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The Human Desire to Be Unique in Caryl Churchill's *A Number*

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Abstract:

Human beings constantly strive to be unique in every aspect of their lives, and the play discussed in this paper effectively illustrates how people seek their existence in a world of cloning. This paper aims to discuss *A Number*, a 2002 play by British dramatist Caryl Churchill (b 1938) for which she received an Obie Award in 2005. In this play, Churchill explores the consequences and the ethical implications of human cloning, raising universally relevant problems. Churchill uses human cloning as a framework for philosophical inquiry. Primarily, she addresses the investigation of human identity: Who are we? What constitutes our identity? Are we distinctive and unique? Imagining the future when cloning has become a reality, Churchill delves into these fundamental concerns on a deeply personal level, prompting us to contemplate the implications of this heroic new creation for parents and offspring. The paper has an introduction and a section wherein the researcher examines the human aspiration for individuality and how Churchill effectively depicted the significant topic of human cloning and its ramifications for individuals. The paper concludes by summarizing the study's findings.

Key Words: Caryl Churchill, *A Number*, human cloning, ethical consequences, individuality, identity.

I. Introduction

Caryl Churchill, the playwright of over 30 original works, several adaptations, and numerous radio plays, is indispensable to the terrain of contemporary drama. Through her politically charged and technically daring dramaturgy, Churchill has continually challenged theater artists and audiences since the 1970s, making her one of the most prominent and innovative contemporary playwrights. Her plays have consistently and acutely depicted the possible destruction, encompassing sociological, economic, environmental, and political aspects, that those in positions of authority can inflict upon both individuals and society (Aston, 2001, p.65).

The critic Charles Spencer claims that Churchill's *A Number* "contains more drama and more ideas than most writers manage in a dozen full-length works and called it magnificent, tremendous, moving, thought-provoking and dramatically thrilling" (Spencer qtd. in Gobert, 2014, p. 113). He emphasizes his commendation of the play's artistic improvements. John Peter in the *Sunday Times* accurately recognized the play as part of a longstanding tradition of Churchill's inventiveness, observing that it affirms the playwright's position as the foremost author of the 21st Century (Peter qtd. in ibid p.113).

Caryl Churchill's play *A Number* arises from an era characterized by escalating global discourse on the ethics and ramifications of human cloning. The drama was composed immediately after the 1996 cloning of Dolly the sheep, a scientific advancement that incited extensive public apprehension and philosophical inquiry. Churchill sought to investigate the psychological and ethical intricacies of cloning, rather than its technical aspects. She focused on the human ramifications: "identity, individuality, motherhood, and the ethics of human life replication".

The period of the 2000s was distinguished by swift biotechnology progress, during which cloning transitioned from a distant science-fiction concept to an emerging reality. Churchill used the worries of that era to employ dramatic fiction to interrogate the essence of humanity in a context where individuals may be artificially replicated.

Human cloning, while predominantly theoretical, is frequently motivated by aspirations to address infertility, replace deceased individuals, or enhance scientific understanding of genetics. Nonetheless, these incentives entail significant repercussions. Cloning encounters conventional notions of identity, engenders concerns regarding manipulation and the erosion of autonomy, and presents ethical quandaries related to the monetization of human

existence. Churchill's *A Number* articulates these concerns by exploring the emotional repercussions between a father and his cloned kids, implying that the genuine perils of cloning may reside not in the scientific process itself, but in the manner in which society and people opt to utilize it.

1. The Human Desire to Be Unique in Caryl Churchill's *A Number*

A Number was composed within a period of public discourse over the morals of cloning. Meanwhile, the news in February 1997 regarding the birth of Dolly, the precise genomic replica of an adult Dorset sheep, the media was inundated with sensational narratives about humanoid duplicating. Numerous narratives cited to support anxieties, concerns, and aspirations included ambiguous allusions to established literature and renowned science fiction tales within our shared cultural legacy. Some journalists often referenced renowned narratives, such as Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* (1818), Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World* (1931), and Ira Levin's *The Boys from Brazil* (1978), to exemplify their concerns regarding human cloning. The narratives of these works were identified as illustrations of the "unrestrained scientist", the dangerous implications of cloning groups of individuals, and the concept that a malevolent figure (Hitler) can be infinitely repeated. Cloning, more than any other reproductive method, provokes inquiries regarding identity, uniqueness, and individuality. Genetic engineering, particularly cloning, embodies an aspiration for uniformity and trepidation around uniformity (Dijck, 1999, pp. 9-10). Upon announcing the potential for human duplication, individuals contemplated the potential harm to their identity and uniqueness. There is an increasing apprehension that the essence of originality may be jeopardized; nonetheless, proponents of cloning may contend that the event will not compromise an individual's character (Thomas, p. 5).

