicky Bird’s traumatic birth” (372-373). Both of these instances put Big Joey in a helpless place where “his equation of women playing hockey with that resistance would amount to an assumption of *disempowerment*” (Billingham 373).

Highway shows us that this inflated sense of masculinity can be attributed to the loss of power the Native men feel in general, especially when they feel they must assimilate to the dominant culture. If the very nature of colonization is to take away power, then these men try to take on this gender role with a vengeance in order to get the power back. This power is related to the domination, exploitation, and sexualisation of women. This explains why Big Joey feels threatened enough by the women to let such violent actions take place. If, in order to gain status in society, the Native must overcome his “feminization” and become “masculine,” then the best way of achieving this is by placing Native women even lower on a social hierarchy. This hierarchy is one that places Western white males at the top, white females under them; Native males become “feminized” below the white Western women. This hierarchy places Native women even underneath the feminized Native males, leaving them in a bottom position susceptible to abuse. If Big Joey fears the women’s reclaiming any power, it is probably because he fears being at the bottom of a social hierarchy. As long as he is oppressing the women, he is still “on top” of them. This is similar to the African servant in the first act of *Cloud*

*Nine* who struggles over power and status, and in *The Crying Game* when Fergus resists his “feminization.” Fergus, like Big Joey, also uses violence to resist his low place in English society. Highway demonstrates through Big Joey the danger of assuming the gender binary of male/female. It may also be interpreted that he is pointing out the dangers of assimilating to a so-called “superior” way of life. Sheila Rabillard points out, “[o]ne could go further and suggest that there is a political edge to Highway’s critique of the polarized genders in *Dry Lips*, Highway more than hints at an association between opposition of the sexes and White oppression”(15).

Billingham addresses how Highway’s work subverts conventional Western gender roles. She discusses the construction of masculinity, homo-social, and homosexual relations within the play. Bingham notes that the relationships and issues between the male characters in the play “serve to transgress boundaries and undermine simple binaries” (364). Simple binaries like male/female, colonizer/colonized, and White/Native can be seen as imperial tools of dominance, and Highway subverts them by having women play hockey and men bake and knit. Throughout the play, Spooky Lacroix is knitting baby garments, and Zachary is baking, while the offstage women are slamming pucks into boards and scrapping on the ice. By undermining these binaries, Highway points to the malleability of supposedly “natural” and rigid roles. Through his destabilizing of the gender binary, in particular, Highway challenges the dominant gender norms of Western culture.

Even though at the beginning of the play some of the men seem to resent the women’s determination to play hockey, eventually the men become absorbed in the women’s game. After the first game the men are enthusiastic,

PIERRE: ...didn't even get to referee more than ten minutes.  
But you have to admit, gentlemen, that slap shot...  
SPOOKY: ...that's my sister, Black Lady Halked, that's my  
sister...  
PIERRE: ...did you see her slap shot? Fantastic! Like a bullet,  
like a killer shark. Unbelievable! (80).

Highway is illustrating the possibility that arises with having the women gain some power back and step outside of their so-called gender roles. He shows that even though some of the men resist the women at first, they end up enjoying the women's hockey game. Billingham points out that having women play hockey is "the most obvious instance of cross-gendering in the play" (370). This is largely because, as Billingham notes, hockey is an "icon" of "white Canadian culture and of masculinity" (370). Highway shows that it is alright to be a man who knits and a woman who plays hockey. Through the women's hockey team, blending of genders, and bending of gender norms, Highway proves that even though, at first, change comes with some resistance, it is possible. The configurations of gender that the characters tried hard to uphold are merely social constructs rather than the "naturalized" traits they are passed off as. In *Dry Lips*, Highway is disrupting this uneven power structure by making slippery the gender customs of the colonizers. He points out that these gender roles are constructed and may be reversed by deconstructing and reconstructing the Western gender dichotomy.

More gender bending can be observed in the scene following Simon's accidental death where Nanabush is

*Sitting on a toilet having a good shit. He/she is dressed in an old man's white beard and wig, but also wearing sexy, elegant women's high-heeled pumps. Surrounded by white, puffy clouds, she/he sits with her legs crossed, nonchalantly filing his/her fingernails. (117)*

According to Billingham,

This scene depicts the white male Christian God in drag, blending traits of masculine and feminine appearance in a manner consistent with the gender-crossing of the play. The iconoclastic treatment of the Christian deity enacts resistance to one of the most blatantly hierarchical, patriarchal, heterocentric, and ethnocentric institutions of the colonial regime. (365)

Looking at the gender dynamics of *Dry Lips*, Billingham also points out that a “complicated interplay among colonization, political disenfranchisement, shifting gender roles, and same-sex desire aims at an understanding of the play in light of both the Cree/Ojibway context and Euro-American theoretical paradigms” (358).

One of the main and most distinctive differences between Cree/Ojibway and Euro-American is language. As Highway states in his notes before the play, “The most explicit distinguishing feature between the North American Indian languages and the European languages is that in Indian (e.g. Cree, Ojibway), there is no gender”(12). Here Highway illustrates that the most fundamental gender difference between the two cultures is present in the very languages that shape their worlds. He goes on to say that, “the male-female-neuter hierarchy is entirely absent” (12). This is why Nanabush, the trickster figure, plays a man in *The Rez Sisters* and a female in *Dry Lips*; she/he is neither wholly male nor female. As Highway says, “the central hero figure from our mythology -- theology, if you will--is theoretically neither exclusively male nor exclusively female, or is both simultaneously” (12).

Some of the anxiety characters in the play display may be attributed to the confusion of adjusting to a gendered way of life. For instance, if we look at the scene

where Simon speaks with Patsy/Nanabush following the rape, we see his confusion and frustration with the gendered English language,

SIMON: ...weetha (“him/her” – i.e., no gender)... Christ!  
What is it? Him? Her? Stupid fucking language, fuck you, da  
Englesa. Me no speakum no more da goodie Englesa, in Cree  
we say “weetha” not “him” or her” Nanabush, come back!  
(110-111)

After spitting violently on the crucifix that Dickie Bird used to rape Patsy, Simon continues, “Fucking goddamn crucifix yessssss. God! You’re a man. You’re a woman. You’re a man? You’re a woman?”(112). Simon and Patsy also then begin to utter “him” and “her” back and forth. Simon asserts “him” while Patsy/ Nanabush says “her” (112). Through this dialogue, the blending of languages, and the confusion over gender, Highway illustrates the effects of cultural collisions. Although Simon tries to retain a more traditional way of life and reject Western imperialism, Highway shows that even he is confused and affected by patriarchy. In fact, his response to Patsy’s rape shows the same hyper-masculinity as Big Joey and Creature. Once he learns of the tragedy he responds by becoming aggressive, getting drunk, and attaining a gun. He then violently searches for Dickie Bird while he shoots the gun belligerently, which results in his own accidental death.

Billingham notes that “[g]ender roles and sexual practices vary across cultures. Despite the colonial imposition of legal and social institutions, it is inadvisable to assume that Native constructs of gender and sexuality are completely identical with Western ones” (359). This can be gathered when looking at Paula Gunn Allen’s illustration of the woman-centred social systems that some tribes used to have. She says, “a diversity of people, including gay males and lesbians, are not denied and are in fact likely to be

accorded honor” (2). She also points out that “[i]n many tribes, the nurturing male constitutes the ideal adult model for boys while the decisive, self-directing female is the ideal model to which girls aspire” (2). While looking closely at these examples, we may see how the Western gender ideals that the poster of White Monroe and Christianity impose cause gender displacement and dangers. Perhaps Highway is also illustrating to the non-Native audience the influence that binary gender norms have on them as well. After all, Gunn Allen declares, “The organization of individuals into a wide-ranging field of allowable styles creates the greatest possible social stability because it includes and encourages variety of personal expression for the good of the group” (2).

Another significant aspect of the play is its structure, which is framed by a dream and ends where it began. At the end of the play, Zachary awakens in the same nude position as in the beginning, minus Gazelle and “Hockey Night in Canada.” This time he opens his eyes to his wife and their baby with the *Smurfs* playing on TV in his own home. Zachary is muttering similar words when Hera wakes him as he does when Big Joey wakes him, and Hera plants on his bottom the same kiss that Gazelle had in his dream. He has awoken from his nightmare to an almost too idealistic reality, where everything seems perfect. The place is the same as Big Joey’s but much cleaner, and “*over the pin-up poster of Marilyn Monroe now hangs what was, earlier on, Nanabush’s large powwow dancing bustle*” (127). The audience may breathe a sigh of relief at this point, realizing that the gruesome rape of Patsy and the accidental death of Simon Starblanket most likely did not happen. However, it seems safe to assume that the much earlier instances alluded to, such as Dickie Bird’s tragic birth under a reserve bar’s jukebox, did

indeed take place, because these are incidents that happened much earlier than the enchanted night of Zachary's dream.

According to Denis Johnston though, "if the tragic conditions are real, then the upbeat tag ending, with Zachary joyfully lifting his infant daughter, undermines the issues which the play has raised" (263). However, rather than undermine the issues raised, Zachary's nightmare serves to warn audiences of the dangerous possibilities of colonization and assimilation on the Native men and women of Wasy Hill and even of North America. Even though all of the events did not transpire, it does not mean that they, or similar ones, are not happening elsewhere or will not. If the kind of abuse and misogyny that Highway portrays in *Dry Lips* continues, then tragedy is inevitable.

It may be argued that Highway uses the dream frame as a method of education. Since Zachary Jeremiah wakes up and much of the crisis is averted, he is given the option to try to stop actions like this from happening. The dream is a warning, and through it Highway educates his audiences. He is not only showing White and Native audiences what could happen, but what is happening in some areas.

Some critics have argued that this ending weakens Highway's representation. This may be disagreed with though, and it can be argued that Highway uses the dream frame to illustrate the pain and the poison and then show us that there is still hope for moving forward. As Longclaws' epigraph says, the poison must be exposed in order for healing to occur. This movement forward, though, is only possible if the issues represented in the play are internalized by the audience. By providing us an overly idealistic ending with no definite answers and having the play structured cyclically so that the end takes us back to the beginning, we may feel inspired to make some sort of a change. The audience is not

left with a closed ending where things are resolved and questions are answered. Rather Highway paints a picture of problems, offers some solutions, and leaves the loose ends and ending up to us. Since problems are unresolved, audiences may be inspired to take what they have witnessed internally and change their attitudes and society. The structure of the work urges the audience to break the cycles and the patterns of abuse. We have been given a glimpse of where things are headed on this reserve and what is likely going on in others, and it is in our power to stop them.

