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### COVERED WITH A SMILE: A STUDY OF SARAH DANIEL'S THE GUT GIRLS

Asst.Prof. Ikhlas Muhammed Nati

University of Wasit/College of Education For Human Science

Department of English Language

Email: [inati@uowasit.edu.iq](mailto:inati@uowasit.edu.iq)

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#### ABSTRACT

In this paper I intend to examine Sarah Daniel's *The Gut Girls*. She is one of the prominent British female playwright who is famous for her clear support for the woman question .Sarah Daniel in this play tries to voice women's abuse, pain and suffering but in new way . She brings the suffering of woman in the Eighteenth century on the stage .In new step of her way to rise her voice all the continuous suffering of woman from the previous centuries till the modern age. Nothing has changed it is the same misery in which woman experienced all the time. All is the same expect the brave smile that covered all melancholy, grief and depression.

#### Introduction:

Through years women lead a harsh struggle to defend themselves and their gender in such patriarchal society. Man controls woman's life and destiny . Thus the world faces what we call the women's movement or the feminist movement, that has its roots in the nineteenth century. This movement used to demand a political, ethnic or financial inference that aimed to protect women legally and save their rights.

The term “feminism” and “feminist” had not been used widely until the 1970s, though they were used much earlier. Maggie Humm and Rebecca Walker are among many writers who study and write about feminism. They divided the history of feminism into three waves. The first feminist wave was in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second was in the 1960s and the 1970s, and the third extends from the 1990s to the present. According to them, the feminist theory emerged from these three movements.

Feminist criticism deals with the manner in which literature tends to reinforce social, political, psychological and economic position of the woman in the society. This literary theory focuses on the way cultures are patriarchal and tends to undermine the role of women in major times. It also tries to reveal male's negative attitude towards women. Women were considered to be trivial. Essentially, they were given the role of reproduction, raising children and taken care of their husbands. However, women have stood still to fight against male control in society “...if you want my opinion it is the men who live off those unfortunate women who are the lowest of the low.” (Daniels, 1988, p, 21)

Sarah Daniels (1956- ) is a British playwright who proved herself as a great supporter for woman. She announces the clear voice of woman question. She is considered to be the most significant playwright of the modern era. She challenges the typical representations of female characters and introduces woman's suffering in innovative way. Women playwrights always try to justify themselves and their gender by staging the real suffering of woman in such harsh environment. As one of the important feminist playwright Daniels through her plays proves her talent in writing drama that help the world to know the difficulty in which woman experience all the time. Daniels's plays since the 1980s offer principally existing portraits and clear images of life in Britain from a feminist point of view.

Daniels in her plays challenges the world which controlled by men. She has her special view about feminism in which it reflects in almost all her plays. Daniels herself helps cultivate the situating of her work as women's activist and feminist. In the opening to her Preface to the very first volume of her collected plays, she sees that “*I didn't set out to be a 'Feminist Playwright'. I didn't set out to be a playwright at all*”. In the final lines of the same Preface she illustrates, “*I didn't set out to further the cause of Feminism. However, I am proud if some of my plays have added to its influence*”. (Bartleet, 2010, p. 145).

Daniels believes that her theater has become more realistic and less optimistic. “*But I still like to end with a spark of hope,*” Daniels asserts. In her play, *The Gut Girls*, Daniels made a complete change of her women's quest, leading the ladies to a “*dissolution of the separatist*

*community*” that, in other work of hers, is presented as aculminating need (Minwalla, 1990, p. 28).

In *The Gut Girls* (1988) Daniels returns back to the late of the nineteenth century. She presents a story of working women at that time as if she tries to say that the situation is the same till now. She explains how women work in cattle market, they work twelve hours per a day chopping meat for London’s butchers. These women work under horrible conditions. They work in a dirty, smelly and bloody gutting shed and verbally in vivid descriptions of blood up to their ankles “*You will forgo your own happiness for the sake of the lowest of the low. Oh yes, Helena, even by their own kind they are seen as marginally better than whores.*” (Daniels, 1988, p, 20). Victorian South East London: the ports and docks are alive and buzzing with ships, traders and livestock which are ready to be sent to the sheds of slaughter. It was around that time (the 1869) Cattle Diseases Act was placed and inserted, asserting that all livestock should be slaughtered as soon as they arrive to the dockyard, to prevent and prohibit any diseases spreading across England from the foreign livestock. Due to this gesture, more than 500 ladies were engaged and utilized to work in the slaughterhouses' gutting sheds. The play was fuelled with movement and the static conversations ceased to be even in scenes where the girls were simply working with filthy guts. They worked for thirteen hours a day in these stinking sheds, covered up to their elbows in entrails and organs. Often conceived as unruly and mouthy, the girls had a very rare degree of independence at the time. They were actually called “the gut girls”, and are also the heroines of Daniels’s fantastic play. (Bartleet, 2010, p. 150).

The play starts on the day, which was her first, that Annie accompanies other four girls in their shed. The characters set and established a conversation very quickly. As they introduce themselves In the dialogue that follows; Maggie is strong and outspoken, Polly is funny. Kate is most often the baby of the group but, ironically, she has the foulest mouth among all of them. Ellen is sort of an activist toward the females’ question and enthusiastic, much to the other girls confusion, the only “lettuce eater” (vegetarianism is a term which Victorians weren’t overly familiar with). “...we have to learn to help ourselves. And, what better way than to find an interest outside the confines of domesticity” (Daniels, 1988, p, 37). Every one of the characters is rejuvenated by the cast who remain committed all through the play. Though, the changes they experience as Lady Helena starts her rehabilitation of their behavior is violent and fierce, their performances never shake (Minwalla, 1990, p. 26) “...running up to Creek Road to put themselves at Lady Helena's mercy.” (Daniels, 1988, p, 61)