The play explores the tale of the imminent future and revolves around the discord between the characters of Salter, a father, his sons: Bernard 1 (B1, the cloned son), Bernard 2 (B2, the clone), and Michael Black, the last two of whom are clones of the first. Following his wife's suicide, Salter, incapable of rearing his sole offspring, Bernard 1, relinquishes him for adoption. However, he subsequently regrets his actions and attempts to begin anew by caring for a cloned replica of his son. The hospital unexpectedly resolves to unlawfully produce further clones without notifying Salter. After 35 years, the hospital finally revealed the truth regarding the entire issue. Consequently, possessing a twin elicits diverse reactions among various characters. The play reveals that 21 clones have been

produced from the original, despite Salter's request for a singular "copy" intended to replace his first son.

The drama revolves around B2, who becomes aware of his status as one of several clones created by a predecessor. Obliged to offer justifications, his enigmatic father, Salter, concedes to having neglected B1 in the years following his wife's demise and ultimately disavowed the son in favor of a cloned infant. In the story, B2 discovers he is one of several clones created by unethical physicians to raise his first child. Salter opts to initiate legal proceedings against the physicians, guaranteeing B2 to restore his trust in him as a competent father. B1 confronts his father for the first time since childhood, articulating resentment regarding cloning and his neglectful upbringing, stemming from his aspiration for individuality and uniqueness, a common human urge. B1 threatens to kill B2. That is why Salter advises B2 to leave the country to avoid B1, as is clear in the following conversation: "SALTER As you mean to go on as in not seeing him anymore/ B2 as in leaving the country" (Churchill, 2008, p. 192). Thus, B2 leaves the country temporarily to avoid Salter and fears that B1 may assassinate him. After that, B1 informs Salter that he pursued and murdered B2, but he reveals scant information like how he followed him, "When I was following him there was a time I was getting on the same train and he looked round, I thought he was looking right at me but he didn't see me. I got on the train and went with him all the way" (p. 203). B1 killed B2 and made Salter very sad and depressed. In Scene 5, Salter convenes with another clone, Michael Black, a clone illicitly generated by physicians, exemplifies a twin devoid of any connection to Salter, and he is content as a married mathematics teacher.

The drama investigates the themes of human cloning and identity, particularly the debate between nature and nurture. Numerous commentators have praised *A Number*, contending that Churchill crafted a book of considerable intellectual profundity with an efficient economy of language and style (Kolata, 2002). Steve Dinneen claimed that the drama addresses the issue of "our desire to be unique, for our lives to have meaning, for our imperfect minds and bodies to somehow achieve perfect ends" (Dinneen, 2020). During an interview, Sam Shepard clarified that the play does not revolve around cloning, contrary to some assertions: "That's not what it is about. It has to do with identity" (Shepard qtd. in Gobert p. 113). Nick Curtis articulated that the inquiries posed by the play are, "If we had a do-over, could we atone for our mistakes? What is the value of a human life? What is the source of our individuality?" (Curtis, 2020). Salter's summary of

the resulting existential dilemma, "if that's me over there who am I?" (p.172), indicates an absence of a fundamental basis for identity.

A Number introduces the readers/ spectators to a fearsome and quite plausible realm where scientific progress questions deeply ingrained beliefs about the independence and humanity of individuals. It explores themes of cloning and identity, allowing for the exploration of various topics. Churchill explores the subject of cloning not through laboratories and experts in white coats, but through a conventional yet emotionally resonant dialogue between a middle-aged father and his thirty-something son. The discourse focuses on origin, identity, and individuality, which are superficially common. B2 seeks to understand his origins and the biological connection to his father, indicating that this inquiry transcends typical pre-adolescent curiosity. He has lately discovered that he is one of several genetically identical individuals created in a "batch" (p. 173) of ten cloned from a singular set of cells. He was astounded to learn of his cloning, and his father was troubled to comprehend that other entities had been generated from the cells. In her introduction to *Plays Four*. Churchill expresses her intention behind composing the play by saying:

A Number has cloning at the center of its story but I never quite feel it's a play about cloning. The cloning's not quite a McGuffin but it does let me look at a lot of things that interest me. I realized after I'd written it that I'd thought about some of the same things in *Identical Twins* more than twenty-five years earlier. I'm reluctant to give advice rather than let the play stand on its own feet now, but I will point out that Michael isn't a fool. It's easy to make him a laughing stock to the audience because he fails to come up with something that satisfies Salter, but his answers seem to me good ones and a serious answer to Salter's search for some essence of a person. That doesn't mean there aren't laughs in the scene (Churchill, *Plays Four*, 2008, p.5).

