

Questioning Social Expectation towards Masculinity in *Cloud 9* by Caryl Churchill**Khalilah Aisyah Maharani¹** ✉¹Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

Article Info	Abstract
<i>Article History:</i> Received 22 June 2026 Approved 07 July 2026 Published 31 July 2026 Keywords: cloud nine, global masculinism, masculinity	This study examines the depiction of masculinity and its resistance in Caryl Churchill's play <i>Cloud 9</i> (1979). Social expectations rooted in patriarchal culture enforce rigid standards of masculinity from childhood, suppressing authentic identities to maintain gender conformity. Therefore, this research aims to 1) To identify how the masculine actions in the play differ from the expectations of the Victorian period and 2) To explore how these "different" versions of masculinity challenge traditional social standards and criticize patriarchal power. This study applies qualitative textual analysis and Lucy Nicholas and Christine Agius's theory of Global Masculinism as the basis of analysis with other supporting theories. The findings reveal that masculinity in <i>Cloud 9</i> is not fixed or natural but constructed by society sustained through physical competence and emotional restraint. This play further demonstrates that it is the acts of resistance from characters that expose the fragility of masculinity. This study contributes to the study of gender and drama by offering new insights into how theatre can critique the persistence and adaptability of masculinist ideologies in the Victorian era.

© Copyright 2026

INTRODUCTION

Social expectations function as a powerful framework that shapes how people build their identities and behave in public (Dejonckheere & Bastian, 2021). These expectations often force individuals to follow strict societal rules deeply rooted in patriarchal culture, which people usually accept unquestioningly and dictate behavioral standards for both women and men (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Within this structure, traditional masculinity is narrowly defined by emotional control, dominance, and the rejection of any "soft" traits. Since childhood, boys are taught to distance themselves from anything considered "feminine," as being a man is often defined simply as the opposite of being emotional or dependent

(McKenzie et al., 2018). As a result, many men face the risk of being ridiculed or marginalized (Bawa et al., 2025) if they show their true selves, leading them to suppress their authentic identities to gain social acceptance (O'Donnell et al., 2018).

Caryl Churchill's play *Cloud 9* (1979) presents a powerful critique of these social expectations of the result of different genders through alienation effects, including cross-gender casting and role reversal (Siklar, 2017). Set initially in Victorian colonial Africa and later in 1970s London, the play explores the intersection of colonialism, gender identity, and societal expectations. One of the most striking representations of gender constraint in the text is the rigid enforcement of masculinity within the patriarchal household led by Clive. In Act I, set in

✉ Corresponding author:
Email: lilaaisy31@students.unnes.ac.id

p-ISSN: 2252-6323
e-ISSN: 2721-4540

Victorian colonial Africa, Clive, as the head of the family, controlled everyone by forcing "natural" roles; men must be strong bosses, or women, like Betty says, "I am a man's creation," and then acting weak and kept pleasing her husband to fit his standard. Clive's logic also causes pain for Edward and his hidden love for dolls, or Ellen's forced marriage, where she actually wants to be an independent lesbian. If they don't follow, they will be the target of discipline by Clive, illustrating how patriarchal authority enforces gender conformity (Rahma, 2023).

While existing scholarship on *Cloud 9* has rigorously mapped the trajectories of liberation and resistance, the critical discourse has disproportionately focused on female agency (Joodaki & Bakhsi, 2013; Rahma, 2023; Singh, 2016; Yilmaz, 2002). For instance, analyses of Betty's domestic subjugation and subsequent identity crisis have become foundational to the play's reception (Siklar, 2017; Yilmaz, 2002). Mir (2025) explains how Victorian-era patriarchal norms are intrinsically linked to how male authority dictates women's bodies, desires, and roles within the family structure. By having a man portray the subservient Victorian woman, Churchill subverts traditional patriarchal depictions, turning the female identity into a literal parody of male desire and control (Abdussemedoğlu, 2026). As Firat (2005) argues in her analysis of the play, Churchill draws attention to the randomness of gender roles by showing how they are imposed through patriarchal ideology rather than arising from any innate difference. However, the nuanced mechanics of masculinity as a restrictive and potentially self-destructive force for men remain under-theorized. Addressing this scholarly lacuna, this research shifts the critical lens toward the ontological friction experienced by male subjects within the play. Drawing on Nicholas and Agius's concept of "Global Masculinism" (Nicholas and Agius, 2018) and Connell's "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 1995), I posit that Churchill utilizes Edward's subversion of gendered expectations to illustrate how hegemonic masculinity functions as a fraught, self-destructive performance. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that Edward's refusal to inhabit the "masculine" ideal serves as a radical