In *The Gut Girls* Daniels confirms effectively to take overlooked the shouting and proceeded to build up her exceptional brand of humor and

strong dramaturgy “*working like a horse fer nothing*” (Daniels, 1988,p, 29). The play presents in the stage the lives and voices of females largely overlooked by history. Daniels, in any case, strives for chronicled precision in her dramatization of social climate and period details. Besides, Daniels' describing and portraying of the working bad conditions in the gutting sheds, the development of exchange unionism, the situation of ‘fallen women’, the crossing point of social classes, and local amusement. In *The Gut Girls*, financial persecution, particularly for ladies, is the main motive of the play's activity and action. Furthermore, Daniels illustrates how financial abuse and economic oppression is connected inseparably with class oppression all through the play. Notwithstanding their commitments to plot, these two powers structure the focal point of the playwright's study of man-centric patriarchal society “*the plight of those poor, wretched, miserable girls*”(Daniels, 1988, p, 21).

This situating of her work as something that is contained by or covers with feminist talks is likewise reflected in as much, however, the basic conversation of her aesthetic and artistic work. The identification proof of Daniels as a contemporary, ‘canonical’ women's activist theater creator. The work of Daniels and illustration of oppressed characters or the overlapping between feminism and also critiques of phobia toward human treatment (Bartleet, 2010, p. 145).

Set at the century's turn, *The Gut Girls* treats with a group of allegedly fallen women whose only expectancy for survival is the practice or occupation of engaging in sexual activity with someone for payment(prostitution) or degutting animal carcasses as a decent work in the most unsanitary environments. They're social outcasts who are different group from those of Daniels has dealt with before. “Most blokes out there think we're rubbish,” one of the ladies says, “I mean as far as they're concerned, there's only one thing worse than being a gut girl and that's being a whore.”But they thrive and grow in this condition, showing what another lady later names an ‘irrepressible paganism’ (Minwalla, 1990, p. 28, 29).

The play 's two acts could not have been contrasted more sharply against each other. The first sees the ladies, bantering and partying and working hard under merciless circumstances, in all their boisterous glory. Daniels's play rings out with feminist humour and a conversation of the utilization of sausage skins to forestall fertilization was a specific high-point for the audience. Behind the laughs of the bawdy, however, lie serious depictions adoption of the enormous gender inequalities of Victorian England(Minwalla, 1990, p. 28).

In act one, the ladies give as good as they get, but at the time that they lose their jobs and are obliged to train for service, the crowd watch as the

intense vivaciousness and frolic of the characters is pressed right out of them, moreover, replaced with bad tempers and mop caps. After that comes an extremely daring consequence for one of the girls at the hands of the brutal vicious master, chillingly described by Louis J. Parker. (Minwalla, 1990, p. 29)

In the second half the devastation is intensified by wonderful dramatizing of the character Lady Helena whom she is an aristocratic woman that truly believes the fact that she is training the other girls for the good of their own lives and also their souls. While In fact, her teaching serves only to crush and smash what little spirit society had permitted them to keep hold on to it. The soliloquies that come at the end, presented in a quick succession, conveyed in their layers utter defeat and submission which the monologues folded up (Bartleet, 2010, p. 151).

Daniels evinces a different style and tone from anything she has subsequently written. Her female character representations are not as roundly studied as Lady Helena in *The Gut Girls*. The men are simple indications of that larger, roughly defined entity "the male establishment" (qtd.in Minwalla, 1990, p. 27).

*The Gut Girls* also explores the exploitation of women in the home and the workplace as well. This dramatic work presents the women sympathetically and appears to place the blame for their misery and oppression on the "system" because the play is so showing it. Despite of its "family resemblance," the ways that Daniels followed in which the female characters are shown to the audience, the cultural, the authorial stance, and ideologies which tells the play diverge widely (Haedicke, 1994, 77).

Lady Helena (the philanthropist) in *The Gut Girls* sets up a social club to guide and teach the ladies decency, Christian virtues, and humility. The community of working women invaded by these "male-identified" characters and contribute to their forced change.

*HELENA: Oh I'm quite au fait with the word "gut" - and I often have to use the word belly - in the context of asking my cook occasionally if we may have (whispers) belly of pork.*

*POLLY: Oh right. (wraps up a piece of pork) There you go. (gives it to Lady Helena) Don't say nothing*

While representing a point of view, Lady Helena opposes that of Daniels's. She isn't a beast resolved to break the gut young ladies, and her thoughtful depiction heightens the conflicts both audience and author feel about the enforced obedience she forces on the gut young ladies. Daniels in her play shows how silence is taught, instructed, or beaten into these ladies who

start the play with "irrepressible paganism" which what one character calls. Maggie, the candid, grating gut young lady, sufficiently kind to get Annie as she begins to swoon on her first day, yet bold enough to let Lord Tartaden hit the soiled floor, strong enough to bear an entire beef carcass which Jim, the male assistant, battles to lift; and totally certain to go to bat for her privileges even to her social bosses, is changed into a submissive wife (Haedicke, 1994, 84).

### Conclusion

In the time of reading the play, we witness a transformation of group of electrifying characters by society into miserable and unhappy 'women' creatures whose most exciting hope is to one day fulfill their dream to become a chief nanny or head maid under the service of their 'superiors', though they covered all that with a smile.

In Victorian England, *The Gut Girls* is true to life and an accurate depiction for the subordination and dependence of women. However, given the frequent current notorious stories which are on the news that concern forcefulness towards girls and women, I finished reading the play and thinking that *The Gut Girls* perhaps isn't that far from our own reality either. There was absolutely a lot to be learned and thought about from this near-flawless play, which was thought-provoking, touching, but above all, extremely amusing.

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