Churchill's narrative structure and character development reflect her conviction regarding the profound effects of environment and parental influence on the well-being and stability of progeny. Salter's mistreatment of B1's refusal to accept culpability negatively impacts his relationship with B2.

The narrative of the play enables the author to explore essential inquiries regarding masculinity and the enigma of personal identity, and to scrutinize the prevalent notion that each human possesses a distinct spiritual essence. The inquiries posed by the play are existential and scientific, such as how we define our identity. What impact do genetics and familial legacy have on our notion of identity? How do familial history and upbringing impact us? To what degree do genes influence our lives? How do family members, namely dads and sons, define their identities in relation to one another? Psychoanalyst Adam Phillips contends that "cloning is, for both evident and subtle reasons, a compelling discourse regarding interpersonal dynamics" (qtd. in Luckhurst, p. 164). Churchill employs it to examine a familial catastrophe akin to a Greek tragedy, encompassing negligence and desertion, psychological collapse, rejection, guilt, fratricide, and suicide.

Contrasting with Churchill's other plays, *A Number* delves into deeper fundamental and existential themes. It poses questions about existence. Each individual, even B2, can be seen as a comprehensive collection of biometric information or a mappable genome, a vast expanse of similar nucleic acids. Every one of us is a numerical value. Therefore, in an era where genes may be exchanged economically, protected by patents and copyrights, humans are vulnerable to being reduced to mere commodities and dehumanized (Gobert, 2014, p. 114). In the opening scene, Churchill articulates these concerns in the interaction between Salter and B2. Initially, Salter asks, "How many of these things are there?" (p. 167). However, despite B2's reprimand, "you called them things. I think we'll find they're people … Because I'm one" (p. 168). Salter saw the clones as mere clones rather than individuals, highlighting the dehumanizing consequences of the scientific process. Salter's sole worry is the impact of cloning on himself and his son; he is apathetic toward the other clones. Whether individuals can file lawsuits based on stolen cells is a subject of speculation for Salter. He then transitions to the monetization process:

a million is the least you should take, I think it's more like a half a million each person because what they've done they've damaged your uniqueness, weakened your identity, so we're looking at five million for a start (p. 168).

Salter then informs Bernard, "they've damaged your uniqueness, weakened your identity" (p.171). The strangeness of the conversation is heightened by the continual allusion to "they," which remains undefined, yet "they" appear to exert significant control over all matters pertaining to Bernard's cloning. It is a nightmarish depiction of Orwellian settings, showcasing a glimpse of absolute power capable of controlling genomic material. This is a futuristic world in which one's identity and genetics may be exploited without consent. Salter's remark exemplifies the dehumanizing effects of cloning science, highlighting broader ethical concerns regarding unique identity and humanity. This cloning was allegedly conducted without the agreement of Bernard or his father, undermining a fundamental human right, and the process itself has called into question the essential nature of identity. The drama interrogates the science of cloning, asserting that it undermines individuality due to the genetic material shared between clones and the original human. Churchill's play investigates the implications of shared heredity on our identity, should such a scenario occur. She requests that we examine the distinction between heredity and environment in their influence on an individual's life and personality (Demerjian, 2016, p. 62).

One of the most notable linguistic characteristics of the play is the lack of names in the dialogue. The absence is indicated by the title and the printed text, where the first two sons are labeled as "B1" and "B2," and in the dialogue, no characters address one another by name. In the absence of names, numbers are pervasive and function as a means, and possibly the only means, of identification. The sole preliminary characterization provided pertains to the characters' ages, which also serve as the primary distinguishing attribute of other persons referenced in the dialogue. B2 denotes the experts responsible for the cloning in strictly quantitative terms:

SALTER. Who did you see?

B2. Just some young, I don't know, younger than me.

SALTER. So who did it?

B2. He's dead, he was some old and they've just found the records and they've traced

SALTER. So we sue the hospital (p. 169-70).

Age supersedes alternative descriptors; names and nouns vanish, with this numerical identity reaffirmed in the final scene, where Salter's third son, Michael Black, who is a teacher of mathematics, informs him about his offspring: "boy and girl twelve and eight and now a baby well eighteen months" (p. 205). Failure to name is a recurring stylistic feature whenever the protagonists engage in

discussions about cloning or their identities: naming is replaced with detached, neutral phrases such as "thing" or "it," and nouns are often suppressed or deferred due to Churchill's stuttering and repetitive dialogue (Campos, 2012, p. 29).