critique of the Victorian and contemporary social scripts that marginalize vulnerability, thereby destabilizing the patriarchal foundations of the colonial and postcolonial eras. To explore this, the study has two main objectives:

- To identify how the masculine actions in the play differ from the expectations of the Victorian period.
- To explore how these "different" versions of masculinity challenge traditional social standards and criticize patriarchal power.

The theoretical foundation of this study is built on "Global Masculinism," a concept that describes masculinity not just as a natural trait but as a widespread "logic of power" (Nicholas & Agius, 2018). According to Nicholas and Agius (2018), who build on the ideas of feminist thinkers like Carol Gilligan and Iris Marion Young (1982; 2003), this logic creates a divide in how we see the world. Nicholas and Agius argue that masculinism is an ideological system that privileges masculinity as the universal and legitimate standard of social and political life. It places "masculine" traits like logic and strength at the top, while treating "feminine" traits like emotion and vulnerability as less important (p. 37). This system justifies male dominance by creating a "protector" role for men and a "subordinate" role for women, often separating life into the public world of work and politics for men and the private world of home and care for women (pp. 31-33). Essentially, this theory suggests that gender roles are a "hidden logic" that both men and women are expected to follow to keep society in order.

This framework has also been applied in previous literary studies examining masculinity across different literatures. Bata et al. (2022) deployed masculinism to analyze how 19th-century societal norms shaped Captain Frederick Wentworth's idealized form of masculinity that asserts authority and power in Jane Austen's *Persuasion*, demonstrates that society plays an active role in conditioning males to perform and uphold masculine ideals within their specific cultural and societal environments. Meanwhile Siedlockzek (2019) employed masculinist analysis to expose how masculinity is actively created and reinforced through everyday actions, and social expectations.

Although Nicholas and Agius developed the concept of Global Masculinism within a contemporary socio-political context, their argument that masculinity operates as a socially constructed rather than natural behaviour provides a useful framework for examining representations of masculinity from the Victorian era. Thus, the Victorian ideal of masculinity depicted in *Cloud 9* can be understood as a historical example from earlier periods that connect with the ideological process described by Nicholas and Agius.

To understand how these broad rules affect individuals, this study also uses R.W. Connell's (1995) "Hegemonic Masculinity." While masculinism explains the overall system of power, hegemonic masculinity identifies the specific "ideal" traits—such as toughness and emotional restraint—that men are pressured to perform. Importantly, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) point out that very few men can actually meet these perfect standards. This creates a situation where men must "maneuver" or act out different versions of masculinity depending on what society expects at the time. When we combine these theories, we can see a deep "ontological friction" which is a conflict between the "script" society gives to men and their true, internal feelings. Therefore, this study argues that *Cloud 9* represents masculine ideals during the Victorian era as a socially constructed rather than natural identity. By employing Nicholas and Agius' concept of Global Masculinism, this study examines both the masculine expectations imposed upon male characters and the ways Churchill questions and challenges those expectations.

METHODS

This study employs a qualitative textual analysis to examine the construction and subversion of masculinity in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* (1979). This approach emphasizes in-depth insights and the specific contexts in which human behavior occurs, making it well-suited for exploring complex, context-rich phenomena (Lim, 2024). The analysis is grounded in the theoretical framework of "Global Masculinism" as proposed by Nicholas and Agius (2018), which posits masculinity not merely as a biological trait but as a persistent belief system that normalizes dominance and structural inequality. By moving beyond a binary understanding of gender, this framework allows for an investigation into how masculine

power operates as a "logic" or "discourse" within both public and domestic spheres.