Billingham, when discussing the dream frame of the play, says, “[a]s the playwright explains in his program notes, ‘dreams and the dream life – have traditionally been considered by Native society to be the greatest tool of instruction’” (359). Many of the instances presented in the dream are horrific and will not easily be forgotten by audiences, whether they are White or Native. Imboden also highlights that “the world of comedy, which succeeds that of satire, rises from the chaos of anarchy toward the creation of a new society” (118). Imboden discusses how the “weapons of satire” destroy the “tragic circle” (117). She further points out this “burlesque, wild, obscene humour” works to allow “characters, and ourselves, the reader/audience, to have the courage to face the horrors with a bravery that otherwise would not have been possible” (117). Perhaps the comic aspects of *Dry Lips* increase the audience's awareness of the tragic circumstances. Highway uses the healing properties of laughter to help us through the harsh tragedy that is grounded in many people's reality.

We may also notice how Highway, in the first stage directions and throughout, produces a cultural melange. During the play, he mixes Canadian hockey and gender, places a powwow bustle over the Monroe poster, and mixes Western and Native food

(Nanabush Cookies and Bannock Apple Pie). Highway states in an interview with Wilson, “I think that White culture in Canada is very much changing and transforming as a result of living with native culture; likewise Cree culture, native culture” (*Other Solitudes* 354). Highway warns of the dangers of assimilation to White patriarchy, but he is positive and hopeful about the blending of the two cultures as well. In the interview, he states, “What I really find fascinating about the future of my life, the life of my people, the life of my fellow Canadians is the searching for this new voice, this new identity, this new tradition, this magical transformation, that potentially is quite magnificent”. (354)

Although Highway does not conclude *Dry Lips* with definitive answers to the nightmare he portrays, in the final scene he gives us a suggestion, and through *Dry Lips* he educates the audience on the danger of adopting rigid gender roles and assimilating to dominant patriarchal ideology. Highway’s work seems to be indicating a need for the lines between different cultures and genders to be more fluid. Whether in sex or race, having groups placed as polar opposites where one oppresses the other is horrifying. Not all of Highway’s characters fit neatly into the polarized gender dichotomy, though, and this offers the people of his community and of North America hope. This includes characters like Zachary and Spooky who knit, bake, and are happy fathers, as well as women like Hera who play hockey as well as mind their families. While tragedy occurs at the hands of some, it is averted and resolved by others. As Zachary says in his nightmare, after Simon is accidentally killed, “this kind of living has got to stop. It’s got to stop!” (116). When he wakes up at the end of the play, there is some relief when the audience realizes that this is only a dream. Today’s readers and theatre audiences can

relax only a little bit, though, because the truth and possibility of the dream is frightfully real.

### **Chapter 3: Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine***

In her play, *Cloud Nine*, playwright Caryl Churchill draws attention to how operations of power use race, gender, and sexuality in controlling and dominating people. Drama has long been used to inform audiences of political issues and to challenge “natural” categories. While discussing Churchill, Annette Pankratz states, “[d]ramatic texts and theatrical performances establish ‘as if’ situations that either perpetuate traditional, seemingly common-sensical norms or that challenge these norms by exposing their artificiality and constructedness” (177). Churchill exposes the constructedness of rigid gender and sexuality roles and their intersections with colonialism and race in her play in order to disrupt the “naturalized” patriarchal hierarchy. Through the play and her use of cross-casting, she shows that gender and sexuality can question, as well as uphold, “natural” gender roles. McClintock declares that imperialism and nationalism make up a “gendered discourse and cannot be understood without a theory of gender power” (“No Longer” 90). In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill displays a social hierarchy, as defined by McClintock and Stoler, based on the relationship between gender, race, and power. By pointing out this hierarchy and its relational dynamics, she gives her audience the opportunity to see how they may break down the systems that, known or unbeknownst to them, they may uphold.

The first act of *Cloud Nine* points out, like McClintock, that gender and colonization are interrelated and run parallel to each other. Everything is gendered as either “masculine” or “feminine.” Clive, “the colonial administrator (248),” demonstrates the polarity of gender roles when he says, “A boy has no business having feelings” (266) and “Women are irrational, demanding, inconsistent, treacherous, lustful, and they smell different from us” (282). According to Clive, a man must be void of the “feelings” that

the women are full of. Consequently all of the feelings that he associates with the female are negative and must be controlled, just as he feels he must “tame” the natives and land (277). Clive portrays the natives and the land as having a dark and treacherous nature similar to that of the women when he tells the widowed neighbour Mrs. Saunders, “You are dark like this continent. Mysterious. Treacherous” (263).

In Churchill’s portrayal of Victorian colonial society, the “masculine” White male occupies the highest and most powerful position in society, while women and “others” are deemed inferior and consequently feminized and exploited. Churchill shows how women’s sexuality was primitivized and blacks were feminized in colonial Africa as McClintock does in “Double Jeopardy.”

Through her racial and gender cross-casting, Churchill shows how the feminized can work to uphold oppressive structures. For instance, Joshua, the African Native, is played by a white actor rather than a black one and says, “My skin is black but oh my soul is white. / I hate my tribe. My master is my light. / I only live for him” (251-252). A black man is able to fit into this hierarchy by accepting it and trying to resist his feminization. Also, Betty, the colonial wife, is played by a male actor rather than a female since, right from the beginning of the play, she states, “I am a man’s creation as you see, / And what men want is what I want to be” (251). Edward, Clive and Betty’s effeminate son, is played by a woman in the first act and declares “[w]hat father wants I’d dearly like to be. I find it rather hard as you can see” (252). Harry Bagley, an explorer, also destabilizes patriarchy because he is a homosexual, but, instead of accepting his sexuality, he tries to conform to the norm for a white colonial male by marrying a woman upon Clive’s insistence. Hee-Won Lee suggests, “[a]s cross-cast,

Joshua and Edward, variations of Betty, clearly indicate that the lack of feminine self has common ground with the lack of black self and with the lack of homosexual self” (765).

All these characters destabilize the colonial system and the “national family”

(McClintock “No Longer” 91): Joshua by his race, Betty by her sex, and Edward and Harry by their gender and sexuality. In order to be admitted into colonial society, they must lack their own identities, reform, and try to conform to what Clive wants them to be.

Hee-won Lee notes,

The sexual disorders, represented by cross-casting, call into question the Victorian male/female and black/white polarization, revealing the rigidity and distortion of the Victorian principle of order and making visible the real split of the individual into private self and public role-playing. (767)

Churchill sharply portrays the structural order of colonialism in the list of characters in Act One, where the gender and race hierarchy is set up. Everyone is described in relation to the patriarchal father, Clive. For instance, in the list of characters, Clive is described by his high colonial position, while Betty is described as “*his* wife,” and Joshua as “*his* black servant,” (248 emphasis mine). Betty says, “I live for Clive. The whole aim of my life/ Is to be what he looks for in a wife” (251). Churchill shows that this hierarchy is designed by and for the white male, who is unmarked by his race and gender and holds the top “masculine” position. Not only are all of the characters described in relation to Clive, but he introduces the rest of the women by saying, “No need for speeches by the rest. My daughter, mother-in-law, and governess” (252). This shows that women were kept invisible and treated as irrelevant. In fact, in the first act his daughter is even played by a doll. According to Elizabeth Russell, “Clive is the only character not playing a part. He has no need to do so because he is perfectly at ease in his

role as representative of his Queen in Africa, as master of the house and as head of the family” (158). Clive is secure and confident as he has obtained the master role in the dualistic framework that, as Plumwood describes, colonial hierarchies thrive on.

Many marginalized people uphold social hierarchies by imitating the colonizers at the top. By mimicking the role of the white patriarch, or by being what he desires in order to resist their feminization, subordinate people are able to maintain their places within the social hierarchy. According to David Waterman, the politics of power and resistance in the first act “is concerned with the hierarchy of dominance and submission, based almost entirely on a constructed idea of gender/ race/ age/ sexuality” (89).

Characters like Joshua, Betty, and Edward try to resist their low social standing in society by placing other, marginalized characters even below them. Betty and Joshua have a constant power struggle between them where one tries to dominate over the other.

Apollo Amoko points out, “both Betty and Joshua lend legitimacy to Clive’s superiority over them and expend their respective energies battling each other to determine who takes second place and oppresses the other” (53). Joshua tries to resist his “feminization” and loss of power and “activism” by trying to assert the colonizer’s brand of “masculinity” similarly to the way Nandy explains resistance in his work: by being violent, sexual, and aggressive toward Betty, who is similarly low in status, and by not following her orders. This is obvious in the following interaction between Betty and Joshua,

BETTY: Joshua, fetch me some blue thread from my sewing box. It is on the piano.

JOSHUA: You’ve got legs under that skirt.

BETTY: Joshua.

JOSHUA: And more than legs. (278)

Joshua also calls Edward names like “Baby. Sissy. Girly” in an attempt to feminize Edward like the colonizers do to him and his people. He mocks him saying, “Oh little Eddy, playing at master” (278). Joshua tries to be aggressive and hyper-masculine, as Nandy describes, in order to gain power over those in similarly low positions, like a woman and an effeminate boy. It is ironic that Joshua’s efforts to resist oppression cause him to perpetuate the colonial hierarchy that ultimately denies him a high position. This reminds us of Sinha’s view that patriarchal politics subvert the anti-colonial agenda (181). According to Amoko, by denying his blackness, Joshua “does not seek to disrupt the fundamental assumptions of hierarchical racial identification. Joshua is self-denigrating and affirms the existence of a racial bipolarity in colonial Africa and idolizes whiteness” (54).

Edward resists Joshua’s efforts, though, and steps into his “masculine” role when he tells Joshua, “You fetch her sewing at once, do you hear me? You move when I speak to you, boy” (278). Edward learns to play the role, which Clive has done all he can “[t]o teach him to grow to be a man” (252), and in turn attempts to prove his masculinity by being aggressive and condescending to Joshua and even his mother. Betty also encourages Edward in his role when she says, “are you going to stand there and let a servant insult your mother?” (278). When Betty goes to embrace Edward thankfully for his heroic show of strength, he moves away and tells her, “[d]on’t touch me” (278). Churchill shows the power struggle that takes place between the lower characters who accept the hierarchy. By elevating themselves in the social hierarchy this way, the oppressed may become oppressors and in turn only weaken an anti-colonial agenda. As Waterman points out, “[a]ll of the characters resist normalization and domination, to

varying degrees yet they reproduce the framework of dominance/ submission by seeking the dominant role” (90).