The clone is expected to feel identity confusion and undergo trauma just like B1 in the play, although their traumatic experiences are different. B1's trauma stems from neglect, but B2's trauma arises from the loss of his unique identity or distinctiveness. The play's title implies that identity fallacy is often linked to the apprehension of mass production and eugenic cloning, presuming that human clones will be generated in vast quantities, leading to clone armies and a diminution of human variation. B2 is already questioning his distinctiveness and uniqueness, albeit ironically, he would later learn that he is a clone and possibly an "imposter" (Luckhurst, pp. 159-60). This is clear in the following conversation:

B2: what if someone else is the one, the first one, the real one and I'm

[…]

SALTER: So you didn't suddenly see

B2: what suddenly see myself coming round the corner

[…]

B2: don't they say you die if you meet yourself?

SALTER: Walk around the corner and see yourself. You could have a heart attack. Because if that's me over there, who am I?

B2: Yes but it's not me over there (pp., 166, 170).

B's apprehension pertains to the dissolution of identity, feeling reduced to a 'number,' worsened by his belief that none of the clones in the "batch" (173), as he articulates, "was the original" (174). This predicament is intensified as he ultimately realizes that his dad did not wish for him, particularly, but rather for the first son from whom he was cloned, to whom Salter honored by assigning the same name to B2. Upon Salter's expression of adoration for B2, B2 replies, "That's something else you can't help" (199), thereby rejecting Salter's emotional agency (Griffin, 2012, p. 23).

In this play, B2 is believed to assert the missing life and occasionally share the same repository of memories. Salter was attempting to substitute his previously "excellent" Little Kid B1, who, in his perception, got distressed and tainted, was thus relinquished to social services and replaced with an alternative model. In Scene 2, B1 meets his father for the first time since being "sent away" (p. 177). B1 exhibits wrath and aggression and approaches a psychotic state. His buddies in existence are not humans but canines, and his treatment of them reflects Salter's treatment of him during childhood. He discloses to Salter that he is engulfed in fear of him as a "dark, black power" (p.

176) and interrogates him over his inability to respond to his incessant cries for assistance each night. Salter justifies his choice to relinquish B1 and replicate him, asserting that it was the ideal sequence of action since he strangely desired the "same perfect raw materials" (p. 182). Churchill unequivocally portrays B1 as a victim of Salter's maltreatment and disregard. B1 suffers from a persecution complex, consumed by rage towards his usurper B2. It is unable to engage in anything beyond the objectification of humans and animals, perceiving other sentient beings as a fatal threat.

Raised in a conventional environment, albeit incomplete due to his mother's death, B2 perceives his identity as jeopardized by the presence of others because firstly, he might be a clone, implying that Salter is not his organic progenitor and his mom is merely a fabrication, resulting in his lack of familial ties as he was created in a medical lab; secondly, he could be the unique one, in which instance his singularity has been compromised or appropriated seemingly without his father's approval. He is uncertain whether to attribute guilt to his father, the medical professionals, or both parties. He is disoriented: bewildered and fearful at the outset. This is clear in the following conversation:

B2 no it was stupid, it was shock, I'd known for a week before I went to the hospital but it was still

SALTER it is, I am, the shocking thing is that there are these, not how many but at all

B2 even one

SALTER exactly, even one, a twin would be a shock

B2 a twin would be a surprise but a number

SALTER a number any number is a shock.

[…]

SALTER Because they're copies

B2 ? they're not

SALTER copies of you which some mad scientist has illegally

B2 how do you know that?

SALTER I don't but

B2 what if someone else is the one, the first one, the real one and I'm

SALTER no because

B2 not that *I'm not real* which is why I'm saying they're not things, don't call them (pp. 167-8).

That is why B2 distinguishes himself from his elder brother by acknowledging that B1's upbringing has rendered him severely mentally unstable, a "nutter" (p. 191). Hence, B2 explains the reason behind Salter's affection for one Bernard and his remarkable disregard for another:

someone with the same genetic exactly the same but at a different time a different cultural and of course all the personal all kinds of what happened in your own life your childhood or things all kind of because suppose you'd had a brother with identical an identical twin say but separated at birth so you had entirely different early you see what I'm saying would he have done the same things who can say he might have been a very loving father and in fact of course you have that in you to be that because you were to me so it's a combination of very complicated and that's who you were so probably I shouldn't blame you (p. 196).

B2 perceives himself as an inauthentic son, so he exits silently. Moreover, it is unexpectedly rare for him to assign responsibility to Salter or exhibit anger. He contends that actions taken are irrevocable aspects of the past, rendering rectification impossible. He upholds a hierarchical relationship with the father by forgiving Salter, accepting his status as a cloned son, and making room for B1.

Salter's relationship with his sons is transformed when he evaluates his "sons" in monetary terms, perceiving them as "objects" in spite of their position as living people, assigning them a value. Their bodily state experiences estrangement due to creation: B2 and Michael Black have been standardized commodities, lacking individuality. Despite Salter's lack of self-awareness, his decision to clone his kid resulted in the forfeiture of his bodily capacity to fulfill the role of a father, leading to his physical alienation. The play's irony is that the authorization derived from scientific discovery undermines the parents' control and creative capacity through externalization.

