



*The Journal of Academic Social Science Studies*

**JASSS**

*International Journal of Social Science*

Doi number:<http://dx.doi.org/10.9761/JASSS3424>

Number: 45 , p. 201-214, Spring III 2016

**Yayın Süreci**

Yayın Geliş Tarihi / Article Arrival Date - Yayınlanma Tarihi / The Published Date

12.03.2016

15.04.2016

## THE FUNCTION OF 'APOSIOPESES' IN TOP GIRLS BY CARYL CHURCHILL

CARYL CHURCHILL TARAFINDAN YAZILAN TOP GIRLS (ZİRVEDEKİ  
KIZLAR) OYUNUNUN 'APOSIOPESES' TERİMİ AÇISINDAN İŞLEVİ

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Dilek TÜFEKÇİ CAN

Balıkesir Üniversitesi Necatibey Eğitim Fakültesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı

### Abstract

Language as a means of communication is considered as one of the most significant sine qua non characteristics of human being. Language, namely the ability to acquire and use complex system of communication, is somewhat meaningful in its own culture as it is deeply involved with the given culture in multiple and complex ways. As language is acquired by cultural transmission, 'aposiopesis' just like the other agents of verbal language such as pauses, laughter, psitticism, turn-takings and etc. is also employed in a language typical to its own culture. Aposiopesis, as a rhetorical artifice, is derived from a Greek word that means 'becoming reticent' wherein a sentence is intentionally broken off or left unfinished in order to give an impression of unwillingness or inability to continue. Aposiopesis remains the sentence unfinished by leaving the reader or speaker in a position of guessing what stands behind this sudden silence. Such a halt represents that either the speaker or the writer is not willing to communicate or state what is in his/her mind due to overcome by passion, excitement or fear. In this regard, this paper firstly includes the definitions of language and culture and then explores the interrelations between these two terms. Then the term aposiopesis is identified in order to unveil technical use of aposiopesis contextually in a play entitled Top Girls (1982) by Caryl Churchill. The main purpose of this paper is to decode cultural, historical and political perceptions of the 1970s and 1980s by bringing into the light the reasons that lie beneath the silence or reticence of the characters in the play.

**Keywords:** Language, Culture, Communication, Aposiopesis, *Top Girls*

### Öz

İletişim aracı olarak dil insanlığın en önemli olmazsa olmaz özelliklerinden biri olarak kabul edilir. İletişime ait karmaşık bir sistem edinme ve bu sistemi kullanma yeteneği anlamına da gelen dil, çoklu ve dağınık bir biçimde belli bir kültürle derinden ilişkili olduğundan bir dereceye kadar kendi kültürü içinde anlam taşır. Dil kültürel aktarma ile edinildiği için 'sessiz kalma' da aynı duraksama, gülme, mekanik bir dille konuşma veya söz alma gibi bir çok diğer sözel etken belli kültüre özgü bir dille yer alır. Retorik bir sanat olan aposiopesis, konuşmaya karşı isteksizlik veya devam etme yeteneksizliği izlenimi vermek amacıyla bir cümlenin kasıtlı bir biçimde kesildiği veya bitirilmeden bırakıldığı 'sessiz kalma' anlamına gelen Yunanca bir kelimedenden türemiştir. Böylesi bir duraksama, hırs, endişe veya korku gibi duyguların üstesinden gelebilmek için ya konuşmacının ya da yazarın iletişim kurmaya veya akıllarındaki ifade etmeye istekli olmadıklarını gösterir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma öncelikli olarak dil ve kültür terimlerinin tanımını, ardından bu ikisi arasın-

daki ilişkiyi ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Daha sonra, bu çalışma Caryl Churchill tarafından yazılan *Top Girls* (Zirvedeki Kızlar) (1982) adlı eserdeki 'sessiz kalma' tekniğini bağlamsal olarak ortaya çıkarmak için 'aposiopesis' terimine açıklık getirecektir. Bu çalışmanın temel amacı, eserdeki karakterlerin sessizliğinin altında yatan nedenleri ortaya çıkararak 1970 ve 1980'li yıllardaki Britanya toplumunun kültürel, tarihsel ve siyasi algılarını ortaya çıkarmaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Dil, Kültür, İletişim, Sessiz Kalma, *Zirvedeki Kızlar*

## INTRODUCTION

In the introduction part firstly, language; secondly culture; and lastly the relationship between language and culture will be introduced and exemplified in terms of their connection with verbal communication and phatic communion function. The term language can be defined as it is what makes us human in general. Language, as a system of meaning, is considered as the greatest source of power within the human semiotic system. Since "[h]uman beings use numerous semiotic systems, some simple others very complex, some rather clearly defined and others notably fuzzy. A language is almost certainly the most complicated semiotic system we have; it is also a very fuzzy one, both in the sense that its own limits are unclear and in the sense that its internal organization is full of indeterminacy" (Halliday, 2003, 2). According to Sapir, "Language is purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols" (1921, 8).

Being either a universal or a local part of a system of voluntarily produced symbols, 'language' (la langue) and 'speech' (la parole) are differentiated in terms of their function by Saussure in his work entitled *The Linguistic Sign*. On his own terms, "Language is not a function of the speaker; it is a product that is passively assimilated by the individual... Speaking, on the contrary, is an individual act. It is willful and intellectual. Within the act, we should distinguish between: 1) the combinations by which the speaker uses the language code for expressing his own thought; and 2) the psychological mechanism that allows him to exteriorize those combinations" (1985, 33).

It is commonly agreed that language relates to communication between human beings and human language is associated with cultural transmission. In a broader sense, "... the words people utter refer to common experience. They express facts, ideas or events that are communicable because they refer to a stock of knowledge

about the world that other people share" (Kramersch, 1998, 3). Correspondingly, language, namely the ability to acquire and use complex system of communication, is 'used in contexts of communication' and, it is 'bound up with culture in multiple and complex ways' (Kramersch, 1998, 3).