As a qualitative literary study, all data are derived from written sources (Creswell, 2018). The primary data consist of dialogue selection and character dynamics from *Cloud 9*, specifically focusing on the internal and external conflicts of characters such as Clive, Edward, and Betty. The secondary data are gathered from academic literature and journals pertaining to masculinity theories and gender studies.

The analytical process is conducted in three systematic stages following Barbour (2013). First, the identification stage involves identifying and categorizing relevant textual evidence based on Victorian expectations of masculinity and the forms of resistance demonstrated by the characters. Second, the elaboration stage analyzes these categories through Nicholas and Agius's theory of Global Masculinism to explain how particular masculine behaviors are normalized, privileged, and reinforced within the patriarchal context of the play. Finally, the synthesis stage integrates the findings to draw conclusions about how the various representations of masculinity in *Cloud 9* challenge the socio-historical standards and dominant masculine ideals of the Victorian era.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Differences in Action of Masculinity towards Victorian era Masculinity Expectations Represented in the Story

The Victorian image of masculinity depicted in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud 9* actions has two kinds, namely physical competence and emotional restraint. These expectations shape the way male characters are evaluated and determine whether they are recognized as properly masculine within Victorian society.

Physical Competence and Actions

In *Cloud 9*, Churchill (1979) explicitly shows the standard of being masculine in the terms of physical ability and actions. Given the setting in the Victorian era, he reflected in the story that being masculine means being capable using tools. In the story, it is said that men do flogging.

Flogging is the act of beating or whipping person, usually as a form of physical punishment or torture with the using of rod, whips, or straps.

MAUD: "The men will do it in proper way, whatever it is. We have our own part to play."

MRS. SAUNDERS: "Harry Bagley says they should just be sent away. I don't think he likes to see them beaten."

BETTY: "Harry is so tender hearted. Perhaps he is right."

MAUD: "Harry Bagley is not altogether - He has lived in this country a long time without any responsibilities. It is part of his charm but it hasn't improved his judgement. If the boys were just sent away they would go back to the village and make more trouble." (p. 29)

Betty echoed Mrs. Saunders' sentiments by stating that Harry was a kind-hearted man, while Maud revealed that Harry has not had any responsibilities for a long time and it ends with Harry's public perception not improved. Through the phrase "the men will do it" can be assumed that the use of tools on physical force activities belongs naturally to men, while "the proper way" implies that violence is regarded as a necessary expression of masculine responsibility. According to Nicholas and Agius (2018), masculine is an idealized, socially constructed standard that often dictates logic, reason, conflict, and individualism as their traits, Harry's reluctance to do flogging places him in tension where masculinity is associated with the willingness to enforce discipline. Although both Nicholas and Agius do not specifically identify tool use as an masculine trait, the ability to participate in physical punishment and handle the instruments associated with it becomes one way of performing masculine authority. Men who are unwilling to engage in such practices, such as Harry Bagley, risk being viewed as inferior by those who follow the dominant norm including women. Through Harry's unwillingness to doing flogging, Churchill presents an alternative masculine position that challenges the dominant expectation that men must demonstrate power through force.

Another expectation shown in the story of being masculine is masculine means being good at

sports. There are several scenes in the story that involve physical activities as a way to fill free time, such as playing catchball together.

HARRY: "Throw straight now."

EDWARD: "I did, I did."

CLIVE: "Keep your eye on the ball."

EDWARD: "You can't throw."

CLIVE: "Don't be a baby."

EDWARD: "I'm not, throw a hard one, throw a hard one -"

CLIVE: "Butterfingers. What will Uncle Harry think of you?"

...