In his book, *Identity: Sociological Perspectives*, Steph Lawler believes that the self-centered pursuit of individuality will not infiltrate acceptable social engagement. Conversely, it would result solely in animosity, division, and conflict. Personal identity can shape society just as society can affect the formation of the self. Churchill's play meticulously emphasizes the reciprocal influence and interaction among the self, society, and the person (Lawler, 2008, p.219). He also states that "common identities_ as human … at the same time, however, there is another aspect of identity which suggests people's uniqueness" (Lawler, 2008, p. 2). Personal traits evolve in response to many influences and conditions. One potential reason for our uniqueness is that "nobody has the same life: Even siblings—even

identical twins—do not share every aspect of life" (Ibid., p. 3). Individuals transform from childhood to adolescence and thereafter into maturity. These imposed distinctions demonstrate how society influences the development of an individual's identity.

A clear example from the play that supports Lawler's point is B2, who harbors a profound aversion to interacting with the other clones. It is apprehensive that B1, whom he perceives as "a nutter" (p. 191) and "very something terrible," may endanger his life, prompting him to leave in terror. "I don't feel myself and there's the others too, I don't want to see them I don't want them" (p. 191). B2 candidly elucidates B1's aberrant dispositions. He posits that his brother is distinct due to his traumatic childhood. B2, while seemingly sympathetic towards B1, remains concerned about another common characteristic linking him to the original son. He unconsciously desires to be with Salter, who is the sole essence of his being. B2 admits with reluctance, "I remind myself of him. We both hate you […] Except what he feels as hate are completely different because what you did to him and what you did to me are different things" (p. 198). Despite their differing characteristics, both cultivate intense emotions towards Salter, whether of animosity or affection. In this scenario, both the clone and the original are articulated through the son-father relationship. This partnership appears to fail in uniting them, as they want just uniqueness. They are perpetually unprepared to disclose.

In Scene 3, B2 informs Salter about his encounter with B1, noting their simultaneous similarities and differences. B2 asserts that he is not "frightening" like B 1; however, he expresses discomfort over the existence of "this person who's identical to me…who's not identical, who's like…not very like but very something terrible which is exactly the same genetic person" (p. 193). B1's hostility has instilled fear in B2, making his genetic origins tangible and personified. It has also undermined B2's sense of security with Salter's deceptions, leading to the revelation of additional truths. Following his wife's death, the father had the devastated Bernard duplicated to initiate a new beginning with his son. He implores B2, asserting, "I was good I tried to be good I was good to you …" (p. 179). It is only too late for B2 and Salter. B2 has observed the harm inflicted by Salter on Bernard 1; he has experienced the dehumanization of his predecessor. B1 was never regarded as a human being after being cloned without his consent or awareness. His father effectively abandoned him upon the arrival of B2. In the disclosure of realities, B2 is likewise dehumanized. He currently leads a life of trepidation, acknowledging that he is a genetic match for somebody

akin to B1. Furthermore, he possesses a chilling comprehension of the nature of his father, recognizing that his entire life is founded on deception (Demerjian, p. 197).

A Number explores the intergenerational relationship between sons, B1 and B2, who seek affection and honesty from their father. B2 has experienced affection but needs more information about his birth circumstances. When B1 discovers his father's deceit, he abandons the connection, feeling abandoned and lacking a foundation for love. Recognizing his father's love and bestowing it upon his sibling, B1's fury kills both himself and his sibling, both of whom are victims of Salter. The father's aspirations are simultaneously straightforward and intricate. Fundamentally, Salter requires companionship as he advances in age. He favors the younger Bernard but is open to rekindling a bond with the elder son despite his having murdered his brother. Salter's aspiration transcends mere connection; he seeks to define and fulfill his own existence in his son. In beginning anew with the cloned second kid, Salter aspires to attain a form of terrestrial redemption, a second opportunity to bestow a constructive meaning upon his life. B1's fruitful growth enables him to perceive that he has compensated for his previous transgressions and attained a new identity (Kritzer, 2008, p. 76).

B1's trauma is significantly more profound and has persisted for 35 years. He was forsaken by his dad and supplanted by B2, who, according to Salter, was the youngster he desired. B1 was physically impeccable, although he exhibited frequent emotional outbursts and had high demands. B2 was orderly and compliant, while he was the antithesis. In his dialogue with Salter, B1 exhibits a dominant and resolute demeanor, characterized by radical aggression and threats, fueled by his traumatic experiences of a stolen childhood, home, and family, likely compounded by an inherent predisposition to violence, ultimately leading him to pursue and eliminate B2, as well as himself.