In general, it is often accepted that people identifying themselves as members of a social group commonly acquire identical ways of viewing and assuming the world they inhabit through their interactions with other members of the same group<sup>1</sup>. However, the function of culture is somewhat paradigmatic since "Culture both liberates people from oblivion, anonymity, and the randomness of nature, and constrains them by imposing on them a structure and principles of selection" (Kramersch, 1998, 6).

As far as culture is concerned, the function of language can best be explained as "Language allows human beings to learn and adopt to changing circumstances far more quickly than would be achieved by evolution..." (Poole, 1999, 2). The example Poole (1999) gives about the changing circumstances of language compares and contrasts the human beings way of acquiring the languages with those of the bees. As he illustrates, honeybees have a remarkable talent in letting others know the direction in which a source of nectar lies and how far it is by means of a 'dance'; nevertheless such a dance never let them discuss the merits of other foodstuffs or alternative routes for their homes whereas human language is infinitely versatile. According to Poole, the dance does not meet the criterion of 'cultural transmission' for the bees themselves are acting instinctively, not behaving in a way that they have learned from other. Just the opposite, cultural transmission is associated with human language for the one stimulates the other; human beings acquire their native tongue by cultural transmission. In other words, we receive, learn and adapt language by cultural transmission<sup>2</sup>. Just like language itself, aposiopesis

sis, a minor characteristic of a language, can also be received, learned and adapted by cultural transmissions.

As the pioneer of the 'structural analysis' of language, which became the dominant trend in linguistics particularly during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Roman Jakobson (1896-1982), put forward that constitutive factors in any speech event, in his own words, in 'any act of verbal communication', demands an 'addresser', who sends a 'message' to the 'addressee'; the message requires a 'context' seizable by the addressee, either verbal or capable of being verbalized; a 'code' which is fully or at least partially common for both the addresser and addressee; and a 'contact', a psychological channel between addressee and addresser which enable them to stay in contact (1985, 150). Since verbal structure of a message depends principally on the predominant function, Jakobson classifies it as such 1) referential function, in other words, denotative or connotative function, the leading task of numerous messages; 2) emotive function, in other words expressive function, a direct expression of the speaker's attitude toward what he is speaking about; 3) conative function, purest grammatical expression in the vocative and imperative form, in other words, syntactically, morphologically and phonemically imperative sentences; 4) phatic function, a message which serves to establish, to prolong, or discontinue to communication, specifically, uttered in order to check whether the channel works; 5) metalingual function, speaking of language itself; 6) poetic function, a function which deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs an objects by promoting the palpability of signs (1985, 151-153).

In language, 'verbal communication' function as well as 'phatic communion' (Bronslaw, 1923) function, which is defined as a sequence of situations in which people communicate using minimal, mutually intelligible semiotic resources, can also be applied to decode social, cultural, and political meanings of the communication. Furthermore, using the language for the purpose of its 'phatic communion' function, specifically the use of speech with the aim of establishing or maintaining social relations, are effective in decoding the purposes of such a communication.

Correspondingly, discourse analysis or conversation analysis, in other words, the study of the organization and the dynamics of conversation, is functional in decoding the unveiled social interactions whether be it oral or written language. As Poole states, "We are more at ease when a conversation flows smoothly. We are less at ease if there are pauses in the conversation or if, conversely, two people speaking at the same time (overlap). We dislike people interrupting, beginning to speak at an inappropriate point" (1999, 37). Hence, the function of discourse analysis is mainly based upon investigating the mechanisms that facilitate smooth flow in conversations. For instance, turn-takings, namely, the floors passing from one person to another with a minimum of disruption, are also cooperative in facilitating a flow in conversations by using either tag questions or a falling intonation. According to Grice, "Our talk exchanges... are characteristically, to some degree at least, cooperative efforts and each participant recognize in them ... a common purpose or set of purposes, or at least a mutually accepted direction" (1989, 29).

As can be seen, language and culture are two interrelated terms. After concisely revealing the mutual connection between language and culture, the term aposiopesis will be defined and exemplified in order to unveil the social, cultural and political background of British society in the 1980's in terms of woman issue by a literary text entitled *Top Girls* by Caryl Churchill.

### I. Representation of Aposiopesis in Language

Aposiopesis, a rhetorical artifice, is derived from a Greek word that means 'becoming silent' wherein a sentence is intentionally broken off or left unfinished in order to give an impression of unwillingness or inability to continue. The occurrence of aposiopesis is usually marked with punctuations such as 'mutton' (—) or 'ellipsis' (...). As a rhetorical device, aposiopesis can also be defined as a figure of speech in which the speaker or the writer abruptly breaks off the statement or comes to a sudden halt as if unable to proceed. Such a halt represents that either the speaker or the writer is not willing to communicate or state what is in his /her mind due to overcome by passion, excitement or fear.

The term “aposiopesis” is also described as “[a] conscious anacoluthon... that is, a speaker’s abrupt halt midway in a sentence, accountable to his being either too excited to give further articulation to his thought... or thinking to impress his addressee the more with this kind of vague hint of an idea too awesome to put into words” (Preminger, 1965, 41). In other words, aposiopesis, a figure of silence which is technically the sudden breaking of a sentence, remains the sentence unfinished by leaving the reader in a position of guessing what stands behind this sudden silence. In another explanation, George Puttenham, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, states that aposiopesis is a figure of speech that ‘signifies such emotional states as shame, fear or anger’ (cited in Anderson, 1998, 89). Aposiopesis, as a rhetorical device, is also defined in the *Ad Herennium* (1981) and can be translated into English as ‘reticence’ (402-403).