CLIVE: "You're so silly and you can't catch. You'll be no good at cricket." (p. 19)

When Clive, Harry, and Edward play catchball, however, Churchill makes Edward fail to meet Clive's standards for athletic ability. Clive statement, "You're so silly and you can't catch. You'll be no good at cricket.", suggesting that Edward's inability to catch the ball is interpreted as childish weakness rather than lack of sporting skills. Clive's question, "What will Uncle Harry think of you?" further shows that Edward's performance is treated as something that will be judged by other men. Within Victorian society, cricket was linked to indicators of manhood and became evidence of masculine perfection. Nicholas and Agius argue that masculinism is universalised and privileges the qualities of masculinity, here cricket functions as one such universalised masculine quality and Edward's inability to perform well in the game is interpreted not merely as lack of athletic skill but as a failure to embody these masculine qualities. By portraying Edward's failure in sports, Churchill exposes how athletic performance functions as a social standard used to evaluate whether a boy is considered sufficiently masculine.

It is expected that being masculine means not being allowed to play with dolls. Through the characters of Clive and Betty, being masculine means not being allowed to play with dolls, which are considered exclusively for girls.

CLIVE: "What are you holding there?"

BETTY: "That's Victoria's doll. What are you doing with it, Edward?"

EDWARD: "Taking care of it."

BETTY: "Alright, I need to give it to Ellen right away. You don't want Papa to see you holding a doll."

CLIVE: "No, we've seen you holding Victoria's doll before, Edward."

ELLEN: "He's watching over it for Vicky. He's not playing with it."

BETTY: "He's not playing with it, Clive. He's watching over it for Vicky."

CLIVE: "Ellen is the one taking care of Victoria; let Ellen take care of the doll."

ELLEN: "Come on, give it to me."

ELLEN takes the doll.

EDWARD: "Don't tug on her; Vicky loves her very much. She likes it when I take care of her."

BETTY: "He's such a good big brother."

CLIVE: "Yes, that's a very manly thing to do, Edward, taking care of your little sister. We won't talk about it anymore. Tomorrow I'll take you horseback riding with me and Harry Bagley. Do you want to?" (p. 8)

The doll posed a threat because it was associated with nurturing, domesticity, and femininity. Churchill chooses ordinary objects such as dolls because it shows how Victorian society classified everyday objects according to gender. By showing interest in the doll, Edward was seen as entering the box that Victorian society has designed for girls and women. In this scene, Edward realizes his parents disapprove of him holding Victoria's doll. Betty's instruction, "You don't want Papa to see you holding the doll," demonstrates that masculinity is monitored through everyday behaviour. Edward's statement, "Taking care of it," shows that he never denies caring for the dolls, instead he attempts to justify his behaviour by emphasizing responsibility rather than play. Interestingly, Clive reframes the act of caring for his sister as something "manly," so that it can be fit to an acceptable masculine standard and offers a horseback ride as a reward. This illustrates the workings described by Nicholas and Agius (2018) as the ability of masculinity to reinterpret behavior to remain in line with the masculine ethos. Their concept of masculinism

explains how masculinity operates as a worldview that continuously privileges behaviours interpreted as masculine and reinterprets behaviours that appear to challenge that ideal. The invitation to go horseback riding the next day may be an invitation for Edward to return to activities that Clive considers masculine, demonstrating that masculine is also maintained through participation in activities that society recognizes as masculine.

Shows Attitude and Emotional Restraint

Besides expectations related to physical competence and actions, *Cloud 9* also portrays a series of social expectations through masculine attitudes and emotional behaviour. The expectations represented in the *Cloud 9* require boys to respect the family, push someone self, and be provider while maintaining emotionless.

EDWARD: "I don't want to be like papa. I hate papa."

MAUD: "Edward! Edward!"