In Scene 4, B1 comes back to notify his father that he tracked B2 to his concealment and killed him. Salter expresses self-blame, suggesting that B1 ought to have terminated him instead. He offers to take his own life and, in a twisted manner, inquires if B1 intends to exterminate the other clones, a notion he claims he would comprehend. In a profoundly unsettling soliloquy, Salter discloses that he heard B1 screaming as a child but disregarded him, occasionally providing him food amidst the trash beneath his bed and confining him in a closet. Ultimately, B1 ceased to eat and speak, retreating into seclusion. In a moment of unrestrained aggression, Salter commends himself on the moral choice of sparing B1's life. He says,

I could have killed you and I didn't I may have done terrible things but I didn't kill you. […] I spared you though you were this disgusting thing by then anyone in their right mind would have squashed you but I remembered what you'd been like at the beginning and I spared you, I didn't want a different one, I wanted that again because you were perfect just like that and I loved you (p. 197).

Salter's lingering subconscious wants to kill his biological son ultimately, and in Scene 5, we discover that B1 has subsequently taken his own life.

The play conveys the author's perspective on scientific advancement, particularly human cloning, and its effects on social connections and ethical principles. According to Churchill, human cloning may lead to identity issues stemming from the conflict between individuality and replication, as well as the distinction between authenticity and artificiality, given that the intentionally formed human exists within a fabricated environment with a constructed narrative. Seriality denotes the obliteration of identity. Consequently, the power derived from technological advancement and the resulting chances yield unforeseen consequences, ultimately revealing humanity's incapacity to control its creations. Churchill's characters experience alienation and confusion by transgressing moral and social norms (Anghel, 2012, p. 156).

In their book *Biology, Religion, and Philosophy* (2021), Michael L. Peterson and Dennis R. Venema believe that

homo sapiens is the only species that asks questions about its own existence, which means that we are self-interpreting animals. We humans have always been on a quest to know our own nature and to ask whether being human makes us significantly unique, qualitatively different from all other things, living and nonliving (p. 133).

This means that humans consider their species unique and are the only species that engage in self-introspection, establishing their status as self-interpreting animals. They seek to understand their essence and distinguish themselves from other entities. Therefore, Salter finds himself entangled in the conversation that initially troubled B1. By endeavoring to measure the worth of his uniqueness, Salter simplifies him to a commodity for sale and, therefore, emphasizes the repugnant justification for the son's laboratory origins. It is highly paradoxical when Salter contends that the clones "belong to you [B1]. They've been stolen from you, and you should get your rights" (p. 170).

According to Salter's theory of belongings, the cherished son is considered descended from his abandoned predecessor, so he should be entitled to the rights taken from him. Furthermore, when Salter consoles this antecedent using the same rhetoric of theft and

ownership, he unintentionally underscores the interchangeability of the sons. He informs B1 that they "stole your genetic material" (p. 179) and continues: "You and I have got common cause against the others don't forget, I'm still hoping we'll make our fortunes there. I'm going to talk to a solicitor" (p. 202). Salter emphasizes that he and B1 have a shared purpose against the others. He also expresses his hope that they will benefit financially from this situation. While Salter's emotional journey is upsetting as he grieves over the death of his younger son at the hands of his older son, who then commits suicide, his sanity is unaffected. By the time B1 was cloned, he would openly admit that he thought the original Bernard was repugnant. By the end of the play, when he encounters Michael Black, he believes that the others are mere objects.

The audience does not know how to judge Salter. On the one hand, he abuses his wife and B1. His actions appear to have compelled his wife to take her own life. He is heartless towards her even posthumously when he states, "She did it under a train under a tube train, she was one of those people when they say there has been a person under a train and the trains are delayed she was a person under a train" (p. 194). On the other hand, he is accountable for delegating the responsibility of his son's cloning to the physician. Upon learning about the doctor's creation of several clones, he capitalizes on the possibility for profit. On the contrary, he possesses an affinity for B2. His efforts to enhance his paternal abilities seem genuinely earnest. B1 and B2 both despise him; however, their animosity manifests in distinct forms. In the words of B2, "We both hate you…Except what he feels as hate and what I feel as hate are completely different because what you did to him and what you did to me are different things" (p. 198). Is he a virtuous individual or a malevolent one? When he concedes, "I did some bad things, I deserve to suffer. I did some better things, I'd like recognition," he appears to be an ordinary individual possessing a blend of human virtues and vices (p. 198).