The presence of aposiopesis and similar structures of ellipsis in any literary text can be considered an innovative language use as transitory from a traditional narrative model to a more epiphanic or a modern one. For instance, Laurence Sterne himself, with his reputable novel entitled *Tristram Shandy* (1759), points to aposiopesis as his stylistic form. Furthermore, T. S. Eliot elucidates that he also uses aposiopesis as a representation of his own stylistic by writing a letter on October 4, 1923 to John Collier, a prospective contributor to *The Criterion*, about a poem Collier had submitted: “This particular type of fragmentary conversation (see p. 4) was invented by Jules Laforgue and done to death by Aldous Huxley,” and he eventually admitted, “I have been a sinner myself in the use of broken conversations punctuated by three dots” (Letters, 2009, 241). Additionally, in Lobb’s terms, Eliot found that using three dots were ‘too easy a means of suggestive omission’ (2013, 167). Historically, among many others, the rhetoric figure of aposiopesis was used by Demosthenes to avoid ill-omened words. It must also be noted that ancient rhetoricians resorted to euphemistic aposiopesis as ‘a logos, a verbal strategy around something unsaid’ (Montinglio, 2000, 133).

In linguistics, there has been a disagreement about where to draw the line between what speakers *state* and what they merely *imply* for many years. Thus, in order to appreciate the meaning in the language of propositions, the

line between those propositions that speakers express and those they solely imply is distinguished by modifiers ‘semantic’ and ‘pragmatic’: in other words, propositions speakers *semantically express* and propositions they *pragmatically imply* (Neale, 2007, 77-78). Another disagreement between pragmatics and semantics lies in the fact that according to pragmatics, how content, an agent determined by compositional semantic mechanism, falls short of the content of the proposition the speaker expresses by the use of ‘incomplete definite descriptions’ (Bach, 1981; Neale, 1990, 2004, 2007); ‘underdetermination of propositions’ (Sperber & Wilson, 1986) and ‘unarticulated constituents of propositions’ (Perry, 1986). Conversely, according to semantics, “Nothing like the formal mechanisms of compositional semantics determines the propositional contents of (at least particularized) conversational implicatures, or the propositions we convey by utterances replete with metaphor, irony, anacoluthon, aposiopesis, etc.” (Neale, 2007 b, 80). Additionally, Neale also explains the mechanisms of compositional semantics as they ‘do not give hearers the means even to assign referents to all singular terms or to resolve all lexical, structural or anaphoric ambiguities, let alone to identify the full contents of utterances replete with metaphor, irony, anacoluthon, or aposiopesis, or to identify the contents of any conversational implicatures’ (2007, 80). Since the hearer will have to infer the meaning of a content pragmatically.

In Austin’s work entitled *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), which takes an *act of speech* as the primary unit of analysis rather than a sentence or utterance, it is asserted that speech acts, explicitly the unit of linguistic communication, depend on the intensions of the speaker and the hearer. Concisely, speech acts are used to perform various actions such as ‘to convey information; to ask for information; to give orders; to make requests; to make threats; to give warnings; to make bets; to give advice; to make a promise; to complain; to thank’ (Jaszczolt, 2002, 295). At the very beginning, while attempting to make sense of the speech acts, Austin (1961, 1962) initially divides them into two: *performative utterances*, which can be either explicit or implicit, are the acts of doing; and *constative utterances*, which are supposed to have truth values, are statements and assertions.

Afterwards he abandons the performative and constative dichotomy and puts forward three different types of speech acts: *locutionary*, the act of speaking; *illocutionary*, the act of declaring a fact, asking, etc.; *perlocutionary*, exerting an influence on the hearer.

Grice's Cooperative Principle, even though its maxims are criticized for being culture-specific, is divided into four in terms of its specific conversational maxims which enjoin truthfulness, informativeness, relevance and clarity: *Maxim of Quantity*: Make your contribution as informative as is required. Do not make your contribution more informative than is required. *Maxim of Quality*: Try to make your contribution one that is true. Specifically: 1) Do not say what you believe to be false; 2) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence. *Maxim of Relation*: Be relevant. *Maxim of Manner*: Be perspicuous. Specifically: 1) Be Brief; 2) Be orderly; 3) Avoid ambiguity; 4) Avoid obscurity of expression (1975, 45-46).

Apart from Gricean theory, Geoffrey Leech's (1983) Politeness Principle, in other words, 'minding your p's and q's', even though it also suffers from methodological inadequacies, consists of at least six maxims, such as the Tact Maxim, maxims of Generosity, Approbation, Modesty, Agreement and Sympathy.<sup>3</sup> The wording of these maxims are generally based upon 'the maxims in terms of stressing what is good to (or about) the addressee and diminishing what is unwelcome, and reversing the strategy when speaking about oneself' (Jaszczolt, 2002, 314).

Aposiopesis, a rhetorical device once defined by Samuel Johnson as "a form of speech by which the speaker, through some affection as sorrow, bashfulness, fear, anger or vehemency, breaks off his speech before it be all ended" (1745, *A Dictionary of the English language*) can be classified under five subtitles: Firstly, 'emotive aposiopesis' is used in conditions of conflicts between emotional outbursts of a speaker and environment that does not react. Usually, the writer or speaker pauses in the middle of a sentence. Secondly, 'calculated aposiopesis' is based on the conflict of missing thought and its opposing force that rejects the substance of that thought. Hence, the idea is removed that is explicitly expressed afterwards. Thirdly, 'audi-

ence-respecting aposiopesis' is based on the removal of thoughts which are unpleasant to the readers or offensive to the audience. Fourthly, 'transitio-aposiopesis' removes the ideas from the end part of a speech in order to immediately get the audience interested in the subsequent section. And lastly, 'emphatic aposiopesis' avoids the use of full utterance to present the idea as greater and really inexpressible.