Just as Joshua and Betty uphold the hierarchy that oppresses them, Harry, the homosexual explorer, upholds it by denying his homosexuality. Harry eventually closets his homosexuality and marries a lesbian woman, Ellen, on Clive’s insistence. Ellen also is expected to deny her attraction to Betty by marrying a man and becoming a straight, conventional Victorian wife. According to Hee-Won Lee, “[f]emale sexual desires and homosexual desires are all kept in secret. But they serve as a hidden political threat to Clive’s patriarchy and his colonial occupation” (767). Harry and Ellen try to conform to the dichotomous roles of man and wife in order to fit into the patriarchal society that their genders and sexualities destabilize. Act One ends quite hilariously with Harry and Ellen’s wedding, and the whole thing seems rather awkward, forced, and absurd. Clive’s concluding wedding speech establishes the colonial agenda once again. He says,

Harry, my friend. So brave and strong and supple.  
Ellen, from neath her veil so shyly peeking.  
I wish you joy. A toast--the happy couple.  
Dangers are past. Our enemies are killed.  
--Put your arm round her, Harry, have a kiss--  
All murmuring of discontent is stilled.  
Long may you live in peace and joy and bliss. (288)

Here Clive reinforces their gender roles and describes them according to Victorian norms. He ironically calls them a happy couple before turning his speech on dangers and enemies. Hee-Won Lee suggests that “conventional marriage is Clive’s neat conclusion to the full range of dangerous sexual actions” (767).

Churchill shows that, like the native and homosexuals, some of the women in the first act reinforce their oppression in the colonial hierarchy as well. Betty upholds this

structure by being exactly what Clive wants her to be. She continuously speaks of what a woman's role consists of from his perspective and perpetuates the stereotypical role of femininity. She also maintains that sexual enjoyment is not appropriate for women. When her children's governess, Ellen, who is in love with her, asks about heterosexual sex, Betty replies "[y]ou just keep still" (286). Ellen then asks if it is enjoyable, to which Betty replies, "Ellen, you're not getting married to enjoy yourself" (286). After Betty has feelings for and kisses Harry, she tells Clive, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Forgive me. It is not Harry's fault, it is all mine. Harry is noble. He has rejected me. It is my wickedness, I get bored, I get restless, I imagine things. There is something so wicked in me, Clive" (276). Betty confirms that her loneliness and desperation are not due to her oppression but rather her sex. She upholds the social order and her demeaned place in it rather than questioning it or being subversive. Having Betty and Joshua portrayed this way shows that they mimic the White male and also how blacks and women were invisible in colonial history and mentality.

Betty emulates Stoler's view on how inclusion into colonial society is dependant on regulating the sexual, marital, and domestic life (43) when she tells Ellen, "But women have their duties as soldiers have. You must be a mother if you can" (281). Here Betty advocates the family and encourages Ellen to have one of her own as an obligation to her country. Ellen is being pushed into this role because, as a lesbian, she destabilizes the family unit and the patriarchal hierarchy. Ellen even tells Betty, "I don't want a husband. I want you" and "I don't want children, I don't like children. I just want to be alone with you, Betty" (281). By not replicating the "proper" heterosexual role for a woman, like Betty and her mother, Maud, do, Ellen weakens the "natural" gender order and thus

threatens the colonial society that Stoler and McClintock draw on. Eventually, though, Ellen takes Betty's advice and marries in order to conform to the regulations of this society. Since Ellen is of the working-class, unlike Mrs. Saunders, she cannot afford to stay single. Ellen is a governess and does not have the money and property that Mrs. Saunders has been left by her late husband. Mrs. Saunders thus has the option to remain alone and do as she pleases, but Ellen does not. Although by upholding a gender dichotomy characters may allow their subordination, Churchill shows that some are less able to be subversive due to their economic conditions.

McClintock argues that hierarchies within the nation were depicted in familial terms due to the "naturalized" subordination of woman to man and child to adult ("No Longer" 91). Similarly, Clive states that the family saves them from the weakness of women. For instance he tells Betty, "Women can be treacherous and evil. They are darker and more dangerous than men. The family protects us from that" (278). Clive also teaches Edward, who is played by a woman, what it is to be a patriarchal man. According to Pankratz, "This casting questions the very concept of supposedly natural gender roles" and "Edward's wish to wear his mother's necklace and to play with dolls appears unnatural for a boy, but rather 'normal' for the woman who acts the part of the boy" (184). After Clive catches Edward playing with the doll, he says,

You should always respect and love me, Edward, not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I loved and respected my own father, because he was my father. Through our father we love our Queen and our God, Edward. Do you understand? It is something men understand.

EDWARD: I don't like women. I don't like dolls. I love you, papa, and I love you, Uncle Harry. (276)

Edward's socialization is similar to the women's, showing that the Victorian family unit has a long history of "teaching" children how to be proper men and women. Maud, Betty's mother, constantly affirms her and her daughter and granddaughter's roles as weak, pretty women. Maud tells Betty, "You are looking very pretty tonight. You were such a success as a young girl. You have made a most fortunate marriage" (258). She is clear in pointing out to her daughter that "[t]he men have their duties and we have ours" (257). Maud tells Betty of how her mother before her formed her into a proper woman. For instance, Maud says, "Betty you have to learn to be patient. I am patient. My mama save himself from his homosexuality, a "most revolting perversion" (283). The play shows that colonial patriarchy uses the family, which in turn supports the nation, as one of its main tools for controlling "others."

Because the widow, Mrs. Saunders, deviates from the other women and men's expectations and refuses to buy into a society where women do not enjoy sex and are expected to have a family, she is deemed deviant and used to threaten other women. For instance, Maud says, "Let Mrs. Saunders be a warning to you, Betty. She is alone in the world. You are not, thank God" (274). Although Maud uses Mrs. Saunders as a disciplinary warning, she fails to acknowledge that Mrs. Saunders chooses to, and enjoys, being alone without a man. Mrs. Saunders even tells Harry, "I could never be a wife again. There is only one thing about marriage that I like" (284). It is obvious to the audience that this one thing Mrs. Saunders enjoys is sex. It is also important to note that none of the other characters call Mrs. Saunders by her first name which shows that although she may be independent, she is still defined in terms of her relationship to a man. According to Elizabeth Russell, with Mrs. Saunders "[a] reversal of gender roles

has begun” and “[i]t is significant that Mrs. Saunders and Ellen are played by the same person. Ellen’s lesbianism and Mrs. Saunders’ open sensuality and love of independence are the makings of the future women of Act II” (158).

If we look at the future women of Act Two, more specifically at the character list, we can see that Betty is on top and now played by a woman, and everything exists in relation to her, rather than to Clive. In fact, it is important to note that Clive does not even appear in the list of characters or the act. The actor who played Clive now plays the role of a young girl named Cathy. Edward is no longer played by a woman, and Victoria is no longer a doll. Hee-Won Lee proposes that “[t]he natural gender casting suggests that sex roles become more of personal choice than that of social position” (769).

The second act is a subversion of the first act, right from its list of characters. According to Russell, “[a]ll sexual taboos have been broken. The patriarchal family has been dissolved” (159). In the introduction, Churchill herself says that the first act is male-dominated and firmly structured to reflect colonial society, while in “the second act, more energy comes from the women and the gays” (249). Because of this, “uncertainties and changes of society, and a more feminine and less authoritarian feeling, are reflected in the looser structure of the act” (Churchill, Introduction 249). Although all gender and colonial issues are not completely resolved, social roles are more fluid, and things have begun to change for the better.

In Act Two, the characters appear twenty-five years older, 100 years later amidst the sexual revolution of the late seventies in London. According to John M. Clum, the structural changes of the second act destabilize the colonial order, and the characters become free “from traditional norms of gender-appropriate behaviour and relationships”

(106). Clum points out that “patriarchal marriage is eliminated as the ideal for human relationships. As a result the gender definitions which supported marriage seem more fluid” (106). Clum also notes how the norms upheld in the gender dichotomy of patriarchy have changed, “[m]ale and female homosexuality and bisexuality seem the norm and the lone heterosexual male is the most confused character” (106). The norm has been inverted from the first act by the sexuality of the characters in the second act; they have made the norms of the colonial gender hierarchy abnormal.

Martin, the lone heterosexual male that Clum alludes to, seems to feel emasculated by the fluid sexuality of the other characters, especially his wife. Even though he claims to encourage Victoria’s experimentation, Martin shows that he is threatened by it. Although Martin states, “I’m not like whatever percentage of American men have become impotent as a direct result of women’s liberation, which I am totally in favour of,” he also claims that “I lost my erection last night . . . I don’t like to feel that you do it better yourself” (300). Even though Martin brags about his support of independent women, he is so bothered by his wife’s ability to please her self better than he can, and on her own, that he becomes impotent and feels his masculinity is threatened. Victoria threatens Martin not only with her sexuality, but also with her ability to be autonomous and please herself.

Martin claims, “I was all for the sixties when liberation just meant fucking” (310). Here he shows that, similar to the patriarchal Clive, all he is really concerned with is how liberation affects him. If he is benefiting from free sexuality, he is all for it, but once it becomes more about equal power and control, he is inconvenienced. He even says to Victoria, “You don’t seem to realise how insulting it is to me that you can’t get yourself

together” (301). Martin, as the white heterosexual male, tries to keep everything centred on him rather than Victoria.

Churchill points out that although the sexually fluid characters in Act Two destabilize the gender dichotomy, there is still resistance to changing the social structure in order to make it more fluid and less focused on the dominance of the white heterosexual male. As Victoria says in Act Two, “You can’t separate fucking and economics” (309). We can apply Weber’s idea to Victoria’s statement, that “[t]he centerpiece of these systems is the exploitation of one group by another for a greater share of society’s valued resources” (127). Weber adds, “That they are based in social relationships between dominant and subordinate groups is key to understanding these systems” (127). Waterman also discusses the persistence of oppressive values and structures through the characters in Act Two, pointing out that despite their freedom in their gender performances, they are “obviously not emancipated from the matrix of power and its normative, regulatory function of maintaining social control” (91). He further articulates, as Victoria does, that “[s]ex and power cannot be separated, and even as they resist patriarchal domination, the characters reproduce, in the subversive performance of gender, the framework of dominance and submission” (92).