Churchill wants to reveal that cloning does not solve the problem of trying to make good substitutes. Since childhood, B1 has felt insecure socially because his father neglected him and sent him to social services. When he perceives his father attempting to excuse his actions and deflect responsibility, he exclaims, "Don't patronize me" (184). His excessive behaviors indicate his emotional and social denial. He appears furious and prepared to assert his rights. He experienced abandonment and harbored traumatic recollections of a parentless and loveless upbringing, exhibiting aggression and envy towards B2, who was positioned to supplant him. This is clear in the conversation: "B1 Can we talk about what you did? / SALTER Yes of

course. I'm not sure where what/ B1 about you sent me away and had this other one made from some bit of my body some" (p. 80). This proves how B1 feels alienated because his father has neglected him for the sake of the other clone. He expresses his anger in the same conversation: "B1 and they take this painless scrape this specky little cells of me and kept that and you threw the rest of me away/ SALTER no/ BI and had a new one made" (p.81). That is why B1 eliminates B2, avenging his prolonged separation from his dad and penalizing him by depriving him of the surrogate. B2 exhibits a deficiency in belongingness and a weak personality, having been shaped by Salter as formless matter according to his desires. By surrendering the certainty of his background, B2 has also forfeited his uniqueness, revealing a communally maladaptive individual.

Uniqueness is the essential foundation upon which the two Bernards assess their self-worth. Cloning alters the perception of individuality. As a result, throughout the play, B2 experiences the sorrow of losing the unique, while B1 resorts to ferocity in reaction to the diminishment of his uniqueness due to replication (Case, 2007, p.160). They demonstrate that individuality is organized. This construction occurs when a person attains specific societal positions that expose him/her to diverse settings.

The play's pivotal moment transpires when Salter encounters one of the unplanned, unacknowledged, and previously unfamiliar men cloned from his biological son. This individual possesses a complete name, Michael Black, and a complex existence as a spouse, parent, and educator. While the interaction is unfulfilling for Salter, it provides the viewer with essential insights into the persistent enigma of human identity and a significant indication of the constraints of human power (Kritzer, 2003, p. 354). Michael Black exhibits a congenial and laid-back demeanor absent in Bernard 1. His life, as he articulates, encompasses all features of ordinary delight. He cherishes his wife and children, takes pleasure in his profession, and derives a sense of belonging from his genetic resemblance to other clones and his genetic affinities with various living organisms, ranging from chimps to lettuce. Michael Black's assertion of existence fails to provide solace to Salter. He still desires a son (Kritzer, 2008, p. 76). Michael tells Salter that he is "a teacher, mathematics, […] married, three children …" (p. 205), and Slater asks him if he is happy, and he says:

what now? or in general? Yes I think I am, I don't think about it, I am. The job gets me down sometimes. The world's a mess of course. But you can't help, a sunny morning, leaves turning, off to the park with the baby, you can't help feeling wonderful can you? (p. 205).

Despite being a clone, Michael experiences happiness and contentment in his role as a devoted parent and husband, a situation that perplexes Salter, who is frustrated by B1's suicide and the murder of B2.

Scenes 1 to 4 contrast sharply with the concluding scene in which Salter encounters his cloned son, Michael Black, radiant, exuberant, and affectionate, who is elated to learn about his cloned siblings. Salter perceives no trace of his obscurity or harmfulness in Michael, who is devoid of the hatred and turmoil that characterized B1 and B2. Disillusioned by Michael's contentment and his impotence, Salter struggles to connect with Michael and, crucially, cannot rediscover his deceased sons within him. Michael recognizes Salter's shortcomings without casting judgment; however, in the last lines of the play, he offers a sarcastic regret to Salter for his independence (Luckhurst, p. 163). Thus, Salter feels the sense of stability Michael has: "SALTER: And you're happy you say are you? You like your life? MICHAEL: I do yes, sorry" (p. 206). Michael possesses a stable sense of himself and demonstrates autonomy due to his childhood separation from Salter. Black highlights the element of uniformity in identification that can connect an individual to the external world. For him, the pursuit of uniqueness is futile, as we resemble other beings under the laws of nature.

The third clone serves a crucial function in the play. He offers a distinct rendition that markedly contrasts with that of his two brothers. He announces that

we've got ninety-nine per cent the same genes as any other person. We've got ninety per cent the same as a chimpanzee. We've got thirty percent the same as a lettuce. Does that cheer you up at all? I love about the lettuce. It makes me feel I belong" (p. 211).