Any attempt to reduce the sphere of aposiopesis to a verbal function or to confine verbal function to aposiopesis would be a very delusive oversimplification. Since, just like language is used to express cultural meanings, conversely language can also be used to avoid saying some certain things. For instance, linguistically, the employment of 'taboo', which is believed to be 'harmful to its members in that it could cause them anxiety, embarrassment or shame' (Wardhaugh, 2010, 249) and 'euphemism' which is used as 'a word or phrase that replaces a taboo word or serves to avoid frightening or unpleasant subjects' (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2011, 473) are considered as two distinctive representatives in avoiding the utterance of some certain words, phrases and sentences in either oral or written forms of communication.

As the review suggests, discourse analysis, what the speakers state and what they merely intend can be decoded by the practices and principles of semantics and pragmatics. However, apart from *semantically expressed* and *pragmatically implied* propositions, communication of the individuals is not restricted to such elements but to the use of 'taboo' or 'euphemism', which are also functional in decoding the utterances. Yet again, Austin's (1961, 1962) *performative* and *constative* utterances; Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) as well as Leech's Politeness Principle (1983) are also functional in decoding the meaning of communication between individuals. Other than all these enumerated functions or principles, most of the literary texts just like the utterances in real life include many different kinds of aposiopesis which play a significant role in decoding the meaning typical to its own period. In this regard, it is certain that the purpose of this paper is to reveal the aposiopesis in a literary text entitled *Top Girls* (1982) by Caryl Churchill in order to decode cultural, historical and political perceptions of the 1970s

and 1980s.

## II. Representation of Aposiopesis in *Top Girls*

In the period between the mid-1970s and the early 1980s, the engagement of British feminism with its own history and culture became a significant phenomenon within the sphere of British theatre. A number of playwrights attempted to construct and dramatize its history and culture by presenting feminist issues on the stage. Caryl Churchill (1938-), commonly considered to be one of the most innovative playwrights to have emerged in the post-war British theatre, receives acclaim from both British and international audiences.

Churchill, as a playwright deeply indebted to Marxist cultural theory as well as to feminist theory, becomes one of the most important playwrights of the 1980s.<sup>4</sup> The emergence of Churchill as an outstanding playwright coincides with the government of Margaret Thatcher. However, it must be revealed that even though the election of Thatcher as Britain's first female prime minister could be seen as a victory for *equal representation*, Churchill wrote *Top Girls* in order to depict 'her opposition to Thatcherism' (Tycer, 2008, 13). As D. Keith Peacock puts it: "Churchill's socialist-feminist interrogation of women's status in Britain under Thatcher therefore concludes that in spite of its high profile during the 1970s, the feminist movement had not significantly advanced the cause of women because it had not spoken with a unified voice. The mere presence of a woman Prime Minister, herself a bourgeois feminist, offered no greater opportunities for the majority of women who could not or did not aspire to be 'top girls'" (1999, 95).

Churchill employs a wide variety of dramatic techniques to explore 'histories in non-linear and non-generational terms' (Bazin, 2006, 119) in her play. Among many others, *Top Girls*, first performed at the Royal Court in 1982, is renowned not only for its political commentary but also for its stylistic innovations. The play also owes its reputation to Brechtian *alienation devices* employed (Tycer, 2008, 43), particularly in presenting top girl's ideology, an ideology that owes much to Thatcher's government. Structurally, the play borrows technical devices more common to fiction as it reveals its chronological story, specifically *fabula* in terms of narra-

tive theory in a non-consecutive arrangement of prolepses and analepses, namely *sjuzhet* (Gobert, 2014, 3). Christopher Innes points out that 'the structure of the play offers a model of alternative ways of thinking' (2002, 517) for the simple reason that each act does not lead to the next in a logical circle, suggesting disruption and intervention.

In the play, Churchill establishes not only *overlapping dialogue technique*, which has become widespread in contemporary British theatre but also *non-linear narrative structure* accompanied by multiple-role casting. According to Aston and Diamond "... Churchill's characters have a kind of hyper-recognizability, their gender, class and historical moment telegraphed instantly through styles of speech that collide for comic and political effect" (2009, 8). Additionally, the employment of ahistorical characters from different cultural backgrounds and different historical moments, the synthesis of mythic and fictional as well as historical and nonlinear time frame disrupt the unity of time and place, that is, a 'defamiliarizing strategy' which disrupts the viewers' ideology, as Brecht puts it (1964, 71). By blocking audience's expectations and presenting each character as an alienated insignia in terms of their historical subjectivity, Churchill portrays characters with psychological depth and personal histories.

*Top Girls* tells the story of Marlene, a businesswoman in early 1980's London whose success depends on both her intelligence and ruthlessness and the working-class sister who has raised Marlene's child as her own. The play also dramatizes Marlene's fight with her sister, Joyce; her strange and abnormal relationship with the disowned daughter, Angie; and her interaction with her colleagues, Nell and Win. Marlene has been promoted to managing director over a sexist rival and she celebrates her promotion at a surreal dinner party attended by exceptional women from either history or legend.

In the opening scene of the play, a cast of famous top girls is gathered together to celebrate Marlene's promotion. In this scene, except Marlene and silent waitresses all the characters are historical figures or fictive representations. That each woman's having an extraordinary story to tell confirms their maintaining *status quo* in the society as a top girl. The first to arrive is

Isabella Bird, the Victorian traveller, who travels extensively between the ages of 40 and 70; next a Japanese courtesan named Lady Nijo arrives; and is followed by Dull Gret, the subject of Brueghel painting; then apocryphal Pope Joan, a disguised man who was thought to have been Pope from 854-856; the last woman to join the party is Patient Griselda, an obedient wife whose story is told by Chaucer in *The Clerk's Tale* of *The Canterbury Tales*. However, the main purpose of Marlene's gathering these women together reveals the fact that she herself is, as a contemporary figure, an individual and an indispensable part of historical continuum. Furthermore, women's increasing independence in political, social and economic sphere is described in a non-linear narrative.