Although Edward’s homosexuality is now more accepted, he still shows a lack of autonomy, similar to the excessively “feminine” Betty of Act One. He wants to be a part of the patriarchal marital system that his father and mother endorsed and that, ultimately, his sexuality excludes him from. For instance, Gerry tells him, “I don’t mind if you knit. I don’t want to be married,” to which Edward replies, “I do” (307). Edward further states,

I wouldn’t want to keep a man who wants his freedom.  
Gerry: Eddy, do stop playing the injured wife, it’s not funny.

Edward: I'm not playing. It's true.

Gerry: I'm not the husband so you can't be the wife. (307)

Edward perpetuates a system that Gerry refuses to be a part of. Edward is still buying into an imperial system which places them in a dichotomy and gives one person, or sex-role, power over the other. Edward wants to be the stereotypical "wife" that his mother was because he feels his effeminacy makes him one. He tries to make their relationship like a marriage, which in turn takes away their freedom. Gerry even asks him, "What are you trying to turn me into" (307). Gerry does not want to play man and wife, nor does he want to be labelled as a husband with very rigidly defined roles. He even tells Edward, "Why don't I do the cooking sometime?" and "Just be yourself" (306). Gerry ends up leaving Edward because the latter can not get past his need to be subservient and "female" in their relationship, and also because Edward wants to take away Gerry's freedom and autonomy.

Lin's daughter Cathy is played by a man, and "becomes an emblem of all confusions that appear in the adults in the present time" (Hee-Won Lee 770). Lin raises Cathy more like a stereotypical boy by giving her toy guns and dressing her in denim, attempting to deny Cathy the femininity commonly instilled in young girls. Rather than allow Cathy to be polymorphous, as children are at young ages, Lin along with the other children who tease Cathy, only colonize Cathy with gender identity. Lin merely represses Cathy's choice to "be just herself" (Hee-Won Lee 770), and instead creates "the Rambo of the playground" (Osterwalder 36). Despite this Cathy still wants to put on Betty's jewellery and wear dresses. Hee-Won Lee further insists that "[i]n the male actor's artificial role of Cathy, the audience see that Lin's education leads her daughter to

forget her feminine aspect, just as Clive attempts to forbid Edward's femininity" (770). Lin is not allowing Cathy to choose her own identity, and, in turn, she causes her the same confusion, lack of autonomy, and repression that Clive caused Edward. Lin resents Victoria's comments regarding the "war toys" she has bought for Cathy and she tells Victoria, "I'll give her a rifle for Christmas and blast Tommy's pretty head off for a start" (292). Here Lin encourages violence and hyper-masculinity through her child because she feels as if Victoria is looking down on her for the way she raises her daughter. We can see that this argument becomes more about the two women's place in society, one that privileges Victoria, as an upper-class and well-educated woman, over Lin. Lin is a lower-class, single mother who not only is a lesbian, but comes from an abusive marriage. Her brother is a soldier in Ireland as well. This is an example of how the lower classes can carry out the colonizers' violence, as in the case of the IRA in *The Crying Game* and Big Joey, Dickie Bird, and Simon in *Dry Lips*. As Weber pointed out, the centerpiece of binary systems is that one group controls and exploits the other for a greater share of society's resources (127).

The firm structure of Act One points to the rigid structure of gender roles and society in a male-dominated era, and Act Two, as a revolt, shows the complete opposite, chaos. Both acts are as dichotomous as two sides of a coin, and, consequently, both have undesirable results. If the first act is male-dominated and anti-female, the second act is female-dominated and somewhat anti-male. Examples of this are seen in both acts and in the first act, Clive tells Harry, "[t]here is something dark about women, that threatens what is best in us. Between men that light burns brightly" (282). In Act Two Lin, a lesbian single mother, tells Victoria, "I hate men" followed by, "I just hate the bastards"

(292). In the second act there is a scene where Lin, Victoria, and Edward drunkenly try to call upon the feminine power of the goddess. Victoria beckons,

Goddess of many names, oldest of the old, who walked in chaos  
and created life, hear us calling you back through time, before  
Jehovah, before Christ, before men drove you out and burnt your  
temples, hear us, Lady, give us back what we were, give us the  
history we haven't had, make us the women we can't be. (308)

They call the goddess that they summon a “[g]oddess of breasts,” “[g]oddess of cunts,” and a “[g]oddess of fat bellies and babies. And blood blood blood” (309).

The fixation on the goddess is opposite to the patriarchal Christianity depicted in Act One. This act is the antithesis of Act One, which is firmly structured, and its structure is unconstrained to the point of depicting disorder and confusion. As the song near the end of Act Two says, “it’s upside down when you reach Cloud Nine” (312). The incestuous relationship between Victoria and Edward shows a complete revolt and inversion of the strict familial and sexual roles that imperialism, and the colonial hierarchy of Act One, worked hard to maintain. Hans Osterwalder discusses how “the taboo of incest” is broken as part of the “overthrow of the patriarchal order” that is so profound in Act One (35). According to Hee-Won Lee, Act Two “is the complete reversal of the past one. It shows contemporary freedom and chaos in which all kinds of sexual relationships and gender roles are experimented with” (761). Victoria ends up leaving her husband and child to experiment with her sexuality and considers leaving them for a career move. She laments about her husband, saying “[w]hy the hell can’t he just be a wife and come with me” (302). Ultimately many of the characters become focused on their own personal freedom, pleasure, and individuality to the extent that they

become egocentric and less concerned with unity, family, or monogamous relationships. In order to find happiness, they have turned things inside out and upside down.

Although changes have begun in this act, Churchill shows that the presence of patriarchy and imperialism is still lingering and that “characters in Act Two are still carrying their Victorian baggage around with them, not only regarding sexuality but regarding imperialism too” (Waterman 92). Lin is a lesbian single mother whose brother, a British soldier in Ireland, appears as a ghost late one night after she, Victoria, and Edward have engaged in a sexual orgy. He tells them that he has not come back to tell them anything, rather he’s come back “for a fuck” (310). He tells them in the army in Ireland, he “[s]pent the day reading fucking porn and the fucking night wanking . . . I got so I fucking wanted to kill someone and I got fucking killed myself and I want a fuck” (311). Lin’s brother has returned not with a warning or farewell, but rather a self-centred, misogynistic, and violent rant showing that patriarchal imperialism is still a contemporary issue. According to Russell, “[t]he message is clear: the extreme chauvinism in Victorian colonialism is still very much in existence in British-occupied Ireland” (159). This is something Neil Jordan also shows us in *The Crying Game*, where he points out that this “extreme chauvinism” is also operating within Ireland in the IRA. Churchill is showing the link between patriarchy and imperialism through both acts. In this case she directly links sex, power, and violence with colonial oppression.

Churchill shows the audience, though, that oppression may be undone through the redistribution of power, autonomy, and the acceptance of freer sexuality. One way this is done is through dismantling colonialism, its subsequent gender and sexuality rules, and oppression and patriarchy, which are there to place power over sexuality and to take

power away from some. The once powerless and controlled characters from Act One seize power and control through owning their bodies, sexuality, and identities, but, ultimately, they need to find a balance between their individualism and their unification with other people.

A prime example of the positive attainment of autonomy can be seen when Betty discusses masturbation and how she is able to own her body and desires. She recalls that as a child she used to touch herself, but she was punished by her mother for it. Betty tells the audience,

I thought if Clive wasn't looking at me there wasn't a person there. And one night in my bed in my flat I was so frightened I started touching myself. I thought my hand might go through space. I touched my face, it was there, my arm, my breast, and my hand went down where I thought it shouldn't, and I thought well there is somebody there.  
(316)

Here Churchill shows us that Betty is able to become her own person without her controlling husband, Clive, and she realizes that she also has her own desires and body. Referring to her Mother and Clive, Betty even says, "I felt triumphant because I was a separate person from them" (316). At first Betty says she cried because she did not want to be a separate person from them, and that after she began masturbating she felt like she was betraying Clive. Betty was frightened of her freedom because she had been a prisoner of her marriage for so long, but now she states, "I don't cry about it anymore. Sometimes I do it three times in one night and it really is great fun" (316).

It is also important that, at the end of the play, a speech of Clive's from Act One that renounces Betty for her behaviour with Harry is spoken again by Clive. Following this, the stage directions tell us "*CLIVE goes. BETTY from Act One comes. BETTY and*

BETTY *embrace*” (320). Here we see Betty literally embrace herself and become her own autonomous person. The end of Act Two displays a balance of the two polar acts in that, not only does Betty accept herself and become independent, but both the male and female embrace and accept each other. This may be concluded since the male Betty from Act One embraces the female Betty from Act Two. Rather than have one domineering over the other as we see in each act -- Act One is centred on the male, Clive, and Act Two revolves around the female, Betty -- both are balanced equally and are embracing. Churchill seems to be indicating a solution to the imbalance depicted in both acts, and that is a balance of power between male and female as well as self-sufficiency. Betty even states that “I think when I do more about things I worry about them less” (319).

Through *Cloud Nine* Churchill shows that accepting more fluid gender roles redistributes power and that, by doing this, society may permit a freer, less hierarchical structure. Much in the same way capitalism operates, the patriarchal hierarchy exploits “others” like the women and Africans in Act One for the development of a select few. As Weber says, “[t]o maintain and extend their power and control in society, dominant groups can and do use the resources they command” (127). Patriarchy also extends their power over society, using the people and resources they control. Churchill points out a solution to the redistributing of power through characters like Betty, who has to rebuild her life herself after her husband is gone. Eventually Betty learns how to reconstruct her life, and by the end of the play, she says, “if there isn’t a right way to do things you have to invent one” (319). Churchill demonstrates that by breaking down the hierarchies that are structured on limiting categories like gender, sexuality, and race,

society can implement equality in social and economic structures, and, then, power is not only restricted to those at the top.

Waterman states, “Because cultural codes appear to be natural and universal, allowing the dominant ideology to claim power through priority, society must examine itself critically if it is to arrest the reproduction of social codes and expectations” (92). In *Cloud Nine*, Churchill destabilizes the underlying foundations of power by showing the inequality produced through hierarchical relationships. Churchill motivates her audience to finish where her play has left off in changing the oppressive structures.