BETTY: "You're a horrid wicked boy and papa will beat you. Of course you don't hate him, you love him. Now give Victoria her doll at once. (p. 30)

In the story, respecting and obeying family is counted as something that the son must do if he wants to be considered as someone who has embraced masculinity. After being caught playing with dolls for the second time, this time Betty expressed her disapproval of Edward's playing with dolls even more strongly and directly links Edward's behavior to the consequences he will face as he grows up. Betty's statement received a response that was no less harsh from Edward, where he admitted that he did not want to be like his father and even hated his father. Betty's denial, "Of course you don't hate him, you love him," shows that such rejection is considered unacceptable and suggests that loyalty towards father is treated as an masculine development. Masculinism works by normalizing certain masculine values so that they are unquestionable. The play reveals how Victorian society expected boys to respect their father and grow into the same masculine role as their fathers too. In a moment

like this, Edward's rejection was seen as a form of disrespect to Clive, who had worked so hard to teach him how to be a man.

Another expectation that must be met in order to be considered masculine is to force self when necessary. When Edward had previously clearly said that he hated his father, Edward finally came and apologized in front of Clive for what he had said.

CLIVE: "Well there's a brave boy to own up. You should always respect and love me, Edward, not for myself, I may not deserve it, but as I respected and loved 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: "Yes papa."

CLIVE: "Then I forgive you and shake you by the hand. You spend too much time with the women. You may spend more time with me and Uncle Harry, little man."

EDWARD: "I don't like women. I don't like dolls. I love you, papa, and I love you, Uncle Harry." (p. 33)

Edward had previously expressed a liking for dolls and openly admitted that he did not want to be like his father, he then retracted this statement by saying "I don't like women, I don't like dolls," and presented himself as the son Clive had hoped for. Edward's sudden declaration of dislike for women and dolls suggests not a genuine change in preference, but rather an attempt to conform to the masculine standards imposed upon him. In this sense, Edward is forcing himself to abandon behaviors associated with femininity in order to regain social acceptance and his father's approval. By presenting obedience to authority as something "understood by men," he treats this value as natural and universal, rather than being created by society. Nicholas and Agius (2018, p. 10) have also pointed out how the logic of masculinity has long been rooted in society and transmitted to various institutions; through legal systems, regulations, widespread social customs and as a result, it increasingly normalizes this logic. Through Edward's apology, Churchill questions whether masculine identity is genuinely chosen or whether

it is produced through pressure to suppress one's own preference.

The story presents another expectation associated with masculinity, which is the responsibility to provide. The form of providing is not limited to the ability to support the family, but also other things such as providing security.

CLIVE: "Well done, Edward, that was very manly of you. See Betty? Edward was protecting his mama's jewels from the rebels. What a hysterical fuss over nothing. Well done, little man. It is quite safe now. The bad men are dead. Edward, you may do up the necklace for mama." (p. 46)

One day in the story Edward managed to get Betty's necklace after it got stolen, Clive immediately announces, "Well done, Edward, that was very manly of you," before explaining that Edward had been protecting Betty's jewelry from the rebels. His statement, "It is quite safe now," frames Edward's achievement in terms of his ability to eliminate danger, while the expression "little man" also symbolically welcomes Edward into the masculine role that Clive has been trying to teach throughout the story. These expectations reflect masculinity that Nicholas and Agius try to explain, a worldview that emphasizes certain masculine qualities and presents them as the desired social standard. The roles of protector and provider are elevated as expressions of masculinity, while alternative ways of being a man are less recognized. This dialogue also suggests that masculine recognition is conditional rather than permanent by showing how quickly Clive labels Edward as "manly" after a single act and must continually be earned through approved actions. Through this scene, Churchill questions whether masculinity should depend upon continuously proving one's usefulness through acts of providing protection or such and exposes the nature of masculine approval and the social expectations attached to it.

To be masculine, the story shows how men are supposed to be emotionless. When Maud suggests playing hide-and-seek after Clive says that Edward won't be good at cricket, Edward

immediately refuses, saying, "That's a baby's game,".

CLIVE: "You're so silly and you can't catch. You'll be no good at cricket."

MAUD: "Why don't we play hide and seek?"

EDWARD: "Because it's a baby game."

BETTY: "You've hurt Edward's feelings."