In the subsequent scenes, it becomes evident that Marlene paid a price for her success, as did the other women around her. Because the women in the *Top Girls* are all cognizant of the fact that women willing to make huge personal sacrifices are given the positions of power and authority like Marlene herself. Among one of the most significant sacrifices woman made was that of Marlene, for, in the next scene the audience is introduced to Angie, the daughter of Marlene abandoned. Angie, as a girl raised by Joyce, Marlene's sister and realized that her biological mother is not Joyce, left school early without any qualifications and is unemployed and directed her violence at both Marlene and Joyce.

The next scene returns to the Top Girls' employment agency, it becomes obvious that Marlene's colleagues pay for high prices by adopting the values associated with free-market capitalism and imitating hyper-masculinity in order to succeed and compete with their male rivals. In the early 1980's the most pressing political issue of Thatcher as a 'tough lady' was that of unemployment. Yet, in the social structure, the notion that only the fittest survive becomes a delusive prospect in a competitive economy. Even though Marlene's sister, Joyce is unable to acquire the skills, education, or work experience to secure a well-paid job, perhaps, the main reason for that is she is caring for Marlene's baby, Marlene overtly employs Thatcher's rhetoric of free-enterprise culture: "... I don't believe in class. Anyone can do anything if they've got

what it takes" (62).

At the end of third scene of act two, Win, Nell and Marlene who have sacrificed and suffered in their personal lives in order to succeed in the business world discuss the position of Angie, as she wants to work as a packer in Tesco. Marlene measures Angie against the criteria she has invested for herself and for other women in terms of her potential 'to make it'. Marlene's own blindness to even her daughter's humanity is the result of her unseeing beyond the values of competitive and free enterprise culture.

Linguistically considered, it can undoubtedly be noticed that the women constantly talk over each other; this is indicated in the text by the use of slashes. The conversations between the women reveal that the women rarely speak to each other; on the other hand, Marlene acts as and intermediary or somewhat negotiator even though she is appalled by the stories she hears from the women. The reason why Churchill employed many common features in the indictments drawn against women is that "... the varied images of women presented in *Top Girls* are bound to provoke strong reactions among a contemporary audience who can not fail to recognise 'the very age and body of the time' and their place in it" (Naismith & Worrall, 2013, 39). For instance, toleration of Griselda to her husband's cruelty is an exemplification of her self-sacrifice and life-long obedience in order to succeed in a male-dominated society.

In the following part, the use of aposiopesis will be exemplified in terms of their function in its own history and culture. The extracted parts used as aposiopesis either by denoting 'mutton' (—) or 'ellipsis' (...) are purposefully highlighted and indicated by bold in order to distinguish the so-called structure from the original text.

The following extraction includes narration of Nijo as she was asked for being one of the maidens of a Japan Emperor at the age of fourteen. She was even too young to understand what means an eight-layered gown sent by the Emperor. In her own culture, it was what she had been brought up for, as her father instructed her to 'serve His Majesty, be respectful, if you lose his favour enter holly order'. Even though at first she thought that the emperor was a sweet

character, then it turned out to be a really unscrupulous one. One night, he even sent her to a man and listened to their lovemaking sounds from behind the screens. Nijo had four children from different men but she felt nothing for these children as the children were all kept away from her. In the subsequent extraction, she employs 'emphatic aposiopesis', she avoids use of full utterance to present her existing idea as greater and really inexpressible, which is that the Emperor was actually a supreme powered man and she loved him while her colleagues are investigating whether she is raped at the age of fourteen or not.

**Marlene** Twenty-nine's an excellent age.

**Nijo** Well I was only fourteen and I knew he meant something but I didn't know what. He sent me an eight-layered gown and I sent it back. So when the time came I did nothing but cry. My thin gowns were badly ripped. But even that morning when he left / [-] he'd a green robe with a scarlet lining and

**Marlene** Are you saying he raped you? (100).

The following extraction is taken from a setting where the women on the table are all on the opinion that whereas leading a life in a patriarchal society is an encouraging one, beginning a new life in an unknown place is also a challenging one. Marlene reminds of her first arrival to London at the age of 17 leaving a baby girl behind her country with a caring her sister; at that time she also thinks that 'life is over' just like the other women do but she opposes that such a mood did not last long. She quitted the feeling of life was over since she attempts to display herself as a powerful, impressive and vigorous woman not a fragile, vulnerable and helpless one. Marlene herself rejects the substance of the existing thought by employing 'calculated aposiopesis', as all the women think that life was over but Marlene.

**Isabella** You thought your life was over but it wasn't.

**Joan** You wish it was over.

**Gret** Sad.

**Marlene** Yes, when I first came to London I sometimes [...] and when I got back from America I did. But only for a few hours. Not twenty years.

**Isabella** When I was forty I thought my

life was over. / Oh I

**Nijo** I didn't say I felt it for twenty years. Not every minute (107).

The successive extraction exemplifies Marlene's use of 'transio-aposiopesis', which removes her ideas from the end part of her speech to promptly get the audience interested in the subsequent sessions or speeches. Her use of transio-aposiopesis is functional in digressing the subject from Nijo's experiences as a Japanese courtesan to Joan's experiences as a disguised woman.

**Marlene** You had prettier colours than Isabella.

**Nijo** the Emperor Kameyana, on his formal visit, I wore raw silk pleated trousers and a seven-layered gown in shades of red, and two outer garments, / yellow lined with green and a light

**Marlene** Yes, all that silk must have been very [...]

*The Waitress starts to clear the first course.*

**Joan** I dressed as a boy when I left home (108-109).

In another conversation, Isabella is speaking about her lover named Mr Nugent, who showed her no disrespect and declared his love toward her by only sending poems. Marlene is about to ask whether Isabella loves him or not. Even though Marlene halts the conversation immediately after she asks "But did you [-]?" Isabella is brilliant enough to appreciate what Marlene intends to utter. Marlene is curious about whether she loved him or she wanted to marry him, and even whether she is repentant or not. In this case, Marlene employs 'audience-respecting aposiopesis', which includes removal of thoughts, which are unpleasant to Isabella. Marlene abruptly stops in the middle of the sentence in order not to insult her.