## **Chapter 4: Neil Jordan's *The Crying Game***

In Neil Jordan's film *The Crying Game*, questions surrounding gender, race, class, and nation are raised as the film challenges essential identity and binary relationships. The film shows how these categories exist in relation to one another and that these categories, in turn, influence each other just as McClintock's theories, *Cloud Nine*, and *Dry Lips* demonstrate. Through its depiction of race, gender, and nation, the film points out that meaning is constructed and "naturalized" through hegemonic processes. Through characters that subvert binaries of race, gender, and nation, it shows that bodies are marked by social constructions rather than having essentialized identities. By pointing out how malleable these categories are, it demonstrates that they are social constructs performed by individuals. Through characters of different sexualities, sexes, gender identities, races, and nationalities, the film shows that people can choose and create their "natures" and their identities. *The Crying Game* shows through these characters that, if meaning aligned with physical markers is a construction, we can deconstruct and re-create these meanings.

By having characters elide the borders of categories like gender and nation, *The Crying Game* allows the audience to see the constructed nature of these categories. If we look at gender and other markers as social constructs rather than "natural," we can begin to allow the possibility of change. While discussing identities and nature, Herek points out that race, class, gender, and sexual orientation are variables and human creations (567). Based on this, Herek states that "[w]hat has been constructed can be deconstructed and reconstructed, albeit with considerable effort" (567). Through the subversion of sex,

gender, and nation, the characters deconstruct and reconstruct supposed “natural” characteristics, showing the audience the fallacy of oppressive binary structures.

Comparing Jody to Fergus, we first see the attributes that mark them as different from each other. Jody is an immigrant from Antigua, a former British colony, whose family moved to Tottenham, a working-class area of London, when he was a child. The fact that he is an immigrant Black man in the English army indicates that he is a member of the English lower working-class who enlisted in the army because, as he says, “it was a job” (12). For Jody, who wonders “what the fuck am I doing here anyway” (12), working in Ireland as a soldier is his source of income. Fergus is an Irishman working for the IRA, and being Irish also places him low in the British hierarchy, possibly lower than even Jody, who is at least British. Eila Rantonen points out that

*The Crying Game* intertwines the problematics of race and colonialism because both the Irish and the blacks have been racialized in British colonial history. Celts have been classified as an inferior ‘dark’ and violent race [. . .] the Irish have been referred to as ‘white niggers.’” (193)

Rantonen also states, “Jordan apparently wants to transcend fixed definitions of ‘race’ as well as the hetero-biased categories of ‘femininity’ and ‘masculinity’” (193). The film toys with these binary categories and shows the audience that people perform these roles based on their society’s perceptions of their relationship to their race, nationality, gender, and class. Rather than merely portraying good and bad “natures,” the film is showing how gender identity has a lot involved in other categories like race and nationality, which, in turn, are affected by gender.

Although, at first glance, Fergus and Jody appear polar opposites, they have more in common than in opposition when we examine their national and racial positions within

British culture, although Northern Ireland is still a colony of England and Antigua is no longer a colony. The film shows that both men are marked as “others” (Said) who are discriminated against, and both men fight in order to gain some status in their lives as well as to advance their national and racial identities. Edward Said explains the low status of the Irish in his work discussing the treatment of the Irish in terms of his theories on Orientalism. When Fergus asks Jody why he is in Northern Ireland maintaining imperial oppression, Jody replies that he got “sent to the only place in the world they call you nigger to your face” (12). Even though Jody complains that the Irish are racist, he follows up his remarks by calling Fergus “Paddy,” a racial slur for the Irish as “nigger” is for blacks. In this instance “Jody, the colonized other, is replicating imperial norms,” and in this way he “crosses over into the domain of the colonizer” embodying “the post-colonial’s internalization of the pattern of the oppressor group” (Wynne 148). Fergus is also called “Paddy” to his face when he is in Jody’s country, England. According to Rantonen,

The question of national identity becomes more complex since Jody, the agent of British military power, is black and originally from a former British colony, Antigua. This creates a paradoxical situation where both the IRA fighter Fergus and the black Briton Jody share a common colonial past. (193)

Although the two share similar colonial situations, Rantonen fails to point out that, for Fergus, colonization is still a part of the present. The film shows that both Jody and Fergus are victims of colonization, yet, at the beginning of the film, they uphold hierarchical systems that perpetuate violence and stereotyping. Each man looks down on the other: possibly as a means to rise out of his degraded place in society and to make him feel like he is higher than the other in their social hierarchy. Like Joshua and Betty

in *Cloud Nine*, the Irish are fighting against their oppression, they put down Black people who have suffered similar subjugation, which shows that “both colonized groupings are guilty of employing and replicating the stereotypes and the insults of the oppressor” (Wynne 148). In this way it may be seen that both groups are undermining the anti-colonial agenda that Sinha wrote about. When Jody calls Fergus a derogatory term, the film shows that, similarly, Black people try to oppress the Irish. This shows that even the victims of colonialism uphold its hierarchical structure and maintain the system that holds them down in an attempt to stay above the other in order to resist “feminization.” In terms of colonialism, Jody feels superior because the Irish are still oppressed, while Fergus feels superior because at least he is still white.

While discussing the avoidance of racial issues in the public and critical reception of the film, Rantonen comments that it “seems paradoxical since the film brings race and nation very close together” (193). The two main British characters in the film are Black, which Rantonen claims “makes the idea of ‘Britishness’ strange” (194). Jordan is questioning racial and national identities and further showing how they can be created, subverted, and made less binary and more fluid. The film demonstrates the constructed nature of race and nation and leaves the audience questioning their own common assumptions about race, nation, and gender.

Just as Sinha explores how the Englishmen define themselves against the Bengali and Said discusses how the West defines itself against the East, in the case of *The Crying Game* we can also see how the English place themselves as superior to the Irish and Blacks, as in the cases of Jody, Jude, Fergus, and Dil. The film demonstrates that these characters are lower in the British social hierarchy due to their genders, classes, and

racism. For instance, “Dil is many times marginalized” within this hierarchy based on binaries as a “black British, as a woman and as a transsexual” (Rantonen 197). *The Crying Game*, just like *Sinha*, *Nandy*, and *McClintock*, demonstrates that “feminization” can be looked at in terms of the complex relationship between the coloniser and colonised, where the group colonizing characterizes itself as “masculine” and then defines itself against the “feminine” colonized in order to control and exploit them.

According to Pieter Spierenburg, “a relationship between physical force and male honor primarily derives from the western experience” (3). Western masculinity has come to be associated with violence, so, in many cases, in order for the colonized to become more masculine, they act violently and respond to their “feminization” with violence, as in the case of the IRA in *The Crying Game*, just as Joshua in *Cloud Nine* eventually responds to his subjugation with violence. Being in the IRA marks Fergus as tough and aggressive, and, when he is with them, he resists the Irish low status and feminization by asserting his “masculinity.” In the beginning of the film, when Fergus appears for the very first time he is the tallest man in a group of IRA men, standing at an angle cocking his gun over Jody, he also appears as more powerful and “masculine.” Fergus is so masculine at the beginning that, in fact, according to critic Jack Boozer, his “Gaelic name means ‘manly strength’” (2). When Fergus moves to London though he calls himself Jimmy, and James means one who supplants or undermines. This shows how Fergus goes from a position upholding an imperial and binary framework to one that undermines it.

In the film, we can see that initially Fergus buys into the hierarchical system by being violent and fighting. His Irish nationalism, employed while fighting with the IRA,

helps raise him within the Irish hierarchy and consequently makes him more violent and masculine. Similarly, Jude employs nationalistic violence and rises in the hierarchy only after Fergus chooses to “lose” himself (Jordan 24) and leave Ireland and the IRA.

Rantonen notes that the “biblical resonances of Jude’s name may also imply that the nationalist myth is treacherous and in vain, since Jude shares the name of the patron saint of lost causes” (199).<sup>4</sup> In this way, the colonized Irish may be seen as only weakening their “anti-colonial agenda” by their use of “patriarchal politics” (Sinha 181). The fact that they use a power hierarchy that is similar to their oppressors where masculine violence raises them to the top shows that they are buying into their system as we see Big Joey trying to do in *Dry Lips*.

When Jude goes to England, she embodies Herek’s definition of masculinity and becomes aggressive and dominant, renouncing femininity and rising in the IRA hierarchy, although still underneath Peter. Catherine Wynne states, “[h]er black business suit, black leather gloves and revolver signify the assumption of a masculine-gender identification and coincides with the cross over into London” (151). Jude’s dress, which changes from working-class denim to middle-class business suit, also indicates her class shift as she rises in the IRA hierarchy. This further signifies the interrelatedness of social categories like gender, class, and race. Jude ironically calls Dil “[t]he wee black chick” (49), which symbolizes her attempted masculinity and how she must demean another woman to gain power. It is important to note that she is degrading a lower working-class Black woman, as this shows that people are oppressed because of these interrelated categories. She is also sexually aggressive with Fergus when she “*lies down on the bed*

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<sup>4</sup> Jude also shares names with Biblical figures Jude the Betrayer and Judith who was the beautiful and dangerous seductress who got into the palace of her Assyrian enemy, seduced the powerful commander Holofernes, and beheaded him. Jude’s name is also a masculine form of a feminine name.

*beside him and puts her hand on his crotch*" (49). Jude aggressively tells him, "Fuck me, Fergus," and runs "*her finger up and down his face*" (49). She is even successful at becoming dominant over Fergus, and at one point "*[s]he looks at him hard. He looks away*" (49). Jude goes as far as emasculating Fergus by calling him "boy" and sticking a phallic gun in his mouth.<sup>5</sup>

Here Jude successfully performs masculinity as defined by Herek and, as a result, tries to "feminize" Fergus. Through her change from the beginning in Ireland, where she uses her female sexuality to trap Jody and also serves the other men in the IRA, to later in London, where she becomes more masculine and aggressive, the film uses Jude to prove that gender is performative. It points out that women can perform masculinity in order to gain power in society, as Jude uses it to gain power within the IRA, and to resist "feminization" and domination. Ashis Nandy explains that colonialism "was a product of one's own emasculation and defeat in legitimate power politics" (10). Jude reacts to this "emasculation" by expressing hyper-masculinity and thus is violent in order to recover from being feminized by Western imperialism and her lack of power as a female member of the IRA and in British society. While discussing the similarity between national, sexual, and political dominance, Nandy explains that colonialism

was congruent with the existing Western sexual stereotypes and the philosophy of life which they represented. It produced a cultural consensus in which political and socio-economic dominance symbolized the dominance of men and masculinity over women and femininity. (4)

Jude becomes hyper-masculine and violent as a reaction to colonization and uses her aggression as a means to rise out of her own degraded space as an Irish woman.