He highlights the uniformity in identification that can connect an individual to the external world. For him, the pursuit of uniqueness is futile, as humans resemble other beings under the laws of nature. Michael Black rejects B1 and B2's frantic attempts to assert individuality. He acknowledges the association with even "humble" creatures. "Rather than claiming an egotistical uniqueness," Black proposes "an alternative to conventional masculine and Western subjectivity." (Kritzer, 2008, p. 77). Amelia Howe Kritzer asserts that a person is evaluated in society solely based on their uniqueness. For the critic, this prevailing pretense is merely an endeavor that fosters solitude and egotism. The quest for individuality torments the two Bernards, resulting in animosity and despair, and ultimately culminating in a tragic conclusion, when B1 takes his own life after killing B2.

Sue-Ellen Case believes that by creating the character of the third clone, Churchill wants to put "individualism to the test" (Case, 2007, p. 160). The fixation with uniqueness in Western civilization may exacerbate societal division and emotions of anxiety. For B1 and B2, uniqueness is contextualized regarding Salter, which also determines their characteristics. Their identity definitions perpetuate a cycle of fear, doubt, and loss. For Michael Black, uniqueness necessitates a strong sense of relevance. Consequently, possessing replicas akin to him cannot compromise his identity and cannot affect his uniqueness. Consequently, when Salter enquires whether he feels anger upon realizing he is merely a number, he calmly responds: "I've still got my life" (p. 209). Life signifies existence within a broader group. Black believes that the presence of multiple twins is unlikely to impact his unique life significantly. He is fully cognizant of his unique and universal personal traits.

While not fully realized in the play, Salter, a more intricate character, connects the past with the present, transitioning from a modest single-parent household to Michael's happy yet mundane new family. Despite being at the origin of the calamity, Salter adopts an inactive stance, feigning confusion; he refrains from disclosing the truth and persistently modifies his discourse to accommodate the interlocutor. In his interactions with B2, Salter exhibits dominant and scheming behavior, diverting B2's focus from his identity issues and deceiving him. The dialogue is disjointed and redundant, indicating the characters' struggle for meaning and Salter's deliberate attempt to avoid outright contradicting B2. What perplexes him is the financial aspect: he perceives the clones as a monetary resource due to the scientist's production of multiple specimens. He attempts to persuade B2 and B1 to litigate against the hospital for compromising their individualities. Salter emerges as an estranged father, oblivious to his boys' needs and willing to embrace detections and tests without considering the potential ramifications: his actions were far from insignificant. Salter embodies the father who perceives his son B1 as a threat due to his demanding nature, ultimately abandoning him, which serves as a surrogate act of killing, reminiscent of King Laius,[1] who was killed by his son, Oedipus (Anghel, 2012, p. 162).

[1]In Greek mythology, King Laius was a pivotal character in the foundational story of Thebes. He was the monarch of Thebes, progeny of Labdacus, spouse of Jocasta, and sire of Oedipus, who infamously murdered him. Laius received a prophecy foretelling that he would be slain by his own son, a prophecy that Oedipus actualized.

Despite his little stage time, Michael Black serves a vital function in the subject, rather than merely acting as an entertaining appendage to the action. He liberates the play from the conventional dichotomy between the virtuous and nefarious sons. By seeing and embracing interconnectedness with even modest organisms like lettuce, rather than claiming an egotistical distinctiveness, Michael offers a counterpoint to conventional male and Western subjectivity. His affection extends in multiple directions, not confined to a singular possessive bond. He terminates Salter's supremacy not via direct opposition to his authority but by presenting a wholly novel perspective. Michael, like the two genetic brothers parented by Salter, originates from a family, although one is absent from the play. It persists as the mysterious substitute to the egoism, struggle, and devastation it embodies (Kritzer, 2008, p.77).

2. Conclusion

Churchill explores humanity's quest for individuality and uniqueness through the theme of cloning. She has clearly expressed that every individual has a distinct personality, rendering it impossible to be identical to others. This concept is demonstrated in the play when B1 grapples with accepting Salter's request for the physicians to generate clones from his cells. As a result, he expresses his repudiation through hostility towards his father and subsequently kills his brother B2 later in the play. B2 dismisses conformity to others as it compromises his distinctiveness. Salter, in conjunction with the physician, is erroneous in the cloning of persons, as this has obliterated the uniqueness of B1 and B2. By cloning B1, he has never emancipated himself; B1's existence has perpetually lacked stability due to the profound loss of self-identity resulting from the consciousness of his cloning and substitution. Moreover, B2 experiences feelings of disorientation and insecurity stemming from the threat posed by B1, prompting him to seek self-discovery and individuality. Consequently, he forsakes both his father and his homeland, but then he was killed by B1.

In this drama, Churchill cautions against the use of human cloning, which threatens to obliterate individuality and originality. Furthermore, cloning poses a threat to both society and individuals as it fosters hostility and hatred among people. Churchill illustrates the quest for identity among individuals, both clones and the cloned, and the resultant alienation that drives them to violence against one another.

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