**Isabella** I urged him to give up whisky, / but he said it was too late.

**Marlene** Oh Isabella.

**Isabella** He had lived alone in the mountains for many years.

**Marlene** But did you [-]? *The Waitress goes.*

**Isabella** Mr Nugent was a man that any woman might love but none could marry. I came back to England (111).

The following extraction displays Mar-

lene's delineation of what success is, but perhaps her blurring mind prevents her from doing it. In order to become successful in a business world, she sacrifices her own daughter. Even though Marlene essentially emphasizes that success is something that you have to pay for it, she halts the conversation once again in order to create a dramatic effect on the listeners by adopting 'emphatic aposiopesis'. Yet again, she is unable to express precisely what success is, what success requires and what success takes away from an individual.

**Joan** There was nothing in my life except my studies. I was obsessed with pursuit of the truth. I taught at the Greek School in Rome, which St Augustine had made famous. I was poor, I worked hard. I spoke apparently brilliantly, I was still very young, I was a stranger; suddenly I was quite famous, I was everyone's favourite. Huge crowds came to hear me. The day after they made me cardinal I fell ill and lay two weeks without speaking, full of terror and regret. / But then I got up

**Marlene** Yes, success is very [...]

**Joan** determined to go on. I was seized again / with a desperate longing for the absolute.

The consecutive extraction revolves around Griselda's story, the story of an obedient woman who was born to a peasant family. Griselda is spotted for her beauty by the ruling marquis, Walter, when she is fifteen. On the day of his wedding, marquis unexpectedly selects her to be his bride on the condition that she will always obey him without question. Griselda's loyalty to her promises, no matter what extreme sacrifices asked of her, results in Walter's insistence on having her two infants taken away from her and apparently killed. He explains his misdeed, as the peasants are discontent with him having children who were partially peasant stock. Twelve years later, Walter sends Griselda back to her father barefoot and dressed only in a slip. He tests her again by asking her to help prepare a wedding ceremony to a new younger girl from France. Griselda obeys him and assists the girl getting ready. Walter reveals that young woman is actually their daughter. Griselda learns that Walter secretly allows both their son and daughter to grow up. After Walter is sure about his wife's unquestioning obedience, he

takes his wife back. In this part, Isabella adopts 'emotive aposiopesis', a kind that is used in the conditions of conflicts between emotional outbursts of speaker and environment that does not react. Since Isabella thinks that he cannot kill own children just because people are restless for her privileged marriage, she halts conversation.

**Nijo** And you had another child?

**Griselda** Not for four years, but then I did, yes, a boy.

**Nijo** Ah a boy. / So it all ended happily.

**Griselda** Yes he was pleased. I kept my son till he was two years old. A peasant's grandson. It made the people angry. Walter explained.

**Isabella** But surely he wouldn't kill his children / just because [-] (132-133).

Then, Isabella gets into conversation by using another aposiopesis; she attempts at understanding the things happened to Griselda and utters: "So whatever did he do this time? / My poor John, I never loved him enough, and he would never have dreamt [...]. (134).

The play also includes an 'interview part' in which Marlene is in the process of interviewing a young woman Jeanine in order to find her a job placement. In the following extraction, Jeanine employs 'transio-aposiopesis' while she is informing that she started as a typist in a small friendly office where she has progressed to being a secretary, shared by three executives. Since Marlene interviews with Jeanine in a way she is constantly bombarded with questions. And the last aposiopesis in this extraction Marlene employs is 'audience-respecting aposiopesis' since it signifies that asking how much she earns can be considered a little bit offensive by Jeanine. At the end, Marlene instructs Jeanine that she should not tell her potential employers that she is getting married, because they will assume that she will leave her job to have children.

**Jeanine** I wanted to go to work.

**Marlene** Well, Jeanine, what's your present job like?

**Jeanine** I'm a secretary.

**Marlene** Secretary or typist?

**Jeanine** I did start as a typist but the last six months I've been a secretary.

**Marlene** To?

**Jeanine** To three of them, really, they share me. There's Mr Ashford, he's the office

manager, and Mr Philby / is sales, and [-]

**Marlene** Quite a small place?

**Jeanine** A bit small.

**Marlene** Friendly?

**Jeanine** Oh it's friendly enough.

**Marlene** Prospects?

**Jeanine** I don't think so, that's the trouble. Miss Lewis is secretary to the managing director and she's been there forever, and Mrs Bradford / is [-]

**Marlene** So you want a job with better prospects?

**Jeanine** I want a change.

**Marlene** So you'll take anything comparable?

**Jeanine** No, I do want prospects. I want more money.

**Marlene** You're getting [-]?

**Jeanine** Hundred.

**Marlene** It's not bad you know. You're what? Twenty? (171-172).

In another interview between Win and Louise, Win's questions somewhat elicit the essential facts about Louise who laconically defines the changing attitude of women to work. Louise after twenty-one years working at the same job, at forty-six, she looks for any other vacancies. Even though she devotes herself to her job, she is neither appreciated nor promoted since she is not like the other attractive type of women. In the following extraction, in the first speech, the aposiopesis Louise employs explicitly indicates that the new kind of woman is not as careful as she had always been. Additionally, the second aposiopesis indicates that she has had to prove herself in her job every minute whereas the other women take themselves for granted. These two aposiopesis Louise employed are 'emotive aposiopesis', since she is in conflict between her emotional outbreak and her unresponsive environment.

**Win** Are you the only woman?

**Louise** Apart from the girls of course, yes. There was one, she was my assistant, it was the only time I took on a young woman assistant, I always had my doubts. I don't care greatly for working with women, I think I pass as a man at work. But I did take on this young woman, her qualifications were excellent, and she did well, she got a department of her own, and left the company for a competitor where she's now on the board and good luck to her. She has a

different style, she's a new kind of attractive well-dressed [-] I don't mean I don't dress properly. But there is a kind of woman who is thirty now who grew up in a different climate. They are not so careful. They take themselves for granted. I have had to justify my existence every minute, and I have done so, I have proved [-] well (178- 179).