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<sup>5</sup> Jude sticks the gun in Fergus' mouth only in the film script. In the film she holds the gun against his face.

Nandy points out that essential to cultural assimilation is “the process psycho-analysis calls identification with the aggressor” (7). While discussing colonial India, Nandy discusses how the Indians tried to redeem their “masculinity by defeating the British, often fighting against hopeless odds, to free the former once and for all from the historical memory of their own humiliating defeat in violent power-play and ‘tough politics’”(9).

We can relate Nandy’s work on Indians to the Irish in *The Crying Game* when looking at Jude or Fergus. Jude needs to be hyper-masculine even more in England than in Ireland because she is in the home of her colonizers where she must assert her masculinity in order to gain power. She is only interested in elevating herself within this patriarchal system that limits women’s roles, which she does by oppressing others, rather than challenging the oppressive hierarchical structure. Jude’s actions fit Sinha’s argument regarding masculinity and patriarchy, the employment of masculinity (or hyper-masculinity) by the colonized does nothing for an anti-colonial agenda, but rather work against it and uphold imperial patriarchy rather than subverting it. If Western imperialism is based on a gender dichotomy that has been imposed on the colonized, then perpetuating that binary perpetuates the basis on which imperialism was founded. According to Wynne, “Jude seems to embody a bourgeois feminism<sup>6</sup> that works within, rather than deconstructs the social and political organization. She has, by this stage, gained access to a position of authority in the IRA hierarchy” (151).

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<sup>6</sup> This brand of feminism lacks serious analysis of the roles of race, class, national origin, and sexual orientation of Western/European women. As a result, bourgeois feminists' recommendations for women’s liberation did not challenge economic interests or class structures. It did not criticize the concept of hierarchy but rather just wanted to elevate the status of women within it.

The film also uses Jude to show how negative polarized masculinity is. After all, Jude's masculine performance is self-defeating and, in the end, causes her own demise. Kristin Handler has criticized the portrayal of Jude, saying that the film is depicting a problematic vision of women. She states, "It's not accidental that the sole woman in the film becomes the representative scorpion" (37). However, it may also be argued that the film is using this lone female character to help point out the danger of aggressive masculinity and the effect of imperial gender paradigms. It is pointing out that women, like others who are dominated, may perform aggressively and dangerously as a means to escape domination. This corresponds with the idea that people, whether male or female, oppressed racially or nationally may perform hyper-masculinity to flee their subjugation. A gender hierarchy that places the Western, White, and "manly" at the top and the dark, submissive, and feminine at the bottom causes those that are "feminized" and buy into this system to gain power only through asserting what those at the top have, masculinity.

Jude's being able to act hyper-masculine further shows that gender is performative. While Dil has a penis, she performs flawless femininity, and Jude, although she has the body aligned with women, performs the opposing binary, masculinity. For instance, Dil knowingly acts like a stereotypical woman by dressing in feminine garments, working in a traditionally feminine-defined occupation, playing the role of the feminine victim, and even suffering from typically feminine-defined hysteria. Jude, on the other hand, when in London becomes the stereotypical man and is dominant, ruthless, and shows very little emotion. Rather than demeaning women, the film is showing that gender is a role that does not have to line up with physical anatomy and that it is rather about power and oppression.

Through Dil and Jude, *The Crying Game* shows that, just as gender is a choice, so is sex. Since Dil does not identify with the sex or gender of a man, she is successfully, as Fergus' reaction shows, able to appear and act as a woman. This is also apparent through the portrayal of Jude as she moves from a "feminine" space to a more "masculine" and aggressive one in order to become more powerful in her surroundings. When she is working for the IRA in Ireland, she is demeaned by the men in the organization, feminized, and placed underneath them. For instance, the IRA uses Jude to seduce Jody in order to kidnap him. As Dil comments, "You used those tits and that ass to get him, didn't you" (67). They use Jude's femininity and female body to trap Jody, and then they feminize her even more while at the farmhouse in Ireland by having her serve the men tea. The fact that she is serving these men shows her role in their hierarchical structure. When Peter is discussing killing Jody with Fergus and Jude tries to speak, Peter yells at her and tells her twice to "[s]hut up, Jude!!!" (19). Peter demeans Jude and treats her opinion as worthless, while he tells Fergus, "You're a good man, Fergus" (19). This shows just what Jude's role is as a woman in the IRA; they use her femininity to lure the victim, and then she becomes like their waitress whose opinion is disregarded. Jude possibly loathes Jody so much because her role as a woman is low on the social hierarchy, just as his is as a "nigger" (12). Rather than identify with this shared experience, as Fergus does with his Irishness and Jody's Blackness, Jude resents Jody. Once again, we can see this reflected through Joshua and Betty in *Cloud Nine*, where it is obvious the two resent each other.

The film displays the inventedness of categories (McClintock *Imperial Leather* 8) that work to form hierarchies and shows how social categories like race, class, and gender

work to form these oppressive hierarchies. This is obvious in the scene at the construction site in London where Fergus is working. When he is working in England, Fergus is called “Paddy” by his English boss, Deveroux, just as Jody originally called him. The name Deveroux is Norman-French, which is a marker of the colonization of the English. This shows just how high Deveroux is in the class/race/gender hierarchy; he is upper-class, English, White, and a male colonizer. Deveroux is also the owner of the house and dressed “*in a three piece suit*” (30). Underneath him is his foreman, Franknum, a working-class Cockney. Underneath Franknum are the workers and Fergus, who are at the bottom of this hierarchy until Dil shows up on the job site, where she is demeaned and whistled at by the workers. This shows that Fergus is “feminized” and placed only slightly higher than a working-class mulatto woman.

When Fergus breaks the windowpane at work, Deveroux never even addresses him directly. Instead he asks Franknum questions in front of Fergus in order to communicate with him. From his first interaction with Fergus on screen, Deveroux calls him “Pat, Mick, what the fuck” (30), which are all racial slurs. When Dil arrives on the work site carrying a lunch basket and “*dressed in a very short skirt with high heels*” (44), Deveroux finally addresses Fergus to insult Dil by calling her a “tart” (47). In this scene a race, gender, and class hierarchy is being portrayed, and both Fergus and Dil are placed at the bottom of it.

The only way Fergus is able to compete with Deveroux in the social hierarchy is by asserting his masculinity. Scott Coltrane states, “[a]ccepting the notion of a natural masculine fierceness and an inborn ‘need’ for masculine validation reaffirms gender difference and carries the very real danger of perpetuating violence against women and

other men” (46). Fergus threatens Deveroux with violence, saying, “Did you ever pick your teeth up with broken fingers?”(46). Deveroux says nothing to this, which momentarily grants Fergus some power. Deveroux possibly does not fire him as violence trumps other forms of power in the masculine hierarchy.

In the film, it appears that violence is always met with greater violence. For instance, the IRA’s kidnapping and attempted murder of a British soldier is met with the much more violent reaction from the British when the IRA greenhouse and farmhouse are blown to pieces and nearly everyone is killed. According to the script, outside the greenhouse, “*A helicopter screams into view through the panes and automatic fire comes from it, shattering every pane in seconds and tearing TINKER to bits,*” while at the farmhouse there are “*Bullets whipping through every window, taking chunks from the masonry, tearing the walls apart*” (23). Here we can see that violence, associated with masculinity and power, is what secures those in positions of power. Even though Fergus’ violent reaction to Deveroux grants him momentary power in a gender hierarchy that is topped with masculine violence, state violence trumps individual violence because it has more resources, often using the colonized and lower-class. For instance, Jody is a working-class Black man and is the one we see fighting and risking his life in Ireland, while Deveroux, the white upper-class man, is at home gaining more wealth. We can see this instance reflecting Weber’s theory, which links the constructedness of race, class, gender, and sexuality as developing their meaning “out of group struggles over socially valued resources” (125). She further points out how one group is exploited by another “for a greater share of society’s valued resources” (127). Jody is being exploited by the

British army because of his race and class, which are socially constructed categories, while people like Deveroux are obtaining a greater share of society's resources.

Deveroux shows there is only one space for a lower-class Mulatto woman like Dil in this hierarchy. He determines her social position by her race, class, sexuality, and gender. He proves this when he calls her a "tart," but Fergus implies that there must be another space, as she does not fit into either one. He says:

She's not a tart.

DEVEROUX: No, of course not, she's a lady.

FERGUS: She's not that either. (44)

Dil responds to Fergus' masculine defence, saying, "My, oh my, Jimmy, how gallant" (46). Here it is obvious that just as Fergus is able to perform masculinity, Dil is camping and aware of her stereotypically feminine performance to his performance. Her camping undercuts Fergus' "masculine" display because camping mocks the very role it enacts. Here it may be argued that Dil is subverting the colonial agenda through making obvious the constructedness of gender roles to Fergus, who is acting excessively "masculine." In this scene, the film portrays a social hierarchy which is based on the interrelatedness of socially constructed binaries. This example also points out that gender is performative and linked within a power structure where "masculine" is powerful.

Applying Butler's theories of performativity to race, one sees that race as well as gender is a marker which gives meaning to the otherwise meaningless body. Racial difference is to race and nation what gender is to sex: they are both a set of culturally relative meanings that are aligned with different body markers. Similarly to the way McClintock and Jordan show that race and nationality are created malleable, Butler also points out that both sex and gender are performative categories. In her work, Butler

points out that categories like “real woman” or “natural sex” are “prevalent and compelling social fictions, and that this is a sedimentation that over time has produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes existing in a binary relation to one another” (140). The film, like Butler, points to the fictitiousness of the “naturalized” categories of sex and gender. Through Dil, we see how easily those who have the anatomy of a male can embody the opposing space of woman and femininity. Rather than seeing Dil as a man dressed up as a woman, she can be perceived as a woman with a penis. In this case, Dil is an example of how, as Butler highlights, gender and sex are merely social styles that are passed as natural characteristics.