CLIVE: "A boy has no business having feelings." (p. 19)

Betty recognizes Edward's emotional reaction as a natural response to criticism by saying "You've hurt Edward's feelings," rather than treating it as a weakness. However, Clive immediately replies with a firm statement: "A boy has no business having feelings." where Clive does not encourage Edward to be strong but instead he completely rejects the idea of boys expressing emotions. As Cornell and Messerschmidt (2005) already associated masculine with a need to suppress emotion and it transforms emotional restraint from a personal quality into a social rule that defines proper masculinity. Nicholas and Agius also explain how vulnerability has long been grouped into feminine traits (2018, p. 81), therefore Edward's hurt feelings are treated not as a normal emotional response but a behaviour that falls outside the masculine ideal. This expectation also reflects the workings of masculinism in which certain masculine values are privileged while alternative ways of being are marginalized (Nicholas & Agius, 2018, p. 5) and by presenting Edward as emotionally expressive rather than stoic, Churchill questions whether the suppression of emotion reflects genuine masculine identity or just a social expectation imposed upon boys.

Differences that Challenge Social Standards and Criticize Patriarchal Power

The characters demonstrate several differences that challenge the standards of masculinity expected by Victorian society. These differences include a subtle hesitation, rejection of masculine ideals, and a challenge to heteronormative masculinity.

Edward's Subtle Hesitation

Another way where the story challenges Victorian ideal masculinity is by portraying hesitation rather than open resistance. Instead of completely rejecting his father's ideals, Edward admits that he struggles to become the kind of man expected of him, revealing that conformity to masculinity is neither natural nor effortless.

CLIVE: "My son is young. I'm doing all I can to teach him to grow up to be a man."

EDWARD: "What father wants I'd dearly like to be. I find it rather hard as you can see." (p. 2)

These moments reveal that resistance is not always expressed through direct confrontation but can also appear through uncertainty, hesitation, and an inability to conform. Clive's statement shows that masculinity is something that must be actively taught rather than something boys naturally process. Edward's response is important because, instead of rejecting his father's wish, he admits that he wants to satisfy those expectations but finds the process "rather hard". As Nicholas and Agius (2018, p. 5) define masculinism as an underlying ethos that implicitly universalizes and privileges the qualities of masculinity, and in doing so subordinates and 'others' alternative ways of understanding align with Clive's statement that he is teaching his son to "grow into a man" treats manhood as a lesson that passed from one generation to the next. Edward's admission that he finds this process extremely difficult is a form of hesitation and he even emphasizes the difficulty of achieving that ideal. Through this, Churchill questions that masculinity is a natural identity that boys willingly embrace. Instead, the story exposes masculine norms as social expectations require continuous reinforcement.

The Rejection of the Father as the Masculine Ideal

One of Churchill's strongest challenges to Victorian masculine expectations is presented through Edward's rejection of his father as the masculine ideal, questioning the assumptions that masculinity is naturally inherited from father to son. This challenge becomes more explicit when Edward declares, "I don't want to be like papa. I hate papa."

BETTY: "You must never let the boys at school know you like dolls. Never, never. No one will talk to you, you won't be on the cricket team, you won't grow up to be a man like your papa."

EDWARD: "I don't want to be like papa. I hate papa."

MAUD: "Edward! Edward!"

BETTY: "You're a horrid wicked boy and papa will beat you. Of course you don't hate him, you love him. Now give Victoria her doll at once." (p. 30)

Betty's warning directly connects masculine identity with paternal imitation, because she suggests that becoming "a man" is not defined by Edward's own identity but by his ability to reproduce the masculine model represented by Clive. On the other hand, Edwards declares, "I don't want to be like papa," rejects the expectation that a son should naturally admire and imitate his father as the model of manhood. Rather than aspiring to become like Clive, Edward does not accept the model of masculinity that Clive teaches. Betty's threat later shows that masculine ideology operates not only through advice but also through violence and fear, especially when the expectation fails to be embraced with its recipients. This moment disrupts what they call the "naturalization" of gender hierarchy, where masculinism depends on the assumption that masculine authority is inevitable and that boys will naturally aspire to occupy the position of the father (Nicholas & Agius, 2018). Through this scene, Churchill exposes masculinity not as a natural identity but as an identity that must be taught, enforced, and maintained.