In another scene, immediately after Marlene learns that she gets the promotion over the runner-up candidate Howard Kidd, Kidd's wife insists on talking to Marlene secretly. Mrs Kidd firstly explains how upset she and Howard about a woman being promoted over him and hopes that Margaret will turn down the offer and the boss will promote him instead. Mrs Kidd speaks for a substantial social group -the stay-at-home wife who serves her husband and children. The first aposiopesis Marlene used is 'audience-respecting aposiopesis' since she does not want to be offensive or aggressive to Mrs Kidd. The next aposiopesis is from Mrs Kidd, who insistently proposes that she remembers Marlene but Marlene does not remember her. And she employs 'audience-respecting aposiopesis'. The third and the last aposiopesis is Mrs Kidd's 'emotive aposiopesis' as she is in conflict with her emotional state and Marlene's indifference to her. With such a kind of aposiopesis, the speaker pauses in the middle of the sentence, as is the case in Mrs Kidd's speech.

**Mrs Kidd** Excuse me.

**Marlene** Yes.

**Mrs Kidd** Excuse me.

**Marlene** Can I help you?

**Mrs Kidd** Excuse me bursting in on you like this but I have to talk to you.

**Marlene** I am engaged at the moment. / If you could go to reception [-]

**Mrs Kidd** I'm Rosemary Kidd, Howard's wife, you don't recognise me but we did meet, I remember you of course / but you wouldn't [-]

**Marlene** Yes of course, Mrs Kidd, I'm sorry, we did meet. Howard's about somewhere I expect, have you looked in his office?

**Mrs Kidd** Howard's not about, no. I'm afraid it's you I've come to see if I could have a minute or two.

**Marlene** I do have an appointment in five minutes.

**Mrs Kidd** This won't take five minutes.

I'm very sorry. It is a matter of some urgency.

**Marlene** Well of course. What can I do for you?

**Mrs Kidd** I just wanted a chat, an informal chat. It's not something I can simply [-] I'm sorry if I'm interrupting your work. I know office work isn't like housework/which is all interruptions (186-187).

The following extraction is a depiction of a conversation held between Marlene and Joyce, which clearly exposes that Marlene leaves home to escape the awfulness of her parents' working-class existence. Then the readers learn that she gets pregnant and Joyce adopts the child. It seemed that at that time Joyce cannot have her own child, but later on she has a miscarriage as she is so exhausted looking after Marlene's baby. All the four aposiopesis in this extraction employed by Joyce suggest 'emotive aposiopesis' as Joyce herself is in conflict emotionally. While Joyce pauses in the middle of the sentences, Marlene breaks down in tears. Immediately after Joyce uses emotive aposiopesis Marlene replies her back by adopting 'transio-aposiopesis' in order to get her sister interested in the subsequent section by stating that she has had two abortions.

**Marlene** Then what are you going on about / why did I have her?

**Joyce** You said I got her off you / when you didn't [-]

**Marlene** I said you were lucky / the way it [-]

**Joyce** Have a child now if you want one. You're not old.

**Marlene** I might do.

**Joyce** Good. *Pause.*

**Marlene** I've been on the pill so long / I'm probably sterile.

**Joyce** Listen when Angie was six months I did get pregnant and I lost it because I was so tired looking after your fucking baby / because she cried so much [-] yes I did tell

**Marlene** You never told me.

**Joyce** you [-] / and the doctor said if I'd sat down all day with

**Marlene** Well I forgot.

**Joyce** my feet up I'd've kept it / and that's the only chance I ever had because after that [-]

**Marlene** I've had two abortions, are you interested? Shall I tell you about them? Well I won't, it's boring, it wasn't a problem. I don't like messy talk about blood / and what a bad (224-225).

The following extraction indicates that the sisterly bond between Marlene and Joyce emerges most intensely when the words break down. Marlene use of 'audience-respecting aposiopesis' depicts that there stands an emotional and impressive exchange between the sisters, particularly a glimpse of affectionate relationship.

**Marlene** I was afraid of this. I only came because I thought you wanted [...] I just want [...]

*Marlene cries.*

**Joyce** Don't grizzle, Marlene, for God's sake. Marly? Come on, pet. Love you really. Fucking stop it, will you? (225)

In the subsequent part, Marlene insists that she had to escape the life that she had envisioned, such as, for instance, that of entering into a working class marriage and subsequently becoming subordinate to her husband's demands. Marlene's discriminatory manner is revealed in the following extraction, which denotes her background and private life as well as her worldview. At the time Joyce cantankerously says that when she sees a Rolls Royce, she scratches it with her ring, Marlene employs 'calculated aposiopesis'. Even though Joyce has four different cleaning jobs in order to survive, she does not accept financial help from her sister, but she hates a Rolls Royce symbolically. In this part, the sisters quarrel about the immediate political situations in Britain. By holding opposite views about Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, they actually try to insult each other. The political row between the sisters is both exaggerated and simplified since their argument reaches a climax point where political realities cannot be avoided. Both Marlene and Joyce adopt 'calculated aposiopesis' from the beginning to the end of their speech as their reticence is based on the conflict of neglecting each other's thought and they also reject the substance of that thought.