*The Crying Game* incorporates social categories— sex, race, gender, and class – as related structures that work either to privilege or oppress people. According to Rantonen, “*The Crying Game* raises in a challenging way the critical issue of how the myriad dynamics of race, nation and gender come together (192).” Rantonen claims that the film challenges national boundaries through characters marked by their complex gender and racial differences and their often-problematic relationships with their nations and each other (192). Examples of this can be seen in different characters who transform throughout the film. For instance, when Fergus moves from his high position in the IRA in Ireland to London, he becomes less “masculine” and lower in class and status than he was in Northern Ireland. Moving from Ireland to England, Fergus has become more “feminized” and taken on a much more caring role from his first appearance on screen cocking a gun above Jody. Also, when Jude wants to climb in the IRA hierarchy, she has to become more “masculine.” While in Ireland, Jody is degraded because of his race,

similarly to how Jude is because of her sex and nationality and Fergus because of his Irishness. These examples help to point out that the dynamics of race, nationality, and gender work together.

Throughout, the film portrays difference between characters and demonstrates that these differences mark people and create social hierarchies that are used to oppress. It brings up these issues in order to show how people can escape the traps of essentialized identity and subvert characteristics that have been dubbed “natural.” Throughout, the film shows how people can choose national, racial, and sexual identity. An example of this is apparent when Fergus first meets Dil in the salon and then again when he follows her to the Metro. In the open and fluid space of the Metro she shows him how it is possible to choose national identity and thus change essentialized aspects of identity. For instance when they meet at the salon, Dil says,

You American?  
FERGUS: No.  
DIL: Not English.  
FERGUS: No.  
DIL: Scottish?  
FERGUS: How'd you guess?  
DIL: The accent, I suppose.  
FERGUS: And what's it like?  
DIL: Like treacle.

Here Fergus chooses his new nationality with the help of Dil. Afterwards at the Metro when Dil is introducing Fergus, she says,

He's Scottish, Col.  
COL: Scottish?  
FERGUS: Yeah.  
DIL: What'd he say, Col?  
COL: He agreed that he was.  
DIL: What do you think his name is?  
COL: I've no thoughts on the matter.

FERGUS: Jimmy.  
DIL: Jimmy?  
COL: That's what he said. Jimmy. (28)

Dil insists that Fergus is Scottish, to which he agrees, even though it would be obvious by his accent that he is Northern Irish. Dil and Fergus' conversation is carried out through an intermediary here similar to Fergus and Deveroux's conversation at the construction site. Unlike in the construction site scene with Deveroux though, where Fergus is assigned categories, at the Metro he is being allowed his own choices. For instance, he chooses his name and his nationality.

Just as defining characteristics like names are chosen, so are characteristics like nationality, gender, and even sex. Furthermore it becomes obvious that naturalized categories like these are merely labels, and, in this way, the film shows that nation and gender are social categories that can be made unstable through characters that challenge them. Col, the bartender, accepts Dil's control of these categories. This allows Fergus the space and freedom to choose his own identity. This further shows that people are able to choose their national identities, just as Dil chooses to identify with the feminine gender and female sex, despite the five percent of her body that is anatomically male. Fergus tells Dil, "Kind of liked you as a girl" (46), even though she still identifies as a girl. After Fergus tells Dil that he wished that he did not know she was male, Dil replies, "You can always pretend," to which Fergus replies, "That's true" (47). When Dil asks him, "Are you pretending yet?" Fergus replies, "I'm working on it" (47). Just as Butler argues that social gender norms produce a supposed "natural" sex, Dil teaches Fergus that, even though society passes gender and nationality off as "natural," he can choose them.

Wynne discusses the work of Butler in relation to Dil, applying Butler's argument that there is nothing that ensures that the "one who becomes a woman is necessarily female" (qtd. in Wynne 150). Wynne further points out that Dil "seems to break down the binary dictating the feminine-woman/man-masculine distinction. Gender becomes an exchange mechanism as female gender identity becomes increasingly dislodged from its culturally determined counterpart – female biological sex" (150).

The film gives an example of Butler's theories of how sex as well as gender is performative in the scene where Fergus finds out that Dil has a penis. Through the manipulation of Dil's body, dress, and make-up, the camera points to the instability and malleability of sex and gender. When the camera pans down Dil's body, the audience only makes out the contours of what has been socially been aligned with a woman's body, like less defined musculature and softer contours, but after Fergus sees Dil's penis, the camera pans back up, and Dil's body becomes unmistakably aligned with the characteristic build of a man. This body is more muscularly defined and contains "masculine" naval or military-like tattoos, like that of an anchor.

Despite Fergus' desire to place Dil into the space of a man who dresses up as a woman -- he even dresses Dil up as a man to disguise her from Jude -- Dil insists that whether she has a penis or not, she is a female. For instance,

FERGUS: Do they know?

DIL: Know what, honey?

FERGUS: Know what I didn't know. And don't call me that.

DIL: Can't help it, Jimmy. A girl has her feelings.

FERGUS: Thing is, Dil, you're not a girl.

DIL: Details, baby, details. (47).

Despite Fergus' instance on questioning Dil about the "truth" of her identity, she is able to point out that the truth is what she creates rather than what society tells her she is.

When Fergus dresses Dil up to fit the masculine gender identity that society would naturally align her with, she appears awkward and "unnatural," as if in drag as a man. She even runs stereotypically like a woman, throwing her legs out to each side. This is because she is not the gender that is aligned with the male sex.

According to Wynne, Dil "threatens the ideological construction of gender" (154). Wynne points out "[i]f gender identity can be so easily usurped, then it is so obviously constructed. Femininity, therefore, does not indicate a female essence, if an almost perfect imitation is so easily created" (154). Just as Fergus and Jody threaten imperialism by destabilizing the essential categories of race and nation, Dil threatens the seemingly stable categories of sex and gender.

Although Dil performs the polar role of female, and, at the beginning of the film, Fergus performs as a polar male, the two characters force each other to confront a certain inversion of these roles. This is most obviously witnessed in the scene where Dil, enraged at the possibility of Fergus' betrayal, ties him to the bed and stands over him with a pistol, similar to the way Fergus stood over Jody with a pistol at the beginning of the film. According to Boozer,

While Fergus' dramatic shearing of Dil's hair is a literal effort to disguise and protect her, it is also a metaphorical awakening of her assertive capabilities. This is confirmed by Dil's aggressive response to Fergus' confession of prior complicity to Jody's demise [. . .] She gives notice that she will no longer tolerate others making decisions for her, whether politically or sexually motivated. (174)

In this same scene where Dil ties Fergus to her bed and stands over him with a pistol, she moves Fergus from the “masculine” role that he has assumed throughout their relationship. Dil stands over Fergus, threatening to shoot him, but is unable to pull the trigger on him. She is unable to shoot Fergus, just as Fergus is unable to shoot Jody in the beginning. Fergus and Dil use violence as a defence Fergus defends Dil at the construction site and also when her aggressive former lover comes after her, and Dil shoots Jude in self defence. This shows that violence in self-defence may be alright, but violence in order to dominate and be an aggressor is not. In the instance where Dil has Fergus tied up, “Fergus must listen to Dil instead, who makes him give up his patriarchal power role [ . . . ] Dil’s act of bondage effectively snares Fergus not into sexual bliss, but into a masculinity that abjures phallic demonstrations of superiority” (Boozer 173). Here Dil has control over Fergus, who accepts this and shows no need to play the aggressive masculine role. Boozer further states,

Because the phallus as patriarchal force cannot exist in a void that speaks only power, it has depended upon a putatively weaker feminine “lack” to give it meaning and justification. But the *Crying Game* structures Fergus’ fate in such a way that he realizes neither sexual fulfillment with, nor protective mastery over, the feminine Dil, which undermines and de-romanticizes the phallic mystique. Jordan insinuates the need for a broader basis of gender and socio-political organization. (173)

While discussing how Fergus changes from his masculine and powerful role within the IRA to his role as Jimmy, the construction worker, in England, Handler states, “[f]or Fergus to ‘lose himself’ entails losing the armoured, delusorily phallic ego of normative masculinity, thereby becoming lacking, feminized” (33). As an Irish worker in London, Fergus is feminized. When Fergus defends Dil’s feminine honour at the construction

site, he steps back into an aggressive and masculine role, gaining status momentarily. Here the film shows that Fergus is playing a role and stepping in and out of a masculine space, just as he steps out of his Northern Irish space in the IRA and moves from Irish to Scottish. It portrays Fergus as a once polar character who now practices fluidity, moving from different identities that are supposedly stable, which only furthers shows the constructedness of such “essential” categories, thus undermining and subverting them.

Sarah Edge claims, “[w]hile Fergus and Jody become more ‘feminine,’ Jude becomes the opposite; she is, because of this ‘naturally’ bad” (179). This idea is helpful in understanding the film’s treatment of femininity and masculinity as performative outfits that are not necessarily aligned with sex but rather with the choice of the individual and the effect of the relationship between other binary categories. Instead of showing masculinity as a behaviour aligned to men and femininity as behaviour aligned with women, the film shows that these behavioural categories may be chosen by either sex. Although Edge claims that Jude becomes more masculine because she is “naturally” bad, Jordan shows that polar masculinity as a performance is oppressive and negative and that Jude chooses this in order to gain power in her social structure. Polar masculinity is also depicted as self-destructive, as Jude dies in London.

Even though the two men, Jody and Fergus, are pitted against each other at the beginning of the film, when Fergus captures Jody, they sub-consciously recognize that they are both victims of colonialism and thus begin to form a bond. While Jody explains that he questions his role as a British soldier, Fergus takes pity on him and lifts his hood despite orders from Maguire. Fergus adds, “by the way, it’s not Paddy. It’s Fergus” (12), and Jody replies, “Nice to meet you, Fergus” (12). This is a pivotal action as it

shows Fergus begin to change from the initially aggressive captor the film shows. He is letting his guard down and breaking an IRA code by giving Jody (the enemy) his name.

Through Jody and Fergus' initial interactions, the film shows how people are marked by their race and nationality in a society which causes their oppression, yet they are still able to identify with each other on a less differentiated level. This recognition is arguably about shared experience and also about the individual choices that people are given and can take.