Questioning The Heteronormative Masculinity

Churchill further questions the social expectation that masculinity must conform to heterosexual norms through the character of Harry Bagley.

HARRY takes hold of CLIVE.

CLIVE: "What are you doing?"

HARRY: "Well, you said-"

CLIVE: "I said what?"

HARRY: "Between man.

CLIVE is speechless.

HARRY: "I'm sorry, I misunderstood, I would never have dreamt, I thought-"

CLIVE: "My God, Harry, how disgusting."

HARRY: "You will not betray my confidence."

CLIVE: "I feel contaminated."

HARRY: "I struggle against it. You cannot imagine the shame. I have tried everything to save myself."

CLIVE: "The most revolting perversion. Rome fell, Harry, and this sin can destroy an empire." (p. 40)

When Harry held Clive's hand, Clive was initially confused, but ultimately speechless when he realized what Harry meant was completely different from what he believed; Harry interpreted his words as romantic rather than friendship. The physical gestures that Harry gives to Clive are considered crosses the boundary of acceptable masculine behaviour and immediately rejects the possibility of same-sex intimacy, suggesting that masculine relationships are expected to remain heterosexual and non-romantic. Clive's reactions "Oh my God, Harry, this is disgusting," and "I feel dirty" show that Harry's desires are seen not simply as personal sentiments, his other allusions to the fall of Rome or the collapse of an empire elevate Harry's desires from a purely personal matter to a real threat to the social order itself. These reactions demonstrate how heteronormative masculinity is maintained by labeling alternative forms of masculinity as dangerous and unacceptable. Through this scene, the story exposes how masculine norms work in excluding men who do not conform to heterosexual expectations, even when someone is male. Harry experiences where he is excluded from the category of proper masculinity, which his identity is treated as shameful and threatening or what Nicholas and Agius (2018) called it a process of "othering". Churchill questions the assumption that masculinity exists in only one acceptable form, since how certain men are marginalized for failing to conform to heteronormative masculinity.

CONCLUSION

The findings reveal that *Cloud 9* portrays ideal masculinity through a series of social expectations related to physical competence and emotional restraint. Male characters are expected to demonstrate the capability of using tools, good at sports, shows attitude to the family, push someone self, and be a provider while remaining emotionless. These expectations reflect what Nicholas and Agius (2018) describe masculinism as a moral voice that maintains and naturalizes masculine qualities as the global standard. However, through characters such as Edward and Harry Bagley, the play exposes the tensions, difficulties, and exclusions created by masculine norms. This play demonstrates that masculine expectations require continuous social enforcement and questions the social expectations by revealing their dependence on conformity rather than real quality of men. Churchill portrays it as a social ideal that is taught, monitored, and repeatedly reinforced. Furthermore, the play exposes the limitations of dominant masculine norms and encourages the audience to reconsider the assumptions that define what it means to be a man.