**Marlene** I hate the working class / which is what you're going

**Joyce** Yes you do.

**Marlene** to go on about now, it doesn't exist any more, it means lazy and stupid. / I don't like the way they talk. I don't

**Joyce** Come on, now we're getting it.

**Marlene** like beer guts and football vomit and saucy tits / and brothers and sisters [-]

**Joyce** I spit when I see a Rolls Royce, scratch it with my ring / Mercedes it was.

**Marlene** Oh very mature [-]

**Joyce** I hate the cows I work for / and their dirty dishes with blanquette of fucking veau.

**Marlene** and I will not be pulled down to their level by a flying picket and I won't be sent to Siberia / or a loony bin

**Joyce** No, you'll be on a yacht, you'll be head of Coca-Cola and you wait, the eighties is going to be stupendous all right because we'll get you lot off our backs [-]

**Marlene** just because I'm original. And I support Reagan even if he is a lousy movie star because the reds are swarming up his map and I want to be free in a free world [-]

**Joyce** What? / What?

**Marlene** I know what I mean / by that [-] not shut up here (231-232-233).

As the extractions exemplified undoubtedly indicate that Churchill employs a number of aposiopesis in the play in order to show the characters' reticence on certain issues. As can be observed, the characters in the play are partially in conflict with themselves or with the environment in which they are living. Accordingly, they employ emotive, calculated, audience-respecting, transio and emphatic aposiopesis for different purposes.

### CONCLUSION

As Genette claims, the 'incompleteness' of the 'mutilated text' can in fact sometimes constitute 'the very truth of a work' (1997, 162). *Top Girls* is such a text as Genette himself defined since it brings into the light the issue of womanhood throughout the history in a realistic manner even if it incorporates 'incompleteness' by the use of aposiopesis. The silences, which also suggest the trauma the characters have gone through, are remarkable as the non-uttered words sometimes mean more than the words uttered in the play. For instance, according to Goodman, 'Gret's silence was not that she didn't have anything to say, but that she had too much

to say' (1998, 84). Contrastively, other than silences, laughs that are the representations of female oppression also play a significant role since they are the most frequent used stage directions in the play in order to show the women's anger and grievance through the history. The women laugh mirthlessly when they hear that the Chinese selling girl babies to Europeans for cameras, a cardinal whose name Pope John the Antichrist and the introduction of a pierced chair after Joan's execution by the Church. As Joseph Marohl points out in "De-Realised Women: Performance and Identity in *Top Girls*," these women 'have made obvious and often extreme concessions to their various patriarchies, against which they utter no word of condemnation or complaint' (1987, 384). As is the case in Helene Cixous's (2001) "The Laugh of Medusa", laughter represents a transgressive bodily disruption of phallogocentric discourse in the play. One of the commonest streaks is the torture and anguish which all women encounter just to stand up for their decisions or to survive in a patriarchal society.

In the play, the dialogue of women characters suggests effective use of diegetic narration where each character tells a different story of their own. Since the characters, as not being as passive receptors but also as active participants, who belong to different eras and nationalities, also employ intradiegetic narrations in revealing their own experiences at a certain period of time. The fact that the play incorporates various narratives about the experiences of women and engages them in a dialogue is influential in exchanging cultural, political and historical ideas in a historically non-linear drama.

In conclusion, Churchill questions the woman issue as an umbrella term not only considering the conflicting ideas on women in her own period but also exposing the position of women throughout the history. She succeeds in doing this by employing a wide variety of communicative techniques. Moreover, she purposefully employs a number of different techniques apart from aposiopesis such as alienation effect, non-linear narration, over-lapping, pauses, silences, and laughter in order to reveal the bodily, psychologically and socio-culturally disruption of women in a phallogocentric world.

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relationships in the Victorian Era. Then she wrote a number of plays such as *Top Girls* (1982) which deals with the position of women in a male-dominated environment; *Softcops* (1984) which is an attempt to depoliticize illegal acts; *Serious Money* (1987) which displays excesses in the financial world satirically; *Icecream* (1989) which explores Anglo-American stereotypes; *The Skriker* (1994) which searches for love, revenge and human understanding and *A Number* (2002) which addresses the subject of human cloning and questions of identity. Among many of her plays, the play entitled *Top Girls* and *Cloud Nine* have a worldwide reputation for playwrighting since it wins 1981 and 1982 Obie Award.

<sup>1</sup> The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which was first formulated by Whorf in 1940, makes the claim that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences the manner in which one thinks and behaves. However, such a hypothesis is firmly criticized for the simple reason that it can eventually lead to prejudice and racism because according to Kramsch, 'there are cultural differences in the semantic associations evoked by seemingly common concepts is generally accepted nowadays' (1998, 13).

<sup>2</sup> Just like Szöke's (1963) 'ornithomusicology', which is based on the supposition that since birds evolved elaborate musical utterances before the human beings appeared on the earth, it is logical to imagine that development of primitive music was essentially stimulated by hearing and mimicking bird vocalizations, the acquirement of aposiopesis can also be based upon the practices and behaviors of human beings which are culturally and inheritably adopted for a long period of time. See Szöke, P. (1963). "Ornitomuzikológia." *Magyar Tudomány*. 9, 592-607.

<sup>3</sup> Leech elucidated Politeness Principle as Tact: a) Minimize cost to other b) Maximize benefit to other; Generosity: a) Minimize benefit to self, b) Maximize cost to self; Approbation: a) Minimize dispraise of other, b) Maximize praise of other; Modesty: a) Minimize praise of self, b) Maximize dispraise of self; Agreement: a) Minimize disagreement between self and other, b) Maximize agreement between self and other; Sympathy: a) Minimize antipathy between self and other, b) Maximize antipathy between self and other. Among these maxims, it can be undoubtedly noticed that part (a) is more important than part (b) since it emphasizes the avoidance of imposition or disagreement in conversation (See for more information Leech, 1983, 132).

<sup>4</sup> Churchill becomes the first woman writer in residence at the Royal Court Theatre in 1974. Churchill (1938) explores issues of gender and sexuality by developing Bertolt Brecht's modernist and dramatic and theatrical techniques of Epic theatre, particularly in her early works such as *Owners* (1972), a two-act play about obsession with power and *Cloud Nine* (1979), a farce which explores colonialist and imperialist personal