As the masculine image of Fergus fades, he begins to show compassion to Jody, the hostage who states that it is not in Fergus' nature to be tough like the rest of the IRA members. Rather Jody tells Fergus, "You're kind. It's in your nature" (16). After Jody insinuates Fergus has a softer "nature," Fergus becomes more kind, which shows that "nature" is a performative category just like gender, race, and nation. After they strip away their differences and communicate with each other on a similar plane in which both men are the victims of oppression, the audience can see how these markers, or categories, can be broken down. It is after they share experiences that the two men make the choice to see each other on a more equal plane. For instance, after Fergus and Jody discuss their social roles, they begin to share similar experiences, and then, after Fergus shares his name with Jody, they begin to form a bond. This is further solidified after Fergus intimately helps Jody urinate, followed by their sharing of laughter and finally the sharing of their stories. These instances of relating to each other ultimately lead Fergus to change. He chooses not to shoot Jody in the back when he runs from him in the woods, and then he chooses to seek out Jody's lover, fulfilling Jody's final request. The most

important choice that these experiences lead Fergus to make is, possibly, the choice to leave Ireland and his “masculinity” in the IRA.

The story of the “scorpion and the frog” that frames the film has been deemed problematic by many critics, who claim that it contradicts the ideas in the film which argue against essentialized identities. According to this argument, the film is problematic because it carries two different views, and the story that Jody tells Fergus at the beginning, and that Fergus tells Dil at the end of the film, upholds the binary idea that certain personalities are “naturally” good while others are bad. The “scorpion” is aligned with masculine qualities like power, while the “frog” is more feminine and thus the exploited. According to Handler, this parable is paradoxical in the film and thus produces confusion. She points out “frog and scorpion also seem to represent essential human identities” (32). Edge also claims this narrative is problematic and “[i]n this context social, political, racial and sexual differences are not a consequence of inequality, oppression and exploitation but basic human differences between good and bad people, a human essence, natural, unchanging, and outside history” (179). Edge looks at the entire film as being simplistic in relation to this framing story, claiming that it does not base difference in inequality. The film appears to point out though, that although one’s “nature” may be influenced by society, to a large extent “nature,” too, is a person’s choice.

After exploring the film filled with layers of oppression and inequality, it seems too easy to claim that the metaphor of “the scorpion and the frog” is this uncomplicated. In fact, it may be interpreted as an ironic parable, because Jordan places it around different gender and race subversions and binary deconstructions within the film. It

appears to be asking the audience if they believe that even though gender, race, nationality and class are created, good and evil nature is inherent. It is also an arguably ironic statement because it would be too disconnected to tell the audience that identities are created and then that natures are as black and white as good versus bad.

It can be read that when Jody introduces this story to Fergus, he is doing so in order to appeal to the goodness in Fergus and to show him that they have this common “nature,” just as they both are exploited as products of colonization, and, more importantly, that he has the choice of whether he kills Jody or not. After all, when the audience first sees Fergus in the film, he is the IRA member who is cocking his gun with some control over the mission to kidnap Jody. As well, at first, Jody tells Fergus, “you’re all tough undeluded motherfuckers. And that it’s not in your nature to let me go” (10). Yet shortly after, when he wants Fergus to take off his hood, he tells him the story about the scorpion and the frog and that “you’re kind. It’s in your nature” (16). This comment is very oppositional to Jody’s earlier comment that pits Fergus as tough and masculine like the “scorpion” and the other IRA members. It is arguable that he manipulates Fergus by appealing to his emotions by insisting he is kind. Jody has given Fergus a black and white scenario that paints people as either evil or kind, and, perhaps in doing this, he presents Fergus with the option of being kind. Fergus responds to this by choosing to be “kind” and removing the stifling hood and proving Jody right, confirming that he chooses to be different than the other violent “scorpions” in the IRA.

The story of “the scorpion and the frog” can also serve as a tool to show that binary relationships, where one person exploits the other, are detrimental to both and that accepting the assigned roles of oppressor or victim is self-destructive. The narrative

frames the film as a foreboding warning to the audience on the self-destructiveness of upholding dichotomies. It is portraying a metaphor that shows the naiveties of the oppressed, who carry their oppressors on their backs and perish as a result. Nobody wins in this scenario where two polar opposites co-exist; the exploiter and the exploited both drown and lose. It may be argued that in order to break free from this destructive relationship, the oppressed (“frog”) must refuse to carry the oppressor (“scorpion”) and refuse part in this destructive binary relationship. Rather, the oppressed, like some of Jordan’s characters do, must refuse and subvert the binary relationships that leave people with limited options.

Wynne points out, “Jordan plays with all these categories and allows for the re-working and attempted destabilization of binaries” (157-58). These characters are able to step out of the dichotomy and practice more fluidity, which “allows for possibility” (Wynne 158). The film portrays fluidity through the border crossing and gender bending of the characters in the film and then frames it with a contradictory story on human nature in order to raise questions about any essentialized “natures.” Rather than looking at “the scorpion and the frog” as a merely contradictory narrative, one may instead look at the questions it raises on binary relationships. As Wynne states, “The film’s achievement is that it denies any resolution of the dichotomies and contestations of the colonial, the political, and the sexual, leaving *The Crying Game* sited on the tensest possible border” (158).

From the beginning, *The Crying Game* points out binaries that work to take power from one group and bestow it over another based on their differences. We are shown binaries like male/female, Black/White, Irish/British, and even between “frog”

(oppressed) and “scorpion” (oppressor). In each binary, one group oppresses the other: male oppresses female, Whites dominate over Blacks, the British oppress the Irish, and the scorpion dominates the frog. The film shows that these binaries are based on difference and work to oppress. The film also shows that binary relationships are symbiotic and (self)-destructive; by carrying the destructive scorpion, the frog also drowns. The film eliminates difference between Fergus, Jody, and Dil through their communication, subversive acts, and fluidity. It removes their race, gender, class and even sexual differences through subverting binaries and revealing the fiction of essential identities. Even though Jody and Fergus are pitted as different in that Jody is Black and British and Fergus is White and Irish, they are able to understand and even like each other. In this way, the film seems to be illustrating that markers that place people low within hierarchies based on sex, gender, race, and class can be broken down. Fergus and Jody and Fergus and Dil are able to identify with and care for each other despite their constructed differences. Jordan shows us that, ultimately, we are able to create our own identities and that identity is performative. As Handler states, “The film piles up binary oppositions in multiple registers with dizzying speed [. . .] then metamorphoses into an erotic thriller, the better to show that love and understanding can prevail over these deep, hierarchically organized divisions” (32).

## Conclusion

By looking at contemporary drama and film that explore power dynamics and imperialism, we may find some of the answers to de-colonization. All of the works explored examine groups and individuals that are “othered,” excluded from the social centre, and placed low in a social hierarchy that is formed through interrelated categories such as race, gender, class, and sexuality. By paying attention to the issues of those whose voices are often repressed by dominant society, we are able to get a better-rounded point of view on our social systems and where we fit into them. We may even become aware of stereotypes or destructive ideas that we may perpetuate ourselves, or that we may be the victims of. The contemporary literature and film discussed show us that it is up to us to overthrow oppressive and hierarchical systems rather than simply fitting into the destructive dichotomies that leave us either oppressors or the oppressed.

Tomson Highway’s *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Caryl Churchill’s *Cloud Nine*, and Neil Jordan’s *The Crying Game* reveal the damage and destructiveness of assimilation and colonization. These works demonstrate the constructedness of social categories like gender, race, class, and sexuality, and show that they are not inherent or “natural,” but rather work together to create divisions between people and groups. This thesis has set out to demonstrate that these works subvert and deconstruct the gender norms, and other constructed social categories of dominant culture, by examining how the works represent these categories in order to challenge power structures.

In *Dry Lips (Canada)*, Highway deals with colonialism and gender displacement, resulting in hyper-masculinity, alcoholism, and abuse. He does not conclude with

definitive answers to the nightmare he portrays, but rather he gives us a suggestion, and, through his play, he educates audiences on the danger of adopting rigid gender roles and assimilating to dominant patriarchal ideology. Highway proposes practicing more fluidity between cultures and gender roles as a step in the direction of solving the play's problems. He indicates that by rejecting cultural stereotypes and Western patriarchal gender norms his characters may wake up from the nightmarish world he portrays. Highway shows this through characters that do not fit neatly into the polarized gender dichotomy, offering the people of his community and of North America some suggestions for change. Having groups placed as polar opposites where one oppresses the other, whether through sex or race, has dreadful results on Highway's Aboriginal characters.

*Cloud Nine* (UK) also deconstructs interrelated categories and explicitly shows how they are used in colonizing people. Churchill explores gender norms and directly parallels them to British colonialism. Like Highway, she shows a need for the acceptance of more fluid gender roles in order to redistribute power. Churchill portrays a social hierarchy in the first act that she deconstructs in the second. The patriarchal hierarchy exploits "others" like the women and Africans in Act One for the benefit of those at the top. Churchill focuses largely on how patriarchy extends its power over society through a hierarchy and by exploiting the "feminized." She displays the imbalance of dichotomies like masculine/feminine through the structure of both acts: Act One is firm and ordered, while Act Two is looser and more chaotic. She points out a solution to the redistributing of power through Betty, who gains control over her life and rebuilds it herself. Churchill demonstrates that, by breaking down hierarchies, society can

implement equality in social and economic structures, and, then, power is not only restricted to those at the top.

*The Crying Game* (Northern Ireland) builds on themes found in the other two works through gender-bending and by deconstructing race, nation, and class. The film points out how binaries based on differences, which take power from one group and bestow it over another, work. In each dichotomy portrayed, one group oppresses the other, and the binary relationships are symbiotic and ultimately (self)-destructive. The film demonstrates that our bodies are marked through socially constructed categories and that these markers (based on sex, gender, race, and class) place people at the bottom of social hierarchies. Jordan shows us that, ultimately, we are able to create our own identities and that identity is performative.

All of these works deal with characters being absorbed into, as well as resisting, dominant social roles, and each chapter builds upon the issues that have been raised in previous chapters. The literature discussed demonstrates the value of multiple voices through placing various marginalized characters in dominant roles. The works do not simply instruct their audiences on easy solutions to the problems that arise from colonization, imperialism, and oppression. Rather they open a window into the reality and brutality of the complex relationship between constructed categories and how they mark our bodies. They question rigid categories like gender, race, class, and sexuality and consequently tear down claims that they are “natural,” giving us the opportunity to see how structures may be transformed. The works show that de-colonization is ultimately up to us and only possible when we choose to reject essentialism and binary, hierarchical frameworks.

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