REFERENCES

- Abdussemmedoğlu, C. (2026). Subverted Roles: Analysing Gender Constructs in Wertenbaker's *The Love of Nightingale* and Churchill's *Cloud 9*. *Eurasian Journal of English Language and Literature*, 8(1), 103-118. <https://izlik.org/JA72HK67WG>
- Barbour, R. (2013). *Introducing Qualitative Research: A Student's Guide*. SAGE Publications.
- Bata, Z., Asanti, C., & Nasrullah, N. (2022). THE PORTRAYAL OF MASCULINITY OF CAPTAIN FREDERICK WENTWORTH IN PERSUASION NOVEL. *Jurnal Bahasa, Sastra, Seni, dan Budaya*, 6(1), 28-45. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30872/jbssb.v6i1.5138>
- Bawa, S., Jani, J., & Nisar, S. (2025). REDEFINING MANHOOD: A PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY INTO MASCULINITY AND MENTAL HEALTH. *Shodh Sari-An International Multidisciplinary Journal*, 4(2), 291-320. <https://doi.org/10.59231/SARI7825>
- Butler, J. (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge.
- Churchill, C. (1979). *Cloud nine*. Pluto Press.
- Connell, R. (1995). *Masculinities*. University of California Press.
- Connell, R. W., & Messerschmidt, J. W. (2005). Hegemonic masculinity: Rethinking the concept. *Gender & society*, 19(6), 829-859. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches* (C. N. Poth, Ed.). SAGE Publications.
- Dejonckheere, E., & Bastian, B. (2021). Perceiving Social Pressure not to Feel Negative is Linked to a More Negative Self-concept. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 22(2), 667-679. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00246-4>
- Firat, S. (2005). *Caryl Churchill and gender roles : Owners, Cloud Nine, Top Girls*. Middle East Technical University. <https://open.metu.edu.tr/handle/11511/15627>
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development*. Harvard University Press.
- Joodaki, A. H., & Bakhshi, P. (2013). The Collapse of Heterosexism and Phallogocentrism in Caryl Churchill's *Cloud Nine*. *Studies in Literature and Language*, 6(1), 127-131. DOI: 10.3968/j.sll.1923156320130601.3105
- Lim, W. M. (2025). What Is Qualitative Research? An Overview and Guidelines. *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 33(2), 199-229. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14413582241264619>
- Mckenzie, S., Collings, S., Jenkin, G., & River, J. (2018). Masculinity, Social Connectedness, and Mental Health: Men's Diverse Patterns of Practice. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 12(5), 1247-1261. DOI: 10.1177/1557988318772732
- Meaghan, O. L., Metclaf, O., Watson, L., Phelps, A., & Varker, T. (2018). A Systematic

- Review of Psychological and Pharmacological Treatments for Adjustment Disorder in Adults. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 31(3), 321-331. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.22295>
- Mir, S., Ahmed, M., & Hassan, H. A. (2025). A FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF GENDER SUBJECTIVITY IN HENRY JAMES' THE PORTRAIT OF A LADY. *AL-AASAR Journal*, 2(3), 174-182. <https://doi.org/10.63878/aaj777>
- Nicholas, L., & Agius, C. (2018). *The Persistence of Global Masculinism: Discourse, Gender and Neo-Colonial Re-Articulations of Violence*. Palgrave. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-68360-7>
- Puspita, B. Y. L., Hamidsyukrie, Wahidah, A., & Syahrul. (2025). Modern Masculinity in Popular Culture: Symbols and Interactions of Male Fashion Users in Mataram. *AL-MAIYYAH: Media Transformasi Gender dalam Paradigma Sosial Keagamaan*, 18(1), 1-10. DOI:10.35905/almaiyyah.v18i1.10670
- Rahma, H. (2023). The Implications of Patriarchal Culture toward Gender Discrimination in Anne with an E Movie Series. *Journal of Culture, Arts, Literature, and Linguistics*, 9(2), 275-279. <http://dx.doi.org/10.30872/calls.v9i2.12693>
- Siedloczek, M. (2019). *Representations of Masculinity in the Novels of Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer, and Tim O'Brien (Published Doctoral Dissertation)*. PALACKÝ UNIVERSITY OLOMOUC.
- Şiklar, E. (2017). A Study of Epic Theatre in Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine. *International Journal of Humanities and Cultural Studies*, 4(3), 343-351. <http://www.ijhcs.com/index.php/ijhcs/index>
- Singh, A. V. (2016). Exploring The Feminine: Shifting Gender Roles in Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine. *International Education & Research Journal*, 2(1), 34-35. <https://ierj.in/journal/index.php/ierj/article/download/88/88/91>
- Yilmaz, N. (2012). *Gender Politics and Feminism in Caryl Churchill's Cloud Nine (Published Masters Dissertation)*. Universitat de Barcelona.
- Young, I. M. (2003, Autumn). The Logic of Masculinist Protection: Reflections on the Current Security State. *Signs*, 29(1), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1086/375708>